

AFRICAN UNION
الاتحاد الأفريقي



AFRICAN UNION
UNIÃO AFRICANA

Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA . O. Box 3243 Telephone: 517 700 Fax : 517844/512622

**PAN-AFRICAN
PARLIAMENT**
FIFTH LEGISLATURE
FOURTH SESSION

28 AND 29 JUNE 2022
MIDRAND - SOUTH AFRICA

SPEECH BY H.E. MOUSSA FAKI MAHAMAT
CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION

Excellency Naledi Pandor, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa

Honorable Pan-African Parliamentarians,

Mr. the Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner to Political Affairs, Peace, and Security of the African Union,

**Excellencies Ladies, Gentlemen the members of the diplomatic corps,
Distinguished guests, ladies, and
gentlemen,**

It is with great pleasure and a poignant sense of solemnity that I take the floor today in this high place of African parliamentarianism. In this hemicycle where the voice of the African peoples is expressed in complete freedom, I send you my warmest fraternal greetings.

Your massive presence at this session, the importance of which is clear to everyone, is proof of the seriousness of the moment and gives the measure of the expectations and hopes built up around the session that opens this morning. Established under Article 2 of the Protocol relating to the African Economic Community adopted in Sirte, Libya, on 2 March 2001, the Pan-African Parliament, despite the high hopes it raised, has remained in search of its true roots and efficient functioning.

The Constitutive Act of the African Union has given it a privileged place in the institutional architecture of our Union. I recognize, however, that despite the declared will of our Heads of State to place it in third place after the Assembly of Heads of State and Government and the Executive Council, the Pan-African Parliament has remained essentially consultative, rather aloof from the requirements of an institution and law-making. The full participation of African peoples in the development and economic integration of the continent through

it has fallen short of expectations. Honorable Pan-African Parliamentarians, we and our governments have a long way to go so that you can, as reason and wisdom dictate, find yourselves in the best possible conditions to fulfil your noble mission.

Need I stress that this noble mission is precisely the one that dictates the ethics and moral virtues that must inspire your actions, your behavior, and your political strategies.

It is well known that parliaments throughout the world are important places for debates and confrontation of ideas. These debates can, from time to time, take on a heated character. Debating, not fighting, is the hallmark of parliamentary life.

In certain circumstances, the most established social codes and norms of behavior can be challenged in a sudden, brutal, and unexpected manner. It is worth reminding everyone of the duties of moderation, balance, restraint, and self-control that should always be the prerogative of those who belong to such an honorable and prestigious institution.

The unfortunate events that took place in this hemicycle on 27 May and 30 June 2021 on the aborted elections to the Bureau of the Pan-African Parliament have brought the image of this institution and that of the continent into great disrepute. The unbearable scenes broadcast on television and on social networks have moved African citizens who are dumbfounded by such a debasement of the parliament. These acts of transgression and dishonor have been condemned across the continent.

In my capacity as legal representative of the Union and guarantor of the proper functioning of all its organs and institutions, I then requested, without further ado, the suspension of the activities of parliamentarians until further notice. Of course, in this kind of situation, it is always necessary to sort out the facts and establish who is responsible for what.

Clearly, not all parliamentarians participated in the brawls of 27 May and 30 June 2021. Many of you have condemned and disassociated yourselves from these

incidents. This is to be welcomed. It is worth recalling that this parliament includes some of the best African political elite

They included presidents of national assemblies, presidents of senates, former prime ministers, former ministers, presidents of national parliamentary groups and many others. The scenes recalled above must have broken their hearts.

Honorable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The time has come to turn these sad and dark pages of the history of the Pan-African Parliament once and for all and to start afresh. The time has come to return to the noble behavior that has long characterized Pan-African parliamentarians and that has made the African Union proud. The time has finally come for fraternal dialogue, in a calm climate, to take precedence over confrontation.

The resumption of parliamentary activities, so desired by most of you, obviously requires the election of a new bureau. Much has already been written about this election. The five regional caucuses have spoken at length during the consultations held here in Midrand for the Southern African caucus and in Addis Ababa for the Central, North, East and West African caucuses. The positions of the various parties are well known, particularly on the principle of rotation. The legal debate on this issue is healthy and useful.

I would like to be clear and sincere with you all.

It is indeed regrettable that the protocol establishing the rotation has not yet entered into force, due to the lack of a sufficient number of ratifications. This is not without effect in a strictly legal sense. Of course. It is also undeniable that rotation is a fundamental principle of equity and justice. It governs most of our institutions.

You all know how the Conference of Heads of State and Government had to cancel and re-run the elections for the post of Director General of AUDA NEPAD simply because all the leading candidates were from the region of the outgoing Director.

So, I ask you clearly, what should be given priority? The legal formalism resulting

from the delays in ratifying a text or the attachment to a founding principle. What should we stick to? Form or substance in this controversy?

At this turning point in the history of our continent, it seems to me more relevant to stick to the essentials. And the essential thing is to gather around our convergences by minimizing our differences, the essential thing is to align ourselves behind our ideals of solidarity, sharing and concord in order to better prepare ourselves to face together the enormous challenges facing our continent: The health challenge with the Covid 19 pandemic and its serious economic and social consequences; the security challenge with the continuing advance of terrorism and its trail of deaths and shattered lives; the climatic challenge with the terrible drought and the multiple floods that are hitting certain parts of the continent, causing desolation and despair; the food challenge with the already visible consequences of the war in Ukraine; the political and democratic challenge, an unprecedented situation in the continent, with four Member States suspended.

These multiple challenges are of the utmost importance to the conscience of the representatives of the African peoples that you are. Faced with these colossal challenges and the need for general mobilization, the African Union cannot afford the luxury of a crisis that persists within one of its key organs.

The Pan-African Parliament must get into battle to be firmly involved in advocacy on behalf of the continent.

Decisions 1128 and 1148 taken by the Executive Council and approved by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government prescribe the holding of elections to the Bureau of the Pan-African Parliament on the principle of rotation to enable those of the two regions that have not yet chaired the Bureau to do so. These decisions do not aim at erasing the legal texts in force within the Parliament. Their sole and ultimate objective is to unblock a situation that has become untenable. They must be respected and applied. An exceptional situation requires an exceptional solution. It is a question of the ultimate responsibility of the supreme organ of the Union, the Conference of Heads of State and

Government. It is only a great honor to apply it.

Honorable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,

There will be no winners or losers in this process. It will be a collective victory, the victory of reason, of surpassing oneself and of fair play, the victory of the Africa we want.

Africa will not be built by Manichean majorities. Nor by Pyrrhic victories. Still less by the cry of "after me, the deluge".

Africa will triumph by transcending what Mandela called the human frailties of selfishness, inability to forgive and revenge.

Let us together honor his memory, especially here in South Africa.

Honorable Pan-African Parliamentarians, I therefore invite you to go to the polls in large numbers tomorrow, 29 June 2022, to carry out your electoral duty and thus open a new page in the life of your institution and in the progress of our organization

continental ideals so dear to our Founding Fathers.

Thank you for your kind attention.