



# PAC

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## PAN AFRICANIST CONGRESS OF AZANIA

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### President

**STATEMENT BY NARIUS MOLOTO, PRESIDENT OF THE PAN AFRICAN CONGRESS ON AFRICA  
DAY  
THIS IS AFRICA'S CENTURY  
25 MAY 2018**

This is Africa's century. Right before our eyes, at astonishing speed, the continent is finding its way in the world and holding itself up as a beacon to the world.

Corrupt regimes are disappearing, from Zimbabwe to Angola, though we should not fool ourselves that all is well. The despots may be gone, but that does not mean the pyramid of patronage and corruption built around them has gone with them. Even here in South Africa, the legacy of corruption embedded under the former president sends a toxic message to the people that dishonesty is normal. It is not. It is a cancer that eats at the soul of a nation. The message is that everything we and our forefathers fought for is up for sale. Let us never again slip into that dreadful morass.

This is a day of celebration for Africa. It is a time to join hands with our brothers and sisters across the continent and reflect on our achievements as a continent, and they are many. We are enriched by the shared intellectual, political and trade exchanges that bind us together as a continent of immense variety and beauty.

So many of these achievements we take for granted. Without peace, there can be no forward progress in addressing issues of poverty and justice. The World Health Organisation reports an astonishing 95% drop in deaths from conflicts in Africa between 2000 and 2012. In other words, the continent has found a relative peace after the long years of violence stoked primarily by colonial powers and Superpower meddling in our affairs. We should not take this peace for granted, as troublemakers, be they indigenous or foreign, seldom sleep. To protect this peace, we need to strengthen our institutional and democratic structures and build the prosperity that has been the African dream these past centuries. Prosperity that is inclusive is the surest safeguard against conflict.

The World Bank reports that adult literacy rates across the continent are up by four percentage points since 1995 and the gender gap is shrinking. Newborns can expect to live six years longer and the prevalence of chronic malnutrition among under five-year-olds is down six percentage points to 39%. At the same time, despite substantial improvement in school

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enrolment, the quality of schooling is often low and more than two in five adults are still illiterate. Reinvigorating Africa's primary educational achievements is urgent.

From Ghana's independence in 1957 to South Africa first democratic elections in 1994, the continent is at last finding its soul. From the great Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first president, to Robert Sobukwe, the founder of the Pan African Congress, the pan-Africanism vision has been reborn. It had been suppressed by the continent's colonial rape, but we Africans never lost sight of our shared humanity and attachment to the lands of our ancestors. The pan-Africanist vision calls for a rekindling of all that we cherish about this continent: our ancient tongues and customs, respect for family and for God, our brotherhood and sisterhood with each other, our genius and industriousness, our long tradition of trading and exchange. These are worth more than gold. They define who we are.

Being African is not a question of colour. Let's put that to bed. It is about commitment to the ideals of our shared destiny. Those who share this vision are welcome into this great big African family.

But let's not pretend all is well in this land. Seven of the 10 most unequal countries in the world are in Africa, most of them in southern Africa.

For all the achievements in Africa, the number of poor people continues to grow. We talk of the poor as if they are mere numbers. They are not. These are the people we dare not leave behind. We will be judged by the success or failure of achieving their integration into the economic mainstream, and that is no easy task.

Intra-African trade is a mere 13% of Africa's total, which is without doubt the most enduring legacy of colonialism. Our trade routes feed the markets of Europe, the US and Asia. Hence, Ghana is one of the world's largest growers of cocoa, yet still imports chocolate from abroad. Nigeria is one of the world's largest producers of crude oil, but still imports refined petroleum from overseas. South Africa produces gold and diamonds that are sent to India and Israel for beneficiation.

We have an opportunity in the next 20 years to change the course of the continent for the better by strengthening trade routes and reducing trade barriers with our neighbours. As our domestic markets expand, so too will our trade with our neighbours.

So while we celebrate the great achievements of our sportspeople and artists – Miriam Makeba, Hugh Masekela, Fela Kuti, Youssou N'Dour, Angelique Kidjo, Johnny Clegg and many, many more – let us never forget about those who have been forgotten and discarded. It is they who are the future of the continent. And it is they who we should be celebrated this day.

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