

NFP Debate on Africa Day Celebrations

Hon Speaker

Hon Premier

Hon Members

Distinguished Guests

I would to entitle this speech **‘Saying goodbye to the Dark Continent’**.

'Africa my beginning, Africa my end. I was born here and I will die here'

Africa you bear my hopes and fears.

Poverty, crime and AIDS are words which plague Mother Africa's name.

These demons bring me shame.

While people try to make Africa better, a few let the hardship overpower them;

Shame on them.

They give up hope and go about their ways.

Even though there's hope on the horizon, be that as it may; they continue to destroy what little Mother Africa has.

Africa is no longer what she was;

'Mother Africa is weeping'.

Yet a new dawn may be creeping;

Mother Africa and her children are beautiful, they know their place in nature.

Even though hardship may corrupt good nature;

In the name of ALL that is good, I hope Africa will rise one day

and we will stop the suffering before she frays.

'Africa my beginning, Africa my end. I was born here and I will die here'

This is a poem by Mthoko Mpofana and he talks about some of the challenges facing our continent. He also talks about his hopes and dreams for our future and this is what we as the National Freedom Party believes should be the focus of today's celebrations: the future.

Like millions of South Africans The National Freedom Party is outraged and dismayed about the acts of violence and intimidation of fellow Africans by some members of our community in recent weeks, which is what makes today's discussion so important and relevant.

The image of Africa projected by European writers in history was that of a place of chaos and underdevelopment. Africa was known as the "Dark Continent," This gave an image of Africa as a land of hopelessness, where its people were uncivilized and unintelligent. Some still carry this view and in light of the recent troubles and tragedies all over the continent, Africa is once more in the spotlight.

Honorable members, the time has come for us to write our own narrative about whom and what we are. It is time for Africa to rise and stand on her own two feet; it is time to say goodbye to the Dark Continent. For how can we continue to see ourselves as a dark continent when here in South Africa, there are diamonds and gold beneath our feet? How can we call

ourselves the Dark Continent when oil runs deep in Nigeria, the copper belt in Zambia or the Uranium found in Namibia?

Yet despite our wealth in mineral resources, our country and the continent at large are facing deep structural inequalities, poverty and unemployment which may all be contributing factors to the attacks we are witnessing. It is therefore necessary to call on all governments and leaders on the continent to speed up the pace of transformation and economic development. It is for this reason that the NFP supports the African Unions theme of “Women Empowerment and Development towards Agenda 2063”.

Women are the cornerstone of African economic development in Africa. Independent studies show that women make up 70 % of the agricultural labour force and produce about 90 % of all food. However, women earn the lowest wages. The two reasons for the lack of women participation in the formal economy are education and health. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development shows that the state of women’s health in Africa, especially women giving birth; is the worse than in other region in the world. Only 50.9% of all births are attended to by skilled medical personnel.

Although significant strides are being made to empower women throughout the continent, much more work remains to be done if we are to achieve vision 2063. As the NFP we believe the starting point in empowering women is through education. Millions of girls in our country and in the continent face challenges which prevent them from getting educated. Issues such as teen pregnancies, child trafficking and prostitution,

child headed households and communities who still believe that a girls place is in the kitchen and therefore she does not need an education. These are just some of the challenges and going forward, governments on the African continent need to take concrete steps to put an end to these once and for all. We all need to remember that when you educate a girl; you educate the future.

However, these changes are not going to happen on their own and we cannot continue to rely on other countries to save us. Africa needs to liberate herself. This requires us to be honest with each other when we are wrong and to encourage each other when right. We need to speak out against corrupt governments who continue to hurt their people instead of helping them. But more importantly, we need to act.

Many foreign nationals in our country today have come here because they seek better opportunities which they may not have in their native countries. It is therefore inhumane of us to turn them away or to attack them. As Africans, we need to start internalising the view that we cannot succeed if our fellow African countries do not succeed. However, while we should welcome those who seek relief in our country, we must also make sure that our laws are respected. Government must make sure that everyone who crosses our borders has permission to be here so that we do not become a lawless country where people can do as they wish.

Honourable Members, as we celebrate Africa today, we must remember that much more work needs to be done. HIV/AIDS continues to ravish our people, so we need to keep working. While millions continue to live below the poverty line, we need to keep working. While there are criminal attacks on children and the elderly, we need to keep working and while our people suffer because of corruption and greedy governments, we need to keep working. As I conclude, I wish to remind you of the simple words of ancient North African writer, Terence, who said “I am a human, and therefore nothing human is alien to me”.

Presented by: Hon VR Mlotshwa