

PRESS STATEMENT

BY HON. PEYA MUSHELENGA, MP, DEPUTY MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ON THE OCCASSION OF THE PREPARATION FOR THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE PROGRAMME OF EVENTS FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE GOLDEN JUBILEE, THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY (OAU), 15 MAY 2013

Members of the Media,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The OAU was established on 25 May 1963 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia by leaders of 32 independent African states. This followed an extensive process of consultations led by many illustrious sons of Africa, notably Dr. Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and many others. The founding of the OAU, followed a series of meetings of All Africa Peoples Conferences which started outside Africa led by the giants of the Diaspora such as Marcus Garvey, George Padmore, W.E.D. Du Bois and many others.

The establishment of the OAU was made with the fundamental objective for the organization to liberate Africa from the vestiges of colonialism and Apartheid. That objective was achieved with the independence of Namibia in 1990 and the dismantling of Apartheid in South Africa in 1994. Unfortunately, to date, one African country, Western Sahara remains under the occupation by another African country, Morocco. This situation needs to be resolved immediately so that the people of Western Sahara can equally enjoy freedom, independence and self-determination like all other peoples of the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Throughout the 1990's, there was an emerging recognition amongst African leaders to change the fundamental orientation of the Organization to address pressing economic and social problems facing the continent after its liberation. Hence the transformation of the Organization of African Unity into the African Union which was necessitated by the need to collectively address issues such as

poverty eradication including continental integration and, to deal with the frequent challenges of conflicts on the continent.

Today, the African Union continues to be a continental platform where African leaders meet to consider and adopt common policies on wide ranging issues.

Thus, the AU Assembly Decision 422 of January 2013, directed Member States of the African Union together with Regional Economic Communities (RECs) as well as other AU Organs to organize various activities including media events, debates and competitions at schools and universities, public opinion surveys, sessions at local and national legislatures and other activities to celebrate the theme of the year "Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance" throughout the year until May next year (2014).

This is in recognition of the immense contribution of the OAU to the liberation of Africa as well as the quest for attainment of the dignity and well-being of Africans through the ideology of Pan Africanism. In this regard, the Government of the Republic of Namibia will on Friday, 17 May 2013 officially launch the Programme of events for the celebration of the Golden Jubilee, the 50th Anniversary of the Founding of the OAU. H.E. Dr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia, will officially launch the Programme of Celebrations. On the same occasion, H.E. Dr Sam Nujoma, Founding President of the Republic and Father of the Namibian Nation, will give a public lecture, sharing his recollections of the Founding of the OAU.

As you all know, the Founding President represented the oppressed people of Namibia on that historic day during the founding of the OAU on 25 May 1963, representing the aspirations of our people for freedom, independence and self-determination.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Government of the Republic of Namibia has established a National Preparatory Committee, chaired by Hon. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, MP, and Minister of Foreign Affairs, comprised of a number of Ministers. The National Preparatory Committee is supported by a team of technical officials from Offices, Ministries and Agencies. These National Committees have already set up a very

rich and colourful programme of events to celebrate the OAU Golden Jubilee of the founding of the OAU.

Namibia's Programme of celebrations is planned to involve meaningful debates around African issues. The youth will be mobilized to provide input into the future vision of the African continent.

In the same vein, Namibia is planning to schedule activities in all the 13 regions of the country. All national and prominent leaders will be deployed to give lectures and participate in Workshops to sensitize the nation on the achievements and challenges of the OAU. In this effort, we will also partner with our brothers and sisters from the continent, particularly who are represented by African Diplomatic Missions in Namibia.

We are requesting members of the public to attend massively the official launch at the Independence Arena in numbers. The programme starts with the arrival of the public at 10h00am and, will end at around 13h00.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The African Union continues to be the premier continental forum to coordinate, harmonise and mainstream common African policies. Namibia remains fully committed to realize the vision of a strong, prosperous and integrated Africa at peace with itself. It is against this background that Namibia's Foreign Policy on matters of continental concern are informed by the positions of the African Union, particularly our position on the security situation on Eastern DRC, Mali, Somalia, Western Sahara, Madagascar and many other situations are based on the African Union position.

In conclusion, I would like to commend and salute the commendable work done so far with regard to the preparation of events for the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the founding of the OAU. Let me also call on the youth and students to play their rightful role in terms of influencing the future agenda of the continent. As youth on this continent, we should participate effectively in all events of the Programme of the celebration of the founding of our continental organization.

I thank you.