Soweto Declaration

From

The 5th Africa Unity for Renaissance Conference

May 25, 2015

I. Preamble

The 5th Africa Unity for Renaissance Conference was held in South Africa from 22-25 May, 2015 in Soweto. The decision to hold the conference in Soweto, as well as to name this declaration after it, is symbolic of the ‘shift in the geography of reason’ that is required to bring about positive change given the realities of persistent inequitable spatial, economic and social relations in Africa. It is also befitting to remember Soweto’s sacrifice and rich history of resistance against apartheid. Delegates that hailed from across the continent, as well as from the rest of the world joined together with the South African
participants in articulating what is required for the creation of a united, liberated, renaissance and prosperous Africa.

Each African Unity for Renaissance Conference has sought to capture and bring together some of the insightful articulations and deliberations made over three days into declarations, which have previously been called the Tshwane Declarations, and to disseminate the declaration to reach key thought and policy leaders. The Third Tshwane Declaration was delivered to all the delegates present at the OAU/AU Jubilee celebration in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The organising partners from South Africa have worked consistently and with full collaboration in order to run these series of African Unity for Renaissance Conferences (AUR) with the clear objective of generating Pan-African education for the creation of substantive change to re-shape with unity and renaissance the free African future. They have now been invited to continue this work by formally organising themselves, as permanent network members and long-term collaborators, representing a diverse vitality of perspectives, under the name of the Africa Unity for Renaissance Network (AURNET). This galvanisation of these series of conferences into the Africa Unity for Renaissance Network (AURNET) is necessitated by the sincerity and commitment required to not only articulate but also to create the attainable reality of a strong and united Africa, where Africans are enabled to make real the futures that they wish to see for themselves, through their own immense strength, wisdom, collaboration, shared vision, project and sustainable solidarity. A true united African agency is still waiting to be made free from all kinds of external influences.

The 5th Africa Unity for Renaissance Conference is also held at the time of the Diamond Jubilee of the Bandung Conference that created the non-alignment and third world route for stable and peaceful world order free from
the domination of superpowers that created the cold war. The world is still not secure, stable, predictable, peaceful, just, fair and sustainable. There is no end of history or clash of civilisations. What is missing is a real new history and civilisation to create a fully humanity anchored world. It is time to seize the moment in order to contribute by re-rooting humanity into the rich values of Africa to create a new history, culture and civilisation for peaceful co-existence for all in the world. The work that the AURNET will promote in the years to come with the African Unity for Renaissance Conference can provide the platform, space and road to produce through research the type of knowledge that will enhance a better understanding of how we can create a better future indeed for Africa and the rest of the world.

The 5th Africa Unity for Renaissance Conference in Soweto was symbolic of this, as it worked against the stigmatisation of the area as one that is supposedly ‘high risk’ and sought to send the message that knowledge of and for Africa must be generated by undertaking reverse learning from the grassroots level from the townships. It is important to recognise that in order for emancipatory engagements to be relevant and effective, they genuinely need to originate from the observations, articulations, and realities of ordinary people and their lived experiences by acknowledging the improvement of their livelihood as powerful sources of resilience, innovation and inclusivity.

‘Africa 2015 and Beyond: Engaging with Agenda 2063’ provided the overriding concern to undertake deep reflections for the 5th African Unity for Renaissance Conference. Delegates had the critical opportunity to reimagine alternatives, to reject and unlearn the artificial and disempowering divisions imposed by both subtle and overt forms of colonially designed fragmentations that Africa has not removed yet to express its free and united agency. The strength of the African identity to be made by all is one that recognises and celebrates unity through diversity and complexity. The 5th African Unity for Renaissance Conference thus sounded out a powerful call for the
acknowledgment of the unique ability of Africans to create new humanity, new history and new civilisation to correct all the remaining colonial mistakes and internal spatial divisions by re-imagining and creating more equitable and emancipatory realities, from Soweto, to the rest of Africa, and, indeed, the world. It is Africa’s time to re-launch a vast Pan-African education from Soweto to every part of the Africana world.

II. Some Insights that Emerged from the 5th AUR

1. Massive epistemicides of African knowledge have perpetuated negative narratives about Africa, which must be overcome through the acknowledgement and promotion of the positive contributions of Africa as the origin of humanity, civilisation, philosophy, science, mathematics, astronomy, education, arts and culture, and religion.

2. Africa as the cradle of humanity, with its rich histories, philosophies and resistances, is uniquely positioned to create new, more inclusive and equitable humanities and realities. This knowledge must be reclaimed for the promotion of the dignity of all.

3. The African values of Ubuntu, Ma ’at, Ethiopianism and Afrikology as well as the movements of Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance, can play a critical role in anchoring African liberation, development and prosperity on the known African deep values, principles, humanity and civilisation to realise the full wellbeing of all the people without any exception. Africa has rich resources which all the ordinary people have the full right to access and utilise for the wellbeing of all.

4. There is an urgent need for the decolonisation and restructuring of entire educational systems, in order to realise the promises and
potentials of African unity to change the present-day lack of African-centred knowledge systems.

5. African people have resisted all forms of destructions and oppressions, including colonialism, cultural genocides, enslavements and imperialisms and these resistances must contribute to all Africans to unite in practice. There should be unity in rejecting the destructive experience by also uniting in recognising and building on the positive contributions, knowledge, histories, philosophies and sciences that Africans have made to be the first to create humans to all other inventions.

6. While Africa has held a series of pan-African Congresses, has founded the OAU in 1963 and the AU in 2002, has had powerful and inspiring African liberation movements, and has won many battles against imperialist powers, full economic and political independence and freedom still remain a difficult challenge.

7. The need for African unity has been declared since 1963 formally by the meetings and protocols of the heads of states and the ministers; but there has not been any systematic implementation of at least even in a few areas, such as for example an African trade and investment area, to produce positive examples. Unity is a process and on-going. Substantive commitment requires that action be taken to implement unity. The people in Africa must be involved in making African unity. The people have to make the African unity history.

8. The AUR 5th Conference delegates said that 2063 for African Unity is too late. Africa must have united yesterday. If not yesterday, Africa must unite now. We need the African Agenda for realising African agency
and unity for renaissance **Now, Now and Now!** If Africa does not unite now, how can we expect unity as late as 2063?

9. Embracing African agency means rejecting a passive attitude to matters that affect negatively Africa and its people. The whole educational system should be guided by Pan-Africanism. The re-education of all by appreciating the African contribution to knowledge and building on this to create new knowledge is part of the work to unite Africa now and not tomorrow.

10. While the AU, through its Agenda 2063, is attempting to envision a strong and prosperous Africa, African Unity cannot remain an ethereal and elusive promise for the future. This urgent struggle was begun many years ago and we have a duty to see this completed by changing the current functionalist perspective to unity with the substantive approach by recognising that colonialism did not come only for some Africans. It came for all opening for all Africans the opportunity to unite to remove it and other ills for good. Remain fragmented, African vulnerability continues; united Africa attains full freedom and independence for good.

11. Africa is vast and powerful, with a rich abundance of resources. In this context, if efforts were intensified for the effective economic, social, political, and cultural cooperation between African countries, Africa would be enabled to create the massive structural transformation by removing for good of inequalities, unemployment and poverty and building the wellbeing of both people and nature...
12. Africa has the ability to be a powerful innovator for emancipation and this agency can be realised through united efforts. Pan-Africanism remains an essential aspect for reimagining and creating the Africa that we all want to see built now and in 2063!

### III. Actions and Recommendations

1. The Africa Union must convince all the members to make the Month of May an African Liberation Education Month and recognise May 25, as Africa Liberation Day. African liberation day needs to be legislated as a day for all the people of Africa to join in re-education to build Pan-African African unity and to promote full African agency.

2. Models for the establishment of centres for education, where future teachers are trained to impart positive knowledge of Pan-Africanism to all children living in different African countries, as well as the Diaspora, need to be developed and implemented.

3. Where incidents of xenophobia and Afrophobia occur, these acts demonstrate a failure of Pan-Africanism, both in terms of creating unity and a shared appreciation for one another’s humanity, as well as in terms of not having addressed continued poverty, inequality, lack of employment, being unemployable, desperation and lives lived without dignity. This should provide the clarion call to spread pan-African education across Africa, with this task of re-education being primary and urgent. All avenues for this task, including on-line platforms and others, should be explored, developed and implemented in order to address this problem.
4. Realising a prosperous, yet non-exploitative Africa, through effective policy and practice, requires the increased communication and collaboration between African academics, governments, businesses, and civil society. Work that encourages these connections must be strengthened in order to create vital and united social, political, and cultural African economies, in which all sectors of the population are included.

5. Civil service is service. Public servants must serve not try to be masters. Corruption must be eliminated. Within African leadership positions, public service and accountability to the people, needs to be actively leveraged and engaged. In order to contribute positively to this work, and to hold leadership performance to account in terms of its service to the people, integrity, and honesty, the Africa Unity for Renaissance Network (AURNET) will create an African Public Service Index (APSI). Efforts to create public service training, actively promoting the values and benefits of Pan-Africanist alliances and highlighting the importance of creating independence from external sources of funding, will also be undertaken.

6. Inter-African integration is still very limited with African trade and investment suffering from collaborative distance. There is an urgent need to redress this gap by promoting the comprehensive strengthening of inter-African economic, educational, social, cultural and labour related trade, exchange and investment. Further collaborations in the development of technology and infrastructure are also urgently needed.

7. Africa is in a position to pioneer social entrepreneurship for prosperity and equality and to redefine development by building on the rich values and traditions that Africans have created. Africa does not need to catch
up to anyone, but must rather create wellbeing by and through the deep-rooting of African knowledge which can serve as an example to the rest of the world.

8. Both African leaders and the people must learn to walk the talk; they must attract the funding for African development not through loans, debt, or donor hand-outs, but rather, through contributions from their own resources. The reality of collaborative contributions for mutual development, as well as the rejection of external donorship and funding must become a reality now, not in 2063.

9. Africa must fully invest in the capabilities and talents of her children in the Diaspora. African leaders and institutions must enhance Africa’s capacity to find African funds for building brain-gain and should establish African retuning talent infrastructure and funding.

10. African unity is both necessary and sufficient to bring full political and economic independence. The AU/NEPAD must be encouraged to be active in the African Unity for Renaissance conferences to share together how all stakeholders can join contribute to transform Africa structurally and not just with issuing protocols that often remain unimplemented.

11. There is a need to re-imagine Africa as an innovator and time to use Pan-Africanism to embed a total knowledge, invention, innovation, learning and competence building culture (KLIC). No pan-African unity means, no African agency, if there is no unity and agency, there will be no African renaissance for Africans to own their own economy today and even in 2063! Science, Technology, Engineering and mathematics (STEM) should become like food and water for all the youth to be
exposed and educated. All ministries of Science and Technology in Africa should begin to implement a strong African Research Area.

12. The Africa Unity for Renaissance that started in South African can be used as an educational platform to create and inspire new pan-African thought leaders through the establishment of research programmes, academies, and partnership networks that include civil society, alumni, governments, industries, and universities. Such activities are integral to the creation of the Africa we wish to see. Engagement with agenda 2063 must continue to make African unity an everyday process not a prolonged projection after another 50 years.

This Soweto Declaration was compiled by Prof. Mammo Muchie based on the submission of the recommendations from the participants of the Africa Unity for Renaissance 5th Conference. This Soweto declaration will be sent to the Africa Union Meeting in June to be held in South Africa. It will also be published and shared to reach as many Africans as possible.