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Organization of African Unity

AFRICA DAY MESSAGE BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE OAU

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

May 25, 1995

My Fellow Africans,

As we celebrate Africa Day this year, the Continent remains in difficulties but hopeful and with renewed determination and confidence in its future.

Economic difficulties remain and so too do the hateful conflicts which have decimated our populations and wasted so much resources. At the same time, we see signs of economic revival. The process of political transition is steadily on course and democracy is consolidating. Efforts at finding solutions to the conflicts have intensified as those at preventive diplomacy. And notwithstanding the specters of genocide in Rwanda, of murder and mayhem in Liberia and the continued conflict in Somalia, Africa has begun steadily to build the first bridges which will enable the people in areas of conflict, traverse their tragedies into peace and stability.

Today, it is thirty two years since the OAU was created. In a month's time, the Assembly of the OAU Heads of State and Government will be convening here in Addis Ababa, to review the situation in the Continent, think together and chart a way into the future. They will be doing so in circumstances of hard economic and political realities in the Continent, but with a sense of confidence that, we are on the right course. All we need is to summon the courage, to persevere and to work together.

While South Africa was the sparkle in Africa's political scene, the many conflicts facing our brothers and sisters, remain the dark side of our politics. These need to be dealt with speedily and conclusively. In this, Africa once more, must summon its courage and its determination to work together.

The tragic events which led to massacres and genocide in Rwanda last year continue to haunt our collective conscience, not only as Africans, but as humanity at large.

Today Rwanda is struggling to regain its feet. The OAU and the International Community are helping the Government and people of that country, re-establish mutual confidence, promote national reconciliation and move on to the vexing as well as resource demanding problem of rehabilitation and reconstruction. But to do these, the Rwandese society needs first to be exorcised of the devil of genocide and massacres.

The rendering of justice by bringing those responsible for the genocide and massacres to trial and treating the physical, emotional and psychological wounds of the victims, is central to the process of reconciliation. This is why we must continue to urge for the early operationalization of the International Tribunal and to help the Government cope with the many physical problems facing the justice system in the country. Likewise, we continue to urge the International Community to render assistance to the Government so that it can be strengthened in its operations. In this respect, I appeal to the countries which made pledges at the Geneva Round Table, to expedite the disbursement of the

the Secretary General of the OAU is expected to be in Mogadishu and other parts of Somalia, trying to broaden the consensus of peace which seems to be evolving despite recent set back of armed clashes reported in Mogadishu.

~~_____~~ The situation in Liberia too is encouraging following the partial agreement reached at the ECOWAS Summit in Abuja last week on the size of the Council and its chairmanship. I hope that the parties will now move speedily to resolve the outstanding issues, so that the people of Liberia can at last cast this sad chapter of conflict and war behind them.

Angola looks very promising following the meeting between President Do Santos and the leader of UNITA, Mr. Jonas Savimbi and the latter's acceptance of the results of the 1993 elections conducted under the terms of the Bicece Accords. We commend the two leaders of Angola for the courage they have demonstrated by putting the interest of the people of their country first. This paves the way to the restoration of peace. We must therefore help the people of Angola in their process of reconciling with themselves and rebuilding their war-ravaged country. In this respect, I urge for the speedy deployment of the United Nations Mission in Angola.

The situation in Burundi remains fluid but I am encouraged by the determination of the Government and the overwhelming majority of the political parties to persist in dialogue. The greater task remains that of ensuring that the forces of extremism are not allowed to undermine the process of rebuilding confidence and building foundations for peace

and poor is widening posing long term threat to social harmony. The challenge therefore, is how these structural adjustment programs can be pursued bearing in mind the acute social needs of the people and without undermining social order.

To this extent, social safety nets should be put in place to address the needs of those who suffer the most as governments gradually vacate the public sphere in terms of social expenditure. This is pivotal, as the future of democracy in the Continent depends on the positive evolution of the economic revolution, now under way. Economic prosperity and democracy are mutually reinforcing. Investing in people is key to long term development and to the safeguarding of social order.

Africa has now to face the realities of competing at the world market place. Our countries are members of the World Trade Organization. But for trade to make meaning, we must have something to exchange or to sell. We cannot hope to make impact, if we accept to be perpetually relegated to the role of consumers of manufactured products from other parts of the world. Africa must now be ready to make the transition and ensure that the programs of economic reforms which are now underway, do not confirm the continent into a sphere of economic dependence, but rather liberate our countries from dependence and subserviency and sets them forth on the road to development.

derail this process. Africa needs to build on its diversity of religion, race, culture, traditions and geography and use these as a source of solidarity and strength.

Likewise, Africa needs to see to it that this process of political transition is not made difficult or hampered by the harsh economic conditions arising from the painful process of economic reforms.

We celebrate Africa Day when Africa is equally being faced with many natural calamities. Desertification, the AIDS pandemic and now the Ebola virus outbreak pose daunting challenges indeed. At this moment of dire need, I wish to express the solidarity of the OAU with the Government and people of Zaire as they struggle to contain the spread of the deadly Ebola virus. I wish to appeal to the International Community to redouble its assistance as well as to Africa to bring whatever help it can to the people of Zaire as they strive to cope with this new catastrophe.

My Fellow Africans,

The tasks ahead are not easy. The challenge of economic reform and political transition must be met. We see the gradual consolidation of these twin-challenges. We are however still faced with the continuing scourge of conflicts which is killing our people, undermining the cause of peace and hampering the development of our countries and people. The many efforts which are now being expended to search for peace, need to be consolidated. The task may be monumental but it is not impossible to undertake.