

THE MWALIMU NYERERE FOUNDATION



OPENING ADDRESS

BY

**DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM
CHAIRMAN OF THE MWALIMU NYERERE FOUNDATION**

AT THE

AFRICA SCIENCE RENAISSANCE DAY

**COSTECH
DAR ES SALAAM
30th JUNE 2003**

**OPENING ADDRESS BY HON. DR. SALIM AHMED
SALIM, CHAIRMAN, MWALIMU NYERERE FOUNDATION,
AT THE AFRICA SCIENCE RENAISSANCE DAY HELD
ON 30TH JUNE 2003,
COSTECH, DAR ES SALAAM**

Chairperson,

Director General, COSTECH

Distinguished Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Let me on the outset express my appreciation at being invited to this workshop. I would like to join the organizers in thanking everyone who is attending this workshop and especially the distinguished scholars who will be making presentations. I believe their presentations will stimulate useful discussions, which will allow us to forge ahead in our quest for the African Renaissance.

Without overestimating what the one-day workshop can achieve, I am nevertheless convinced that your presence here today, is an eloquent testimony of your commitment towards the realization of our important goal of the renewal of our African continent. In this context, I take it that our

participation at this workshop constitutes an undertaking by each one of us to stay on course as genuine activists for the rebirth of our continent through the extensive promotion and development of science and technology as well as its effective utilization in our country and our continent.

At this juncture, I wish to commend those among us who have organised this workshop as an important contribution in the commemoration of the African Science and Technology Renaissance Day.

Let me start by briefly highlighting the important contributions of our continent which have had universal impact and recognition. Africa is a continent, which led in the very evolution of human life and was a leading centre of learning, technology and the arts of ancient times. The glorious past of the emergence of ***Homo sapiens*** on the African continent, the continuum in the fine arts that encompasses the varied artistic creations of the Nubians, and the Egyptians, the benign bronzes of Nigeria, and the intricate sculptures of the Makonde of Tanzania and Mozambique.

I also refer to the centuries old contributions of the evolution of religious thought made by both Muslims and Christians in our continent. And how can we not mention the architectural monuments represented by the giant sculptured stones of Aksum in Ethiopia, the Great Zimbabwe ruins, the Egyptian sphinxes and pyramids, the origin of Mathematics, in particular Algebra, also in Egypt, the Tunisian city of Carthage, as well as the legacy of the ancient University of Alexandria of Egypt, Fez of Morocco and Timbuktu of Mali.

Along with this glorious past, however, Africa has experienced various traumatic epochs, each one of which has pushed her peoples deeper into poverty and backwardness. Tragedies like slavery robbed the continent of millions of her healthiest and most productive inhabitants and reinforced the racist and criminal notion. Imperialism and colonialism resulted in the plunder of raw materials and the destruction of our indigenous knowledge. The combined evils of slavery, ^{Imperi} ~~feud~~alism, colonialism and racism has done considerable damage to our societies and severely eroded the development of our countries and peoples.

Mr. Chairman, the beginning of our rebirth as a continent must be our own unequivocal determination not simply to lament the injustices of the past but to recognize our peoples' creativity and resilience in the midst of such adversities and resolve to chart the way forward for a better and progressive continent.

What then is the renaissance of the African continent are we talking about? And how can Science and Technology contribute to the African Renaissance? The word renaissance means rebirth, renewal or springing- up. When we speak of an African Renaissance, we speak of the rebirth or renewal of our continent projecting it into the future, which is characterised by globalisation and rapid scientific and technological changes.

The First Congress of African Scientists, held in Brazzaville from 25 to 30 June 1987 passed a resolution which called upon Member States to:

- Celebrate in June of every year as a Day for the Scientific Renaissance of Africa with various activities (lectures on Science and Technology, visits to Scientific

Centres and Institutions, scientific exhibitions and competitions);

- Support the Pan-African Union of Science and Technology;
- Encourage the establishment of national or sub-regional scientific associations where they do not exist and to strengthen existing ones.

The holding of this workshop is in line with the Brazzaville resolution. On 12th April, 2003, hundreds of people from Africa, the Americas and the islands of the Caribbean met in Goree Island, Dakar, Senegal to discuss on the African future and join up in a collective effort to partake in the economic, political and cultural renaissance of Africa and its communities worldwide.

To us Africans, the “African Renaissance” entails many parts which when assembled together would ensure the rebirth of our continent ready to play its rightful role in the global arena. The different parts of the African renaissance include:

- The establishment of **democratic good governance systems** to ensure the accomplishment of the goal that “the people shall govern”;

- The strengthening of the genuine independence of African countries and enhancing their role in the international system of governance in all fields, including politics, the economy, security, information and intellectual property, the environment and science and technology;
- The achievement of sustainable economic development that results in the continuous improvement of standards of living and the quality of life of the masses of our people.

The theme for the today's workshop, '**Linkage between Science and Technology and Productive Sectors**', though admittedly only a part of a whole range of activities necessary for the African Renaissance, is particularly relevant given the current situation in our country and the formidable challenges that confront us.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I need not emphasise on the role of Science and Technology as the hub for any modern development. In my view, Science and Technology cuts

across all other parts required for the African Renaissance. It has therefore ~~played~~ a pivotal role for the rebirth of the African Continent. Yet regrettably, the reality prevailing in our continent is that the majority of the people have been left out from Science, Engineering and Technology. This must change.

I have taken due note that apart from the Science and Technology aspect you are going to tackle, you will also deal with the correlation of the socio economic aspect of Science and Technology in one of the presentations. I just want to make a quick observation on this; that most of African countries have treated economic expansion on one side and advances in Science and Technology on the other. In the real sense these should not be separated - they are two sides of the coin.

By expanding the participation of all communities in science and technology, we are also making a contribution to the democratization of economic ownership and participation as well as building of an expanded and firm base for economic progress. The Sengerema Information Technology Project run by COSTECH is a very good example of economic

empowerment of the rural people taking advantage of advances in Science, Engineering and Technology. The attainment of a better life for all our people is dependent on our people achieving a competitive, growing and sustainable economy in which all our people participate.

The people should, therefore, be allowed to enter the theatre of universal human exchange in Science, Engineering and Technology. In order to hasten this process, I consider it of paramount importance to develop greater co-operation with our East and Southern African neighbours as well as the rest of Africa in scientific and economic areas. Our interaction with the world should be anchored on this strategy and principle. We cannot achieve our own renewal in isolation from a region and the continent. In similar vein, we need to act together nationally, regionally and continentally to combat man made and natural disasters such as civil wars, AIDS, famine and drug trafficking among others.

It is unfortunate that despite repeated affirmations about the importance of Science and Technology in national development and 21st century being the century of Science and Technology, our investment in Science and Technology

remain dismal 0.35% of the GDP. Compared to some countries, such as Japan and USA spending more than 3% of their GDP to support science activities, there is no doubt that we are still a long way to go.

Mr. Chairman, as we draw the attention of the public to the centrality of Science and Technology in the rebirth of our country and the continent, as a whole, we should capture the imagination of our youths – our future scientists with the message that Science and Technology is crucial for the survival of our country in the increasingly competitive world. Research programmes constitute an integral part of Science Technology sector and since the government funds most of them, it is only logical that the limited resources are used efficiently. Applied research could be given more prominence to solve some of the basic problems facing the masses.

I am informed that there are lots of research results that are unable to find their way to the end users. Perhaps the results in their present form are not utilisable by the people or the means to communicate the results to the end users are either not appropriate or not in place. Whatever may be the

case; all our research activities should be geared towards solving our problems. The result should be communicated to the people and be used by the people.

It is only through this way, that a positive image of Science and Technology will be created and influence people to better understand it. The government should provide the requisite support to the Science and Technology including the provision of incentives for those programmes that aim to stimulate innovation. To achieve this goal and bring about real changes, we must expand frontiers within which the creative genius and enterprising spirit of the people and the individual can find unlimited expression.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish to recall with pride the African scholar of the Middle Ages, Sadi of Timbuktu, who had mastered such subjects as law, logic, dialectics, grammar, and rhetoric, and other African intellectuals who taught at the University of Timbuktu, who said “where are Africa’s intellectuals today!” In our world in which the generation of new knowledge and its application to change human environment is the engine which moves the human society ^{TOWARDS} further ^{HORIZON} ~~away from barbarism~~. It is important

that we reverse the trend of flight of our intellectuals to Western countries. Let us make it greener here.

The involvement of Science and Technology in searching for solutions to Africa's problems and challenges is very critical in ensuring that Africa, takes its position in the world and also gets prepared for the changes of the new millennium. The negative stereotype assertions that Africa is incapable of initiative, creativity and entrepreneurship, is certainly challenged and confounded by the enormous achievements that our continent has had in the past.

In strengthening our resolve for the African Renaissance we should draw inspiration from such countries as Japan which through the Meiji Restoration only 130 years ago enabled its fore bearers to project both into their past and their future. Today, we bear witness of the Japanese economic might and her enviable position in the contributing to the global advancement in Science and Technology. Through our resolve for African Renaissance, we should be able to effect the necessary changes given the great potential that exist in our continent, but to succeed we must work hard for those changes. We must not be satisfied with sloganeering. We

must as a country and as a continent seriously invest in Science and Technology and vigorously utilize Science and Technology in the socio-economic transformation of our countries.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you for your kind attention and **I now declare the Workshop on African Science and Technology Renaissance officially open.**