

MISSION PERMANENTE D'OBSERVATION
DE L'ORGANISATION DE L'UNITÉ AFRICAINE
AUPRÈS DES NATIONS UNIES



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PERMANENT OBSERVER MISSION OF THE
ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY TO
THE UNITED NATIONS

ADDRESS

BY

HIS EXCELLENCY SALIM AHMED SALIM
SECRETARY GENERAL
OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY

AT THE

SPECIAL COMMEMORATIVE SESSION OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON THE OCCASION

OF THE

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Mr. President,

Your Excellencies, Heads of States and Government,

Mr. Secretary General,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Fifty years ago, the world emerged from the ashes of a devastating war to found the United Nations. It was a world rediscovering its common humanity and destiny after the division, hatred and destruction of the war. In the new Organization, the world saw an opportunity to recreate society and to rebuild the bonds of human solidarity, to work together, to promote understanding and cooperation, to correct the wrongs of the past and to create a new world order, founded on freedom and justice, in which humanity was at peace with itself and forswore war.

Despite the determination and efforts of the United Nations in the last fifty years, the world has not been without conflict and war, or without injustice,

oppression and doubt which these have at times engendered. As the world has gone through the cyclical changes, the United Nations has seen violence, human suffering, injustice, poverty, racism and wars. In the attempts to respond to its global mission of peace and socio-economic development, the United Nations has applied itself seriously and made a difference to many. In its involvement in the maintenance of International Peace and Security, in fostering socio-economic development, in promoting human rights, the Organization has made its mark on our global society.

The work of its Specialized Agencies and Programmes has brought development and humanitarian assistance to the more needy of this world. Yes, the United Nations has had its share of difficulties and shortcomings. Yet, notwithstanding these shortcomings, not least those thrust upon it by the limitations and actions of its Member States, it is still an Organization which, in its universal character, embodies the world's peoples yearning to embrace each other in

a partnership of understanding and cooperation. In the name of the United Nations, we have witnessed more than human deprivation, suffering and wars. We have also witnessed human generosity and compassion, courage, gallantry and sacrifice.

Fifty years ago, a free Africa, liberated from colonialism and racial bigotry was only a concept to many and a distant dream even to the optimistic internationalists among those who met in San Francisco to draw up the Charter of our United Nations. To the Organization of African Unity and Africa as a whole therefore, the United Nations has been an instrument of liberation. Today, Africa is free and Apartheid has been relegated to history, due to a great extent, to the joint struggle within the United Nations. In the United Nations, the world opposition to colonialism and racism found convergence and a concrete expression of global partnership for change. That partnership made the difference and liberation of Africa is a reality we now live.

As Africa now faces the future - one in which the challenge of human development is getting the ever more urgent, we shall continue to need the solidarity and support of the United Nations. To sustain that spirit of global human solidarity inherent in the United Nations system, we must renew our confidence in this Organization, overcome our doubts and defeat sentiments of isolation in some Member States which now seem to be slowly undermining the spirit of internationalism embodied in the United Nations.

Equally, as we face the future, Africa being a continent of mainly small and developing countries, we see the continent at one with the United Nations in the global search for equality and peace and promoting human development. In this world which has more often than not tended to gravitate towards the unilateralism of the powerful, Africa can only continue to find security in the collective of the United Nations.

The new changes which have taken place in the world system are presenting new challenges. The

United Nations is being tested and it has to adjust. But for it to do so effectively, its Member States must renew their faith in our shared humanity and to strengthen the United Nations bridges of cooperation and understanding which span the full breath of this globe, and to rekindle the spirit of the founding fathers.

This is a celebration of global solidarity and cooperation. It is a commemoration of half a century of partnership between the peoples of the world. We therefore need to take stock of the past fifty years, assess our achievements and weigh our failures, and reflect so that we can forge ahead. This is equally an opportunity to rededicate ourselves to the ideals of the United Nations, to renew our faith in the Organization, and to pledge our undivided political and resource support to it so that it can effectively face the daunting challenges of peace and human development as we enter the next millennium.

I thank you.