

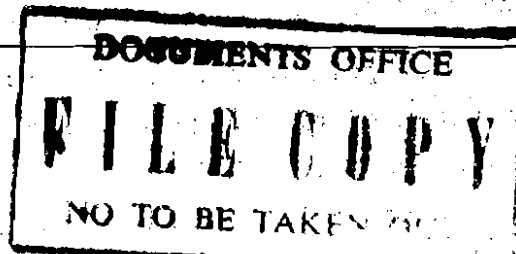
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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA
Seventh session
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Item 5 of the agenda



STATEMENT MADE BY LIJ ENDALKACHEW MAKONNEN

LEADER OF THE ETHIOPIAN DELEGATION

TO THE SEVENTH SESSION OF THE
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished delegates,

Allow me to associate my delegation with the other delegations of this Seventh Session in congratulating you, Mr. Chairman, and the other officers of the Conference for your election to high and responsible office. We wish you and your colleagues the best of luck and want to assure you of our full co-operation in the accomplishment of the common task.

This Seventh session of the Economic Commission for Africa has an importance and significance all of its own.

It is being held in what is surely the time for positive action, not only for the Commission as such but also and perhaps more so for the continent as a whole.

By far the greater part of the African continent has during the past decade managed to rid itself of political servitude, and despite pockets of obstinate resistance here and there, we can confidently say that Freedom has definitely triumphed on our continent.

The exploitation and domination of former times have today been replaced by the concepts of partnership and interdependence.

A new and promising era has begun for our continent - an era of unlimited possibilities of development and prosperity through our own effort and also through equal partnership with the rest of the world.

Our political position and influence in the world today has been greatly enhanced by our growing numbers in the Councils of Nations, and here I wish to pause awhile to associate my delegation with other delegations here present in welcoming with joy the sister nations of Malawi and Zambia that have gained their independence and have joined the Commission since the Sixth session last year.

These great achievements in the sphere of political independence have to be sustained and strengthened by economic self-sufficiency and progress.

If we are to be worthy of these achievements, if we are to maintain this position of political influence in the world and if we desire to be in a position to aid our less fortunate brethren in the remaining colonial territories of Africa, to gain the freedom that we have gained for ourselves, we need to obtain the strength that only economic progress can give to us.

We have to translate into real wealth and power the great natural potential that we possess and we have to mobilize our resources in such a way as will enable our countries to bring to their peoples the blessings of science and technology in this age of unequalled human progress.

This is the great challenge facing the independent African States today, and the task of the Economic Commission for Africa must be to assist African States to meet this challenge.

The Economic Commission for Africa has now been in existence for six years, and within this period we have seen it move, slowly perhaps but decidedly from the purely study and research stage to the present stage of implementation.

This is a time when we become increasingly aware of what the Commission can do and of what it can mean to the development of each one of us and of our continent as a whole.

A review of the activities of the Commission since the last annual session gives one the confident feeling that the Commission is definitely beginning to get things done, and the Executive Secretary and his staff deserve our thanks and congratulations for this positive and promising turn of events.

We have witnessed with satisfaction the establishment of the two important institutions that will assist our countries in their development and economic co-operation. I refer to the African Development Bank and the African Institute for Development and Planning.

The President, Vice Presidents and Board Members of the Development Bank have already been elected.

We are grateful to the Government of the Sudan for making Mr. Mahmoud Beheiry available to serve with the Bank.

Mr. Mahmoud Beheiry is an outstanding economist and administrator and has held high posts in his country including that of Minister of Finance in his country's Government. We are confident that he brings to his new task the knowledge and experience gained in the service of his own people.

It is hardly necessary for me to emphasize the importance of having such outstanding personalities in the Commission and in the other African institutions. I realize full well the difficulty for our countries to spare such men for African service when there is so much to do and so few to do it home. But I believe that such sacrifice on our part is both necessary and worthwhile; since the African institutions are created for our individual and common good, and they can never render the full and effective service that we expect of them, unless they are manned by African leadership of the highest calibre.

It is no good talking about Africanization unless we are prepared to spare the best of our countrymen for service with African institutions.

I hope therefore that we shall always be ready to give the best when these institutions call upon us to make the necessary sacrifice.

We have, Mr. Chairman, also been happy to see the Institute for Development and Planning already taking the first step in calling together the

Dakar Conference of the African Planners. This has been a welcome initiative which enabled our planning officers to exchange ideas and experience.

A report on the activities of the Institute will be discussed under item six of our agenda and I shall therefore reserve the comments and suggestions of my delegation for that occasion. It only suffices for me to say here that my delegation attaches very great importance to the service that the Institute can render to our countries both in respect of our individual development and in that of co-ordination of development plans.

It is not my intention, Mr. Chairman, to go into detailed discussion of the many items of the agenda that are of interest to my delegation.

This interest is common to us all, and I am sure that other delegations will have, in any case, raised one or other of the points that I have in mind, before we conclude the business of this session. I should like in this connexion to congratulate the out-going Chairman, the leader of the Liberian delegation, for his comprehensive report which has spared us the necessity of going into detail by his excellent presentation of the problems we have to face.

If I may be allowed to do so, I would like to give a brief review of the activities of the Economic Commission for Africa as I have seen them performed during the period since the Commission's last session in ~~Addis Ababa~~, and in the light of the momentous events that have taken place since then.

Three important economic conferences highly relevant to our work in this Commission have taken place since we met in Addis Ababa last year. These are, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development held in Geneva last June, and the First and Second sessions of the Economic Commission of the Organization of African Unity held respectively in Niamey and Cairo.

The Economic Commission for Africa was present at all three of these meetings, and I must say that its presence was of immense value to African countries represented at the said meetings.

This effort of the Economic Commission for Africa to keep up with world and African events is both right and commendable. We live in a world that is constantly on the move, and the Commission will obviously be ineffective and out-paced if it does not keep up with these changes in order to guide and influence them to Africa's greater advantage.

The importance to Africa and to the developing world of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development has already been fully recognized. Those of us who had the privilege of participating at its historic deliberations can say with justified pride that we have helped open a new chapter in world trade and economic relations - a chapter which is in keeping with the fact and spirit of the new age in which we live, and one which will in the long run ensure a world more happy and secure.

It is gratifying to note that the United Nations has already endorsed the resolutions and recommendations of the Geneva Conference and has established the new Trade and Development Organization as an organ of the General Assembly.

This gives to the new organization the high status and standing that it must possess if it is to play an important and historical role in the world trade and economic relations of our times.

I would, with your permission, Mr. Chairman, like to suggest that this Seventh session of our Commission should seize the opportunity of the welcome presence in our midst of the Under Secretary of the United Nations, Mr. Philippe De Seynes, to convey to the Secretary-General U Thant our appreciation and gratitude for his personal contribution to the UN effort in calling the Geneva Conference on Trade and Development.

Such a message will not only be a fitting tribute to the United Nations and its Secretary-General but would also testify to the importance that we in this Commission attach to the Geneva Conference and to the work of the permanent machinery that it has brought into being.

As the organization specially established by the United Nations to promote African economic development, the Economic Commission for Africa

has a particular responsibility to work closely with the new trade and development organization and we are happy in this connexion to recall the action initiated by the Economic and Social Commission of the Organization of African Unity at its Second Session in Cairo.

The conclusions of the Geneva Conference have been included in the Final Act of the Cairo meeting and a number of recommendations have been made which, if followed, would create better co-ordination of effort as between the Economic Commission for Africa and the Committee of Fourteen within the permanent machinery of UNCTAD.

We believe it is only through such co-ordination that we can hope to succeed in the necessary formulation of a proper trade policy for African countries.

My delegation would urge that this Seventh session give clear directive to the Executive Secretary on this very important subject.

Another matter of vital importance on which the Executive Secretary needs to be given clear guidance is the subject of co-ordination of activity as between the Economic Commission for Africa and the Economic Commission of the Organization of African Unity.

It would indeed be a pity if these two organizations were to duplicate their effort at a time when we can least afford any such wasteful competition in our economic endeavour.

The Economic and Social Commission of the Organization of African Unity has taken the first step in the right direction by passing a resolution to the effect that the two Executive Secretaries should draft a convention in order to put their relationship on a more complementary basis, and this initiative is one that we welcome.

The Organization of African Unity is after all an essentially policy-making body which has been created for the purpose of giving co-ordinated expression to African political and economic policies and objectives.

On the other hand, the Economic Commission for Africa is more of a technical agency with greater international character and with the capacity

and means to promote and implement technical and scientific studies and projects.

The plans and programmes of these two African organizations whose membership is identical need to be fully co-ordinated if we are to derive the maximum benefit from these equally vital institutions for our progress and well-being.

I must say in passing that the Executive Secretaries of the Economic Commission for Africa and the Organization of African Unity deserve to be congratulated for the spirit of co-operation they have shown in their relations so far. Nevertheless, my delegation feels that unless clear definition of scope and activity is made available, the two Commissions run the dangerous risk of working at crosspurposes.

I hope therefore that this Seventh session will endorse the recommendations of the Cairo meeting and will authorize the Executive Secretary to carry on negotiations with a view to give a full report at our next session.

If I have made it a special point to emphasize the international character and role of the Economic Commission for Africa and to urge the need for co-ordination, it is only because I know we all understand and recognize the vital part of international assistance in our economic development.

We believe that the Economic Commission for Africa can play an important role in preparing the ground for greater international assistance and participation in the development programmes of our continent.

The rapid progress that we desire to obtain for our peoples can only be achieved through the triple interplay of trade, aid and investment coupled with our own initiative and endeavour which must be well-planned and rightly executed.

We have to create in our countries and on our continent an atmosphere of confidence and security without which we cannot hope to attract international participation in our programmes of development.

We must thus be ready and prepared to co-operate with all countries on the basis of mutual respect and common benefit.

We need to abandon sentiments of undue caution and of complex in our dealings with the former colonial powers that are the developed nations of today and hence the ones that have the economic capacity to contribute most to our economic development and progress.

We are often warned of the danger of a new economic colonialism that will return to replace the colonialism of old. But if we allow this to happen we have only ourselves to blame.

History has put firmly into our hands the right and opportunity to shape our destiny. We cannot escape responsibility anymore by putting the blame on alien forces and circumstances.

The answer to external pressure is not to be found in the negative attitude of isolation and inaction but in unity and common endeavour.

There is an Ethiopian proverb which says "you do not remain forever awake for fear of dreaming a bad dream".

Independence brings many risks and challenges - risks and challenges that we cannot forever escape but must learn to face and master.

This I believe is the attitude of courage and self-confidence that we should maintain in our relations with the outside world.

Mr. Chairman,

In the urgent and vital endeavour for rapid economic progress, the Economic Commission for Africa has an important role to play.

Let us in this Seventh session demonstrate once again our determination to provide our organization with the support, directive and guidance that will enable it to be worthy of our high expectation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.