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Educate African kids for the 21st century, building resilient education systems for increased access to inclusive, lifelong quality, and relevant learning in Africa: Speech at Africa Day Indaba Australasia and the Pacific 2024

Hadera Abera ADMASSU

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Rugare Mugumbate: Thank you very much to our three speakers so far, Dr Dzator, Matshepo Molala, as well as Noël Zihabamwe. Thank you so much for your presentations. My role now is to introduce our guests, then allow them to address us. Our first guest is His Excellency Ambassador Hadera Abera, who represents Addis Ababa, Ethiopia here in Australia. Ambassador Hadera is here on behalf of the African Ambassadors Group in Canberra. So, we want to thank you, His Excellency, for coming, but also to thank the Dean of the African Group in Canberra, His Excellency Tapera Mhishi, for supporting us and nominating you to address us today, welcome.

I also wish to introduce our guest, Professor Patricia Davidson, who is the Vice Chancellor and President of the University of Wollongong. Today, she is accompanied by the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities. That is the faculty where I belong. I can see Professor Peter Kelly in the meeting. Thank you for joining us. As well as the Head of Discipline for Social Work, Associate Professor Mim Fox, I welcome, Mim.

I also want to acknowledge academics and professional staff and students from the University of Wollongong in attendance today. Welcome, professors, and welcome those from the University of Wollongong. At this moment, I want to hand over to you, His Excellency Ambassador Hadera Abera, to address the meeting. Thank you and over to you.

Hadera Abera: Thank you, everyone. Good afternoon.

Rugare Mugumbate: Good afternoon.

Hadera Abera: Can you hear me?

Rugare Mugumbate: Yes.

Hadera Abera: Thank you very much. I would rather make my remarks in writing because I am representing the African Ambassadors Group here in Canberra. Once again, thank you very much. I would like to address members of the African diaspora community in Australia and the Pacific, ladies and gentlemen. Let me also begin today by acknowledging the Ngannawal and Ngambri country and traditional custodians of the land where we, the African Ambassadors Group in Canberra, live and work, and recognise any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ethnicity and the region. I would like also to acknowledge and welcome other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be attending today's event and pay my respects to their elders' past, present, and emerging. Let me extend my greetings to you all in my native national language, Amharic (Greetings in Amharic).

On behalf of the African Ambassadors Group in Canberra, I am deeply honoured to join you today in the African Day Indaba 2024 celebrations. I am also honoured to partake on this auspicious African Day Indaba 2024 as the envoy of one of the oldest independent African country, Ethiopia. At the same time, I am privileged as a diplomatic agent of one of the founders and host government to the headquarters of the organisation of the African Union, now the African Union, where we have gathered today to mark its foundation, its formation 61 years ago. On this occasion, allow me to thank Professor Patricia Davidson, Vice Chancellor, and President of the University of Wollongong for being with us today. Professor, your attendance today symbolises your deeper commitment to fostering the cooperation between the peoples of Africa, Australia, and the Pacific region.

I would like also to thank the African Australian Advocacy Centre, the African Studies Association of Australia and the Pacific, the Australian Research Network to African Academics, the Centre for African Research, Engagement, and Partnership, and the University of Wollongong for hosting this symbolic event. On behalf of the African Ambassadors Group in Canberra, I would like to thank the organisers of the African Day Indaba 2024 for extending the invitation. I would like to particularly thank Dr Rugare Mugumbate for the tireless effort he has made to ensure the representation of the African Ambassadors Group in this event. Thank you, Doctor for inviting the guests.

Ladies and gentlemen, Africa is the youngest continent in terms of its demographic structure, with a population of 1.4 billion and 3.4 trillion combined equals. Africa, owing to its demographic dividend and untapped resources, undoubtedly holds the key to global wealth creation and prosperity. Over the next three decades, Africa is expected to experience the fastest growth in population forecast to reach 2.5 billion. The increase in the working age population will be higher than any of the continents, with a projected net income of 740,000,000 people by 2050. During this period, the combined economies of Sub-Saharan Africa in particular, West Africa, East Africa, Central Africa, and Southern Africa is expected to reach 29 trillion.

However, Africa can only pave the way to inclusive and global competitive growth by investing in its human potential by making education as the key growth driver for its success. Recognising the critical role, education plays to unlock the full potential of our continent and the significant challenges Africa is facing in achieving the sustainable development goals on education, the 37th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Head of States, and governments of the African Union that took place in Addis Ababa in February this year, decided education as its key priority for the year 2024. Indeed, the two-day meeting was held under the African Union's theme of the year, which says to educate African kids for the 21st century, building resilient education systems for increased access to inclusive, lifelong quality, and relevant learning in Africa.

My guest, ladies and gentlemen, this is the very theme under which this event is taking place today. And on behalf of the African Ambassadors Group in Canberra, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to the host, organisers, presenters, and participants of the African Day Indaba 2024 for putting the African Union's key

continental priority of the year to the forefront. We applaud the efforts you are making to use this annual event as an important vehicle not only to raise awareness about Africa and its rich history, diverse culture, and society in Australia and the Pacific region, but we also commend your continued commitment in helping shape our destiny through your valuable contributions geared towards addressing the challenge Africa is facing in the education sector.

We greatly value the contribution of the growing African diaspora community, living, studying, and working in Australia and the Pacific in many important ways to the economic development as well as the social, cultural, and political diverse of their host region. We also recognise and appreciate your valuable support to your respective home countries and the African continent in general. We are grateful to the educators, advocacy groups, and friendship associations, members of the African academic community, organisations for your efforts in promoting cooperation and mutual understanding between the peoples of Africa, Australia, and the Pacific region. The Australian African University's network, a group of leading universities in Australia and Africa, connecting our academics and researchers through an institutional partnership, is also serving as an important forum in addressing research and development challenges facing the continents, enhancing the engagement and partnership between the universities in the two regions, and addressing common challenges, training exchanges, programs to produce leaders, both in the public and private sphere, is critical to meaningful collaboration between Africa and Australia.

Finally, I would like to thank the Australian government for its commitment to assist Africa in addressing its development challenges in terms of providing, training, and capacity building through the prestigious Australian Awards program. We thank also its generous financial assistance, the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research, for undertaking impactful agricultural research projects in Africa, which is actually changing the lives of millions of African farmers in the agriculture, forestry, livestock, crop, climate change, soil, land and water management systems.

As I conclude, my opening remarks once again allow me, on behalf of the African Ambassadors Group in Canberra, to thank the organisers, presenters, and past fans of this event for your collective commitment to help fulfil the aspirations and developmental goals of the African Union. I would like to wish you a very successful presentation and discussion. The African Ambassadors Group in Canberra looks forward to receiving the final published document from the discussions today, which will be there to enhance the discourse on education and development in the African continent. God bless Africa, long live the friendship between the peoples of Africa, Australia, and the region. I thank you very much.

Rugare Mugumbate: Thank you very much, Ambassador for your remarks and for wishing us a happy Africa Day.

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