

**OPENING REMARKS BY H.E. DR. JAKAYA MRISHO KIKWETE, FORMER
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA AND THE AFRICA
LEADERSHIP FORUM (ALF) PATRON DURING
THE 07TH AFRICA LEADERSHIP FORUM 2023,
25 – 26 MAY, 2023, ACCRA, GHANA**

Your Excellency Nana Addo Akufo-Addo, the President of the Republic of Ghana;

Your Excellencies, colleague's Former Heads of State and Government;

Your Excellency Wamkele Mene, Secretary General of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA);

Honourable Ministers;

Distinguished Leaders from the African Business Community;

Invited Guests;

Ladies and gentlemen.

Your Excellency,

Allow me, on behalf of the former African Heads of State and Government and all participants to the Seventh African Leadership Forum, to most sincerely thank you for three things:

First, that, we thank Your Excellency and your esteemed government for the warm reception and gracious hospitality accorded to us since our arrival in this magnificent and historic city of Accra. We have been received cordially and we are being taken care off very well. We are enjoying the generous hospitality of the Ghanaian people. This is something we are used to, and we would not expect anything less.

Second, that, we thank you for agreeing Ghana to be the host of this year's African Leadership Forum, and;

Third, that, we thank you for allocating time out of your very busy schedule to come, in person, to grace this meeting. I understand you only came back last night from an important overseas trip. It means a lot to us. It demonstrates the importance you attach not only to the ideals of this Forum and the work of the AfCFTA, but also to unlock the potentials of African agriculture.

Your Excellency,

Distinguished Participants,

The African Leadership Forum was established in 2014 with the objective of bringing together the former and current African leaders to discuss and exchange ideas on pertinent African challenges and find ways of addressing them. It is a Forum where African leaders share experiences and knowledge and explore pathways to getting sustainable solutions to socio – economic development challenges facing our dear continent.

The idea of establishing the ALF was hatched by three prominent former Presidents. These are non other than His Excellency Olusegun Obasanjo, former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, His Excellency Festus Mogae, former President of the Republic of Botswana, and His Excellency Benjamin Mkapa, former President of the United Republic of Tanzania, who is now Late. They were in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in 2013, attending a symposium on “*Shared Societies and Inclusive Sustainable Development*”. The symposium was organized by the World Leadership Alliance, Club de Madrid and the Uongozi Institute – which is a leadership training institution based in Dar es Salaam.

The three leaders agreed that African perspectives need to be interrogated, analysed, understood and expressed by Africans themselves. As a result, the African Leadership Forum was established in 2014. President Benjamin William Mkapa was the Patron of the ALF and the Uongozi Institute provided its Secretariat services.

Since its inception, the African Leadership Forum has played an important role in fostering candid conversation on opportunities, challenges and solutions for Africa’s socio – economic needs and problems. The Forum has also been discussing global developments and how they impact the advancement of the African continent.

Todate, the Forum has had six meetings and has covered six broad thematic areas as follows:

- 1) *Meeting the challenges of Africa's Transformation*, held in 2014, in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania;
- 2) *Moving towards and Integrated Africa: What need to be done*, held in 2015 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania;
- 3) *Enabling African Business to Transform the Continent*, held in 2016 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania;
- 4) *Peace and Security for an Integrated, United and Sustainable Africa*, held in 2017 in Johannesburg, South Africa;
- 5) *Financing Africa's Transformation for Sustainable Development*, held in 2018 in Kigali, Rwanda;
- 6) *Promoting Good Natural Resources Management for Socio – economic Transformation in Africa*, held in 2019 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania;

This seventh edition of the African Leadership Forum under the theme of “Promoting Intra – Africa Trade to Unlock Agricultural Potential in Africa” was supposed to be held on the 29th and 30th of July 2020 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Unfortunately, it was postponed due to the passing of His Excellency Benjamin William Mkapa, former President of the United Republic of Tanzania on the 24th July 2020. For two years after the demise of the ALF patron, things stalled mainly due to the outbreak of the COVID 19 pandemic.

Your Excellencies,

Distinguished Participants,

After the easing of the COVID – 19 pandemic, work on the holding of the seventh meeting of the Forum was revived. Here we are, the seventh edition of the seventh edition of the ALF is about to be launched. I am happy to say that

this is the most attended Forum compared to all others with seven former Heads of State and Government attending both physical and virtually.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the presence of my brothers, friends and colleagues, starting with:

- 1) His Excellency Olusegun Obasanjo of the Federal Republic of Nigeria;
- 2) His Excellency Mohamed Moncef Marzouki, Former President of the Republic of Tunisia;
- 3) His Excellency Goodluck Jonathan, former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria;
- 4) His Excellency Thomas Bon Yayi, former President of the Republic of Benin;
- 5) His Excellency Ernest Bai Koroma, Former President of the Republic of Sierra Leone; and
- 6) The Right Honourable Hailemariam Desalegn, Former Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.
- 7) We also have Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, former President of the Republic of Liberia who is participating virtually in this Forum.

I would also like to express apologies on behalf of former Presidents of the Republic of Ghana His Excellency John Agyekum Kufuor and His Excellency John Dramani Mahama. They are out of the country for appointments they have to attend in person. His Excellency former President Uhuru Kenyatta of the Republic of Kenya had promised to come but unforeseeable matters cropped up at home he had to call off his visit.

Mr. President,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It would be amiss of me if did not recognize and thank His Excellency Wamkele Mene, the Secretary General of the AfCFTA for the pivotal role he personally and his esteemed organization played in making it possible for this meeting to be held here in Accra. First, we thank him for agreeing to be a co – convener of the Forum with me, and second, for agreeing the AfCFTA to work with the Uongozi Institute in organizing this Forum.

My fellow former Heads of State and Government will agree with me that the organization of a Forum of this magnitude is no easy task. But thanks to the wonderful work done by the organisers this Forum has been a big success. I extend my compliments and appreciation to the AfCFTA and the Uongozi Institute for a job very well done. I also thank all the presenters, moderators and rapporteurs for coming and agreeing to share their insights and experience in the various sessions that will take place in these two days.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

You will also agree with me that the choice of Accra to be the venue of this Seventh ALF was spot on. The theme of the Forum is on “promoting intra – African trade” which is the hallmark responsibility of the AfCFTA, whose headquarters are here in Accra, Ghana. We would not have chosen a better place to hear and discuss the progress we are making on implementing the aspiration of establishing a continental free trade area in Africa.

With the other objective of the Forum being to contribute to efforts being made by governments and people of this great continent of ours for a better future, it is quite opportune for the Forum to choose to discuss “unlocking the agricultural potential in Africa”.

Agriculture is the mainstay of the majority of the people in sub – Saharan Africa. Agriculture is the backbone of the economies of the majority of countries in sub – Saharan Africa. Agriculture accounts for a large share of the GDP of our countries and, it is a major source of foreign exchange earnings, a source of food, a source of raw materials and a major source of employment.

However, this important sector has not been able to perform optimally because of the many constraints impeding full exploitation of its potential. Therefore, for this Forum to discuss unclocking the agricultural potential of Africa it is the right thing to do.

I would like to seize this opportunity to acknowledge the efforts being made by African governments, African smallholder farmers and other stakeholders to transform African agriculture. A significant ground has been covered and a lot has been achieved. However, much more needs to be done to make agriculture play its rightful role in the growth and development of African nations and wellbeing and prosperity of the people of Africa.

So far so good but it is not good enough as evidenced by the levels of poverty in rural areas where many of our people live and the never ending reports of people who suffer from food shortages and hunger in Africa.

Reports of Africa still spending huge sums of hard earned forex importing food are not pleasant to hear. Likewise, reports that Africa is still exporting primary agricultural raw materials to the developed world and importing finished products from the raw materials we exported, etc. I am glad that, this forum is framed to discuss how we address these and other related challenges.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The success of this endeavour will require our dedicated political will and investment. That is to say, investment in our people especially smallholder farmers and our young people; investment in our organizations and institutions to ensure the favourable environment of doing business prevail; and above all, our sacrifice to invest in the long-term African agenda over the short-term domestic priorities.

The forum is also framed to acknowledge the contribution of our institutions – regional and international, governmental and non-governmental – in advancing this agenda and accelerating the process of Africa’s socio – economic transformation and ensuring we meet the people’s aspirations for prosperity.

Excellencies,

Dear Participants,

I am gratified to have in our midst experts from all fields of socio – economic development, policymakers and business people. I hope you will feel free and

open to share your experiences and knowledge. Also that, you will be forthcoming in providing recommendations and suggesting solutions. Thank you all for coming and I wish you good deliberations.

Your Excellency, Mr President,

Please allow me to assure the delegates that all deliberations will be kept in – house and the discussions, after the plenary session, will take place under the Chatham House Rules.

Before I conclude my remarks, I would like to thank all the sponsors whose contributions have made this Forum possible. I want to make special mention of the AfCFTA, NMB Bank, CRDB Bank, the Tanzania Agriculture Development Bank, NBC Bank Tanzania, ASAS, ComNet and RAHISI, DTB Tanzania, Karibu Travel, and several others.

We thank you very much for your support and generosity in ensuring this Forum becomes a success. I would also like to appreciate all of you who have shown interest to support us in the upcoming events.

Your Excellency,

Let me end here, but before I invite His Excellency Wamkele Mene, the Secretary General of AfCFTA to deliver the keynote address, please allow me to invite all of you to watch an eight minutes short video clip as a tribute to the Late Benjamin William Mkapa, former President of Tanzania and the founding Patron of the ALF. But before that, I request you all to rise and observe a moment of silence in his honour.

I thank you for your kind attention!