



**2011 Namibian Independence Public Lecture
In Memory of
President Marien Ngouabi
Assassinated 17 March 1977**

**Remarks by the Hon. Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab,
MP, Speaker of the National Assembly and
President of the Inter Parliamentary Union**

Check Against Delivery

Director of Ceremony,
Fellow Participants,
Sisters and Brothers,
Friends and the Media,

I thank PACON for the worthy undertaking in memory of one of Africa's celebrated revolutionaries "Commander Marien Ngouabi, an African Hero"!

I treasure the opportunity to participate in this noteworthy memorial and celebration of the respected militant of the African Revolution who died, because he was right for justice and committed to serve the people of our Continent, without fear, favour or prevarication.

Two things preoccupy my thinking and I share my thoughts briefly with you all: the Pan-Africanist dedication and ideological resilience in the face of betrayal and internationalist conviction that reaction and sacrifice will not stop the triumph of worthy and just causes in the world, even when some authentic heroes of the people do not reach the finish line.

I am reinforced as I share the floor here with my sister and comrade Her Excellency Mary T. Avemeka and that well-known Pan-Africanist and versatile African intellectual Bankie F. Bankie. My respects to both of you.

Let me now back-track briefly to contextualize my remarks. The intermediate years between Ghana's independence in 1957 and the subsequent outbreak of a consensus on the need to create a continental structure represented a Tower of Babel type of confusion among the pioneers of what became the OAU in 1963. I sadly missed its inauguration due to the vagaries of African travel at that time.

I speak of African regional blocks of those days. Two among them the Cassablanca Block and the Brazzaville Block consisted of the militants. While the Monrovia Block was deemed as of a moderate variety. Then there was the Malagazy tendency which straddle the tow ideologically. The goal was common to all but the details of the roadmap was the problem.

Anyway, the OAU was inaugurated in Addis Ababa on 25 May 1963. A couple of weeks earlier, I had reached the USA as United Nations Fellow to start my university life. That's a chapter by itself in terms of my own Pan-Africanist and indeed revolutionary awakening.

Just on the very of the OAU's birth in 1963, the first bloody military coup had taken place in Togo. Thus the nauseating culture of military coup-making through the barrel of a gun had since then become a common nature of African politics. The 21st century is, therefore, no exception as far as that heinous abomination is concerned in Africa.

Fourteen years later, the sad news of the assassination of Comrade Leader "Commander Marien Ngouabi's" death reached us at the United Nations in New York. By then I was fully established as SWAPO's Representative at the UN. The African Group at the UN held a memorial service.

Friendly countries and African Diaspora participated in eulogizing a fallen revolutionary and Pan-Africanist. I was there.

PACON, think about that and let's hear your scream of outrage and indignation for the ears of the AU, PAP, NEPAD, and all other stakeholders of Pan-Africanism! Africa wants democracy, not guns and deaths of innocent people. We want peace and development, not destruction and self-enrichment.

I now proceed to cite one of the OAU's memorable Summits in Dakar, Senegal in 1992, three years after Namibia's independence. During its sitting there, the OAU was dramatized anew with the assassination of Algeria's President by Islamist fanatics. Other relevant things, good, bad and ugly, have also come to characterize that otherwise very productive Summit. I want to show here a pathology and double standards of African leaders and indeed communicators as well on this destructive menace.

What I want to share here is a fait accompli state of mind of the African people generally and also of those who like to be thought of as Pan-Africanists and members of the African intelligentsia in respect of military coups I speak of.

In 1993, within less than a year after that Dakar OAU Summit, two military coups took place in Africa, first one in Burundi and the second one in Nigeria. The difference was, one coup took place in a big and important country and the other a small and weak country. One was strongly condemned but the other not. That's the double standards and Africa's shame. Both military and political coups continue unabated in Africa. So, nobody knows what's in store and which other countries are next on the list. That's an open question. As Namibia's Foreign Minister, I condemned both. I was chastised for that. But Africa and the world heard me.

This is PACON hosted event for which I commend you all and urge you to remain pro-active as a Pan-Africanist's platform. That said, I am, however, disappointed by African youth, students and the rest who consider yourselves as the protagonists of Africa's today's vision and its future greatness. You seem uncertain and you are quiet!

I will proceed to point out areas where shortcomings are glaring and left unattended. I would like to hear and read about your persistent demonstration of courage of your convictions to be the voice of genuine Pan-Africanists and committed African youth.

At the right time and another occasion, we will go into depth of some of the things I have just mentioned here. Let me now move on to the Summit where the OAU was transformed into the African Union. That was in 2002 in Durban, South Africa. At the core of what I am driving at in this case is the Question of the African Diaspora. What is it to Africa and to you?

In Durban, a group of African Foreign Ministers read the Diaspora's collective mind and heard the shouting, "what about us, we Africans living here, there and elsewhere in the world? We too

are Africans, count us in as our leaders are writing a new chapter of unity, integration and transformation of Africa!” That’s the story I want to share.

A group of us gathered there took note of that and responded by taking up the matter further. The result was the inclusion formally of the African Diaspora as the Sixth Region of the African Union (AU) and its structures. Is PAFCON aware of this? If not, why not and if yes, what have you been doing about this resolution in terms of strategizing and engaging with those Africans?

That’s the question which requires an answer! Not to make me feel good but for you to take up your charge and run with it. Or are you waiting for Marcus Garvey, Kwame Nkrumah or Harriet Tubman to come from their graves to show you the way? While you are at it, think also about an animal called NEPAD. Find out what it is doing for African unity, economic reconstruction and prosperity of us all.

After the assassination of our revered hero and martyr Patrice Lumumba, there is only one Congo left still walking tall and living out with confidence the true spirit of Pan-Africanism and heroism: The Republic of Congo. My dear sister Excellency, we are all Congolese today and always. Namibia is your home.

Now this in conclusion. Comrade Commander (1938-1977) was progressive Pan-Africanist and renowned socialist. He and I share a birth year and belong to a generation born during the heat of WWII and its ghastly consequences.

Under his competent leadership, the Republic of Congo enjoyed warm and comradely relations with Soviet Union, China, Cuba and other peace-loving and justice-upholding countries in Africa and the world over, as well as leaders of National Liberation Movements.

The MPLA of Angola, SWAPO of Namibia, among others, were invited to open offices in Brazzaville and given moral, political and material assistance and sustained support.

In the case of SWAPO, we were invited to open radio broadcasting facilities to reach out from there into Namibia and also to French-speaking parts of the Continent. Ambassador Eddie Amkongo, now the chief of our Public Service Commission, inaugurated the facility and his successors kept it going until our independence in 1990.

The Commander was humble in his disposition but a tough and courageous Marxist. Also, his regular engagement with the masses was that of a people’s leader who regularly interacted with them on policy and social issues of common concern.

He founded the Congolese Labour Party in 1969, a year after he took office. We shall remember him for all of the above. But we will always think of his immortal words which are: “When your country is dirty and lacks durable peace, you can only restore its cleanliness and its unity by washing it with your blood.”

I am pleased to join you all here this evening. I am done.
Thank you.