

**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY HON. SHIRLEY AYORKOR BOTCHWAY, MINISTER FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND REGIONAL INTEGRATION AT THE FLAG RAISING CEREMONY
FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE 55TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ORGANIZATION OF
AFRICAN UNITY / AFRICAN UNION**

**Colleague Honourable Ministers here present,
Your Excellency, the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps,
Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Honourable Deputy Ministers,
Colleague Honourable Members of Parliament,
Chief Directors and other officials of Ministries, Departments and
Agencies,
Service Commanders,
Our Gallant Officers on Parade,
Nii Mei, Naa Mei,
Friends from the Media,
Students of selected schools,
Distinguished Invited Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is with great pleasure and profound gratitude that I welcome you all to this Year's Flag Raising Ceremony to commemorate the 55th Anniversary of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), now the African Union (AU). At the outset, let me express my appreciation to Her Excellency the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps and Ambassador of the Republic of Zimbabwe to the Republic of Ghana, Mrs. Pavelyn Tendai Musaka, for always dutifully accepting to play her role in marking this day, each year.

2. I wish to take this opportunity to thank my colleague, the Honourable Minister of Defence, for his invaluable cooperation in making this event possible. At the same time, may I avail myself of this singular honour to thank you all for accepting the invitation to be part of this ceremony. Indeed, your presence here this morning signifies the importance you attach to this occasion.

3. It will be very remiss of me if I do not acknowledge the Commander and the contingent on parade today. Your display of discipline and coordination of action by the troops in uniform, adding to the illustriousness of this occasion is much appreciated.

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

4. Formed in 1963 to promote solidarity among African states, improve the quality of life for Africans, eradicate colonialism in all its forms and to defend the sovereignty of African countries, the Organization came into being at a significant historic moment for the continent, especially in an era when a number of our countries were still under colonial rule. Indeed, the Organization has become a symbol of the common heritage and identity of Africans in their collective quest for unity, peace, prosperity and development.

5. The declaration of 2018 by the African Union Commission as the African Anti-Corruption Year rightly echoes the theme for this year's celebration, that is; **“Winning The Fight Against Corruption, A Sustainable Path To Africa’s Transformation”** which reminds us of the need to constantly fight against this vice, and against impunity on the continent, if we are to place ourselves on a sustainable path to a prosperous and peaceful Africa.

6. In retrospect, the adoption of the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption (AUCPCC) in 2003 and the African Union Advisory Board on Corruption in 2009, reflects the existence of the relevant architecture for fighting corruption on the continent and for advising Governments on how to deal with the scourge and related offences within their domestic jurisdictions.

7. On that score, AU member states have been more than willing partners in the endeavour to fight this canker and they have taken measures at various levels to give expression to the AUCPCC, particularly through the setting up of national anti-corruption institutions - Ghana not excluded.

8. As we resolutely link the theme of this celebration to our own national priorities, we recognise and duly acknowledge Government's demonstrated effort in the setting up of the National Anti-Corruption Plan (NACAP) and the establishment of the Office of the Special Prosecutor, among numerous measures taken. These are expected to contextualize and mobilize efforts and resources in a bid to help prevent and fight corruption through the promotion of high ethics and integrity, as well as through vigorous enforcement of applicable laws.

9. Our persistence in battling corruption, which has become an impediment to socio-economic development, is paramount. Government will continue to fight that war with all the tools available to it until victory crowns our efforts.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

10. As stakeholders in the future of our continent, it is important to utilize the opportunity offered by a memorable event like this to reflect on the past and take

stock of the achievements as well as failures of the AU. It was in keeping with this persuasion that African leaders dedicated the 50th Anniversary celebration in 2013 to reminiscing over past successes and charting a path for the AU for the next fifty years, by pursuing the Pan-African vision of **“An integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena.”**

11. Accordingly, a solemn Declaration was adopted at the 21st Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the AU in 2015 by our leaders outlining the priorities for the development of the continent spanning the fifty-year period. Thus was the African Union’s Agenda 2063 born, with seven aspirations reflecting the desire of Africans for prosperity and well-being, for unity and integration, for a continent of free citizens and expanded horizons, for freedom from conflict and for improved human security.

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

12. I must admit that I am particularly encouraged by the significant strides that AU member states have made with some of the key aspirations of Agenda 2063 which, interestingly, have a strong linkage with the United Nations SDGs including those on “the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, the provision of access to justice for all and the building of effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”. We have no room for complacency here as we march gallantly on towards the brighter future we aspire to, on the wings of Agenda 2063.

13. Furthermore, we must always be reminded that the ideals and values of Agenda 2063 will only come to fruition and reflect appropriately in the lives of

the ordinary Ghanaian when we, as a nation, nurture the right environment and stimulate Government into exercising the political will needed to integrate these goals into national and regional development plans, programmes and projects.

14. It therefore goes without saying that, the launch of the flagship projects of Agenda 2063, namely, **the African Passport and the Free Movement of People, the Establishment of a Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) and the most recent establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)**, are programmes that AU member states need to ratify expeditiously to facilitate the implementation thereof, and to foster holistic integration and unity on the continent.

15. As palpable evidence of our commitment to the this cause, Ghana deposited its instrument of ratification to the CFTA at the AUC on 11th May, 2018, together with Kenya, to become the first members of the African Union to do so.

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

16. Permit me, at this point, to state that aside the laudable fundamental objectives that underscored the formation of the OAU/AU, the continental body has chalked some significant successes and has had to grapple with various obstacles and challenges since its inception. That notwithstanding, the recent institutional reforms being undertaken by the Organization represents a good step in the right direction towards re-positioning and re-equipping itself with the requisite institutional capacity and capabilities that will further assert its relevance, given the evolving economic, political, and social needs of the continent and drastically changing world of today..

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

17. At this juncture, I deem it an honour to inform you today that Ghana is actively preparing to host the next edition of the PANAFEST festival from July to August 2019. This remarkable event significantly marks the 400th Anniversary of the first landing of enslaved Africans in James Town, the capital of the English colony on the continent of North America. I wish to take this opportunity to invite all AU member states to join us in the massive commemoration of this event, which is under the theme, “**Beyond 400 Years: Reaching Across Continents into the Future**”. PANAFEST 2019 will, undoubtedly be the greatest gathering of all Africans across the continents and will seek to create in their hearts and minds, an African people who are aware of their historical and future role in the world. I, therefore, wish to avail myself of this occasion to declare duly-launched PANAFEST 2019.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

18. May I conclude by reiterating that we as Ghanaians owe it to ourselves to continue to resolutely support Government's efforts at bringing to life, the spirit behind the anti-corruption theme for our celebration this memorable day and to playing our role in collectively propelling the continent to higher heights, through the instrumentality of the African Union.

God bless the African Union!

God bless our homeland Ghana!

I thank you for your kind attention!