

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY**

**HIS EXCELLENCY  
DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM**

**AT 83<sup>RD</sup> ROTARY DISTRICT CONFERENCE  
THEME "AFRICA BELONGS TO TOMORROW"**

**AT KUNDUCHI BEACH HOTEL,  
DAR ES SALAAM**

**15 MAY 2008**

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MK 1600.*

**District Governor Chris Mutalya,**  
**Distinguished Rotarians,**  
**Invited Guests,**  
**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**I wish to thank the District Governor of Rotary District 9200 for the kind invitation extended to me to be with you this morning. I also want to recognise the remarkable efforts of the organizing committee in making excellent arrangements and facilities for this important gathering. My special thanks go to my good friend and neighbour Hatim Karimjee who not only delivered the District Governor's invitation but also very politely and persuasively insisted that whatever my other commitments I should not fail to be here for the occasion. I have**

**kept my word and I am really delighted to be in the midst of such a distinguished gathering.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen;**

**I have been asked to address you on a theme “Africa Belongs to Tomorrow”. I must admit at the very outset that my initial reaction was rather hesitant. This is particularly so considering that it has often been said that Africa is the continent of the future. The response of many of us to this assertion has been that we want this Continent also to be of the present. On reflection, however, it is evident that the two assertions are mutually reinforcing. For, “Africa to belong to Tomorrow” it must not only be relevant for the present but equally important, create conditions and environment which will**

**effectively enhance Africa's role and contribution in the years to come.**

**The thrust of my address therefore is to survey the current situation in Africa – our shortcomings as well as achievements – and in that way realistically situate Africa's future role and contribution.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen;**

**A review of the current African situation as well as the projection of the future must of necessity take into account the international situation and environment. Africa is part of the global community although admittedly thus far a very handicapped part. The continued inequity in the international system, the transformation of the world from a multipolar to a unipolar one has had**

**adverse consequences especially for the smaller countries – a considerable number of them are in Africa. The challenges and vagaries of globalisation if pursued without taking into consideration the legitimate concerns and interests of developing countries especially the least developed among them has clear repercussions. We can also allude to the old and new threats and how they have negatively impact the continent. But rather than discuss all these very pertinent issues, of an international dimension, I think it is first and foremost important to focus on our selves – a sort of introspective and critical analysis.**

**What are the shortcomings that have faced our countries and are within our means to resolve? What have we done to address them? What have we done to create the**



**enabling environment for economic and social transformation in the continent by *inter alia* using the continent's immense potential both human and material? Have we done enough to confound our critics who consider Africa as a continent where conflicts are rampant, human rights abuses tolerated and corruption including in high places the order of the day in some societies; where some of its people are forced to vote with their feet; and where every thing that can go wrong has gone wrong?**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Evidently, Africa is changing and this change is essentially due the fact that our peoples throughout the length and breadth of the continent demand and expect changes. This**

**is not to suggest that there is no resistance to such changes. Like in every community in history, there are those who wish to maintain the status quo and strive hard to achieve their objective. Yet change is either happening or in the air.**

**Africa is a continent in transition both in political and economic terms. The process of democratisation is gradually but firmly on course. It is my firm conviction that despite setbacks here and there – and in some cases serious setbacks – this process is irreversible. Indeed the people of our continent who have fought against colonialism and all forms of racial discrimination are more and more determined to control their destiny. Above all, they want to have a say on how they are governed, by whom, for what period and**

**towards what objectives. They are also becoming increasingly assertive in demanding a scrupulous observance of human rights. All this, role of civil society has been pivotal.**

**At the same time it is a fact that many African countries have been undertaking economic and structural reforms – some of which have had social cost especially among the most vulnerable segments of our populations. All those measures – promotion of democracy and good governance, accountability and transparency as well as the pursuit of an economic route map in which the role of the Private Sector will not only be recognised but challenged to play its critical role are intended to prepare our continent for a better tomorrow.**



**But while it is a fact that Africa has the right trajectory both in terms of promoting good governance and economic development, it is important to bear in mind that there is still a long and bumpy road ahead. For example the concept of a genuine multiparty democracy has yet to consolidate in many of our societies. The culture of tolerance – so essential in a democracy – has yet to gain a foothold in some of our countries.**

**Furthermore, governance should be considered as the totality of the exercise of authority in the management of a country's affairs comprising of the complex mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights and mediate their differences. In building good governance, there is also the need to**

**address some misconceptions of democracy within and outside our continent. Democracy has often been characterised as the participation of the people in electing a government of their choice through the ballot box.**

**There is no doubt that elections are indeed a crucial state in a democratic process. Yet, while elections are indispensable, they themselves do not provide adequate condition for the building of democracy and good governance. Elections *per se*, are not the panacea for sustainable democracy and good governance. Put differently, the existence of a multiplicity of political parties, the conduct of free and fair elections and the performance of Parliament under the leadership of an elected government, crucial**

**as they are, do not always guarantee governance into a democratic system.**

**Perhaps more critical than the electoral system which I consider to be vital, is the need to build viable institutions to sustain democracy and promote good governance. In addition to building and/or consolidating such institutions as Parliament, the Judiciary, the Police, the Media, Independent Election Commissions, we need also to take into account, specific factors related to the building of governments in Africa.**

**One of these factors is the need to strengthen the quality of leadership so as to ensure the promotion of people centred decision making process. This naturally calls for greater transparency in decision making as well as accountability. African**

**leaders must place national interests before self or group interests. Power must not be seen as an end in itself, but more critically, power must be vested in the people and not in their leaders. Political power must be discharged with a deep sense of responsibility for the well being and interest of the people.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Conflicts have been a curse on our continent. They have caused untold suffering, loss of life and limb and destruction of property. They engender hatred and a culture of violence within our societies. They traumatize generations of Africans and undermine the very fabric of our societies. They affect the most productive section of our societies and jeopardise the**



**chances of African children to have a decent and dignified life. They have devastated our women and in the process undermine a crucial component of our societies. They produce orphans and armed children and constitute a fundamental obstacle to our socio-economic endeavours.**

**Conflicts remain, by and large, the main root cause of humanitarian tragedies in our continent which has the inevitable record of hosting the largest number of refugees and internally displaced persons. Furthermore, as a result of unbearable burden created by the massive influx of refugees to countries of asylum the environmental degradation caused and resentments and frustrations generated among local populations, there has been a decline in the traditional African**



**Africa needs to put a definite end to this scourge. In this context it is gratifying to note that there has been recently a significant de-escalation of these conflicts. Africa leaders under the overall umbrella of the African Union using among other things the recently reinforced African peace and Security Council have made giant strides in resolving some of the major conflicts. Indeed one of the remarkable developments taking place in the continent is the leadership provided by Africans themselves in resolving African conflicts.**

**Indeed almost all the major conflicts that have beleaguered the continent; including the most recent ones (Darfur, Kenya, Chad) are being or have been mediated through the leadership of Africans, with international**

**support. It was a moment of pride on March 11, 2008 to watch Mr. Koffi Annan a distinguished son of Ghana and former Secretary General of the United Nations, as chief mediator under the auspices of the African Union, standing with the current chairman of the African Union, President Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete of Tanzania and members of the Eminent African Personalities Group – Former President Benjamin Mkapa and Mama Graca Machel witnessing the signing agreement for a peaceful end of an election-triggered conflict in Kenya.**

**While peace has not been fully entrenched in the continent, with the prevailing conflicts in the Western Sudan region of Darfur and Somalia as the most terrible examples, it is nonetheless satisfying to note a significant**

**reduction in the incidence of civil or inter-state strife in the past five years. It is also encouraging to see the gradual solidification of peace and stability in the Great lakes region including in Burundi.**

**Obviously, the continent is not homogenous so it does not help to generalize. However, there is an all-encompassing momentum which seems to pull even those which are fairing badly at a given point in time. In this respect, the process of integration has fairly gained thrust, with the transformation of the Organisation of African Unity into the African Union, and more operationally with the remarkable progress made in the workings of the more than a dozen regional economic communities.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen;**

**The foundations that are laid down today are what will determine tomorrow's Africa. Africa's success in the liberation struggle was made possible in large measure by its oneness of view and unity of action on the issue. We were united in our resolve to rid our continent of colonialism and racialism. And while we had occasionally debated strategy, never has there been the slightest doubt as to our unity of purpose. We should therefore ensure that the same type of unity is preserved and strengthened as we tackle the economic challenges facing us.**

**Some sceptics and detractors of Africa have continually cast aspersions at Africa's ability to sustain unity in economic matters. Indeed this assertion is based on the misplaced**



**notion that Africa necessarily disagrees on all other issues except liberation. But the reality is that Africa has demonstrated strong unity. We have joint – negotiating platforms, a common development strategy. We have come to recognise the inherent vulnerability of a fragmented continent – a continent which speaks in a multiplicity of voices. Africa needs unity, for, only in unity are we strong and can our collective voice be heard, Africa needs to get itself organised – at the national, regional and continental levels, to give strength to the reality of our commitment and action for intra-African co-operation.**

**This definitive trend towards greater unity, coordination and cohesion has been given concrete substance in the formation of the African Union and the strengthening of the**



**African Union and the strengthening of the regional economic communities. Tomorrow, Africa will, in my opinion, evolve into a more united continent which having learnt from its own history and the examples of others – the imperative of unity and cooperation in the economic, social and political dimensions.**

**Furthermore, I foresee a continent which will have taken giant steps in multidimensional fields.**

**❖ A continent where the practise of democracy and good governance will be a given and thus releasing the energies of our people for meaningful development.**

**❖ A continent which will see to it that its immense resources are used to benefit its own people including heavy**

**investment in human resource development.**

- ❖ Africa which will be competitive in the world stage and whose immense resources properly utilised will enhance its bargaining position**
- ❖ A continent where the scourge of conflict especially internecine conflict will be history.**
- ❖ A continent where the powerful force and voice of the women will be fully recognized at every level including in particular in positions of leadership.**

**In brief I do believe that Africa of Tomorrow is that of the United States of Africa – a realisation of the ideal articulated by leaders like Kwame Nkuruma of Ghana and our own Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere. But to realize these goals and objectives, we as**

**Africans must think and act beyond tribe, clan or religion. We must draw lessons and examples of other nations. We must use our cultural, ethnic, religious and other diversities not as source of division but as assets for our common future. In this we can draw some inspiration from what has been happening in the United States where despite its turbulent past and the contradictions inherent in a multiracial, multicolour and multi-religions society, an African-American has defied all conventional wisdom and no matter what happens in the primaries and later in the Presidential Elections, he has commanded huge support and loyalty of millions of Americans across the racial and colour divide.**

## **Ladies and Gentlemen**

**As we talk about Africa's future or as the theme of the presentation categorises "*Africa belongs to tomorrow*", it is important that, our people should survive to be part of that future. Nothing constitutes a greater threat to the very survival of our people than the horrible pandemic of HIV/AIDS. The statistics are horrifying. Every single day, thousands of mothers and fathers have to hold their hopeless infants and face the grief of losing a partner and a reality, often unknown, of themselves facing an impending agonising death and living behind destitute orphans. Furthermore, HIV/AIDS is worst among the youth. Most of our colleges have most students in the age of 19 – 28 in whom the prevalence of new infections is high. In brief, this disease is decimating our populations and**

**creating havoc with our economic and social programmes. This is the foremost challenge facing our continent as we look into the future. This pandemic must be combated with all the means at our disposal.**

**Let me conclude with some personal reflections:**

**For the entire period of my youth and adulthood, I have been in one way or another involved in the process of change in our continent. I have done so in the various roles and capacities dating back to the time when I was Tanzania's first Ambassador in Cairo at the age of 22. I also served an unprecedented three terms covering 12 years as Secretary General of the Organisation of Africa Unity (now the African Union). During this period I had visited, in some cases, several times,**



**almost all Africa countries. During these visits and in different forums I interacted with leaders of our continent as well as with different segments of the population including the civil society.**

**I have experienced memories of glory and gratification like the swearing in May 1994 of Nelson Mandela as the first democratically elected President of South Africa. I have also witnessed moments of agony, shame and indescribable cruelty when I visited Rwanda in the immediate aftermath of the genocide. I have been a witness to successes as well as distresses and disappointments. I have met with African leaders who were and are genuinely committed to serve their people. I have also met some who were more interested in self glorification and personal aggrandizement.**

**As OAU Secretary General I was very much involved in at least four major decisions of our continental organisation which had considerable impact for the future of our continent and people. These are: the 1990 Addis Ababa decision to embark on further democratisation of Africa Societies and greater respect for human rights; the 1991 Abuja decision to establish the Africa Economic Community with the Regional Economic Communities as its building blocks; the 1993 Cairo decision to establish the Mechanism for prevention, management and resolution of conflict and finally the 1999 Sirte declaration which ushered in the establishment of the African union.**

**Clearly therefore I have seen many ups and downs. But one thing has been consistent.**

**The resilience and determination of the African people for a better tomorrow through good governance, transparency, proper and fair utilisation of the continent's immense resources. In this context, one need hardly over emphasize the urgent need to eliminate or at least drastically minimize the glaring anomaly and contradiction of a continent so richly endowed in resources but inhabited by some of the poorest people in the world.**

**It is my conviction that notwithstanding the many problems and shortcomings that we face, Africa is on the right path. This is not only the continent of the future but the African people with boundless energy are resolved to make it the continent of the present. The resources both human and material are there. The challenge is to the leadership. With good governance and genuine international**

**cooperation Africa and its people, will rise to  
the great heights that they are entitled to.**

**I thank you for your attention.**