

Full Text of HM the King's Speech to 29th AU Heads of State and Government Summit

Praise be to God

May peace and blessings be upon the Prophet, His Kith and Kin

President Alpha Condé, Chairman of the African Union,

Dear Brothers, Dear Sister, Heads of State and Government,

President Moussa Faki Mahamat, AU Commission Chairperson,

Distinguished Ministers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Kingdom of Morocco is taking part in its first Summit as a member of the African Union since it returned to its institutional family last January. Morocco is thus consolidating not only its action in the continent, but also its multidimensional ties with African sister nations.

Following the historic decision made in Addis Ababa, Morocco has continued the process of accession to legal instruments in order to participate fully in the organization's activities and contribute to the agenda of all AU bodies.

Honoring its commitment, Morocco has taken part in all meetings, in the constructive spirit I mentioned in my address in Addis Ababa when I said: "We have absolutely no intention of causing division, as some would like to insinuate. (...) as soon as the Kingdom becomes a member and is able to contribute to the agenda of activities, its action will, on the contrary, help bring about unity and progress".

This Summit provides an opportunity to underscore our countries' genuine,

responsible and unwavering commitment to serve the causes and interests of our African continent.

President Alpha Condé's action at the head of our organization is commendable. Displaying leadership and foresight, he has made praiseworthy efforts to streamline our organization's work. He has reshaped our agenda in such a way as to share out follow-up to priority themes more judiciously, thereby giving greater visibility to the organization's action.

I should like to extend my thanks to His Excellency Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, the AU Commission Chairperson, for his untiring efforts to inject fresh vigor into the Commission's work and support the reform process within the AU.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have always firmly believed that Africa can turn the challenges it is facing into genuine prospects for development and stability. African population growth, African institutions, migration and youth issues are opportunities we should leverage together.

Morocco wants to contribute to the emergence of a New Africa: a strong, daring Africa that defends its interests; an Africa that is influential on the world stage.

To shape this new Africa, it is important to shed all illusions and reject any fantasies. The New Africa I am yearning for should, on the contrary, be based on a solid, pragmatic vision which is likely to help forge a conquering Africa that is committed to solidarity.

Africa is at a crossroads. It is up to us to choose the right path for its emergence. Right now, our African continent is facing a host of challenges, including the proliferation of non-state actors - a fact which creates many gray areas - the threat of transnational terrorism and violent extremism, and the impacts of global warming.

Given the new perils looming over our continent, it is necessary for the AU to begin its metamorphosis in order to come up with adequate, appropriate answers.

To do this, I believe it is essential for African States to set realistic, pragmatic objectives based on the continent's real priorities. Africa no longer needs ideological slogans. It needs concrete, resolute action in peace-building, security and human development.

Morocco has faith in Africa's ability to reinvent itself and to unleash a momentum of its own. Given the obvious limitations of classic North-South co-operation in the bid to rise to the challenge of an emerging Africa, our continent should make greater use of inter-African cooperation and of strategic, solidarity-based partnerships between sister nations.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, more than ever, the AU should be fully attuned to the stakes involved in our continent and be constantly heedful of today's challenges. The emergence of Africa requires an overhaul of African institutions –one that would enable the continent to respond fully and decisively to the challenges faced.

In this regard, I should like to commend President Paul Kagame's leadership on this issue which means so much to our African continent. I congratulate him on his important, thorough report, which contains crucial recommendations for finding solutions guaranteeing the future of the African Union.

The Imperative to Strengthen our Union makes an eloquent diagnosis of the current state of the AU and proposes realistic, pragmatic recommendations. That imperative is our imperative. A transformative vision of the African Union is needed today, more than ever.

The reform of the African Union is a flagship project in which Morocco will be actively involved, alongside sister nations.

Our institutional family must aim for greater efficiency and a streamlining of the pan-African organization in order to be in step with the expectations of African populations.

The implementation of such a reform is no longer a luxury; rather, it is an imperative need, considering the enormous stakes involved and the immense challenges to which our continent must rise.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A proactive, youth-oriented policy can channel energy for the achievement of development. The future of Africa hinges on its youth. Today, nearly 600 million Africans are young. In 2050, 400 million will be aged between 15 and 24.

This trend underscores the urgent need to use the demographic dividend to stimulate the emergence of our continent. This is a godsend for Africa; it makes it possible for the continent to benefit from a young, educated and abundant labor force to drive the continent's economic growth.

Each year, more than 11 million young Africans enter the labor market, but only 3 million jobs are created. More than 70% of young Africans live on less than \$2 a day.

African youths are bearing the brunt of unemployment. How can we tackle that problem, knowing that 60% of the continent's unemployed are young people?

The answer lies in a proactive policy whose three watchwords are reeducation, higher education and vocational training of the highest quality. It also lies in substantial, sustained and judicious investment to be geared towards education, health, vocational training and employment.

Investing in young people, who account for nearly two-thirds of Africa's population, is crucial. It calls for appropriate training, smooth, well-regulated integration into the job market and the ability to take initiatives in order to create wealth, to showcase one's talents and to contribute to the continent's progress and development.

Idle African youths will hamper the continent's much-desired emergence. If the challenge of young people's employability is not addressed urgently, their idleness will be compounded, thus reinforcing their vulnerability and the risk of radicalization.

Close to 40% of unemployed people are ideal recruits for rebel movements and extremist or terrorist groups which are present throughout the continent.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Africa is losing its youths to legal and illegal migration. There is no way such a loss can be justified.

Should our young people's fate be at the bottom of the Mediterranean? Should their mobility become a hemorrhage? Certainly not! I think it is up to us to deal with this issue properly in order to make it an asset.

Thousands of young Africans try clandestinely to reach the northern shore of the Mediterranean in search of a better life, with all the risks involved. They are precious men and women and are part of our continent's human resources.

As the Leader who, at the 28th AU Summit, was put in charge of the question of migration, I intend to submit a paper focusing on the need to lay out a common African Vision on migration and the related stakes and challenges. What we need to do, above all, is to change our perception of migration and see it not as a constraint or threat, but as a positive element. Since time immemorial, has migration not been a factor of rapprochement between peoples and civilizations?

Addressing the challenge of migration requires an innovative approach that allows us to assess its causes and impacts and to consider possible solutions, above all by creating synergies between development plans and migration policies.

We must work together to develop an African Agenda on this question that

includes a common vision of the ways and means of dealing with the question of migration, both within our continent and in international forums.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A New Africa will make the most of its potential since our continent boasts tremendous assets. Morocco wants to contribute to the emergence of that New Africa.

Africa must resolutely look to the future and rely mostly on its own means.

We owe this to our peoples. We owe it to our youths. The promise of a better, more prosperous future should no longer be an empty slogan or mere wishful thinking. It is our duty to match words with action for the sake of our future generations - for the sake of a New Africa.

Thank you

Wassalamu alaikum warahmatullah wabarakatuh.