

ADDRESS BY H.E. EVARISTE NDAYISHIMIYE, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BURUNDI AND CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION, ON THE CELEBRATION OF AFRICA DAY- 25 MAY 2026

Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,

Mr. Chairman of the African Union Commission,

Mrs. Deputy-Chairperson of the African Union Commission,

Dear Commissioners,

Heads of the African Union's organs,

Ladies and gentlemen of the African Union Commission,

Dear people of Africa and those of African descent,

Dear friends of the African continent,

1. On 25 May 1963, the founding fathers of our continental unity chose hope over division, solidarity over isolation, and a shared future over narrow interest. Their vision gave rise to the Organization of African Unity, which has now become the African Union, a living symbol of our collective ambition.
2. Sixty-three years later, we can see how far we have come. Despite the challenges, Africa continues to move forward. Our continent is gradually consolidating its position on the international stage, with greater confidence and responsibility. Africa's accession to the G20 is, moreover, a historic recognition of our continent's growing importance in global governance.

It also reflects the legitimacy of Africa's aspirations for more inclusive international governance, notably through a reform of the United Nations Security Council that rectifies the historical injustice done to our continent and guarantees Africa fair and permanent representation that reflects its demographic, political and strategic weight.

3. This progress is not an end in itself. It must enable us to give greater voice to the aspirations of our people, to defend our development priorities and to demand a fairer and more representative world order. It must also strengthen our call for reforming the international financial system so that African economies can access fairer and more accessible financing that is tailored to the realities of our development. Africa is not asking for charity; it is asking for fairness, justice and a legitimate place in the decision-making mechanisms that shape the future of the world.
4. The number 63 also resonates with our Agenda 2063, a strategic vision of a prosperous, integrated and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens. Agenda 2063 is not merely an institutional roadmap; it is the living promise of an Africa that is choosing, right now, the image it wishes to present to its children of tomorrow.
5. But this celebration must also be a moment of collective awareness. Whilst we commemorate our achievements, millions of Africans continue to suffer, victims to armed conflict, terrorism, violent extremism, climate-related disasters and humanitarian crises. In many parts of our continent, entire families are living in refugee camps or camps for internally displaced persons, often deprived of the bare necessities.
6. And among them are children. Children who should be in schools. Children whose dreams should never be cut short by war, hunger or exile. Today, we must send them a message of hope and, above all, take concrete actions.

7. As I often say: “An African child denied access to education today is a part of Africa’s future that we are abandoning tomorrow. Even in refugee and internally displaced persons’ camps, education must remain as much of a priority as humanitarian aid itself”.
8. Yes, we must feed the hungry, protect the vulnerable and assist affected communities. But we must also invest in our children’s education, wherever they may be. For no nation can build a solid future on a generation deprived of knowledge.
9. My thoughts also go out to Member States facing difficult transitions, as well as to those who face the threat of terrorism on a daily basis. No country should have to face this danger alone; it undermines our institutions, brings grief to our people and jeopardizes the future of our continent.

I call for greater African solidarity, for what is currently ravaging some of our nations could tomorrow affect our entire shared region. Terrorism makes no distinction between peoples, cultures or borders; it strikes indiscriminately and demands a united, coherent and sustainable response from us. To all the families affected by these tragedies, I extend my deepest sympathy. Every African life lost is a wound borne by the whole of Africa.

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

10. African integration remains our greatest strength. That is why we must speed up the effective implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area. The success of this historic initiative will help to boost intra-African trade, create opportunities for our young people, accelerate the industrialization of our economies and consolidate our economic sovereignty.

11. But our collective success will depend above all on our ability to preserve our unity. I appeal today to all African leaders: let us continue to show greater solidarity and unity in the decisions that shape the future of our continent. Africa grows stronger when its nations speak with one voice. It is our historic responsibility to always put the interests of the continent and the well-being of our people first.
12. I would also like to pay a special tribute to the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, the Vice-Chairperson, the Commissioners, the Heads of the Union's Organs, and all the officials and staff members of our organization.
13. Thanks to your daily commitment, often quiet yet vital, the pan-African ideal continues to advance. You embody the institutional continuity of our Union and, every day, you help bring Africa closer to its aspirations to peace, integration and prosperity.
14. To all the people of Africa and of African descent, I would like to say this: Africa needs every one of its sons and daughters. Wherever you are in the world, you remain an essential part of our collective destiny.
15. And to all Africa's friends, we express our gratitude for your partnership, your solidarity and your confidence in the future of our continent.
16. On this Africa Day, let us together renew our commitment to the ideals of Pan-Africanism, to peace, to unity and to the sustainable development of our continent.
17. May the sixty-three years already behind us inspire us to continue with even greater determination on the path towards the Africa of Agenda 2063: a united, strong, prosperous, peaceful Africa that is respected throughout the world.

Long live to a United Africa!
Long live to the African Union!
Happy Africa Day to you all.