



Africa Day Statement



Tuesday 25 May, 2021

Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for Building the Africa we Want

The Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD) joins the rest of the continent in celebrating Africa Day. This year's continental anniversary is running under the Africa Union theme; "Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for Building the Africa we Want." It is a theme reflective of the three components that make Africa what it is and uniquely different from any other place on earth, that is, Arts, Culture and Heritage. These three components reinforce the collective desire of all Africans, to freely live out and share diverse values, cultures and beliefs as full citizens of a free and united society. All over Africa this collective desire is threatened by the forces of extractivism, corporate greed, militarism and climate change. Diversity is replaced everywhere by 'One size fits all policy prescriptions' of debt riddled private sector led development models. However, it is the resilience of Art, Culture and Heritage in the hearts and minds of African people that faithfully fertilises our collective efforts to seek diverse and innovative solutions to continent's pressing challenges particularly the intergenerational cycles of debt, conflict and extreme poverty and inequality. There is more that unites Africans than what divides us – these are the levers on which a just and equitable Africa must be built on.

As the continent celebrates this year's Africa day celebrations, we are reminded to turn back and draw inspiration from the Arts, Culture and Heritage that fertilises diverse struggles and inspired people's victories over forces as dark as colonialism; apartheid; racial oppression and others. To this end, ZIMCODD calls on the African Union and its member states on this important day to reflect on the founding values of the then Organisation of African Unity and reflect whether present day AU is still abiding by and respecting these values and principles. ZIMCODD would like to refresh the memories of African Heads of States and Governments that the African Union is supposed to champion, defend and entrench people centered democracy in all its members states.

We reiterate that with our continent battling with lack, disease, inequality, poverty, dictatorships, terrorism among other malaise, the battle of the African people organised in their different social movements, is the battle for democracy.

From Cape Town, through Windhoek, Bujumbura, Lomé, Djibouti, Lusaka, Brazzaville to Dakar, Mombasa, Nairobi to Lagos, to Cairo, the ordinary men and women on the continent yearn for a genuinely developmental Africa that has strong states that respond to the socio-economic needs of the African in the villages, townships, urban areas and metropolises across the continent.

We call on the African Union to deal decisively with the human security and survival threat that is posed by different terrorist groups on the continent. We call for African brokered political solutions to resolve the root and structural causes of insurgent challenges in northern Mozambique, northern Nigeria, Chad, The DRC, Cameroon and Niger. Many African people are suffering because of the resources under their feet. The unjust system of unfettered market domination at the root of many conflicts across the continent will not stop spawning conflicts until asymmetrical neo-colonial relationships of domination and appropriation between African and the developed world are reversed.

Cognizant of the fact that our continent remains the poorest continent in the world despite the numerous mineral and natural resource endowments. We call for measures to ensure that the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement bridges rather than enlarge the already glaring structural inequalities across many economies in the continent. To this end we call for robust measures to ensure adequate safety nets to protect those vulnerable to significant economic loss as markets open up amongst them smallholder farmers; pastoralists; traditional food producers and fisher folk; artisanal miners and others.

International Financial Institutions predict that this continent will be home to the world's two thirds of the world's population by 2025. It is therefore imperative that economic opportunities on the continent are made more available to youth as this continent is youthful and will remain predominantly youthful for decades to come.

We are also calling on the African governments to coordinate a robust COVID-19 vaccination response to ensure that by year end, the continent is free from COVID-19. In the same vein, we call on the continent to invest in scientific and bio-chemical research so that this continent is capacitated to develop its own vaccines not only for COVID-19 but for any other disease outbreak that might come in the future.

As Africa continues to battle with shocking debt levels, a looming COVID-19 induced debt crisis raises legitimate fears that many African governments will no longer have the fiscal space to spend on anything other than servicing debt repayments and arrears. The International Community owes it to millions of vulnerable people across the continent affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and other overlapping shocks, to formulate a decisive debt relief framework for Africa. So that African governments can deploy debt repayment funds towards meeting peoples' growing needs during the pandemic.

For this continent to grow, develop and thrive, it needs to have a robust governance structure that is supported by effective institutions that promote both sustainable economic growth for the youth and democracy for all. To this end, respecting continental agreements and protocols on democracy, elections and good governance by all member states with the AU playing an effective watchdog role is important. The time for the AU to rubber stamp unfair and undemocratic elections in the continent must be a thing of the past. African art, culture and heritage beckons to a more hopeful future for a continent richly endowed, yet radically crippled from reaching fullest potential.

One Africa, One Continent

Mayibuye iAfrica, iAfrica Mayibuye!

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