



## Concept Note and Call for Abstracts

### Ties That Bind South Africa and Senegal: From Goree Island to Robben Island

9 -12 July 2023 University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

“No one has a right to erase my culture, because a community without culture is a people without human beings” Leopold Sedar Senghor

“I dream of the realisation of the unity of Africa, whereby its leaders combine in their efforts to solve the problems of this Continent” Nelson Rholihlahla Mandela

#### Introduction

Many founding leaders of a free Africa as well as its intellectuals have always maintained that it will be a unified Africa that will bring progress and peace in the continent. Mwalimu Julius Nyerere pointed out that without unity, Africa has no future for with unity African people can never be marginalised and humiliated. Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana also dreamt of African unity and even went further to suggest political union based on defence, foreign affairs and diplomacy as well as a common citizenship for a liberated African Continent. For decades now, Africans have been examining the possibilities of engendering and embracing the concept of African Renaissance. The illustrious intellectual, Cheikh Anta Diop, was the first to coin the concept, *African Renaissance* referring to the dream of ensuring that the African people shall overcome challenges that Africa faces as she achieves cultural, scientific and economic renewal. Decades after Diop, the then South African deputy president Thabo Mbeki, (later president of the Republic) perceived the concept *African Renaissance* as the right of Africans to determine their future. Thabo Mbeki spoke of unity, determination, identity and development, highlighting the dream of a developed Africa. Other African intellectuals such as Kwame Nkrumah, John Mbiti and Eskia Mphahlele have underscored the need to create a new African Personality as Africans create a developed Africa as a new society.



The envisaged *Ties that Bind* Conference will expatiate on these themes as role-players examine various trajectories that are critical to Africa's growth and development. The meeting of two countries in Senegal and South Africa moves us closer to the achievement of the Pan-African ideal that leaders had underscored before.

Senegal shares several incidents of historical significance with South Africa, including ways in which the colonisers ravaged these lands. Portugal, The Netherlands, England and France were all colonial masters at different times in Senegal. South Africa's colonial masters also switched chairs between the English and the Dutch. Over the years, both countries have been struggling trying to move towards self-sufficiency. For example, Senegal has been struggling to break dependence on imported rice. There have also been several initiatives to enhance justice in society and this includes the introduction of a National Strategy for Gender Equality and Equity (SNEEG). Political parties by law today, are aware of the need to include women in the running of the country. As in South Africa, Senegal has been striving to reduce poverty and improve the lives of its citizens through millennium goals. The illustrious Goree cast is one area that not only attracts tourists but is also critical in combating poverty.

The role of Senegal on South Africa's history has been immense for it was in Dakar where the Institute for Democratic Alternatives in South Africa (IDASA) and the African National Congress (ANC) met in 1987 at what was to be termed the Dakar Dialogue or Dakar Initiative. Held between the 9<sup>th</sup> and the 12<sup>th</sup> of July, the dialogues discussed ways of bringing solutions to apartheid in South Africa and attempt to forge national unity. In the presence of President Abdou Diouf, the new South Africa was discussed. It is now a historical fact that the Dakar Dialogue paved the way to the political settlement that ultimately ended Apartheid in 1994. This should serve as an inspiration to the whole continent of Africa in seeking solutions to her problems, including conflicts, insecurity and civil strife.



South Africa has similar problems. The country battles with governance challenges, corruption, state capture, poverty, food insecurity, youth challenges and joblessness. These are problems shared by many African states and which make the envisioned African Renaissance distant and development almost impossible. Furthermore, like several African states, South Africa has natural resources like minerals, but the majority of its people are hungry. Many people are landless and graduates struggle to get jobs or create them. Senegal, where mineral and oil resources have been found recently, should learn from South Africa's lesson.

The *Ties That Bind* Conference seeks to convene a meeting that would show the commonalities between Senegal and South Africa, but more importantly, to conceptualise an intervention or strategy that would move beyond the ordinary and bring forth a platform that demonstrates how patriots can bring solutions to a ravaged Africa that still upholds the Pan-African aspirations.

This conference's main theme is to look at the Pan-African ideal of a unified Africa posing the question, "Which elements are pivotal in enriching Africa as it enhances the Africans' dream in redeeming themselves from ills faced by the Continent?" Some of the sub-themes include but are not limited to the following:

- African languages as languages of development
- Governance in Africa
- Peace and conflict in Africa
- Poverty alleviation in Africa
- Research in Africa and technological innovation
- African Renaissance and African advancement



- African unity in the changing global order
- State corruption
- Africa's debt crisis
- Education and social justice
- The legacy of colonisation
- Public service and sustainability and millennium development goals
- Pan Africanism – the lost dream?
- Security and intelligence in Africa
- Health and insecurity
- Common citizenship and liberation
- Culture and interdisciplinary arts
- African cities and mass housing
- New technologies for rural and urban Africa
- Climate justice and saving the planet
- Slavery and enslavement
- Oppression and resistance
- Democracy and governance
- Management of natural resources
- African Union
- Decolonization of minds and plural voices
- Food systems and food security
- Biodiversity

### **Motivation**

There have been several initiatives in Africa before meant to redeem Africa from a myriad of challenges and these include the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) before and much later, the African Union (AU).



The OAU is said to have failed to bring peace, prosperity, security and stability in Africa. In this context, it is apposite to mention the role played by former presidents of Senegal (Abdoulaye Wade), South Africa (Thabo Mbeki) and Nigeria (Olusegun Obasanjo) in the establishment of the African Union (AU). Today, more voices are stating that the AU still has to explore more ways to achieve African unity, economic development, good governance, as well as ending kleptocracies destroying Africa. Without the critical input of intellectuals, the struggles of these institutions will come to nought. Thus, organising such conferences will present unique opportunities for academics to present papers that would support the idea of bringing African solutions to African challenges. The Ties That Bind is an initiative of three partners: Cheikh Anta Diop University, Gaston Berger University (both in Senegal), as well as the University of South Africa. At the University of South Africa, the project leader is the Thabo Mbeki African School of Public and International Affairs (TM-School).

The conference is motivated by the following factors, among others:

- To make recommendations of which would be beneficial to Africa;
- To create a think tank that would meaningfully support Africa's development;
- To form a platform of intellectuals who would underscore the role of Africa as a global player amongst nations;
- Enhancing the idea of Africa as a self-sufficient continent;
- To collect solution-driven ideas into a book that is pragmatic and bring forth practical examples for Africa's development;
- To recommend to African governments on how to deal with graft and governance challenges;
- To collectively explore solutions that would liberate communities;



## The Conference

The main languages used at the conference would be English and French. We should also note the following:

- The conference will be held in South Africa with the logistics coordinated mainly by Unisa/Thabo Mbeki African School of Public and International Affairs team;
- The conference dates will be 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> July 2023. These dates have been deliberately chosen as a remembrance of the historic Dakar Talks;
- The TM-School will work closely with the UCAD and UGB to finalise the programme;
- The first day of the conference will mainly be a cultural tour of important places in and around Pretoria;
- Selected papers will be published in a book that would be a great scholarly resource for academics, students and the general public.

## Submission Guidelines

The Scientific Committee team invites papers to be presented at this inaugural international conference. The selected papers will be published in 2024 in one or two volumes of book/s. The inclusion and selection will be based on being solution driven. The call for abstracts will require prospective presenters to submit abstracts/proposals of no more than 500 words in English and French. The abstracts/proposals should:

- Include a descriptive, clear title;
- Present main questions addressed, and these should be clear;
- Explain the methodology that would be executed;
- Present innovative recommendations;

Additionally, the presenters' short biographies should be sent with the abstracts.



The abstracts should be sent to Ms Ndiambani Nesengani no later than 23 June 2023. Her email address is: [nesennp@unisa.ac.za](mailto:nesennp@unisa.ac.za)

### Important dates

- Abstracts should reach the organisers by **23 June 2023**
- Presentations will be delivered in-person between the **9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> July 2023**
- Papers will be published in a peer-reviewed volume or two volumes in **2024**.

### Conclusion

Few conferences are set up to entrench meaningful difference in society. Intellectuals from the three institutions in the organising committees will certainly plan a credible conference that will reflect critical thinking. Whilst we promote the development of theory and support of previous studies, this conference is more concerned with the true liberation of the continent and to explore ways of transforming the epistemologies to suit an Africa that will be seen as an equal competitor in a rapidly changing world. Africa needs real solutions in improving her economy, feeding her people, teaching her people and empowering all the various states. African intellectuals should not be afraid to step into uncharted waters as they rummage for solutions.

Whilst looking at the past intellectuals' notions of a new Africa, the conference will focus much on presentations that seek to transform the future. The *Ties That Bind*, is a Pan-African notion of forging unity among African states as we symbolically look at Senegal and South Africa in this case. The Goree Island and Robben Island in Senegal and South Africa respectively represent the resilience of Africans against slavery and imprisonment. All African states share histories, cultures, languages and epistemologies. Yet in this commonality there is also diversity that enriches the continent. The conference will highlight these and it will be a conference with a difference.



*Une conférence différente!*

*A conference with a difference!*