

**Statement**

**by**

**His Excellency Joaquim Alberto Chissano  
President of the Republic of Mozambique  
Chairman of the African Union**

**on the**

**Occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> of May, African Unity Day**

**Excellencies,**

**Dear African Brothers and Sisters,**

**Dear Friends of Africa,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is with great honour that, in my capacity as the Chairman of the African Union, I address all Africans and friends of Africa, wherever they are, on the occasion of yet another anniversary of the Organization of African Unity, a creation of our glorious epic freedom of the Continent.

The Organization of African Unity has made achievements of great political transcendence throughout its existence that have changed forever the fate of the African Continent. As a matter of fact, even less attentive political observers recognize the heroic deeds of the O.A.U. and their impact in the set of the international relations system.

We, therefore, have excessive and varied reasons to celebrate, acknowledging the victories of our organization, from which I highlight three:

- *first, having fulfilled the noble role of politically liberating the Continent and giving back dignity to the African people;*

- *second, having known how to survive with tenaciousness and determination the vicissitudes of the cold war, including the attempts of dividing the continent;*
- *third, having had the capacity of reading the history and the dynamics of international relations, and know how to change, to be up to face the challenges of the new era.*

Indeed, after liberating the Continent from the colonial domination, African leaders understood that, in a period dominated by globalization, the O.A.U. could no longer keep up, with the required effectiveness, the evolution of the world, thus feeling the urgent need to change.

This “genetic mutation” of our Organisation aims at equipping it with efficient tools to speed up political, economic, social and cultural progress of the Continent, because without these advances, the everyday life of our people would be of continued poverty, hunger and misery.

It also aims at granting the Continent the required political and economic strength to become a partner like others from other parts of the world, and a pro-active actor of international relations, capable of making its opinions worth, defending its legitimate and non transmissible interests.

We, African leaders and active forces of our societies, feel the great support from our people, whom today, more than ever, actively participate in defining their future, in the formulation of policies for their achievements, finding a growing space to become more active agents of their own development.

It is precisely to ensure this participation that the Constitutive Act of the African Union foresees the creation of the Economic, Social and Cultural Council, a forum through which the civil society of the Continent will actively take part in the formulation of decisions with impact on the present and future of the African people.

The full participation of African people in the efforts for a sustainable development and economic integration of the Continent through their representatives in parliament was asserted with the launching of the Pan-African Parliament on the 18th of March 2004.

The adoption of NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa Development) by the African Union was a fundamental milestone in the history of our Continent. NEPAD provides a platform for the construction of a united, prosperous and harmonious Continent, thus consolidating the ideas and desires of African people.

One of the greatest achievements of our Continent is the decision and determination of African leaders in improving their governance. It is the translation of the principles in the Constitutive Act of the African Union. In this context, we have created the Peer Review Mechanism, a tool that consolidated our belief that, from now on, we will take the right and steady steps towards progress.

**Excellencies,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The Maputo Summit was an important landmark in the history of our Organisation, because it was the moment where the AU Commission was established, with the election of the Chairman and Deputy - Chairman of the Commission, as well as the Commissioners. The launching of the Pan -African Parliament on the 18<sup>th</sup> of March and the formal launching of the Peace and Security Council, today, May 25<sup>th</sup>, are examples of our engagement in the materialization of the decisions taken at the Summit.

I have noticed that the process of establishing the African Union bodies is taking place at a speed never witnessed in the history of our Organization. This fact is not more than the reflection of the dynamics that we, African leaders, want to give to the functioning of the African Union, an

Organisation we want to keep modern, efficient and up to the challenges of the XXI Century, the African Century.

In this effort for modernizing our continental Organisation, we are also guided by the commitment we have undertaken, of giving African women the space they deserve in leading and developing Africa and its institutions.

The achievement of this commitment lies, among other aspects, in gender balance that is reflected in the creation of the Union bodies.

We have recorded great progress in the efforts towards attaining peace, stability and security and their consolidation in Africa. The isolated armed conflicts and political tensions, still occurring here and there, represent a threat to the hard work we are carrying out for sustainable development. The remaining conflicts represent a challenge to our capacity and determination in the search for peace.

Peace and stability are the essential conditions for us to fully attain the objectives set in NEPAD, translation then in to the improvement of the social and economic conditions of the African people.

That is why we have high hopes and believe in the Peace and Security council, which we see as an efficient tool for the achievement of the African agenda, on issues regarding conflict prevention, management and resolution.

**Excellencies,**

**Dear Africans,**

The Progress made by the African Union in such a short time after its creation is evident, in an increasingly more integrated world, where the boundaries of States are permeable to the dissemination of information, knowledge, capital and human resources among others. Africa has the challenge of taking advantage of this reality, through the design and application of strategies capable of mitigating the perilous effects of globalisation.

We are also called to adjust strategic plans to fight absolute poverty and other government plans and programmes to NEPAD and the millennium development goals. We must direct all our energies towards the search for solutions to the external debt problem nor be complacent in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Each and every one of us must contribute to the success of NEPAD because it represents the success of our collective work in promoting the sustainable development of the Continent.

We have defined this century as “The African Century”. Today, we have the advantage of being better-equipped and more united to realize our aspirations. If we won yesterday, despite major obstacles and adversities, nothing will prevent us from succeeding in the future.

The natural and human resources that we have and the great capital of faith and determination that encourage us, is an added value. Therefore, all Africans, regardless of where they are, must assume the certainty of success and give their best contribution in the efforts aimed at developing Africa.

Each one of us has a noble challenge and responsibility to guarantee that future generations will live in a Continent free from the scourge of hunger, wars and diseases. We must therefore engage in mobilizing support for Africa and collect experiences from other partners that can ensure the success of the programmes we design for the Continent.

The African Diaspora has a role to play in this process. It must be the image and the beat of Africa wherever Africans are. It must be assumed as an important network of attorneys and ambassadors of their Continent. It must transform the opportunities provided by its inclusion into added value, for the interest of the motherland.

We expect an increasingly positive attitude from the international community, even recognizing that the primary role is played by ourselves, Africans. We hope to work with the international community and get support from it to build a more stable and harmonious world. After all, the global village in which we live in will not be safe for a few of us, if it is not safe and stable for all of us. In the long run, no island of progress and stability will be sustainable if it is surrounded by an ocean of misery, of those without a present and without a future.

The way might be long, but I have no doubts that many victories await us. Not all of us might have the possibility of living to witness them, as we live and witness the triumph of the commitment made by our founding fathers. As a matter of fact, those who initiate an undertaking do not always have the opportunity to finalize it.

We must all work to try and merit the same appreciation we make today of the mentors of the African Unity, from future generations. The struggle continues. Together we shall overcome.

**Thank you very much!**