

Ethiopia, The Proud Host Of Two Key Continental Events!!

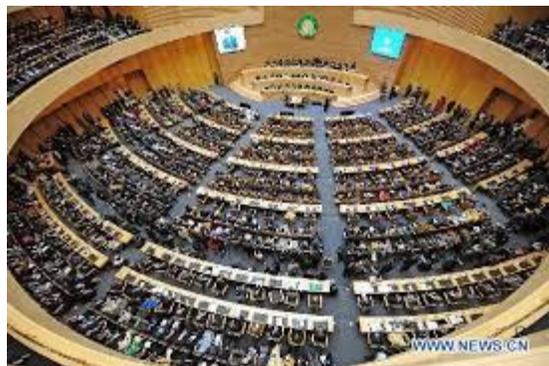
Tsehaye Debalkew, Washington D.C. March 1, 2013

Ethiopia which has been entrusted with a huge task of the current Chairmanship of the African Union through the person of the Premier, Haile Mariam Desalegn is poised to deliver its continental responsibility come May 2013, by championing the celebration of the Fiftieth Golden Jubilee of the Anniversary of the emblematic Founding of the OAU, now affectionately referred to as the African Union /AU/ in tune with its history of pioneering Africa, in the struggle for its total liberation and emancipation from the political, economic and cultural bondage it has been cursed with for Millennia on end.



It is anticipated that during the upcoming celebratory event African leaders shall chart out a new vision and dedicate an entirely new mission that would resonate with the fast moving twenty first century challenges that our continent is destined to confront.

One of the new approaches that the continent is set to improvise is a new vision as pertains to trade. For Africa in order to achieve its novice vision just to cite but an intriguing challenge, it behooves for the continent to move away from simply trading in raw and natural materials, to exporting finished goods and products. Just to put things in perspective as they currently stand, it is appropriate to gauge Africa's trade among its member countries and its relationship with the rest of the world.



Currently according to a recent study made in the field of trade, Africa's contribution to international trade is negligible, estimated at only 3 percent of the total, even as it trades in raw materials. Trade among African countries is also low, estimated at between 10 and 12 percent according to the same study.

Addressing the need for a shift to measure up to the requisite 21st century technological advancement and the sequel of events attached with it particularly as pertains trade and commerce, Dr Dlamini Zuma the current AU Chairperson in one of her remarks uttered in a meeting in Beijing recently emphasized the need to enhance infrastructure, develop human resources, promote tourism, improve skills among the youth, encourage investment, modernize agriculture and industry and attain peace, among others.

The attainment of the AU vision, the Chairperson added, will also come about as a result of concerted efforts by all Africans and all institutions of the African Union, working towards the same agenda. It is this appropriate agendum of trade where the second responsibility that Ethiopia was entrusted to



shoulder, that of the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act/ AGOA/ comes succinctly into play. It was during a convocation convened in Washington D.C. that a high level African Ministers Group unanimously elected Ethiopia to Chair the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act /AGOA Forum for two years, during the annual session of the Forum held last June. The confab which rightly carried the theme "Enhancing Africa's Infrastructure for Trade" has been closely tied with that of the African Union that places due emphasis on the crucial role that infrastructure plays to enhance trade and investment between the sub-Saharan region and the US.

In this regard it should be reiterated that it is Ethiopia's firm and sacrosanct belief that the provision of affordable physical and economic infrastructure, including transportation, communications and energy



will make a formidable contribution to economic growth, job creation, social welfare, urbanization and the over-all expansion of the industrial sector and the modernization of agriculture. It should be noted that there is a new US Strategy towards Sub-Saharan Africa that stipulates that AGOA will continue to be a key part of the strategic US-Africa Partnership. It is quite fitting here to draw a special attention to the Obama Administration's promise to intensify Doing Business in Africa Campaign.

This conforms to the wider strategy that Africa has increasingly become a continent of opportunity in wide variety of areas including infrastructure entitling it no doubt to be the ideal continent of the 21st century. It remains for the AU to see to it that Africa not only celebrates the birth date of its continental body which is indisputably very crucial but also seizes upon the time to make good of the dual opportunities that call for a collective and united voice in designing a new approach as to how it conducts business i.e. trade and investment that is congruent and in synch with the twenty first century.

As for Ethiopia it has been presented and endowed with such a rare occasion of hosting the much anticipated 2013 AGOA Forum and the AU 50th Golden Jubilee in Addis Ababa concomitantly. The dual event is expected to attract thousands of participants and delegates to be drawn from the United States of America, the African continent and the rest of the world. It is believed that the event will go down in history as an auspicious opportunity to showcase to the world Ethiopia's time tested tradition of public diplomacy, hospitality and culture of welcoming guests and making them feel at home.

No doubt the folkloric fanfare, dance and music representing the over eighty nations, nationalities and peoples and the much touted and avowed Ethiopian Cuisine and the world renowned Ethiopian coffee ceremony will be a source of attraction to the guests. Ethiopia on the occasion should stand aloft at one and the same time benefitting from the conclave.

