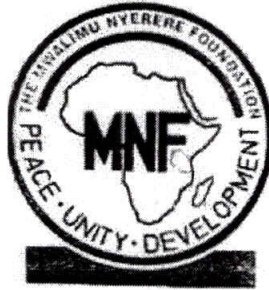


THE MWALIMU NYERERE FOUNDATION



ADDRESS

BY

**DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM
CHAIRMAN OF THE MWALIMU NYERERE FOUNDATION**

**AT THE
CONFERMENT OF AN HONORARY DEGREE**

**BY THE
UNIVERSITY OF ADDIS ABABA**

26th July 2003
ADDIS ABABA
ETHIOPIA

**ADDRESS BY DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM
AT THE CONFERMENT OF AN HONORARY DEGREE
BY THE UNIVERSITY OF ADDIS ABABA
26 JULY 2003, ADDIS ABABA - ETHIOPIA**

Your Excellency Prime Minister Meles Zenawi

Honourable Ministers

President of the University of Addis Ababa

Excellencies Heads of Diplomatic Missions

Distinguished Guests

Members of the University Community

Ladies and Gentlemen.

**ADDRESS BY DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM
AT THE CONFERMENT OF AN HONORARY DEGREE
BY THE UNIVERSITY OF ADDIS ABABA
26 JULY 2003, ADDIS ABABA - ETHIOPIA**

I feel greatly honoured to be conferred with this prestigious award of Doctor of Laws, Honoris Causa from such a legendary African Institution, the University of Addis Ababa. Beyond its particular attributes, to me this tribute evokes memories of the friendship, support and solidarity that I have always enjoyed and treasured from the wonderful people of Ethiopia during my 12 years stay in this country, and in this city in particular. Indeed, I have continued to relish the warmth and generosity of the Ethiopian people and their Government in my return visits to this country as a private citizen of the African Continent. I wish to convey sincere gratitude and appreciation to the authorities of the University of Addis Ababa for endowing me with this honour. I shall cherish it beyond the bounds of personal recognition because it represents the ideals that we have all stood for and the causes we have collectively endeavoured to realize as African people.

May I assure Your Excellencies and members of this congregation that whatever qualities that have been seen in me, which have qualified me for this accolade have been inspired by your experiences and from your support. For me to be included among my distinguished colleagues in this podium, it is also because of the gallant role that the great people of Ethiopia have continued to play in the African Continent. Indeed, it is your experience and your unflinching dedication to the African cause that have encouraged the humble deeds performed by some of us. It is those experiences that have served as a beacon to guide some of our actions. Yours has been a history of bravery, commitment and sacrifice for the good of the larger African family. Indeed, it is not fortuitous that the Headquarters of the OAU, and now the African Union, are based in Addis Ababa, and that this occasion is also connected to the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the founding of our Continental Organization.

As I stand at this graduation ceremony, I can see the powerful symbolism that this occasion represents for our Continent. It reaffirms, and indeed consecrates, the continuous linkage of the past, the present, and the future. The young women and men, who are receiving their honours today,

are solemnly taking custody of the future of this Continent so that they can continue in our collective quest of realizing the African vision. I feel privileged to be associated with this important occasion.

Our Continent has reached an important milestone which calls upon the graduands of today, as people who have been more empowered, once again to marshal the dedication, determination and commitment they have demonstrated in the many years of the rigorous education and training at this University and bring these to the service of Africa. As they join the ranks of African intellectuals and the intelligentsia, the young women and men who are being conferred with their degrees today are called upon to understand the African reality, to articulate its essence, and propagate its fundamentals. More importantly, they are assuming a major responsibility, of remaining at the vanguard of a noble movement that is aimed at improving and transforming the well-being of our people and enabling this Continent to occupy its rightful position in the global arena.

Indeed, the University of Addis Ababa has been legendary in propelling the African revolution. Not only has it served as a fountain of knowledge and a

center of excellence for capacity building, but also equally important, it has eschewed any pretense of elitism often crippling many institutions of its type. It has remained a people's university, in its culture, in its approach, and in the substance of its programmes. No wonder, hundreds of African experts from all over the Continent have received their training in the various fields of this great institution.

Mr. Chairman, Africa enters the new Century and new millennium with mixed attributes. On the one hand, it is with a feeling of pride and gallantry that we have been able to liberate this Continent from the evil of foreign oppression and subjugation perpetrated through colonialism and apartheid. After more than 500 years of being denied our humanity and being treated as objects, today the Continent has been able to totally free itself from the humiliation and insolence of being ruled by others. Efforts are now being concentrated into addressing our internal contradictions and to foster closer inclusiveness among ourselves. Indeed, the resilience of the African identity is quite remarkable. After centuries of being divided, disarticulated and pitted against each other, yet, we are moving in the new century with

our common identity intact and with a stronger resolve to become more united.

On the other hand, the challenges facing our Continent are still formidable. We find ourselves in the midst of the overpowering impact of globalization and its attendant repercussions. We have become victims of the domineering consequences of a uni-polar global hegemony. And worse, our people are still suffering from the scourges of poverty, conflicts, undemocratic rule, and recalcitrant pandemics, among many others. The road ahead is still rough, bumpy and tortuous. More than ever, we need to mobilize our solidarity and a collective sense of purpose in order to surmount the developmental challenges facing us. The revitalization of our Continental Organization and the creation of the African Union, as well as the adoption of the NEPAD programme provide a stronger vehicle for anchoring the momentum of overcoming these challenges in the peoples of this Continent.

Indeed, it is the people of this Continent who constitute the motive force for change and transformation. The bountiful resources Africa has been

endowed with cannot relieve this Continent from the bondage of under-development if they are not deployed for the benefit of African people. In the same regard, all our programmatic aspirations, institutional intentions, and collective engagements cannot succeed if the people are not connected.

Africa has to put its human resources at the centre of its priorities. We need to invest in our people at all levels, so as to improve their welfare, to increase their empowerment, and to enhance their capacities. In this regard, high-level training, particularly the universities need to be accorded due attention. In this era of rapid scientific and technological advancement, universities have a major role to play in positioning Africa in the global knowledge and information network. We will be undermining our own potentialities if we allow our universities to degenerate into mediocrity and pedantic ivory towers. Universities have to be assisted to remain at the cutting edge of the emerging knowledge societies.

On this particular aspect, the University of Addis Ababa, located at the Headquarters of the former OAU and now the Africa Union has an

additional responsibility of back-stopping the Continental Organization because of its proximity. It should endeavour not only to follow what happens at AU Headquarters but as far as possible also seek to be involved and render its intellectual support in research, policy advice, and capacity building. I do hope, the new African Union will make full use of this great institution.

Mr. Chairman, Your Excellency, may I, once again reiterate my gratitude and appreciation for honouring me with this award.

I thank you!