

**ADDRESS OF THE OAU SECRETARY-GENERAL, H.E. MR SALIM AHMED SALIM
BEFORE THE FOURTH REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE INTEGRATION
OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT
AND
ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ARUSHA STRATEGIES
FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN IN AFRICA**

ABUJA - NIGERIA, 6 NOVEMBER, 1989.

MADAME CHAIRPERSON,
YOUR EXCELLENCY, GENERAL IBRAHIM BABANGIDA
PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA,
YOUR EXCELLENCIES, HONOURABLE MINISTERS,
PROFESSOR ADEBAYO ADEDEJI,
YOUR EXCELLENCIES, FIRST LADIES,
YOUR EXCELLENCIES, MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I AM GRATEFUL TO THE ORGANISERS OF THIS CONFERENCE FOR HAVING INVITED ME TO ADDRESS THIS FOURTH REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE INTEGRATION OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ARUSHA STRATEGIES FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN IN AFRICA. I AM ALSO GRATEFUL TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA AND ITS PEOPLE UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF HIS EXCELLENCY GENERAL IBRAHIM BABANGIDA FOR THE WARM HOSPITALITY EXTENDED TO ME AND MY COLLEAGUES FROM THE OAU SECRETARIAT SINCE OUR ARRIVAL IN THIS BEAUTIFUL CITY OF ABUJA.

I AM HAPPY THAT THE PURPOSES OF THIS CONFERENCE TODAY IS TO REFLECT ON THE DEGREE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ARUSHA STRATEGIES, TO DISCERN THE SHORT-COMINGS, TO DESIGN FURTHER STRATEGIES FOR OVERCOMING THE PITFALLS AND TO PROJECT THE FUTURE OF THE AFRICAN WOMEN BEYOND THE YEAR 2000 IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE AFRICAN CONTINENT.

MADAME CHAIRPERSON,

IN REFLECTING ON THE SUBJECT MATTER OF WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ARUSHA STRATEGIES FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN BEYOND THE UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR WOMEN, WE TAKE INSPIRATION FROM THE LAGOS PLAN OF ACTION AND THE FINAL ACT OF LAGOS. IT IS IN THIS HISTORIC DOCUMENT THAT THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONTINENT WAS SUCCINTLY ARTICULATED AND RECOGNISED. INDEED, DURING THE TWENTY-FIRST ORDINARY SESSION OF THE OAU, THE HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT DIRECTED THAT THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT MUST BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY INTO ACCOUNT IN DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AND IN THE DISBURSEMENT OF RESOURCES.

THE HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT FURTHER EMPHASISED THE PIVOTAL ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR AND AGAIN DIRECTED THAT THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE BE RECOGNISED AND ENCOURAGED. IN THIS REGARD, WOMEN WERE TO BE PERCEIVED AS CONTRIBUTORS TO AND BENEFICIARIES OF DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS AS RECOMMENDED BY THE ARUSHA FORWARD-LOOKING STRATEGIES. CLEARLY, THE AFRICAN WOMAN HAS A GREAT ROLE TO PLAY IN MOBILIZATION OF PRIORITY MEASURES IN THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE SECTOR.

FIVE YEARS HAVE GONE BY SINCE THE FORWARD-LOOKING STRATEGIES WERE ADOPTED IN ARUSHA. I HAD THE PRIVILEGE AND HONOUR, THEN AS PRIME MINISTER OF MY COUNTRY, TO CLOSE THE AFRICA REGIONAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE WHICH ADOPTED THE HISTORIC «ARUSHA FORWARDLOOKING STRATEGIES FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN UP TO THE YEAR 2000» AS AFRICA CONTRIBUTION TO THE NAIROBI WORLD WOMEN CONFERENCE FOUR YEARS AGO. THE DOCUMENT REFLECT THE SOCIAL SITUATION OF OUR WOMEN, THEIR NEEDS, THEIR MULTI-FACETED WORK, THEIR HOPES AND FEARS AS WELL AS THEIR ASPIRATIONS.

MADAME CHAIRPERSON,

THIS CONFERENCE IS TAKING PLACE AT A CRITICAL JUNCTURE IN THE HISTORY OF OUR CONTINENT. ALL THAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED ECONOMICALLY DURING THE LAST THREE DECADES IS THREATENED OF BY THE HOSTILE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT WE FIND OURSELVES IN TODAY. INDEED, IF WE HAVE TO SOME EXTENT FAILED TO REALIZE FULLY OUR ARUSHA OBJECTIVES, IT IS TO SOME MEASURE AS A RESULT OF THIS, BUT THIS IS BY NO MEANS AN ATTEMPT AT EXONERATING OUR GOVERNMENTS. IT IS THE SAD REALITY.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICA FROM BEING THE MOST BACKWARD AND MOST UNDER-DEVELOPED OF THE WORLD'S REGIONS WILL CERTAINLY NOT BE AN EASY TASK. IT WILL REQUIRE THE FULL MOBILIZATION AND RATIONAL USE OF ALL THE CONTINENT'S NATURAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES. THE DAUNTING DIMENSIONS OF THE PROBLEM WERE REVEALED DURING THE SECOND EXTRAORDINARY SUMMIT OF THE ASSEMBLY OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT WHICH WAS CONVENED SPECIFICALLY TO CONSIDER THE AFRICAN DEBT SITUATION.

AFRICA'S EXTERNAL DEBT STOOD AT MORE THAN US\$ 230 BILLION IN 1987. SINCE THEN, THE EXTERNAL DEBT HAS CONTINUED TO SOAR AS AFRICA CONTINUES TO LOOSE REVENUE OWING TO THE CONTINUOUS PLUMMETING OF ITS FOREIGN EXCHANGE EARNINGS.

THE PRICES OF ITS EXPORT COMMODITIES CONTINUE TO FALL AND AS THE PRICES OF AFRICA'S ESSENTIAL IMPORTS ARE RISING RAPIDLY. THE INTEREST RATES ON EXTERNAL LOANS HAVE CONTINUED TO RISE WHILE CURRENCY DEVALUATION, LAUDED AS THE PANACEA FOR ALL OUR ECONOMIC ILLS, HAS NOT SUCCEEDED IN ARRESTING AFRICA'S ECONOMIC DECLINE. ON THE CONTRARY, THE SOCIAL COSTS OF STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT HAVE BEEN HORRENDOUS. WE HAVE WITNESSED A MOST TRAGIC REGRESSION IN SOCIAL SERVICES, ESPECIALLY EDUCATION, HEALTH, NUTRITION TO MENTION BUT A FEW. AND THE HARDEST HIT VICTIMS ARE WOMEN AND THE VERY YOUNG. ALSO AS IF NATURE HAS CONSPIRED AGAINST US, OUR CONTINENT HAS UNDERGONE DISASTROUS SPELLS OF DROUGHT AND DESERTIFICATION. DROUGHTS HAVE INDUCED CONDITIONS OF FAMINE WHICH HAVE BROUGHT UNTOLD SUFFERING AND DEATH AND DRAMATICALLY INCREASED THE NUMBER OF REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AGAIN MOST OF WHOM ARE WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

IN APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA, THOUSANDS OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN HAVE PERISHED IN THIS ON-GOING SAGA OF RACIST-INSPIRED BRUTALITY. THE TURMOIL IN SOUTHERN AFRICA MILITATES AGAINST THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ARUSHA FORWARD-LOOKING STRATEGIES AND THE OVERTHROW OF THE APARTHEID IS THE PRE-REQUISITE NOT ONLY FOR THE LIBERATION OF SOUTH AFRICA AND THE STABILISATION OF SOUTHERN AFRICA BUT ALSO FOR THE REALISATION OF THE GOALS OF THE ARUSHA FORWARD-LOOKING STRATEGIES AS WELL AS THOSE PROCLAIMED IN THE WORLD DECADE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN.

THE VERY BLEAK AND GRIM PICTURE THAT I HAVE PAINTED OF THE SITUATION OF WOMEN IN AFRICA ENABLED US TO FACE THE REALITY OF THE AFRICAN SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION. BUT THIS REALITY SHOULD NOT DISCOURAGE US. IT BEHOVES US TO RE-VISIT THE ARUSHA CONFERENCE AND DRAW INSPIRATION, FORESIGHT AND COURAGE FROM BOTH ITS PROCEEDINGS AND ITS RESULTS. ARUSHA ENABLED THE AFRICAN WOMEN TO DRAW UP A BLUE-PRINT FOR THEIR OWN ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS OF THEIR CONTINENT AND TO REACH A COMMON POSITION FOR PRESENTATION TO THE REST OF THE WORLD IN THE NAIROBI WORLD CONFERENCE OF WOMEN. ARUSHA IS AS RELEVANT TODAY AS IT WAS IN 1984. ITS LOFTY IDEALS HAVE ENABLED US TO PERCEIVE OUR INADEQUACIES AND FAILURES IN THE DOMAIN OF WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION. BUT IT HAS ALSO ENABLES US TO IDENTIFY SOME OF THE ACHIEVEMENTS WE HAVE ATTAINED AND, ABOVE ALL, TO MAINTAIN OUR STRATEGIC OPTIMISM IN CONFRONTING THE OBSTACLES THAT LIE STREWN ALONG OUR ROAD TO THE TOTAL EMANCIPATION OF THE AFRICAN WOMAN AND HER FULL INTEGRATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS OF AFRICA.

WE CAN CERTAINLY FEEL PROUD AT WHAT HAS BEEN DONE. WE HAVE MADE APPRECIABLE PROGRESS. WE HAVE MORE WOMEN AS MINISTERS, TEACHERS, LAWYERS, SOCIOLOGISTS, PHYSICIANS, BIOLOGISTS, INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANTS AND ENTREPRENEURS. WE HAVE MORE FEMALE ENROLLMENT IN OUR SCHOOLS. WOMEN NOW OCCUPY SO MANY JOBS TODAY IN DOMAINS HITHERTO REGARDED AS MAN'S WORLD. ALL OVER THE CONTINENT, AFRICAN COUNTRIES HAVE ESTABLISHED STRUCTURES TO PROMOTE THE SYSTEMATIC ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN AND THESE STRUCTURES RANGE FROM SECTIONS OF MINISTRIES TO FULL-FLEDGED MINISTRIES. CONSIDERABLE RESEARCH AND STUDIES HAVE BEEN UNDERTAKEN TO BETTER UNDERSTAND AND HANDLE ISSUES PERTAINING TO THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY.

THESE ARE HEALTHY AND PROGRESSIVE INITIATIVES WHICH DESERVE OUR ENCOURAGEMENT AND SUPPORT. BUT WE HAVE A LONG WAY BEFORE WE CAN BRING THE SITUATION TO ACCEPTABLE STANDARDS.

MADAME CHAIRPERSON,

IF WOMEN REMAIN MARGINALIZED TODAY, IT IS NOT FOR LACK OF EFFORTS AT THEIR INTEGRATION. EVEN BEFORE ARUSHA, THERE HAD BEEN CONCRETE EFFORTS AIMED AT THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN. FIFTEEN YEARS AGO, THE UNITED NATIONS DECLARED A DECADE FOR WOMEN WITH THE THEME OF EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE. THE 1979 MONROVIA SYMPOSIUM IN AFRICA'S FUTURE DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS STRESSED THE NEED TO MOBILIZE WOMEN AS PART OF THE PROCESS OF HARNESSING AFRICA'S ESSENTIAL RESOURCES FOR DEVELOPMENT. THE LAGOS PLAN OF ACTION, AFRICA'S PRIORITY PROGRAMME FOR ECONOMIC RECOVERY, AS WELL AS THE UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR AFRICA'S ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT - ALL ENCAPSULATED THE INELUCTABLE TRUISM THAT THERE CAN NEVER BE ANY MEANINGFUL OR SUBSTANTIAL DEVELOPMENT WITHOUT THE CONSCIOUS, UNFETTERED AND ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF AFRICA'S WOMENFOLK.

WE IN THE OAU WILL RENDER OUR CONTRIBUTION TO THIS NOBLE OBJECTIVE. AT INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL, I AM HAPPY TO ANNOUNCE THAT LAST FRIDAY, I SIGNED AN EXECUTIVE ORDER ESTABLISHING A WOMEN'S UNIT IN THE GENERAL SECRETARIAT. THIS WILL ENSURE THAT EACH OF ITS FIVE DEPARTMENTS WILL TAKE WOMEN'S INTERESTS INTO ACCOUNT AND INTEGRATE THEM IN THEIR PROGRAMMES OF WORK.

THE UNIT WILL HAVE A VERY PRECISE MANDATE TO ENSURE THAT WOMEN'S CONCERNS AND INTERESTS AND, ABOVE ALL, THE ROLE OF WOMEN ARE TAKEN INTO SERIOUS CONSIDERATION IN THE DRAFTING OF OAU WORK PROGRAMMES.

THE UNIT WILL BE THE THINK TANK AND COORDINATOR ON WOMEN'S AFFAIRS IN THE CONTINENT. TOGETHER WITH ECA, ILO, INSTRAW AND UNIFEM, THE OAU IS ALREADY ENGAGED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A PROJECT AIMED AT «IMPROVING AFRICAN WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE INFORMAL SECTOR : PRODUCTION AND MANAGEMENT». A UNESCO FUNDED STUDY ON «TRADITIONAL AND CULTURAL FACTORS WHICH PREVENT WOMEN FROM FULLY PARTICIPATING IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS» IS BEING UNDERTAKEN; ACTION IS BEING TAKEN TO TACKLE THE PROBLEM OF «HARMFUL TRADITIONAL PRACTICES WHICH ADVERSELY AFFECT THE HEALTH OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN» AND A COLLOQUIUM OF «WOMEN, AGRICULTURE, FOOD SELF-SUFFICIENCY AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY» IS BEING PREPARED BY THE OAU. ALL THESE ENDEAVOURS CANNOT SUCCEED WITHOUT YOUR ACTIVE AND WHOLE-HEARTED SUPPORT.

MADAME CHAIRPERSON ,

THIS NEW INITIATIVE UNDERLINES THE OAU'S REALIZATION OF THE RIGHTS DENIED TO WOMEN. WE BELIEVE THAT AFRICAN WOMAN MUST BE RESTORED TO THE CENTRE OF OUR DEVELOPMENT. THE LAGOS PLAN OF ACTION AND THE ARUSHA STRATEGIES DO EMPHASISE THE IMPERATIVE NEED TO MOVE THE AFRICAN WOMAN FROM THE PERIPHERY OF OUR DECISION MAKING PROCESS TO THE MAIN STREAM OF OUR SOCIO-ECONOMIC PLANNING. WE HAVE TO REVERSE PAST TRENDS IN WHICH SHE HAS REMAINED OVER THE LAST THIRTY YEARS OF OUR INDEPENDENCE AS AN OPPRESSED SPECTATOR AND MORE OBVIOUSLY A VICTIM OF OUR OWN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS.

THE WORLD CANNOT CONTINUE TO BE AN EXCLUSIVE DOMAIN OF MEN. THE WOMEN OF THE WORLD HAVE, THROUGH NATIONAL LEGISLATIONS, TO BE GIVEN THE REQUISITE OPPORTUNITY TO EXTRACT THEMSELVES FROM THE PERIPHERY OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS. THE AFRICAN WOMAN IS STILL SOMETIMES DENIED BASIC RIGHTS AND MARGINALIZED IN SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PLANNING. MOST UNFORTUNATELY, SHE IS AT A LEVEL WHERE MORE EFFORTS WILL HAVE TO BE MADE TO BRING HER TO A PROPER LEVEL IN OUR DEVELOPMENT PROCESS AND THUS THE CHALLENGE OF THIS CONFERENCE.

AS THE CONFERENCE BEGINS TO REFLECT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ARUSHA STRATEGIES FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT, IT MUST PONDER OVER WHAT MUST BE DONE FIRST AND FOREMOST TO IMPROVE THE LIVING AND WORKING CONDITIONS OF THE RURAL WOMEN AND HOW TO ARREST THE INCREASING TREND ON A URBAN MIGRATION PARTICULARLY OF WOMEN. IN OTHER WORDS, WE MUST DELIBERATE ON WAYS AND MEANS TO MAKE THE RURAL CONDITIONS CONDUCIVE TO LIFE. HERE, WE HAVE TO THINK ON THE METHODS OF IMPROVING RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND THE PROVISION OF THE NECESSARY FACILITIES IN THE FIELD OF HEALTH AND SANITATION, EDUCATION, SHELTER AND OTHERS WITHIN THE REALM OF THE CONCEPT OF BASIC HUMAN NEEDS. WE MUST REVIEW THE NATIONAL PLANNING MECHANISM AND EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITY FOR CHANGE WHERE NECESSARY SO AS TO ADDRESS THIS ANOMALY.

RURAL TECHNOLOGY IS ESSENTIAL IN THE PLANNING PROCESS AND THE PROVISION OF WATER FOR THE RURAL POPULATION WILL GO A LONG WAY TO HELP THE RURAL WOMAN TO CONCENTRATE ON THE PRODUCTIVE SECTOR. WE ALL KNOW THAT RURAL WATER SUPPLIES ARE VERY MUCH A QUESTION OF WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION IN AFRICA, FOR, TRADITIONALLY, IT IS THE WOMEN WHO TILL THE LAND, SEARCH FOR AND CARRY THE WATER, AND COLLECT FIREWOOD NEEDED FOR THE HOME. CLEAN WATER IS BASIC FOR THE HEALTH OF OUR PEOPLE AND FOR THEIR DEVELOPMENTAL ASPIRATIONS. WE SHOULD LIBERATE OUR RURAL WOMEN FROM THE AGONY OF WALKING MILES AND MILES TO FETCH WATER AND FIREWOOD.

ABOVE ALL, WE MUST LAUNCH A COORDINATED ATTACK ON THE SOCIAL ATTITUDES WHICH HAVE COMBINED WITH OUR OWN THINKING ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TO PRODUCE A SYNDROME OF INEFFECTUAL PLATITUDES ABOUT THE WOMEN'S ROLE IN OUR DEVELOPMENT PROCESS. TIME HAS COME WHEN WE MUST TOGETHER, MEN AND WOMEN, TRANSCEND THE SO CALLED NICETIES OF THE OLD ORDER WHICH HAS SUBJECTED WOMEN INTO THE MAINSTREAM OF UNDERDOGS IN BOTH NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL POLITICS AND WHICH HAS SOCIALLY ESTABLISHED NORMS WHICH WORK AGAINST THE PROCESS OF WOMEN INTEGRATION.

EVERYONE IN EUROPE IS NOW REDISCOVERING THE VIRTUES OF UNITY AND COOPERATION. WESTERN EUROPE IS GEARING ITSELF TO A SINGLE MARKET BY 1992. THE BIG POWERS ARE ENTERING INTO A NEW PHASE OF COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIP. THE RAPID CHANGES IN EASTERN EUROPE ARE PROVING TO BE CATALYSTS TO EAST-WEST COOPERATION.

IN SUM, THE DEVELOPED WORLD IS RESPONDING TO THE INEVITABILITY OF COOPERATION AND EVENTUALLY UNITY. WE ARE WITNESSING THE WITHERING AWAY OF TRADITIONAL IDEOLOGICAL BARRIERS AND, INDEED, THE BLURING OF IDEOLOGICAL COLOUR CONTRASTS. THIS GRADUAL INTEGRATION OF EUROPE WILL FACILITATE GREATER FLOW OF RESOURCES TO NON-TRADITIONAL INVESTMENT AREAS. INDEED, BECAUSE OF FACTORS OF GEOGRAPHY, CULTURAL AFFINITY AND, ABOVE ALL, EXISTENCE OF SOPHISTICATED INFRASTRUCTURE AND MANPOWER, THESE NEW INVESTMENT AREAS WILL BE MORE ATTRACTIVE FOR FOREIGN INVESTMENT. THIS MEANS, IN REAL TERMS, THAT EUROPE WILL LOOK TO EUROPE, AMERICA TO THE EAST. THERE WILL BE LESS INFLOW OF RESOURCES IN TERMS OF CAPITAL TO AFRICA.

WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN ? IT MEANS AFRICA WILL HAVE TO ADJUST TO A MORE HOSTILE ECONOMIC AND POSSIBLY POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT. IT MEANS WE WILL HAVE TO LOOK TO OURSELVES FOR OUR OWN DEVELOPMENT. IT MEANS WE WILL NEED UNITY AND SPEAK IN ONE VOICE. THESE CHANGING RELATIONSHIPS MEAN AFRICA WILL HAVE TO HARNESS EVERY RESOURCE POSSIBLE FOR HER DEVELOPMENT. ABOVE ALL, IT MEANS WOMEN CAN NO LONGER CONTINUE TO BE ERRONEOUSLY REGARDED AS A PERIPHERAL FORCE IN AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT.

BUT TOGETHER, WE MUST WORK IN UNISON. FOR, AS AFRICA MOVES INTO THE LAST DECADE OF THE 20TH CENTUARY AND BEYOND, IT WILL NEED TO HARNESS ALL ITS RESOURCES, IN PARTICULAR HUMAN RESOURCES, TO FACE THE CHALLENGES WITH MORE CONFIDENCE.

THE POTENTIAL OF WOMEN IN AFRICA HAS YET TO BE REALIZED; AND IF WE SEEK TO ACHIEVE FULL AND GENUINE DEVELOPMENT, WE HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO EMBARK ON DELIBERATE POLICIES TO BRING THE WOMEN TO THE CENTRE OF OUR DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES. WE MUST FIGHT SOCIAL AND SYSTEMIC PREJUDICES WHICH, UNTIL NOW, HAVE ENGINEERED THE RELEGATION OF THE WOMEN TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SOCIAL POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC LADDER.

LET ME ADD, MADAME CHAIRPERSON, GOOD JUDGEMENT WOULD SUGGEST THAT WE HAVE TO RELY ON OUR OWN EFFORTS IF WE ARE TO ACHIEVE MEANINGFUL DEVELOPMENT. WE HAVE TO DRAW UP REALISTIC ACTION PROGRAMMES, WHICH TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE MEANS AT OUR DISPOSAL, AND ENLIST THE ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT OF OUR PEOPLES, RIGHT FROM THE GRASSROOT LEVEL TO THE TOP.

WOMEN CAN, CERTAINLY, MAKE THE DIFFERENCE IN WHAT THE CONTINENT WANTS TO ACHIEVE; THEY CAN MAKE THE DIFFERENCE BECAUSE, AS MOTHERS, THEY ARE THE TEACHERS OF THE NATION; AS WIVES, THEY ARE PARTNERS OF MAN IN DEVELOPMENT AND AS WORKERS, THEY CONSTITUTE A VITAL AND POTENT WORK-FORCE WHOSE CONTRIBUTION TO AFRICA'S PRODUCTIVE CAPACITY CAN ONLY BE IGNORED TO THE DETRIMENT OF THE CONTINENT'S DEVELOPMENTAL TARGETS. LET ME REAFFIRM THAT THE OAU WILL DO ITS BEST TO KINDLE AND PROMOTE AWARENESS OF THE CONTRIBUTION THAT AFRICA'S WOMEN CAN MAKE AND THEIR VAST POTENTIAL IF THEY ARE FULLY INTEGRATED IN THE PROCESS.

A CONTINENT WHOSE WOMEN-FOLK REMAIN IN BONDAGE CANNOT CLAIM TO BE FREE. THE EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN IS THE YARDSTICK WITH WHICH TO MEASURE THE EMANCIPATION OF A GIVEN SOCIETY. THEIR FULL-FLEDGED INTEGRATION IN ALL DOMAINS OF SOCIAL LIFE IS THE YARDSTICK WITH WHICH WE SHOULD MEASURE OUR SERIOUSNESS AND REALISM IN PROMOTING AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENTAL ASPIRATIONS.

MADAME CHAIRPERSON,

HISTORY BEARS ME OUT WHEN I SAY THAT AFRICAN WOMEN HAVE BEEN AT THE CENTRE OF AFRICA'S LIBERATION EFFORTS - BE IT IN THE REALM OF POLITICAL OR ARMED STRUGGLE. AS A RESULT, THEY HAVE PAID A HEAVY PRICE INDEED ! THEY HAVE MADE MANY SACRIFICES. MANY HAVE BEEN KILLED, MANY MORE MAIMED. BUT THEIR SPIRIT OF RESISTANCE AGAINST COLONIALISM, FOREIGN OCCUPATION AND OTHER EVILS REMAINS UNDAUNTED.

IN SOUTH AFRICA, THEY RISK THEIR LIVES DAILY IN OPPOSITION TO APARTHEID. AND WATER-CANONS, BATONS AND BULLETS HAVE NOT MANAGED TO BEND THEIR WILL TO RESIST. OUR WRITTEN HISTORY, FOLKLORE AND ORAL HISTORY ARE FULL OF PRAISE TO OUR HEROINES. BUT THERE MANY MORE WHO ARE NOT SUNG BUT HAVE MADE AND CONTINUE TO MAKE MONUMENTAL SACRIFICES FOR THE LIBERATION OF OUR CONTINENT. IT IS TO THESE TO WHOM I PROPOSE YOU DEDICATE THIS CONFERENCE.

I THANK YOU.