

DÉLÉGATION PERMANENTE DE
L'ORGANISATION DE L'UNITÉ AFRICAINE
A GENÈVE

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PERMANENT DELEGATION OF
THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY
IN GENEVA

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Référence :

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ADDRESS BY DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM,
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE
ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY
TO THE FORTY-FIFTH WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY
SPECIAL PLENARY MEETING ON THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN THE WORLD ECONOMY, HEALTH
DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT

GENEVA, 6 MAY, 1992

Mr. President of the Forty-Fifth World Health Assembly,
Your Excellency President of the Republic of Portugal,
Your Excellencies the Ministers of Health and
Heads of Delegations,
Your Excellencies the Ambassadors and
Heads of Diplomatic Missions,
Mr. Director-General of the World Health Organization,
Distinguished Delegates,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Permit me to begin by expressing my deep appreciation to Dr. Hiroshi Nakajima, the distinguished Director-General of the World Health Organization, for having taken the initiative to organize this event. I am particularly happy to be given the opportunity to speak on the current world economy, health development and the environment. In my capacity as coordinator of the special sessions, I would like to briefly touch on some of the problems facing the developing world and particularly Africa.

This is a subject of major importance especially for Africa which is still going through serious economic problems with their serious implications to the Continent's ability to meet the social needs of the people. The subject assumes added relevance with the global developments now underway including, in particular, the trend towards globalization. As technology

.../2..brings countries

the people. A healthy and educated population is the ultimate goal towards which we must strive.

Mr. President,

To ensure a healthy living and good education for our people will take more than political declaration of intent. To raise the standards of health, to lower mortality rates, to eliminate malnutrition, to immunize children, to provide basic medicines, to improve sanitary conditions, to increase school enrolment or indeed to provide safe drinking water to our people will all require massive resources - both financial and human. It will, therefore, be necessary in tandem with pursuing the objective of a healthier society, to see how, globally, we can enter into partnership for resource mobilization targeted in particular to resuscitating the economies of the developing countries and especially Africa, spurring growth and development. It is only through raising the income levels of our countries that we shall be able to begin addressing these issues decisively and comprehensively.

Mr. President,

Africa is part of the global economy, even if it is still operating on its margins. As such, Africa is the weakest link in the chain, binding the world in one economy and, in consequence, the most vulnerable. The dependence of Africa's

.../4..economies on

structural adjustment needs to be handled more imaginatively; so as to ensure that these programs do not also compromise the ability of governments to meet their obligations to society - and especially to those of its most vulnerable segments. For ultimately, these programs can be sustainable in the long run, if they are also made sensitive to the legitimate primary needs of the people. In particular, these adjustment and stabilization programs have to be linked to additionality of resources.

In order, therefore, to meet the multifaceted challenge of managing world economy, health development and the environment, we will need to go into an alliance for resource mobilization in favour of developing countries. The developing countries need better terms of trade, access to the developed markets, remunerative prices for their primary commodities and the resolution of the debt problem so as to increase the income levels of these countries and stimulate internal savings for investment. This will need to be complemented by increased aid and easy access to concessionary credit.

Mr. President,

African countries face not only those immense economic problems, but also social problems, some endemic and some arising from the tumbling economic fortunes of the Continent. Africa is facing the scourge of 6 million refugees, 12 million

.../6...displaced persons

infrastructures, schools, health centres clinics and hospitals have been destroyed along with the environment; as a result of inter-State as well as intra-State conflicts. Africa has, with renewed determination, begun to address the issue of conflicts, in the clear realization that unless they are resolved, the Continent cannot face the daunting challenge of improving the quality of the lives of its people. What we now need, besides human solidarity in meeting the immediate humanitarian needs of the victims of these disasters, is the cooperation of the international community in elaborating political frameworks within which lasting solutions to these conflicts can be found.

Mr. President,

Whether in health development or the environment, the key issue will be cooperation and global partnership. To sensitize the world fully to the imperative of conserving our environment will require a comprehensive strategy. In less than a month, the world will be converging in Rio de Janeiro for the Earth Summit. My hope is that out of that global encounter, will emerge a genuine global commitment to reverse the current trend of development which is degrading our environment. But to achieve sustainable development, will require more than just to ask the developing countries to change their pattern of development. It will also require to help them develop sustainably and protect their environment. To conserve life-support systems, to conserve biodiversity or to ensure the

all humanity is so critically dependent. Because the world is one, with shared resources and eco systems, the challenges of preserving the environment will have to be met on a global basis and pursued as part of the process of attaining global sustainability.

Mr. President,

In Abuja, last year, at the 27th Assembly of Heads of State and Government, the OAU adopted another Declaration on Africa's Health Crisis and the Challenges of the 1990s. By this Declaration, our African leaders have taken cognizance of the numerous health problems facing our Continent today and the danger of reversal of our health gains of the Sixties and Seventies - because of such diseases as malaria, children's killer diseases such as diarrhoea and respiratory diseases and, of course, the AIDS epidemic.

For the next Summit in Dakar, this coming June, we have included a special agenda item on AIDS. This is a clear demonstration of the concern by our leaders of the plight facing our populations. The AIDS epidemic is not only decimating the most productive segments of our populations - the young and the able, it is also stretching the resources of our countries to the breaking point. In particular, the exigencies of meeting the needs of the sick and dying has placed heavy responsibility on governments and the families alike. The loss of income and

.../10..the decreased

resources. As we pursue these inter-related challenges, we must place emphasis on the central and over-riding imperative of eliminating poverty as the only viable solution to all these problems. The scourge of poverty will continue to undermine the ability of our countries to meet the health or educational needs of our people or to meet the challenge of preserving our environment. This is the all embracing challenge which must be met.

I thank you.