

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE PRESIDENT OF PAN-AFRICAN
PARLIAMENT HONOURABLE AMBASSADOR GERTRUDE IBENGWE
MONGELLA, MP; TO THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE PAN-AFRICAN
PARLIAMENT 3RD SESSION AT GALLAGHER ESTATE IN MIDRAND,
SOUTH AFRICA
ON 29 MARCH 2005**

Hon. Members of the Pan African Parliament

Excellencies

Invited guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. May I ask you to rise for a minute of silence in remembrance of the late Hon. Jerome Sacca Kina Guezere Member and 4th Vice President of the Pan African Parliament from Benin. He passed on the 11 January 2005 in his home country Benin after being taken ill in Accra Ghana where he was representing PAP at the ceremony of the inauguration of President Kufuor to begin his Second Term of Office.

The late Hon. Sacca Kina was a man of integrity with a track record of leadership experience in his country and across Africa. As a Bureau member he demonstrated his dedication to the ideals of Pan Africanism, and firm commitment to the work of the Pan-African Parliament. We have lost a leader, a colleague and a brother in the struggle for development for Africa. May his soul rest in eternal peace - Amen.

2. Your presence today at Gallagher Estate, Midrand, Gauteng Province in South Africa, the seat of the Pan-African Parliament, is for me not only a great pleasure, but also a privilege to address this august Assembly of the Pan-African Parliamentarians (and invited guests). It is one year after the historical inaugural and first session of the Pan-African Parliament which took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 18 to 20 March 2004 under the chairmanship of President Joaquim Alberto Chissano, the

retired President of the Republic of Mozambique, and the then Chairperson of the African Union.

I welcome you to this official opening ceremony of the 3rd Session of the Pan-African Parliament. Among our esteemed guests who have graced this occasion are a number of Honourable Speakers from National and Regional Parliaments of Africa; Government Ministers from the Republic of South Africa; Ambassadors and High Commissioners, Representatives of International Organisations, leaders of the civil society and the media; last but not the least -- the Gallagher Estate staff. I recognise and appreciate your presence.

3. The first anniversary of the existence of the PAP provides us with an opportunity to take stock of the progress and to reflect on the challenges faced during this period. PAP is one of the organs of the African Union established by article 5 of the Constitutive Act of the Union as a representative body of the African people to enable full participation in the development of their continent, promotion of peace and human rights and development of culture of democracy in Africa. I wish all the members a happy birthday (at this first anniversary of the PAP).

4. The drumming which preceded this ceremony is an expression of happiness of the fact that now PAP exists and continues to grow with the mandate that it derives from the Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community Relating to the Pan African Parliament. PAP has made some progress and has stood up to a number of challenges in this one year period. The progress made has been due commitment and hard work of the parliament Bureau and secretariat and support from a number of key actors including:

- *The Commission of African Union*

The Commission of African Union, in particular the Commission for Political Affairs spearheaded the process of launching PAP. The

Commission continues to provide financial and human resources that facilitate the functioning of PAP.

- *The Host Country*

The Republic of South Africa was declared by the Heads of State and Government at the African Union Assembly held in Addis Ababa in July 2004, as the permanent seat of the Pan African Parliament. The government of the Republic of South Africa has provided services and support according to the Host Country Agreement. Moreover, the President of the Republic of South Africa H.E Thabo Mbeki has been a source of inspiration and encouragement. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National and Provincial Parliaments have been an important link in ensuring the availability of the required staff, infrastructure and services at Gallagher Estates for smooth running of the day-to-day activities of the PAP. The construction of the new building to meet the requirements of the functions of parliament is yet another demonstration of the commitment of the Republic of South Africa to meet its obligation as a host. Some of you may have visited the building that will provide modern working facilities for PAP. The facilities will include; a fully furnished parliament chamber, offices for Bureau and Secretariat, committee rooms, offices for each Member of Parliament as well as other general service facilities. The construction of this spectacular building was done within one year of PAP's existence. The government and the Gallagher Estate deserve a big applause for the work well done.

- *The National Parliaments*

Speakers of the National Parliaments of Africa have been deliberately invited to this session to witness the progress made by the PAP to which they have rendered support according to the decision of the Assembly (Assembly/AU/Dec.39(III) Rev.1) and the Executive Council ((EX.CL/Dec.98 (V)). Both resolutions state - that Member States should bear the expenses for the participation of members of the

Pan-African Parliament at the statutory meetings of the Pan-African Parliament and its Committees during the first five years.

National Parliaments have accordingly taken the responsibility to cover travel and subsistence cost for their PAP parliamentarians during committees and session meetings. PAP is very obliged to all Hon. Speakers for their contribution and support. The National Parliaments have therefore contributed to the capacity building of PAP at this initial stage of its development.

5. During this one year, the parliament has carried on its activities under the leadership of the Bureau composed of the President and the 4 Vice Presidents. According to article 12 (5)

‘The President and Vice Presidents shall be the Officers of the Pan African Parliament. The officers, under the control and direction of the President and subject to such directives as may be issued by the Pan African Parliament, shall be responsible for the management and administration of the affairs and facilities of the Pan African Parliament and its organs. In the discharge of their duties, the officers shall be assisted by the Clerk and the two Deputy Clerks’.

Using that mandate above, the Bureau appointed an Interim Clerk and two Deputy Clerks while the Parliament was waiting for the approval of its budget for the recruitment of permanent staff. The organisational structure has been completed and will be tabled at this session. A budget of US\$ 5.6 million for 2005 was approved by the AU in December 2004 for PAP’s activities – including the provision of 37 posts to start with. The recruitment process of these posts will be open and competitive to eligible candidates according to AU rules and procedures.

6. The Pan African Parliament has adopted its own rules of procedure and formed 10 Parliamentary committees according to Article 12 (1) and 12 (13) respectively.

7. During the 2nd Session held last year in September 2004 Swahili was introduced as an African working language following in the foot steps of the AU. At the same time the agenda was to create a common understanding among PAP parliamentarians' on their obligations and responsibilities within the vision of the African Union. The relationship of the PAP and other organs of the Union and oversight role of PAP was defined. Within this thrust the parliament has carried out a number of several activities:

- The mission to Darfur
- The Bureau Committee meetings have developed 2005 work plans and PAP's strategic plan to be discussed during this the 3rd Session
- The Bureau have carried out a number advocacy work to popularise the Parliament within and outside Africa with a hope of establishing institutional relationship and partnership with institutions of similar nature e.g The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe; EU Parliament, Latin America, AWEPA, UNDESA. Through such cooperation we expect to build a strong technical capacity within the parliament.
- The Bureau has examined the need to provide the Parliament with the necessary resources. At this session there will be a discussion of the establishment of the Trust Fund as an additional source of funding for the PAP's activities.

In short in its first year of existence the PAP has worked to establish structures and capacities to carry out its mandate. While doing so, it has become clearer that in order for PAP to succeed its mission, there is a need to build close and strong relationship with National and Regional

parliaments and other organisations in order to ensure the integration of people in Africa.

8. In order to achieve this, the PAP is looking into ways and means of establishing effective communication technologies that will enable sharing and dissemination of information, capturing concerns, wishes, interests, opinion of peoples in Africa. The media will therefore be one of the strong partner in this endeavour. The ultimate goal is to make PAP :

- A truly representative of peoples of Africa in social, economic and political debates of the continent in international bodies to ensure that the agendas of Africa take into account the real needs of the African people.
- Embrace programmes such as NEPAD which take the lead in a professional way of addressing social and economic development of the continent and in restoring the dignity of the African people
- Protect human rights of the African people
- Manage the globalisation process by influencing the international agenda
- Enhance Partnerships for effective resource sharing and advocacy

9. The PAP parliamentarians have varying experiences and expertise in all sectors of society. The rich diversity of experience and knowledge will enhance the capacity of the parliament to debate Africa's critical issues of development such as:

- Issues of peace and security,
- Influencing international and development agenda notions such as MDGs, UN reforms, Trade Policies that affect Africa
- Stimulating debates, discussions in a plenary like this one, caucuses, and permanent committees of the PAP
- Calling for accountability of the leaders and state machineries

10. In conclusion Africa is on the right track, the actions taken by AU and leaders of Africa to deal with conflicts is an indication of a new trend of Africa managing its own affairs. The situation in Togo is a case in point, where President Obasanjo of Nigeria effectively used his position as a Chairman of the AU to call to order the son of the late President Eyedema who was trying to make a short cut (to power), ignoring the constitutional requirements of that country, (that is) a thing which could not have happened in the past.

The contribution of our African leaders in resolving conflicts of Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, Somalia and Sudan deserve a recognition and support of PAP

I thank you for your attention