

U.S. President Historic Visit to the African Union



U.S. President Barack H. Obama at the African Union, July 28, 2015

U.S. President Barack Obama hails Africa's development in a historic visit to the African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia July 28, 2015: "Although we welcome you as the President of the United States of America, we also claim you as our own". With those words, H.E Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, welcomed the President Barack Hussein Obama to the African Union headquarters. His visit is the first by a sitting USA president to the African Union.

AUC Chairperson H.E Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, noted the strong and historic bond of Africa and the USA, which forged with the blood and sweat of African sons and daughters captured and forced across the Atlantic Ocean, toiling on the plantations and cities that made the United States into the great country it is. The Chairperson also warmly welcomed the Congressional delegation, recalling their bipartisan unwavering support, and the support of ordinary Americans, to the African struggle against colonialism and apartheid.

She further highlighted that this visit comes at a time when the African continent has adopted a framework for its development for the coming fifty years, Agenda 2063, the Africa we want. “Africa is a youthful continent and likely to remain so over the next few decades. By the end of this century, one in three of the world’s population will be African. Over half of its population is women. Our people therefore remain our most precious resource” she added.

In his farewell speech, following a historic trip to Kenya and Ethiopia, President Obama hailed Africa's extraordinary progress, while noting that such progress can only be sustained through continued progress and democracy for all. It was the first speech to the African Union by a sitting USA president.

“I stand before you as a proud American. I also stand before you as the son of an African” said President Obama during his address to the African Union. He summarized his personal interest in seeing Africa’s continued economic and developmental growth as it sheds a history of colonialism. Obama hailed the continent’s gains, from a plummeting HIV/AIDS infections rate to millions of Africans being lifted out of poverty, while championing the U.S. role in such gains.

President Obama also stressed the need for strong functional institutions and reforms in trade and industry to help the continent generate more jobs, boosted by its imminent population boom that could help foster employment opportunities.

Urging Africa's leaders to make their countries more attractive to foreign investment, the U.S. President also called for ending corruption, upholding democratic freedoms, supporting human rights, and observing proper mediums of power transfer, as it is the African people who can best liberate themselves from the wide spread political, social and moral vices that have scared the continent. He further urging the African Union to spear head all development agendas and lead by example.

He called on the African Union to use its authority to help make sure African leaders stick to their term limits and follow their constitutions. "Nobody should be president for life," said Obama, who leaves office in January 2017. And he also stressed that peace and security is very pertinent in Africa's progress, as it creates increased level of investment potential in the continent, pledging continuous U.S. support and collaboration in the fight against terrorism.

President Obama’s visit to the African Union headquarters marks the end of a five-day tour to Africa that included an earlier stop in Kenya where he participated in the Global Entrepreneurship Summit in Nairobi.