



Draft Statement by State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Nemanja Stevanovic on the occasion of celebration of Africa Day.

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear friends,

When the Organization of African Unity was founded on 25 May 1963, it was clear that this day would become a historic one, and it is therefore no wonder that it is celebrated as Africa Day throughout the African continent.

On that occasion, we have gathered here in Belgrade today, shortly before the big holiday, to mark and celebrate this milestone date.

Serbia, as a friend of Africa, could have done nothing less than to include May 25 in its calendar of major dates. Therefore, the Government of Serbia adopted a decision to officially mark the Day of friendship with the peoples of Africa on that date.

Serbian relations with African countries have lasted for decades and they rest on solid foundations of community, understanding, support, cooperation and solidarity.

Serbia, as the largest Successor State to Yugoslavia and to its policy towards Africa, feels proud of our glorious past and shared victories. I am happy that I can say that my country was on the right side of history when the peoples of Africa were fighting against colonial powers, since it lent its support, in all ways possible – politically, diplomatically, morally, but also materially and militarily – to the just struggle of African people for freedom, and I am happier still that this support has not been forgotten in Africa.

I myself have visited some African countries as a Special Envoy of Aleksandar Vucic, President of the Republic of Serbia. Warm welcome, constructive talks and successful and implemented agreements are proof that relations between Africa and Serbia do not only have a wonderful past, but also a promising future.

Apart from friendly countries – and indeed, Serbia has only friends in Africa – exceptional cooperation has also been developed with the African Union. A witness to the special nature of our relations is that the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia is the only one among the parliaments in Europe that has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Pan-African Parliament, but also that the Memorandum of Understanding on Economic Cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the African Union Commission has been in force since 27 June 2015. The heads of African continent organizations – Her Excellency Mrs. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, the then Chairperson of the African Union Commission, His Excellency Mr Erastus Mwencha, former Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission and His Excellency Mr. Roger Nkodo Dang, President of the Pan-African Parliament – have already visited Belgrade, and we would be delighted to welcome other African leaders and officials in Serbia, as well as businessmen, sportsmen, artists, scientists, students...

The Republic of Serbia supports close cooperation between the members of the African Union and believes that African problems need to be solved in Africa. We are always pleased to see that our friends make peace and we will, as far as possible, make our contribution to it.

On the other hand, it worries us to see any misunderstandings or conflicts between our friends and we therefore support all initiatives by the United Nations, the African Union and its members and regional economic communities launched with a view to establishing peace and ensuring sustainable development on the continent.

We will continue to take part in peacekeeping missions in Africa, wishing that their numbers be reduced, as well as in humanitarian and development activities, and we will continue to provide university scholarships for African students in Serbia, who, as shown, are an important binding factor in the relations between our countries and peoples.

We are looking forward to furthering our cooperation and strengthening our friendship.

Long live Serbia, long live Africa!