

AFRICAN UNION

الاتحاد الأفريقي



UNION AFRICAINE

UNIÃO AFRICANA

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ASSEMBLY OF THE AFRICAN UNION

Third Ordinary Session

6 – 8 July 2004

Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA

ADDRESS BY MR. ALPHA OUMAR KONARE,
CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMISSION OF THE
AFRICAN UNION, ON THE OCCASION OF THE
OPENING OF THE THIRD ORDINARY SESSION
OF THE ASSEMBLY OF THE AFRICAN UNION

ADDIS ABABA, 6 JULY 2004

Distinguished Chairperson of the African Union,

Your Majesty,

Brother Leader,

Distinguished Heads of State and Government,

Mr. Secretary General of United Nations,

Distinguished Former African Heads of State,

**Distinguished Members of the Executive Council of
the African Union,**

Madam President of the Pan-African Parliament,

**Distinguished Former Secretaries General
of Our Continental Organization,**

**Distinguished Executive Secretaries of the
Regional Economic Communities,**

Excellencies,

Invited Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

From Algiers, where the decisive rendez-vous was made, to Sirte...

From Sirte, where the clarion call was made, to Lomé...

From Lomé, where the foundations of the Union were laid, to Lusaka...

From Lusaka, where the foundation of the African Union was consolidated, to Durban...

From Durban, where the final gathering took place, to Maputo where the march began with the establishment of the Commission...

From Maputo to Addis Ababa today, what an exciting journey it has been!

Excellencies, Heads of State,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is by resolutely implementing this and similar programmes that we will be able to overcome the difficult and, in most cases, tragic situation prevailing in our Continent; a situation which, we all know, is extremely serious, given the state of health as evidenced by the unrelenting spread of HIV/AIDS and malaria, and the dramatic resurgence of polio; a situation equally evidenced by the persistence of old conflicts and the upsurge of new hotbeds of tension and war.

We have implicit confidence in the process of dialogue in Côte d'Ivoire, and in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC); we trust in the logic of dialogue between the DRC and Rwanda, and in the on-going dialogue in Burundi; and elsewhere in the Continent.

We need to support the Sudanese Government in its efforts to control the Janjawid militia, thereby restoring security and confidence – all of which will pave the way for the return of the displaced people, for strengthening the rule of law, and enhancing respect for human rights; we need to backstop the humanitarian organizations and the Sudanese Government's commitment to immediate and decisive political dialogue.

Excellencies,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The situation we are facing is not a fatality. Giving way to despair would in today's circumstances, be suicidal. The times are, no doubt, hard. No doubt, all the big international meetings so far organized have not yielded concrete results. The same goes for all the solutions advanced to this day; solutions which have failed to reverse the trend towards Africa's marginalization.

No doubt, the prospects are bleak as highlighted in the 2003 UNDP Report, which made it clear that if things remain as they are, the objectives set in the Millennium Development Goals for 2015 will not be attained within the stipulated timeframe. According to the above Report:

- It is only by 2129 that the goal of Education for All at primary level, will be achieved;
- Extreme poverty can be halved only by the year 2147;
- Infant mortality will be reduced by two-thirds only by 2165.

Africa today needs a more substantial support to the tune of what Europe received from America soon after the Second World War and what the European Union is now offering its new members.

We have to explore new ways of mobilising resources such as taxation an international financial transactions and taxation on arms sale, as suggested by distinguished personalities.

Excellencies, Heads of State,

We have no doubt that you will mobilize the resources commensurate with our ambition which we are determined to achieve with realism and pragmatism while changing our course and establishing our priorities. Realism but also determination because it is not a fight for tomorrow but a battle to be waged from today to avert a new domination. It is a battle to ensure that our people retain the initiative to take advantage of the continental leadership, the widespread African presence on the international arena and our numerous bonds of friendship we have forged in the world.

Excellencies, Heads of State,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentleman,

Africa is often projected as a risk, a risk for herself but also a risk for the whole world. We totally reject this image. Let nobody make any mistake about this. For us, Africa is a great opportunity despite everything. Our potentials are immense with fresh glimmers of peace appearing in the horizon. This Continent which is twice the size of Russia, three and half times the size the of United States of America, three times the size of China and six times that of the European Union is the ecological lifetime of the world. It is a land so much endowed with natural resources, a land destined to become a demographic power. By the year 2025 we shall have a population of more than 1 billion 300 million Africans, almost as many as a Chinese or the Indians, more than the European Union and the United States put together, with the advantage of a younger population with nearly 8 million below 15.

We will tomorrow become the new market. Tomorrow, we will become the young market. Africa will tomorrow become the number one Continent if this passionate appeal which we made to African Parliamentarians on 18 March this year on the occasion of their Inaugural Session is concretised.

"Give us our countries!

Give us our motherland Africa!

Restore to us our honour and glory;

Give us our redemption by making us citizens of Africa"

Your Excellency President Chissano,

My I just address one word to you. I would like to say that all that we have achieved over the past months bears your mark. It also bears witness to the great militant you have always been.

Mr. Secretary General of the United Nations,

We are very glad about and greatly honoured by your constant presence in our midst and unflagging support. We pay you tribute, you the great man, the great African.

Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,

Your massive presence today is a mark of your great leadership.

I would like to tell you that Addis Ababa has opened its doors wide for you. It has given you due recognition.

- from now on a street in Addis Ababa will bear the name of each of our States.
- Moreover, the African Union will henceforth be provided with extensive grounds at its headquarters and elsewhere for its future development.

Thank you, Prime Minister Meles and

Thank you Mayor of Addis Ababa.