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Salim's Address : "AFRICA AND THE CURRENT CHALLENGES"
AT THE PLAZA (CITY HALL OF ROSEHILL AND BEAU BASSIN)
MAURITIUS, ON. 13. MARCH, 1991

INTRODUCTION

- Pleasure at being in Mauritius and to participate in the 23rd Anniversary of the country's Independence.
- Tribute to Mauritius forging unity in diversity.
- Appreciation for this opportunity to share views and experiences with some of the leaders and senior officials of this country and with the young generation of Mauritians - who are the leaders of tomorrow.

2. CURRENT CHALLENGES VIEWED FIRST IN THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- 27 years ago when the OAU was formed: Priority was African Freedom and the Dignity of the African Person.
- Achievements on the anti-colonial Front. What is the position now: With the independence of Namibia in March 1990, the only unfinished business remains the struggle against apartheid in South Africa.
- Victories scored have been as a result of national efforts (i.e. resistance by the people of the countries concerned led by their national liberation movements and collective efforts (i.e. those of Africa led by

the OAU and N.B. These are no mean achievements. Remember Ian Smith's boast "no majority Rule in Rhodesia for a thousand years".

And the bankrupt assertion of the invincibility of white redoubt.

3. PROMISES OF EXPECTATIONS OF POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE UNFULFILLED : FRUSTRATION HAS SET IN

Political independence brought hope and raised peoples' expectations just as it conferred responsibilities of governance on the part of Governments.

- In the first decade of Independence, most of Africa tried hard : investment in society, hospitals, roads and schools built; attempts to create an indigeneous core of scientists, teachers, doctors, technicians, etc.

- Africa registered an average of 10% annual growth rate during the first decade of independence at a time when the continent was also spending heavily on social needs as well as on other political agenda like decolonization.

- The advent of the first oil shock and the resultant imbalances in the global economy, impacted negatively on Africa's economies. Not only had Africa to spend more on oil imports but also on manufactured goods whose prices had been raised to offset the effect of oil price increases. Africa suffered doubly.

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- Technological developments especially the development of synthetics and other artificial fibres, as well as change in consumption patterns in the traditional market for Africa's goods, brought down commodity prices.

- The syndrome of having to spend more on energy imports and on capital goods at a time when Africa was earning less and less meant not only a spending squeeze especially in the social sector but inability to sustain and service the infrastructure which had been built.

- As a result, many development projects were abandoned: hospitals and clinics had to do without equipment and medication; schools without books and roads have fallen in disrepair.

- To cope with this deficit in cash inflow and limited aid, Africa was forced to go into debt. Presently, Africa is indebted in excess of US\$ 260 billion and debt servicing obligations have resulted into net transfers of resources to developed world including the Brettonwood Institutions.

- In fairness, not all problems of Africa resulted exclusively from the external factors or the international economic environment. Some were a result of national policy errors and political experimentations.

- Some problems resulted from wrong priorities such as neglect of agriculture and over-dependence on one or few commodities.

- But Africa has tried to reverse the situation. Many countries have entered into structural adjustment programs with international financial institutions. More and more African Governments are prepared to accept responsibility for these errors and are bold enough to take unpopular political measures to correct them.

- Even though 1980s have been described as a "lost decade for Africa" in economic terms, the continent has done well in the consolidation of the Institutions of Government upon which recovery, long-term development and socio-economic transformation of the continent will depend.

4. LAST DECADE OF THE 20TH CENTURY: THE ADVENT TO A NEW MILLENNIUM

- How is Africa to face this period?
- Is it to be a yet another lost Decade?

(i) Global Changes

- (a) USA-USSR Rapprochement and the end of the cold war;
- (b) Fundamental changes in Eastern Europe;
- (c) Unified Germany;
- (d) Towards larger economic and political entities e.g.:
 - EEC and the Single Market 1992;
 - USA-CANADA Free Trade Area and incorporating Mexico;
 - South-East Asia

- The general trend is towards larger Groups and intensified cooperation.
- (ii) The impact of these changes to Africa.
- (iii) The Afro-Pessimism Syndrome.
- (iv) The reality of further MARGINALISATION.

5. WHAT CAN AND SHOULD BE DONE

My Report on Fundamental Changes submitted to the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government in Addis Ababa in July 1990 in which I had stressed

- Development of Africa is the responsibility of Africans;
- That peace, development and democratisation are interlinked.
- Heads of State and Government adopted the Declaration on the Political and Socio-Economic Situation in Africa and the Fundamental Changes taking place in the World. What is the significance of this Declaration?

6. OUR PRIORITIES

- Apart from dealing with the unfinished business of apartheid South Africa, we must focus on the economic liberation of the Continent.
- This of necessity requires inter alia action in the following fields :

- (A) Inter-African Cooperation and Regional Economic Integration (We must draw the appropriate lessons from the Europeans).
- (B) This can be done by recognition of mutual and shared interests. In particular we must endeavour to :
- (i) Move from Declarations to Concrete Actions;
 - (ii) Create community of interests instead of community of intentions.
- (C) Priority Areas include :
- Self Sufficiency in Food (currently we depend on 25% for food imports including food aid).
 - Communications and Transport (Presently it is easier to telephone from one African State to another through Europe. It is also quicker to travel in many cases from one African capital to another through Europe).
 - Trade and Commerce (At present Inter-African Trade is a pitiful 4%).
 - Science and Technology (This is the only break through to the real world).
 - Utilisation and Harmonization of Human Resources (How often do we look to Africans when we require experts or professionals. The result is that our experts are demoralised and abscond to developed world. At the same time we are forced to pay astronomical sums for the services of 'Experts' from the developed world).

(D) The Establishment of the African Economic Community (A.E.C)

With all the foregoing in mind, after 3 years preparatory work, the OAU Council of Ministers in its 53rd Ordinary Session adopted the Draft Treaty of the A.E.C. for the consideration and signature of our Heads of State and Government when they meet in Abuja in June 1991.

7. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REQUIRES PEACE AND STABILITY

imperative of seriously addressing ourselves to the Resolution of inter and intra State conflicts.

In the process we can be in a position to overcome the problems of 6 million refugees and 12 million displaced persons.

These conflicts include those (a) in the Horn of Africa; (b) Liberia; (c) Rwanda (d) Mauritania-Senegal; (c) ChadLibya and (e) the conflicts in Angola and Mozambique. (N.B. the 26th Summit in July 1990 addressed itself seriously to the issue of conflicts in our Continent. It is encouraging that more and more African States are urging the OAU to play a role in conflict Resolutions including Internal conflicts which hitherto were considered a sacred cow)..

8. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND POPULAR PARTICIPATION

- Comment on the debate on Democracy and the issue of political conditionality.
- What is essential is to stress on the basic fundamentals of democracy including :
 - Responsibility and Accountability of Governments
 - Rule of law.
 - Independence of the Judiciary.
 - Respect of and observance of Human Rights.
 - Checks and Balances of a Society including the blossoming of a free and dynamic press.
 - Participation of people in Politico-socio economic processes and in particular in the process of governance.
 - Whether Multipartyism or one Party should depend on the historical, environmental and cultural circumstances of each society.
(Neither Multipartyism or one Party participatory democracy are in themselves a guarantee for democracy).

9. CONCLUSION

Africa is part of the Global Village and hence international understanding and solidarity is a MUST.

But Africans cannot blame all their ills on external environment. Nor at the same time can we ignore the negative impact of a hostile international environment.

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- But for Africa to impact on world affairs and refuse being marginalised, the need for unity, cohesion and solidarity need not be over-emphasized. This unity of action must encompass all African States - from Mauritius to Cape Verde and from Namibia to Algeria.