

22

THE AFRICA CENTER LECTURE:

«THE OAU AND THE AFRICAN AGENDA IN THE 1990»

Delivered by
H.E. SALIM AHMED SALIM
SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE OAU

London,
11 October 1990

Mr. Chairman,
Mr. Nigel Watt - The Director
of African Center,
Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Allow me to begin by saying how happy and honoured I feel to have been invited to deliver the Inaugural Africa Center Lecture. I am pleased to be part of a rich though relatively short history of the Center. Over the last quarter of century, the Center has been a convergence point of Africans living and passing through this country. It has provided a forum for political exchanges and social interaction. It has promoted African Culture, Art and brought the diversity and richness of the continent closer to the people of the United Kingdom. In a very practical way, the Center has been able to forge links of better human understanding between the people of this country and Africa and even among Africans themselves. The Center, remains loyal to the mission it set for itself when President Keneth Kaunda, officiated at its opening back in 1964. And this, it has done despite the many problems it had to face - not least those of finances. I congratulate most sincerely the staff and supporters of the Center and I urge you to carry on this mission.

The history of this Center, is very much intertwined with the most recent history of Africa. The troubles and fortunes of the continent have engaged the minds of the people who frequent it - whether in formal or informal discussions. Today thirty years after the phase of the decolonization began in earnest and a few months after the independence of Namibia, Africa is at crossroads. With the exception of the question of Apartheid in South Africa, the process of decolonization, in the classical sense has now come to an end.

Mr. Chairman,

We remain with the daunting task of bringing down the structures of Apartheid which over the many decades, have held millions of the black people and other non-whites in racial bondage. It will not be an easy task but it is inevitable that all those concerned muster the necessary will to take realistic political measures which seek to dismantle the Apartheid system totally. We at the OAU and indeed Africa as a whole, are encouraged by the important changes which have taken place in South Africa. The release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners, the unbanning of the ANC, PAC and other Anti-Apartheid organizations, the partial lifting of the state of Emergency and the relaxation of other peripheral instruments of Apartheid are all positive

measures. They are the beginning of what we hope will be a march towards an irreversible process of change inside that country. But by themselves, these measures are insignificant and unless they are buttressed by other more fundamental changes, they can only have propaganda value for Mr. de Klerk and the South African Government.

The OAU has taken note of these measures but we have also said that the euphoria of these minimal changes should not cloud our collective judgement on the Apartheid system. Apartheid is alive and well in South Africa. None of those legislations which constitute the pillars of Apartheid has been addressed much less modified or changed. The Group Areas Act, the Land Act, the internal Security Act and a host of others still continue to proscribe meaningful political activity and to give police and the entire Security apparatus broad discretionary powers. The black majority of South Africa still has no vote and neither has the South African Government demonstrated commitment to the principle of democracy.

We are encouraged that the ANC and the Apartheid Government have initiated and continue to sustain dialogue. The spirit of both the Groote Schuur and Pretoria Minutes is to persist in dialogue. The ANC decision to suspend Armed

Struggle is an eloquent demonstration of its goodwill in facilitating the process of negotiations. It is important nonetheless to remember that so far these have been talks about talks. And while broad guideline of the future substantive talks may already be in discussion; no clear direction or content of those talks has emerged so far.

Mr. Chairman,

A process of change has begun to manifeste itself in South Africa. It is still in delicate stages and it needs to be nurtured and consolidated. This can only be achieved if we all remain united in our total abhorrence of and opposition to Apartheid and in our view that while some progress may have been made, no susbtantive change has taken place. This recommitment to the objective is all the more necessary now, when friends and apologists of the Apatheid regime are on the offensive in their bid to drive a wedge in the global solidarity on Apartheid. They want Economic Sanctions and other forms of pressure against South Africa removed as an incentive to Mr. de Klerk to continue with the process of change. I regret that even in our midst doubt may have begun to creep in. But let us be clear on one thing.

If today we can speak of dialogue it is because of the collective pressures both internal and international, which together, we have been able to bring to bear on South Africa. As far back as 1969, in the Lusaka Manifesto, the National Liberation Movements, supported by Africa, had pledged their readiness to persue negotiations if genuine conditions for such an avenue were in prevalance. It took the Apartheid authorities twenty-years to accept the idea and for the first time to endeavour to provide the minimum conditions for negotiations. This did not come about because of the change of heart or the newly found benevolance on the part of Mr. de Klerk or the National Party. Rather it is he pressures which have raised the cost of Apartheid that finally brought Mr. de Klerk to the negotiating table. It is his realization that ultimately, apartheid is unaffordable and untenable. This is the true incentive which has sprung the process of change and it is the maintenance of these pressures which will keep Mr. de Klerk at the negotiating table. To do otherwise would be to undermine and indeed torpedo the process of change which is slowly evolving in South Africa.

We are naturally saddened by the violence which has engulfed some black townships; and we have strongly condemned it. The killings and the destruction of property can not advance the cause of freedom but only

undermine it. We are encouraged that the African ^{/Nationalist} Leadership has been taking measures to address this issue of violence, its implications to the struggle against Apartheid and to elaborate a political mechanism to end it. This can however be only part of the solution. The larger solution lies with the Government which has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of Law and order. It must assume this responsibility - fully not only by containing elements of its security forces which have actively encouraged and even conspired in fanning the violence but also by containing the extreme right wing groups.

An end to Apartheid holds great promise to South Africans and to Africa as a whole. As free, democratic, non-racial and united; South Africa will be able to provide opportunities to all people of that country, without regard to race, to contribute to the development of their country. But beyond that, the end of Apartheid will also mean the end of destabilization of the economies and political systems of the African countries neighbouring South Africa. This peace dividend is bound to impact positively on the Economic Development of all these countries. In a larger context, we will welcome post-apartheid South Africa as an important addition to the African family of nations. The economic power and scientific and technological know-how of South

Africa can, if applied prudently, stimulate growth and development in the entire continent. Our role as the OAU is to ensure that the process of ending Apartheid takes root and is not undermined or diverted. It is equally our role to ensure that when finally South Africa, as a society, has emerged out of the oppression of racism, takes its rightful place in our midst.

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Outside the realm of colonialism and the consequences of colonialism including Apartheid, Africa faces many more challenges to which the Organization of African Unity intends to direct its attention.

Most of Africa has been independent for the last three decades. During the 1960's alone, the decolonization process progressed at a phenomenal pace. For example, between 1960 and 1970 - a span of just 10 years, thirty-two countries became independent. Africa, which at the end of the fifties had only nine independent countries, moved into the 1970's with 41 - This was by no means, a small achievement.

But independence brought with it, responsibilities of Government - of political leadership and fulfilling economic needs of people. From a political point of view, these countries and the leadership, had to evolve, out of the ruins of colonialism, national political systems which would address the yearnings for freedom and other civil liberties which independence had promised. This political debate was linked to the economic systems which were opted for by the various countries. Independence meant that the leaders of the newly independent nations had not only to assume the positions and privileges of the departing colonial masters, but they also had to put in place mechanisms of government to maintain law and order and to establish economies which were to ensure the provision of essential needs to the people and stimulate development.

Mr. Chairman,

Africa is now facing a unique challenge of completing the task of elaborating mechanisms of government which reflect more, the realities of the continent and address themselves to the needs of its people. This is an important and crucial assignment considering especially that it is on these institutions upon which Africa will hinge her future

economic growth and development. But more will still need to be done both in the area of consolidating the institutions which have been built at great cost and of ensuring that they are efficiently put at the service of the people.

Mr. Chairman,

Beyond the task of fighting colonialism and racism, consolidating national sovereignty and independence as well as building more relevant institutions of government, the African countries have had to deal with economic problems. These problems were inherent in the economic structures inherited from the colonial Governments as they were in the rigidities of the international economic systems in which Africa has had to operate.

Despite so many odds against them, the enthusiasm of freedom from colonialism, the toil and sweat of its people and a relatively permitting international economic

environment, made it possible for Africa to make important strides in the first decade of independence. Roads were built, hospitals and schools constructed. There were many investments in the Social Sector. This concern for the social well being was a general phenomenon across the continent without regard to ideology or political orientation. It was in self-interest that Africa had to train its doctors, engineers, teachers and others. Needless to say hopes and expectations were the undergirding of this enthusiasm. Independence held promise. The African, finally free from colonial bondage, saw a future of boundless possibilities, a future of abundance.

Today however Africa is going through an economic crisis of monumental proportions. The 1980's were particularly difficult years for Africa. The crisis we are facing today, sprung from the economic disfunctions of the decade. Due to dismal performance in the 1980's, today for example, the average per capita income of the continent stands at US \$ 565 in comparison with US \$ 854 which is what it was in 1978. When seen in a broader context of Africa's poverty, it is even lower. The average Per Capita Income of the 28 African Least Developed countries, is a meagre US \$ 237. The rate of per capita GDP also dropped from 3.03 % in 1978 to minus 0.7 % in 1988. Between 1981 and 1990 the

number of African countries categorized as Least Developed, rose from 21 to 28 and I am told, two more are likely to be added to that list. The Manufacturing Sector, currently contributes a low average of 12 % to the total GDP of Africa and in the case of the African LDC's, a dismal 8 %. The average life expectancy in Africa is only 52 years and even lower in those Least developed. Literacy rate averages 47 % in the entire continent. In fact the, number of illiterates in the continent increased from an estimated 124 million people in 1962 to 165 million in 1985 - a 30.6 % increase. More recent statistics will definately confirm a further increase.

Mr. Chairman,

All these are illustrations of the stagnancy of African economic and social performance. This has given rise to even greater systemic problems. The deficit of Africa's balance of current accounts shot up from US \$ 3.9 billion in 1978 to an astronomical figure of US \$ 20.3 billion a decade later. The rate of external indebtedness has also been astronomical. It rose from US \$ 48.3 billion in 1978, to \$ 230 billion in 1988 and currently stands in excess of \$ 260 billion. The Debt Servicing obligations as a percentage of annual external earnings increased many

folds to exceed 100 % in many cases. This has led to a severe contraction of the African economy increasing unemployment from 5.3 % of the Labor force in 1980. to above 13 % now.

Mr. Chairman,

Beyond these statistical abstractions, is the suffering of millions of people, of high infant mortality rates, of malnutrition and of starvation and death. It is equally the lost hopes and chances of the continent's people. Africa has tried to respond to the challenge of halting the slide, restoring the economy to a sound footing and ultimately stimulate growth. This, African governments have sought to do by a combination of national efforts and external cooperation. Increasingly, African governments are prepared to take unpopular measures and often at great political risk, to institute reform. They have at the same time, concluded Structural Adjustment agreements with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. This, they realize, is only a means of correcting short-term internal and external imbalances and not to tackle the structural problems which face the continent.

In spite of these efforts to restructure its economy, the socio-economic situation of Africa continues to deteriorate. A combination of internal and external factors - Not least the deteriorating terms of trade, the collapse of commodity prices and the external debt, have hamstrung Africa's efforts at recovery. This state of affairs is quite worrisome. For if current trends are not halted and reversed the 1990's could well end up as another lost decade and Africa could enter the 21st Century as the only continent still grappling with the scourge of abject poverty.

The agenda before Africa is therefore to elaborate a strategy to achieve self-reliant growth and self-sustained development. It should seek to gradually internalize fully the engines of growth for accelerated socio-economic development. Only through such a strategy which addresses itself to the fundamentals of the African crisis, in particular the structural vulnerability of its economy can we ultimately be able to handle the other problems such as rapid population growth, degradation of the environment and deforestation.

Mr. Chairman,

In 1980, the African Heads of State and Government met in Lagos and adopted the Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act. This is a blue-print for Africa's Economic Recovery and Development. Central to that Plan is the objective of regional integration within the context of collective self-reliance. The Plan seeks a radical departure from the past conventional strategies which have served more to entrench the systemic imbalances within African economies and in consequence perpetuate the appendage of African economies to Europe and elsewhere. Regional integration is the key to Africa's future. Indeed it is the way of the future. Europe, which is composed of the former colonial powers - each able to stand on its own economically still finds it necessary to come together. How much more for Africa? The United States, Canada and I understand soon also Mexico, will be joined in a free - trade Agreement. South East Asia and also the Pacific are each joined in a trade or economic arrangement which seeks to promote regional integration. The tendency - World wide - is to create larger and larger trading blocs. It is the stronger, the larger and the more diversified groups which will compete effectively in the global economy of the next century. Africa, has awoken to this reality and is taking action.

Just two months ago, a draft treaty establishing the African Economic Community was completed. It will be submitted to the next Assembly of Heads of State and Government in Abuja - Nigeria in June 1991 for their consideration and signature. This; we hope will trigger a process towards economic integration on the continent. We are all realistic enough to realize that it will not be an easy task and neither will it be achieved overnight. It is a long term objective which must be buttressed by the countries' determined political support which is rooted in the realization that ultimately this is the only credible option for the continent. Individually, no country on the continent however strong any may feel or seem, can stand alone and meaningfully make a difference on the world scene. Integration is the first - line defence of Africa against further slide into deeper poverty as well as against even further marginalization on the world political and economic scene.

Mr. Chairman,

The process of integration will undoubtedly require massive infusion of resources. In the short run, we will have to sort out the priority areas - especially the most

integrative sectors such as Transport and Communication including Telecommunications, for special attention. We hope to be able to mobilize resource internally, first and foremost. But given the hostile economic environment in which we will have to operate, especially the background of ever deteriorating terms of trade and falling commodity prices, Africa alone will not be able to meet fully the cost of integration. We shall require the solidarity of the international community, to meet, at least partially, those costs. Africa must continue to call for a new international economic order and at the same time promote South-South cooperation.

Mr. Chairman,

There are now a number of sub-regional organizations around Africa - all engaged in regional Economic integration in one form or another. We have the Southern Africa Development Coordination Conference, the Preferential Trade Area, the Economic Community of Central African States, the Economic Community of West African States and Maghreb Union. These, we consider to be the building blocs upon which the structure of the envisaged African Economic Community, shall be erected. There are those who have expressed the fear that as these sub-regional organizations grow and acquire

definite identities of their own, they shall degenerate into centripetal forces pulling away from the centre and in the long run, undermine the goal of continental integration. I do not share that view. I see instead these groupings growing and gradually overlapping and embracing each other in a partnership of development. The plan for the African Economic Community envisages a precise role for these institutions. In addition to being the catalysts and nuclei for the African Economic Community; they provide, in the meantime, practical experience which will be crucial in putting that continent-wide community on sound beginning.

At the OAU, we see our role being that of coordination. We shall endeavour to provide the link between these organizations collectively with the member States and between them. From our vantage point we are able to have a more encompassing view of the system of these sub-regional groupings and how it functions. As a result we are better equipped to point at areas which need strengthening and to help avoid duplication of efforts. All this will not only bring operational harmony between these groupings, but more so, make it possible to synchronize their operations with the programme of the larger African Economic Community.

Naturally, at the level of the Secretariat we will have to do the necessary adjustments including equipping ourselves with the requisite resources and manpower so as to better discharge this facilitating function.

Mr. Chairman,

Perhaps an even greater challenge which must urgently be met in Africa is that of establishing new and long-term premises of cooperation. Over the last three decades, the issues of decolonization and racism coalesced Africa around a common objective and resolve to struggle. Our common abhorrence of these evils, brought our countries together and albeit for a limited time, allowed us to subordinate all other issues, including differences, to this imperative. It was the unity, cohesion and single-mindedness of purpose which were so crucial in the successes which Africa has been able to score.

There are those who suggest that with the phasing out of the era of decolonization and the ending of Apartheid, the solidarity of the African countries will lose its most credible basis and crumble. They suggest that the spirit of African brotherhood will be severely strained under the weight of mounting Economic and Social difficulties.

While not in anyway minimizing the gravity of the problems now facing Africa, I want to suggest to you that it is precisely because of these difficulties that Africa will not pull apart. Instead, there will be greater need for cooperation. And it is increasingly becoming evident, that a fragmented Africa stands little chance of braving the political and economic vagaries of the future. Unity or cooperation is not a favour which one African country does to another. It is an imperative.

Mr. Chairman,

Europe is not a homogeneous continent. Her countries and people have fought many wars - tribal, imperial and national. Indeed, legacies of these wars still exist today and they manifest themselves in many disputes. There are competing and potentially explosive expressions of nationalism in Europe. All these and other differences - including those of religion, have not stood in the way of European integration. Europe is now talking of a Mega Single Market and political union well under way by 1992.

Africa likewise will have to forge new links of interest, establish bonds based on shared interest and not on the likes and dislikes of each other. In a practical

way, Africa will have to rise above sentimentalism and start on the road to a regime of relations based on reason. It will no longer be an issue of tribal, religious or social affinity but that of the exigences of the shared needs.

I see the role of the OAU in this respect being that of a catalyst to the new order. As the nations awaken more to this new realism, the OAU can and will have to play a coordinating role, and ensuring that the institutions like the African Economic Community which subsume this new spirit of shared needs are consolidated, and allowed to blossom

The fundamental transformations which have taken place in Eastern Europe - in particular the unification of Germany will of course have a major impact not only in the global configuration of power but also in world economic relations. The United Germany will be an economic juggernaut and its economic engines, it is expected, will spur rapid economic progress in Europe. Similarly the Eastern European countries, with relatively advanced infrastructure, skilled manpower and a thirst for market economies, will provide attractive investment opportunities to the Western Europeans, the Japanese and the Americans. With particular respect to European investors the geographical proximity

and, in some cases, common history and cultural affinities, will be added incentives to invest in Eastern Europe. Africa welcomes the advantages which this potential economic unity in Europe can offer. Naturally, greater and broader participation in the European Economy by Eastern Europe, and the benefits which the economies of scale of this participation can present, will have positive effects on the world as a whole. A generalized European recovery will of course have positive effects to Africa. We look forward to it, but it is in the long term.

At the moment however, Africa is concerned, and has reason to be that the preoccupation of the world with Eastern Europe is being sustained at the expense of Africa. There is already in evidence change in the pattern of investments. More and more investments are being channelled to Eastern Europe while no new ones are coming to Africa. This is well understood in Africa as simply being good economic sense! An investor will take his or her money where the risks are less and profits quick and high. So far Eastern Europe seems to promise that kind of environment. Needless to say that Africa will have to present the same conditions if she wants to compete.

Mr. Chairman,

If we understand it as being simply a matter of financial sums, why you may ask is it sufficiently important to warrant attention of Africa.

We are concerned because the disposition of good will in the world to the problems of Eastern Europe raise important questions. The fundamental difference in the approach of the West Europeans, Americans and the Japanese to the East European reconstruction is not the function of private capital but of political direction. This is the qualitative difference. There is a conscious political decision and commitment to East European recovery and reconstruction, quite in stark contrast to the lukewarm regard to Africa's problems. For decades, Africa and the rest of the Developing World have been calling for a new Economic Order which would facilitate the flow of resources to the countries of the South. The West has not only refused to accept the principle of resource flows, it has, with a few happy exceptions, even reneged on its promises on Official Development Assistance Targets. Instead we were told to make Africa more attractive to private investment. And we have ! But what we got have invariably been unstructured and uncoordinated investments which suited more

the desire of the investor to make quick profit than to the needs of long term economic development of the continent. Even the Brettonwood institutions, have been less enthusiastic on such long term development investment and emphasize instead. short term growth.

Unlike for the case of Africa and indeed the developing world, there is now here in London, an International Bank created specifically to channel resources to the economic recovery efforts of Eastern Europe. It is a sort of Marshall Plan for Eastern Europe. Why has it been so difficult over the years to accept the very idea of commitment of resources to Africa's recovery yet so easy to respond to East European needs?

Mr. Chairman,

I felt it important to raise this issue simply to highlight the different responses to similar problems. Lest I am misunderstood, Africa does not object to this. On the contrary, we welcome and wish it for Eastern Europe. But this disparity in response underlines an important lesson for Africa. It simply shows that Africa will have to adjust to a less charitable Europe:- A Europe more concerned about its own needs first. It means that Africa will have to live

in a world of fewer and fewer samaritans. It means that Africa must begin on the road towards self-reliance, individually as countries and collectively as a continent, in an environment of diminishing interest in our economic well being. This is also our challenge.

Central to any prospects of growth and Economic Development is the issue of peace and stability of the African countries. Today there are interstate conflicts between Senegal and Mauritania, Chad and Libya, Senegal and Guinea Bissau. There are many more latent and potentially explosive; and can be ignited by the slightest political misunderstanding. Apart from these interstate conflicts, there are those within nations in Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia, Mozambique, Angola and now Liberia. There are many more countries in which tensions exist and where the likelihood of such conflict flaring up is quite real indeed!

Without presuming to know all the rootcauses of these conflicts and therefore without delivering judgement on the protagonists, what is evident is that these conflicts are detrimental to the developmental efforts of those countries and undermine the prospects for their unity and long term stability as well as the security of those other countries neighbouring them. And in addition to diverting their

meagre financial and material resources from development to war, these conflicts have regressed these societies into tragic conditions, and turned men, women and even children into instruments of destruction of their own country.

Mr. Chairman,

The Charter of the Organization of African Unity recognizes, as one of the cardinal principles, the non-interference into the internal affairs of states. This, like the principle of the intangibility of boundaries as inherited at the time of independence have contributed significantly in evolving a relatively stable regime governing African interstate relations. We are all at one in agreeing that the good sense of respecting inherited boundaries, has averted numerous conflicts and kept broad unity in place and allowed the continent to direct its energies to more pressing issues such as decolonization.

Of course, this principle has entailed many sacrifices - of territory and resources in some cases and of perpetuating and putting in permanence, the arbitrary division and demarcation by the colonial powers, of the present nation states. Underlying this voluntary sacrifice was the realization by the leaders of Africa then, that the

larger interests of the people on the continent as a whole would be better served not; in lingering in the past, or exploiting the colonial misdeeds for political expediency; but in embracing a new partnership in diversity in the new Africa, and building upon what was the reality on the ground. Likewise the Non-interference principle has by and large, convinced the countries to desist from the temptation of readily getting involved in each others affairs. And, in addition to the spirit of good neighbourliness this general understanding on non-interference has in a very real way, kept Africa from generalized chaos, which could have been likely, had countries not restrained themselves and deliberately refrained from exploiting tensions and conflict in each of them.

I understand this principle has not gone uncriticized, There those who argue that taken together with the clause on the condemnation of political assassination, the principle was a device incorporated into the charter, essentially to safeguard the personal political fortunes of the leaders of Africa then. There is a historical context to this assertion - especially if one recalls that the Charter was signed in the wake of a totally new experience in the independent Africa - that of the overthrow and subsequent assassination of President Syllivano Olympio of Togo. But

it would be a tragic simplification of history if the motivation of the leaders behind the incorporation of this principle in the OAU Charter were to be portrayed as having been purely personal.

The true and real motivation of the leaders lay in their keen understanding of the vulnerability of every African country. Colonial boundaries arbitrarily separated tribes and families; they transferred territory and in the process; also resources: This was and is still the phenomenon prevailing across Africa. It is this shared view of mutual vulnerability of the nation states and not of the leaders which, in my view, was at the root of that clause.

Outside the debate on the genesis of the principle, there is of course that of its application. There is a criticism, perhaps justified, that the clause has been used more to justify inaction. It is argued that this clause has been used to prevent censure of governments in power and that Africa has hid behind this technicality to let violations of human rights continue uncriticised. Most tragically, Africa is accused of having hid behind the cloak of non-interference to exhibit a callous disregard and indifference to human suffering. In fairness, most of these accusations have been grossly exaggerated.

Mr. Chairman,

I am one of those who are convinced on the merits of the principle of non-interference. It is at the same time also my conviction that non-interference should not be taken to mean indifference. And while each country has an inalienable right to its sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence, so does it responsibilities to the welfare and well-being of its people. Africans are one people. It is hence unacceptable that a part of that people should stand in silence, and in seeming helplessness, when another part is suffering. Apart from the dimension of physical human suffering attendant to internal conflicts, there is their direct effects to the neighbouring countries. The insecurity, political instability, the tides of refugees all weigh heavily on those countries neighbouring conflict areas.

For all these reasons, there is now a new realization that the clause on non-interference need to be looked at in a broader context. In this new need for a broader perspective, African countries are increasingly recognizing the right of constructive and positive involvement in those affairs - which though internal in character, have repercussions far beyond the borders of the country in crisis.

The challenge of the OAU, as I see it therefore, involves the consolidation of this emerging new perspective. As an organization, the OAU must be placed at the service of Member States; and be able to play a positive role in facilitating resolution of conflicts or their management. We can play this role more constructively if we consolidate the determination that Africa has a view, indeed a right of one, on the internal conflicts on the Continent and that in exercise of that right we can take measures to facilitate the settlement of those conflicts. Consensus on such direction is slowly taking shape; as evidenced by the frank and serious exchange of views on the issues of conflict resolution, at the last Assembly of Heads of State and government this July. In the declaration adopted, the leaders pledged themselves to apply increased efforts towards the resolution of conflicts as a way of liberating the energies and resources now locked into wasteful conflicts and redirecting them to socio-economic development of the continent. It is on the basis of this new determination of right to positive involvement that the Economic Community of West African States have taken the initiative of helping the warring parties in Liberia to bring the unfortunate fratricidal conflict to an end. The OAU has supported ECOWAS fully in this initiative.

Mr. chairman,

The collateral measures which Africa will have to take to institute economic and political reform, will have to include democratisation. Of course, you are all too familiar with the now topical issue of democratisation.

The events in Eastern Europe have already had a stimulating effect to the debate on democracy in the world and particularly in Africa. In fact, already the question of political pluralism within a western context has assumed more preeminence not only in these debates but now more increasingly in the policies of many countries of the west. Already the degree of democratization in Africa - of course as is understood and practiced in these donor or creditor countries, has become the barometer of eligibility for aid or concessionary credit. Africa is increasingly being told to adopt multipartism as both a condition of certification for aid and we are told, as also a panacea for all her problems. These calls are emphatic that short of such direction, Africa will face what would in fact amount to economic sanctions.

Mr. Chairman,

I, for one, believe that with or without this new

conditionality - for assistance and concessionary resource flows, Africa on its own has come to understand the serious deficiencies of a society lacking the essential attributes to democracy. The African countries have come to realize that lack of genuine democracy stifles initiative and kills creativity. So, quite apart from pursuing democracy as an ideal and a right of citizens inherent in good government, there are also direct economic dividends which could flow from it.

A permitting political Environment which enables the people to participate fully in the process of governance, will also open up opportunities for the maximization of individual initiative and industry. Political freedom is the spring that waters the spirit of enterprise in any society. Indeed it is only through broad and deliberate political dispensation that governments can activate all the peoples' energies, harness them and apply them to development. To the extent therefore, that there is a self-interest in political liberation, African countries have seen this imperative and are already deploying efforts at further democratization.

What this new enthusiasm for a new political direction represents in a fundamental sense, is not that Africa has

all of a sudden awakened to the need for democratisation or multipartism by prodding from the West. Rather it is that a culture of political debate and more tolerance is taking root on the continent. This is a result of a new recognition, among the people and within governments of the need to nurture a culture of diversity of view and to weave it into the political fabric of the continent. This awareness has its genesis in the material conditions of Africa, though of course it may have been given urgency by the events in Eastern Europe. The task of Africa and the OAU is to ensure that this awareness on political diversity and tolerance is consolidated as an integral part of and indispensable element in the political process of the continent.

Mr. Chairman,

We all agree on the good sense of democracy, and we all go to great pains to extol its virtues. This is why, I have yet to see a government which does not claim to rule or govern in the name of democracy.

I hold the view that the motivation for; essence, rationale; and purpose of democracy, must be to place the people at the centre of the process of governance. It must

be to involve them sufficiently in the national processes of decision-making. How can this be fully achieved depends on the local conditions existing in any given country - not least those of customs, history, culture, levels of socio-economic development. Because of these fundamental differences arising out of the variances in conditions, the processes by which democracy is conceived and given concrete expression, must also differ. There cannot be a standardization of the processes of democracy without a corresponding standardization of conditions is not possible. Conversely it would be a gross error, if attempts were made to propagate a standard formula of democracy or to impose one on some societies simply because it worked elsewhere. Africa has set for itself, an agenda for political liberalization which is hinged on democratization and greater openness of governments. Our challenge is in part to ensure that, as we pursue the route to further democratization and political transparency, we do not lose sight of the central role which our socio-cultural values can and must play.

Mr. Chairman,

True democracy weaves into the political fabric of any society strong regard to accountability and the rule of

law. The prevalence of legality as evidenced by an independent judiciary, accountable executive branch and a probing and responsible press and the guarantee of other fundamental freedoms can promote the regard for human rights within countries. In tandem with further democratization, African countries have made efforts at promoting and protecting human rights. They have adopted an African Charter on People and Human Rights. The OAU strongly supports these efforts and shall do all it can to encourage and assist governments in promoting greater awareness among the African people on the issue of human rights. In addition to this, I think we at the OAU and at this Center have a joint responsibility to ensure that these efforts of Africa are known and appreciated abroad.

Mr, Chairman,

Africa faces many challenges. The elimination of Apartheid, the consolidation of the institutions of government, economic recovery and development, conflict resolution, further democratization and the promotion of Human Rights - are among the imperatives which have to be fulfilled. They constitute an engaging agenda for the continent. Already within the continent, there are efforts in progress to address these problems more comprehensively.

But what is most encouraging is not simply that there are these efforts. It is more the fact that there is now a definite awareness that Africa has no other credible choice. This determination to engage the continent's minds and energies to conflict resolution, for example, lies in the knowledge that economic recovery will not become a reality - unless and until peace and stability are restored fully in the continent. We can not eliminate the scourge of the five million refugees and twelve million displaced people in the continent unless political decisions which address the root causes of this problem are taken. Neither can full recovery be brought about unless there is political dispensation which permits free political expression and involvement of the people in the process of governance.

Ultimately however all this will be possible at continental level if all countries rise above narrow and short-term self-interests and embrace each other in a partnership of development. We must forge links of unity of the continent based on shared needs and aspirations. It is Unity - Unity of purpose and action which will anchor Africa firmly on the ground of economic recovery and development. I am gratified that Africa has seen the need for such course of action. The OAU will do its utmost to ensure that the momentum is sustained. This Center can be helpful in

helping Africa and the OAU not only in the pursuit of these objectives but most importantly in endeavouring to ensure that these efforts are understood in the United Kingdom and elsewhere.

I thank you