

A D D R E S S

by

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on

Africa Parliamentary Knowledge Network

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Excellency Mr. Mohamed Safwat El Sherif,
Excellencies, Heads and Members of Councils and Parliamentary Delegations,
Excellencies Ministers,
Excellencies United Nations Representatives,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me honour and happiness to meet today in this august African and International Assembly in the Egyptian People's Assembly in Egyptian soil, this Assembly that has always devoted itself to be present among its brothers and sisters in Africa and the international community.

Firstly, it gives me pleasure to convey to your Excellencies greetings of H.E. President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak who spares no effort in participating in every promising African event. Today, and with your representation, the activities of your Conference are launched in which numerous parties concerned with parliamentary action have been involved in its preparation.

This Conference is held as a project elaborated by the United Nations in collaboration with the Inter-Parliamentary Union for the establishment of the Africa Parliamentary Knowledge Network.

This network was created between the European parliaments as well as among certain states in the USA twenty years ago. In fact, efforts are exerted to replicate this model in African parliaments in order to establish an institutional mechanism for exchanging knowledge and experiences among them. Moreover, to support training and build capacities of members and personnel in parliaments at the level of the African continent, so that this network may become an arena for creativity. Through this network, modern technology and communication will be consecrated to enhance parliamentary action. This network will not only contribute to the exchange of ideas between parliaments, but it will simultaneously foster the ties of friendship and solidarity among the peoples of the Continent who share the same challenges, interests and objectives in their battle for development and it will deepen democratic practice in this part of the world.

I would like to express thanks and appreciation, foremost to the United Nations and its representatives, the Pan African Parliament currently headed by Ms. Mongella, the Global Center for Information and Communication Technologies in Parliament, in which I feel great pride for having been one of its founders in its first stage.

Distinguished participants,

The invitation to establish this network was launched in March 2007 in Abuja, Nigeria, during which this matter was discussed by twelve parliamentary delegations as well as the challenges and obstacles facing its inception: This was undertaken in order to ensure its true effectiveness and services for parliamentary issues in the African continent, the origin of mankind.

At the top of these challenges are the diversity of languages from one country to another, the disparity in technical and technological levels in different parliaments: Nonetheless, the daunting challenge is finding and rehabilitating human resources in our parliaments in terms of members, personnel and assistants who can understand this day and age and to utilize them in the service of the issues confronting their countries through the promotion of parliamentary efficiency. In view of the natural outcome of that conference, the participants agreed on the necessity to hold another conference to deliberate these issues on the one hand and to build on its results by adopting and implementing this initiative.

We are all honoured by the inauguration of this Conference which represents an effective assembly among world parliaments with a view to increase the exchange of experiences and information and equally to draw from the experiences of other countries who share the same challenges and difficulties. In fact; it could be possible to reduce and rationalize expenditures not by minimizing tasks and services only but also by the participation of member countries in supporting joint efforts and software development for sound cooperation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

African parliaments have convened and participated in studies and questionnaires to upgrade the informatics infrastructure therein and to examine shortcomings and determine strong points. This culminated in the preparation of the first world report on information technology in parliament issued by the United Nations last March to become a document for all parliaments worldwide in a bid to enhance their performance and linkage with the world and its successive and cumulative expertise on the other hand. I exhort all participants to spare time for reading this document, to benefit from its content and study the possibility of improving it in the future.

Our Conference that we are launching today envisages objectives with clear milestones. We will start with more detailed discussion on the regulations of the African sustainability episode in working sessions which I invite all participants especially heads of delegations to attend and actively contribute to supporting informatics among our parliaments. Meanwhile, your Conference is organizing workshops on legislation and informatics to be attended by a number of parliamentarians and directors of information centers in our assemblies. It is contended that rational utilization of technology and databases for legislation and furnishing our parliaments and their members with accurate purposeful information that forcefully supports the putting in place of this knowledge network and enhances its effectiveness and vigor. The Egyptian Parliament had come to recognize the importance of knowledge in shaping the thought of members of parliament and keeping them informed of updates to be of help while assuming parliamentary responsibilities. It established an internet-enabled information center at both its houses as part of sustained efforts for support and development. The Egyptian People's Assembly will keep up its bid to reinforce African parliamentary cooperation in knowledge-sharing via the Africa Parliamentary Knowledge Network under establishment.

Our Distinguished Guests,

Our work today does not merely rest with technical cooperation. It is rather regarded as a first-grade collective political action aimed to deepen democratic practice. No democracy could be viable in the absence of knowledge and awareness. It is through this process that constructive dialogue among different cultures in the continent can be heralded to strengthen population structures. In this fast-changing world, knowledge plays a crucial role as far as development was concerned. Underdeveloped countries suffering ignorance are construed as incongruous.

This Network is increasingly significant when it comes to entrenching bonds of African unity, instilling the spirit of solidarity and upholding cultural specificity of peoples to stand as steadfast versus challenges.

How Africa, while waging its development battle to get rid of backwardness and poverty inflicted on it by imperialism, occupation and apartheid, is badly in need to be armed with knowledge, science and shared information among the sons of the same continent to avail itself of different solutions for development problems.

Today we are meeting at this august forum, with the hope the African continent, faced by multiple onerous problems and its sons haunted by ghosts of fear, illnesses and wars, would upgrade and elevate its parliamentary performance.

Parliamentarians all over the world are destined to honestly echo the voices of their natives and their sufferings in an attempt to repel these threats and to proceed with forward looking steps towards development and progress.

May your Conference be a true call for dedicated parliamentary action and fruitful cooperation among the sons of a formidable continent who fear no challenge and are never conquered by hardships. Let our discussions be sincere and resourceful to the best interest of our countries and the renaissance of our generations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We still have a long way to go and difficulties are manifold. However, the beam of hope will always be enlivened and the torch of progress will never be dimmed.

I invoke Allah to grant this Conference success, forging a sincere message addressed from us, the parliamentarians, to our countries and peoples.

Thank you and May Allah's peace, mercy and blessings be upon you.