PAN-AFRICANISM: The Unity of Africa

**Kwame Nkrumah - 'The People Of Africa Are Crying For Unity'**

The African Union has its roots in the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). On 24 May 1963, as 32 independent African countries met in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, to find ways to unite the continent, Ghana’s then president,**Kwame Nkrumah**, gave one of the greatest speeches of his life, a speech which has since become the definitive blueprint for a strong, but so far sadly elusive, African unity. As the AU celebrates its 10th anniversary, we publish here an extract to remind us of how far Africa has come and how far it still has to go

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Our objective is African union now. There is no time to waste. We must unite now or perish. I am confident that by our concerted effort and determination, we shall lay here the foundations for a continental Union of African States. A whole continent has imposed a mandate upon us to lay the foundation of our union at this conference.* | 1. What is Nkrumah’s goal of this conference?
 |
| *Independence is only the prelude to a new and more involved struggle for the right to conduct our own economic and social affairs; to construct our society according to our aspirations.* | 1. Why is seeking independence only the beginning to a unified Africa?
 |
| *African unity is, above all, a political kingdom which can only be gained by political means. The social and economic development of Africa will come only within the political kingdom, not the other way round.* | 1. Why does political freedom have to come first, before any other progress?
 |
| *In independent Africa, we are already re-experiencing the instability and frustration which existed under colonial rule. We are fast learning that political independence is not enough to rid us of the consequences of colonial rule...*  | 1. What types of problems do you think Africa may be experiencing after colonial rule? Why?
 |
| *The resources are there. It is for us to marshal them in the active service of our people. Unless we do this by our concerted efforts, within the framework of our combined planning…the symptoms of our troubles will grow, and the troubles themselves become chronic. It will then be too late for pan-African unity to secure for us stability…* | 1. What resources is Nkrumah speaking of? Why do they require “combined planning?”
 |
| *It is said, of course, that we have no capital, no industrial skill, no communications, and no internal markets, and that we cannot even agree among ourselves how best to utilise our resources for our own social needs. Yet all stock exchanges in the world are preoccupied with Africa’s gold, diamonds, uranium, platinum, copper and iron ore…Our capital flows out in streams to irrigate the whole system of Western economy.* | 1. What problems does the world see Africa having? Why does Nkrumah mean in his last sentence?
 |
| *Experts have estimated that the Congo Basin alone can produce enough food crops to satisfy the requirements of nearly half the population of the whole world, and here we sit talking about gradualism, talking about step by step. Are you afraid to tackle the bull by the horn? For centuries, Africa has been the milk cow of the Western world. Was it not our continent that helped the Western world to build up its accumulated wealth?* | 1. Why does Nkrumah bring up the amount of food Africa is able to produce?
 |
| *We have been too busy nursing our separate states to understand fully the basic need of our union, rooted in common purpose, common planning and common endeavor. A union that ignores these fundamental necessities will be but a sham. It is only by uniting our productive capacity and the resultant production that we can amass capital. And once we start, the momentum will increase.* | 1. Why is unification so important?
 |
| *Even for other continents lacking the resources of Africa, this is the age that sees the end of human want. For us it is a simple matter of grasping with certainty our heritage by using the political might of unity. All we need to do is to develop with our united strength the enormous resources of our continent.* | 1. How can Africa “see the end of human want?”
 |
| *We meet here today not as Ghanaians, Guineans, Egyptians, Algerians, Moroccans, Malians, Liberians, Congolese or Nigerians, but as Africans. Africans united in our resolve to remain here until we have agreed on the basic principles of a new compact of unity among ourselves which guarantees for us and our future a new arrangement of continental government.* | 1. Why was it important to set aside heritage for the sake of Africa as a continent?
 |

[*http://www.newafricanmagazine.com/special-reports/other-reports/10-years-of-the-au/kwame-nkrumah-the-people-of-africa-are-crying-for-unity*](http://www.newafricanmagazine.com/special-reports/other-reports/10-years-of-the-au/kwame-nkrumah-the-people-of-africa-are-crying-for-unity)

**Comprehension Check:**

1. Why did Nkrumah believe that unification was the only way for Africa to survive post-colonial rule?
2. What issues could keep Africa from uniting?
3. Do you think Africa is united today? Why or why not?