

## Reflections on the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Congo's Independence

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Independence Day is important to this generation. We were born free—free from slavery under the Belgians. Earlier, our lives were limited. We could not speak freely or do what we wanted to do. Our prospects were limited.

Independence is like a project. You know where you are, but you want human rights, freedom of expression—to be free. Our ancestors saw that project and pursued it. The project of independence was not a project of one person but of a whole nation.

So now independence is not just a day to wave palm branches, but a day for us to continue our project for freedom. Independence Day is a day for us as individuals to reflect on our lives. I'm 48 years old so my life has been lived in independence and freedom. But it is also a day for each of us as individuals to take stock of our own lives. If we had a personal project to get education, did we succeed? And what have we done to help the people around us? What have we done to help our nation?

We received independence, but we must be careful not to misuse our freedom. Making poor choices can affect other people and limit our freedoms. Independence doesn't mean isolation, It doesn't mean that I no longer need relationships with Belgians, South Africans, or even my neighbors. Independence is not isolation, but allows us to work together for the good of all.