



AFRICA DAY 2020 – MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF AOMA

It was South African freedom hero and former president, the late great Nelson Mandela, who once said: “I dream of an Africa which is in peace with itself.” As the Public Protector of South African and the President of the African Ombudsman and Mediators Association (AOMA), I feel the need to wish you a happy Africa day on this great day.

As you all know, today we commemorate Africa Day in honour of the creation of the African Union’s (AU) forerunner, the Organisation of African Unity, which was founded on this day, 57 years ago. The idea at the time was to establish guidelines for and to facilitate strong relationships between independent African States.

The day has since been repurposed into a Pan African Vision of working towards “an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens, representing a dynamic force in the international arena”. As we are celebrating the day, we recognise the role that the African Union has played in making this continent a better place for all who live in it.

We must also acknowledge the contribution of the African Ombudsman towards this goal through the protection of people in each country against the violation of human rights, abuse of power, unfair decisions and maladministration.

Part of our duties as African Ombudsman is to ensure that all countries in the continent have an Ombudsman office, which will uphold the principle of a people-centred development by holding governments accountable for their actions in relation to the effectiveness and efficiency of public service delivery.

In so doing, we will gradually contribute to the AU’s Agenda 2063: The Africa we Want vision, which prioritises the repositioning of Africa as a dominant player in the global arena, with inclusive social and economic development, continental and regional integration, amongst other issues.

As the African Ombudsman, we have our work cut out. One cannot overemphasise our role in respect of the Agenda 2063 aspirations, which focus on good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law, and peace and security.

The vision for AOMA, which has now 44 member institutions, including 4 sector-specific Ombudsman, is to advance the development of the Ombudsman institution for the furtherance of good governance, the rule of law, and human rights in Africa.

We want to be a leading international Association of Ombudsman offices, practitioners and scholars dedicated to the promotion of open, accountable and people-cantered democratic governance in Africa. This corresponds perfectly with the itinerary of both Agenda 2063 of the AU and the Pan African Vision, which are

to be moved forward in order to boost Africa's economic growth and development and lead to the rapid transformation of the continent.

In Africa, we endorse the principle of an IsiZulu proverb, which says: "Umntu ng'umuntu ng'abantu". Loosely translated, it means "I am because you are". The development of our continent must be led by Africans in general without any discrimination along the lines of race, gender or social background.

Most importantly, this development must take place away from conflict and war, and with as much transparency as possible in the way that the African governments conduct themselves. These are some of the ways in which the African Ombudsman can contribute to a united Africa, alongside their fundamental commitment of restoring human rights and human dignity.

There is no Africa without its people, there is no development of Africa without the people of Africa, there is no African transformation without its people.

As we commemorate this momentous day, let us remember that a silent and invisible killer known as Covid-19 is stalking the world and taking away thousands of lives. I implore you to adhere to the safety measures endorsed by the World Health Organisation. These include social distancing, sanitising our hands regularly, wearing face masks and getting tested as soon as we show suspicious symptoms.

Happy Africa day 2020!

ADV. BUSISIWE MKHWEBANE
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