**Institutionalizing Pan-Africanism:**

**Adwa Pan-African University (APAU)**

**Concept Paper**

**Introduction**

At a conference held in Adwa at the end of February 2016, in conjunction with the 120th anniversary of the victory, a Coordinating Committee has publicly announced a plan to establish a Pan-African University in Adwa. The symbolic and historical significance of Adwa, particularly in the context of the African World, are taken into consideration in making the announcement.

In 1896, eleven years after the Berlin Conference, the Ethiopian army defeated the invading the Italian forces at the Battle of Adwa. It was a decisive battle because it aborted Italy’s ambition to establish a colonial foothold in Ethiopia. The victory at the Battle of Adwa set the stage for the beginning of the end of colonialism in Africa.

Adwa, therefore, is significant because it disturbed the colonial order in the world. Colonial subjects interpreted Adwa as a call to resist and defeat colonialism and racial oppressions throughout the world. With Adwa, they have a permanent symbol and a constant reminder that colonialism was wrong and it ought to be defeated. No system is just as long as it treats human beings as objects and fodders to exploitative and profitable economic systems. Citizenship is a right that cannot be denied and that should be exercised if at all freedom is a universal right of peoples and communities.

Adwa, to many, was not simply an Ethiopian victory, but an African victory as well. The 1884/85 Berlin Conference was convened to divide up the entire continent of Africa and assign colonial territories to European powers. The Europeans allocated the Horn of Africa to Italy. Italy’s military push in Ethiopia is a part of the European colonial design in Africa. Adwa inspired resistance and anti-colonial movements in the African world.

In 1963, the first step was taken to institute continental Pan-Africanism by founding the Organization of African Unity (OAU). At its 50th anniversary, the Organization was strengthened by transforming itself into the African Union (AU) in 2002. AU has crafted Agenda 2063 and, at present, efforts are being exerted to put into practice. As another step to continue the institutionalization of Pan-Africanism, Ethiopian citizens, in 2015, took the initiative to establish a university in Adwa for the primary purpose of advancing Pan-African causes. Establishing a Pan-African institution of higher learning is viewed as a way of implementing Agenda 2063.

**Adwa Pan-African University (APAU)** commits itself to address and advance Pan-African issues in line with Agenda 2063 of the African Union and the Africa Decade Program of the United Nations. With the establishment of **APAU**, Adwa will become a major hub and center of excellence for Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance.

Fifty-five years ago, at the founding summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963, Emperor Haile Selassie I had proposed the founding of an African University where the continent’s youth and future leaders would be nurtured together at one site in Africa. His dream was not realized until AU has begun to open Pan-African Universities in five regions of the continent. Adwa Pan-African University is intended to compliment the AU’s Universities. While the AU Pan-African Universities are established on the basis of equity and geography, **APAU** is going to be a standalone Universitywith Pan-African center of excellence. As Addis Ababa is the political capital of the AU, Adwa will become the center of historical knowledge and archives about the African World.

**Pan-Africanism** was the rallying ideology for resistance and liberation in the African World in the 20th century. According to W.E.B. Dubois, Pan-Africa will seek to preserve its own past history, and write the present, erasing from its literature the lies and distortions about Black folks, which have disgraced the last centuries of European and American literature. Now, it will be the ideology for Africa’s renaissance and development and inspire Africa’s vibrant youth to strive forward and realize both objectives. Africa’s youth should chart the trajectory for Africa’s development in the coming 50 years within the framework of the AU’s Agenda 2063. In Dubois words, Pan-Africa seeks to make Africans modern, intelligent and responsible men and women of vision and character.

**Historical Background**

Africa’s modern history is a history of colonialism and the resistance to it. Broadly defined, colonialism is a system of human and natural resources exploitations in the form of slavery and settler or non-settler colonialism. In Africa, slavery lasted for more than 400 years. Millions of able-bodied African men and women were deported from their homelands. Those who survived the Middle Passage were forced to work for free in the cotton, sugarcane, rice and tobacco plantations of the Americas and the Caribbean.

In what is labeled the Triangular Trade, enslaved Africans were taken to the Americas, across the Atlantic Ocean to labor for free on the plantations. The products were sent to Europe where they were turned into processed goods in which some of the finished products were shipped to Africa. While Europeans gained more and more capital, Africa lost more and more of its youthful population to the plantations of the Americas. While Europe has developed as the result of the unequal trade, Africa became underdeveloped, as Walter Rodney eloquently put it.

The Triangular Trade forced millions of Africa’s most vigorous youth to be deported to the Americas, not to mention those who perished in the Atlantic Ocean on what is known as the Middle Passage. In due course, the deported Africans rebelled and in the case of Haiti, slavery was crushed and Jean-Jacques Dessalines formed a new Black Republic in 1804. The Maroons freed themselves from slavery and succeeded to carve free territories on the mountains of Jamaica in the Caribbean. In the forests of Brazil, the self-emancipated Africans established a self-governing territories known as Quilombos.

There were also several rebellions and resistance by enslaved Africans in the United States. One good example was the 1831 rebellion of the enslaved in Virginia led by Nat Turner. Harriet Tubman and her legendary role to lead enslaved Africans to freedom in what was called the “Underground Railroad,” in the United States, exemplify the resistance to enslavement by African Americans.

Enslavement was followed by another form of colonialism in which Africans were transformed into colonial subjects laboring for minimal or no wages in colonized territories and economies. The 1884/85 Berlin Conference that inaugurated the so-called Scramble for Africa set the rules for carving up the continent among European colonizers. No sooner was the agreement reached than the victory at the Battle of Adwa sealed its fate and heralded the beginning of the end of colonialism.

Colonialism disrupted historical continuity and cultural integrity. It disrupted the natural process of state formation. It has contributed to economic dependency. Further, African arts and crafts lost their contexts when they were removed from their cultural spaces and placed in European museums. Literary texts perpetuated European colonial hegemony and to date we are encountering neocolonial discourses.

At the turn of the 20th century, Diaspora and African Americans, such as the West Indian Sylvester Williams and the African American W.E.B. Dubois convened congresses to proclaim “Africa for the Africans” by leading Pan-African movements and organizations. African leaders, such as Kwame Nkrumah, JomoKenyatta and NnamdiAzikiwe brought the notion of Pan-Africanism home to Africa. Liberators, such as Frantz Fanon, Amilcar Cabral, Nelson Mandela and SamoraMachel led the struggle to liberate the continent from the scourge of colonialism. Leaders, such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Rosa Parks and Fannie Lou Hammer led the Civil Rights Movement or Black Liberation Movement to expand the liberties of African Americans in the US.

**Rationale**

The Battle of Adwa is well documented and its literature can be found in almost all the major libraries of the world. Institutions of higher learning, and in some cases, high schools have incorporated the Battle and its outcome in their curricula. And yet at the very site of the battlefield, in Adwa, there are no battlefield markers, museums, or monuments. Historically, while Adwa signifies resistance and freedom to the people of Africa, Adwa remains unmarked and undeveloped. The historic victory appears to have more significance outside that inside the country. It is therefore critical to capture the dynamics and meanings of the victory at Adwa for posterity and for the generations to come. Hence, there was a widespread call and a succeeding unanimous approval, locally and internationally, for the establishment of **APAU**.

Adwa is the spark for the global Pan-African Movement. Adwa imparts can do-ness and affirms the possible. It is undoubtedly a source of inspiration for anti-colonial struggles. This key symbol of resistance and freedom deserves a permanent institution to document and narrate the Battle. It is therefore necessary to establish an institution that is capable of perpetuating the victory and its Pan-African implications for generations. It is in this context that the need for the establishment of **APAU** was announced and measures for its implementation were adopted.

**APAU**, which is the first of its kind, strives to immortalize the victory at the 1896 Battle of Adwa. The lessons from the preparation to the Battle, the coming together of virtually all Ethiopians in defense of their country and ultimately their victory remain historic and educational. The lessons are the basis for the establishment of a Pan-African institution of higher learning. Successfully repulsing the colonial aggressor imparts lessons valuable to all freedom lovers in the world.

Adwa is an inspiration for those who were engaged in the drive to tackle challenges faced by countries and peoples whose desire is to develop their societies.**APAU’s** educational mission is of great value in building an institution to educate future leaders and nation builders.

**Vision**

**APAU** strives to create a knowledgeable African society fully conscious of its common history and culture, a society willing to defend and advance its interests, a society that persistently strive to make a united Africa a reality, and a society at peace with itself and the rest of the world.

**Mission**

**APAU** will focus initially on Humanities, Social Sciences and Informational Sciences and Technology.

**APAU** will collect, document, and archive Africa’s liberation history. Africa’s architects and heroes of resistance and liberation will be remembered and their writings and deeds will be studied in details. It will work closely with its sister institutions, such as Nkrumah, Senghor and Mandela Institutes.

**APAU** will be the venue to educate, conduct research, deliberate and elaborate on Africa’s renaissance and development. The University will also host research fellows and invite distinguished personalities to give lectures to students or researchers recruited from all over Africa and the World.

**APAU** will join those at the forefront of the global struggle against all forms of exploitation, racism and discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerances.

**APAU** provides an academic environment for the discourse of commonality and solidarity among the people of Africa.

**General Objectives**

**APAU** will further open a state-of-the-art conference center and museum to display and narrate the glorious 1896 Battle of Adwa, as well as other valiant liberation movements of the larger African World. In addition to the preservation of the sites of the Battle of Adwa, it will cooperate with the Leningrad Museum, which has a rich collection on the eventful Battle. It will also seek collaboration with international museums across the globe. The University will host visiting exhibitions and actively engage in the repatriation of historical artifacts from European Museums. The Adwa section of the Leningrad Museum is mentioned because it serves as a testimony to the considerable support Russia gave to Ethiopia then.

**APAU** will be built by soliciting the contributions of all stakeholders: the African Union and all its member states, African leaders and statespersons, high level academics and intellectuals, financiers and bankers, and most of all, visionaries who work towards the realization of such ideals.

By establishing **APAU,** we are acting to bring the future we want, that is, to bring Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance, in the parlance of Agenda 2063.

**Specific Objectives**

To conduct research on Pan-African issues in order to encourage regional, continental and global cooperation and interactions among the people of Africa,

To create academic platforms for the systematic study and advancement of Pan-African Unity.

To challenge and undo false interpretations and narrations regarding the African past.

To create and sustain active interactions among the African youth.

To dig, document, narrate and publish the detailed history of enslavement and colonialism.

To raise African interests in international and other fora.

To establish a library with a collection primarily on resistance and liberation together with museums which collect and exhibit the artifacts of liberation struggles and

To identify, investigate and suggest solutions to economic and political challenges of Africa.

**Plan of Action and Accomplishments**

**The Committee**convened townhouse-styleseries of meetings and national conferences over the last two years to discuss and approve the concept paper for the establishment of Adwa Pan-African University. The concept paper was warmly accepted and constructive suggestions were made to it.

**The Committee** will work with the local and regional officials to ensure the transfer of 150 hectares of land to the Coordinating Committee.

**The Committee** has identified academic programs, crafted the University’s architectural master designs and secured 150 hectares of urban land from the Regional Government of Tigray and the Municipality of Adwa.

T**he Committee** has undertaken various public relations activities through private and publicmedia outlets. It had also presented a paper at a conference at Cornell University in April 2017.

**The Committee** will convene an international conference on April 23 and 24, 2018 in Adwa in order to designate a Board of Directors as well as to discuss the academic program, master design, archives and documentation and funding issues.

Prepared by the Coordinating Committee

April 17, 2018