



Organization of African Unity

**AFRICA DAY MESSAGE OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL  
OF THE OAU**

## **My Fellow Africans,**

Today we celebrate the thirty-first year since the founding of the OAU amid mixed feelings of hope, accomplishment and anguish.

We are all inspired by what happened in South Africa. We rightly should have a sense of accomplishment, as with the defeat of racial tyranny in South Africa, and the triumph of democracy there, Africa has at last closed the chapter on political emancipation. The task of liberation which the founding fathers of the OAU set for the Organization, thirty-one years ago, has now been completed.

The end of Apartheid, and the ushering in of democracy in that country gives Africa, and humanity great hope. Freedom of South Africa has enlarged that of the rest of the Continent. Our hope is that, that freedom, will enable the people of that country who were divided by centuries of violence and prejudice, heal the wounds of racialism and begin on the engaging task of nation-building. Already we are very much encouraged by the spirit of accommodation and reconciliation which is being demonstrated by the people of that country. I salute in particular the courage, vision, tenacity and determination of President Nelson Mandela who, against many odds, stood steadfast and finally succeeded in leading South Africa into a new era of equality and justice in democracy. I also salute Mr. Frederick de Klerk, who was instrumental in allowing the process of change to begin, and finally, joined hands with President Mandela in charting the course for their country. I also salute all the people of South Africa and their political leaders for this great victory - a victory which all the peoples of Africa and of the world share and identify with. The challenge before all South

Africans is now to take advantage of the new beginning, to put prejudice behind them and join hands in true reconciliation.

A truly reconciled South Africa will impact positively on the rest of Africa as an example to emulate. Africa, the most diverse of continents, in terms of race, religions, ethnies and culture, needs tolerance the most, if we are to build and consolidate Unity. We are happy and indeed excited in welcoming the reborn nation of South Africa in the Organization of African Unity as a member. We look forward to it playing its rightful role as an important factor of stability and economic development, in the Continent.

The completion of the task of liberation of the Continent means that Africa must now move on to its second liberation - that of economic development. Three decades after independence, our countries are still mired in economic difficulties, even if they are deploying important efforts at recovery. Every country - almost without exception, is restructuring and adjusting, with the objective of restoring productivity and growth to the economy. And while these innovative and mostly painful reform measures have stemmed the downward spiral of the economy, and in some cases brought modest growth, the challenge of development is far from being met.

As our countries have strived to reform and restructure at home, they also have seen the constraints of individualized action, in the context of a long term development strategy. This is why, in Abuja, three years ago, our leaders signed the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community. I am happy to say that now that Treaty has entered into force following its ratification by the required number of OAU Member States. This is a happy development as it is a



challenge. The challenge is now to begin in concrete terms, putting together the structures which will support and sustain the Pan-African Community. We at the level of the General Secretariat have, in cooperation with Member States covered considerable ground in making the necessary preparations such as working on a number of Protocols to the Treaty. Protocols on Transport and Communication, Trade and Customs Cooperation, free movement of people and right of establishment as well as that of the relation between the future African Community and the existing Regional Economic Groupings have already been examined.

But beyond the legal entry into force of the Treaty and the work on these protocols, the greater challenge lies in making the future Community a true Community for the people of our continent. For ultimately, for that Community to be relevant, it will have to be a Community of people rather than of goods and services. I therefore appeal to governments and the general public, to see how a creative partnership can be established by which the ordinary people - the traders, businessmen, the professionals, all-along with Governments can be associated with the task of building the Community.

Development is about people. It is about making people part and parcel of any process aimed at bringing about economic and social progress. The ability of people to be involved will ultimately determine the content and direction of development in the Continent. More and more, our countries are committed to the promotion of popular participation as a means not only of involving and empowering the people, but also as a Mechanism of harnessing their energies and directing them at development.

Naturally empowering the people means giving them the voice and ability to determine their fate. I am encouraged that again, increasingly, governments are responding to the demands of the people for transparency and accountability. This, they have done in the strong belief that good governance, is ultimately the key to peace, stability and development in the Continent.

The respect for human rights and further democratization are also a pace in the Continent. We see more and more multiparty elections taking place thus expanding the process of democratization. While there may have been some setbacks, the process is taking root. We should endeavour to ensure that the steady progress we see in the Continent, in the consolidation of democracy and promoting politics of inclusion is sustained. Building democracies which are founded on transparency, accountability, respect for human rights and other fundamental freedom and good governance generally on the part of those who hold office, as well as on popular participation, now holds promise in the Continent. We should all work together to advance that process.

**My Fellow Africans,**

The beginning in earnest of the second liberation - liberating the Continent from economic want and poverty, now stands seriously threatened by the phenomenon of conflicts which continue to afflict our countries and people.

The conflicts in Angola, Liberia, Sudan and Somalia, continue to claim lives and destroy property. While these conflicts persist, none has now touched the conscience of humanity as much as the conflict in Rwanda. The scale and brutality of the organized slaughter of hundreds of thousands

of innocent men, women and children, some of them orphans, has shocked the entire world. The OAU has condemned in the strongest manner, these organized and systematic massacres as we have condemned those responsible for the death of Presidents Habyarimana and Ntaryamira, who were returning from a peace mission in Dar es Salaam, where they had gone to attend a Regional Summit on the situation in their two countries.

Today, the killings, as well as the war continue, while Africa and the International Community persist in efforts to bring an end to those massacres, secure a cease-fire and pave the way for dialogue. In the meantime, an equally urgent problem is the humanitarian crisis which is unfolding as hundreds of thousands of Rwandese refugees are fleeing to Tanzania, Burundi and Zaire and more than a million others internally displaced.

While commending the great humanitarian work being done by Non-Governmental Organizations and the United Nations Agencies, I wish to reiterate my appeal to Africa and the International Community generally to respond urgently with food, shelter and medicines.

**My Fellow Africans,**

The tragedy in Rwanda and the apparent inability of the World Community to act speedily and decisively has taught Africa that we should take the challenge of self-reliance with even greater seriousness. We should see how we can strengthen our own mechanism, to empower ourselves with the means and resources to act in the face of such tragedies in future. Above all we should strengthen our resolve, our means and



capacity to respond swiftly and effectively in such catastrophic situations.

**My Fellow Africans,**

The Continent is now facing serious challenges of economic development and of ending conflicts. It is easy in the face of the difficulties of the hour, for one to succumb to despondency and discouragement. We should not. The problems may look insurmountable but I believe, with determination and perseverance, we can overcome them. The events in South Africa, which looked impossible only a couple of years ago, should inspire us to push on. With will and determination we shall succeed. Let us look ahead with confidence.

God Bless Africa!

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**  
**25 May 1994**