

ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY

STATEMENT BY H.E. DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM, SECRETARY-GENERAL
OF THE OAU AT THE OPENING OF THE THIRD CONFERENCE
ON THE STATE OF POLITICS IN TANZANIA ORGANISED
BY THE UNIVERSITY OF DAR-ES-SALAAM

DAR-ES-SALAAM,

26 JULY 1995

Mr Chairman,
The Vice Chancellor
University of Dar es Salaam,
Distinguished Guests,
Members of the Academic Staff,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am, indeed, privileged and honoured to have this opportunity to officially open this Third Conference on State of Politics in Tanzania (SPTC 111), organized by the Department of Political Science and Public Administration of the University of Dar es Salaam. I should like, from the outset, to point out that, in my view, this year's theme focusing on The Civic Culture and the 1995 General Election in Tanzania is very timely. I hope this conference will contribute significantly to Tanzania's transition from single to multiparty politics.

From the perspectives of both national and continental politics, I am indeed, encouraged by the fact that this Conference draws participants not only from the academic community and other intellectuals, but from all parts of Tanzania and from all walks of life and shades of opinion. I note that participants include representatives of political parties, cooperative unions, councillors, trade unions, non-government Organizations, Government

Agencies and religious groups. This is a clear demonstration of the existence of continuing dialogue between the people and government in Tanzania and between University and Associations. I wish to pay tribute to the role played by the University of Dar-es-Salaam in providing a Forum for the pursuit of knowledge and intellectual exchange not only among Tanzanians but the larger International Community as well. Similarly, I am also encouraged by the nature and scope of the sub-themes of the Conference. Indeed, such topical issues as religious affiliations and party preferences in Tanzania; Regionalism, Ethnicity and political party affiliation; Political tolerance and Gender issues are not only of great concern to Tanzania but to the entire continent of Africa. There is no doubt that discussion of such issues at the national level reflect one of the basic preoccupation of our people.

In this regard, allow me to pay special tribute to the University of Dar es Salaam and more specifically to the Department of the Political Science and Public Administration for organizing this Conference. I also want to thank the Department for inviting me to share with the participants of this conference my views on the State of Politics in Tanzania. I do so in full recognition and appreciation of the formidable challenges, problems

and potential of political pluralism and the building of a democratic society. Equally, I do realise and recognize the imperative role of the academic community and other intellectuals in sensitizing the general public through an analysis of the civic culture that prevails and how it is likely to manifest itself in the forthcoming General Elections.

I sincerely hope that the present deliberations will further one of the basic objectives of the conference, namely raising the awareness of the general public on the holding of free and fair elections in a multiparty context. Let me emphasise, at this juncture, that this is a task upon which the OAU has placed particular importance and given it a high priority in the course of the last five years through associating itself fully with the process of managing political transition in the continent.

MR CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

Before I declare the Third Conference on the State of Politics in Tanzania officially opened, I should like to seek the indulgence of the participants through you Mr. Chairman, to make a few remarks within the context of the theme of the Conference.

My first remarks relate to the political landscape of this country, especially as we move from single to multiparty politics and the formidable challenges ahead of us. Indeed, our current political landscape is characterised by a number of factors relating to a political society in transition. Most of the factors point to the challenges, problems and potentials of political pluralism and the building of a democratic society. Clearly, one of the major challenges facing this society is the management of the transition it is going through. This is necessary in order to ensure that the basic principles upon which this society was built over the years are consolidated and made to guide change which we seek. In our specific case we should ensure that the principles that are enshrined in our constitution and which have become the cornerstone of our societal values and which have brought about unity of the country over the last thirty years of independence are safeguarded and promoted.

It has always been relatively easy within the one-party state to forge consensus on issues of common concern to our nation. Our people have been involved in one way or another in making major decisions that have had or continue to have bearing on their individual and collective aspirations and demands of their

developmental needs. In this way we were able despite shortcomings to build a fairly democratic society within a one-party state. This may not have been a perfect model for galvanizing national efforts towards national reconstruction and development, but it was certainly a major achievement that we can be proud of in our political history. Indeed, as we move from single to multiparty politics we must ensure that our basic foundation is not undermined by our zeal to change almost at any cost.

In this regard, the changes that we are aspiring for as we approach the 1995 General elections should take cognisance of our past experience, our common values and commitment to transform the socio-economic conditions of our people. There is an imperative need to avoid any agenda that might jeopardise the efforts of our last 30 years of independence to maintain peace and stability in our country. We should strive to set aside our individual prejudices in our collective endeavour to examine the problems and potentials of political pluralism in building a democratic society in Tanzania.

Tanzania's political process has also been characterised by efforts towards economic liberation with a view to ensuring the provision of basic human needs and giving impetus to our national

development efforts. In this regard, economic liberalization was conceived as an engine for growth and development and not as a means of enriching a few among the people. The changes that we are now seeking, should be to ensure that the basic needs of the people are safeguarded within the overall policy of economic liberalization. In other words, economic liberalization should not be seen as a means of depriving the people their basic socio-economic rights. Rather, it should embody an all-embracing programme aimed at eliminating poverty and in which equal opportunities are created for all, and empowering the people to participate more effectively in the economic process. But beyond fighting poverty through the elaboration of a permitting and people-centred economic programme, we should also strive to create conditions of compassion and care for those among our people who are poor, weak and deprived. A society without the moral precepts of justice and equity cannot endure in the long run. To foster these ideals, we need to be united.

Our vision for change should therefore be predicated on our ability to provide greater freedom to our people and fight against attempts to undermine the basic principles of freedom and unity and to create division within our ranks. In this regard we should work

towards safeguarding religious freedom, freedom of assembly and association and freedom of expression. We should fight against all forms of oppression, marginalization and xenophobia. For these are elements that poison societies and create conflicts among the people.

All these point to the need for proper management of the transition from single to multiparty politics in Tanzania. In doing so we should be guided by the need to forge consensus on common values while safeguarding the principles of national unity and solidarity. We should also recognize that our ethnic as well as religious diversity is a source of strength and should not be used as factor for division among ourselves.

MR CHAIRMAN

The second remark I would like to make relates to the significance of the principles that have governed Tanzania's political process and the need to safeguard such principles.

As we all know the principles of Freedom and Unity have over the years, been the corner-stone of our development policies and political process. We have, within the elements associated with

freedom, discovered our unity of purpose and we have used this unity to strengthen the political stability that has been enjoyed by all. If there is something that can be learned from the first generation of leadership in Tanzania it is the promotion of national unity. Today, Tanzanians no longer think in terms of their ethnic affiliation and their political parties are not built on the basis of either religious or ethnic considerations. We do not have Christian parties or Muslim parties just as we do not have SUKUMA parties or NYAKYUSA parties. Regionalism is not a major factor in the political process either of General election or of leadership style. Tanzania has remained a secular state where the exigencies of government activities and leadership have not been based on religion. Indeed, within the larger principle of freedom and unity we have safeguarded freedom of expression, of religion, of Assembly and of Association. These are achievements which we must always cherish as we explore better ways of managing the transition from single to multiparty politics.

Mr. Chairman,

Tanzania is a union conceived with the central objective of promoting the welfare of the people of both sides. The last three decades of the union have seen a steady process of consolidating the bonds of history, culture, traditions, and blood which united our people.

And while at the political level, we have had some differences with regard to the management of the affairs of the union, the logic of unity inherent in it has steadily taken root. Our people see each other as partners and allies in a common objective of building our unity. The bonds of blood which united us, bind us in fraternal brotherhood. The unity of our people and the union of Zanzibar and Tanganyika is not an abstract concept. It is a reality we live and which we are bound to continue living with. Our challenge therefore, is to ensure that the good we hold in common as Tanzanians, and the pride we feel belonging to this nation, inspire us to persist in our determination to safeguard our unity and defeat temptations of separation based on narrow and selfish political expediences. The challenge upon the future leadership of this country will equally be to ensure that our unity is consolidated, that our bonds of brotherhood are deepened and that Tanzania shall continue to prosper as one in unity, peace and harmony.

Another principle that has been very dear to Tanzania is the principle of equality. All Tanzanians are equal before the law. We have over the years strived to ensure equality for all without consideration to religious, regional, ethnic or political affiliation. It would be most unfortunate if this principle were to

be obscured or made irrelevant by our inability to properly manage the transition from single to multiparty politics. Indeed, as we seek for change this is one of the elements that should characterise our new policy of continuity and change.

The third remark I would like to make in connection with the theme of this conference relates to the role of political parties in the management of the transition from single to multiparty politics. The political parties in the country must be both responsible for and responsive to the changes taking place in the country. One of the major roles of the parties, in my view, is ensuring that the changes which are envisaged in the process of transition take place without undermining the many achievements made so far. Furthermore, the maintenance of the harmony and unity of the people of Tanzania is crucial in any viable strategy to manage the anticipated transition and in promoting the principle of Freedom and Unity. In this respect, the parties should work towards the consolidation of the principles that have been the corner-stone of our civic culture and the political process. Where necessary we should seek to expand on these principles so as to respond to the greater aspirations and demands of the people.

MR CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

Let me now turn to my fourth remark regarding the theme of this Conference. I believe that in managing our transition from single to multiparty politics we ought to set-out as clearly as possible a code of conduct on the part of all political parties and demand that such a code of conduct be respected by all.

It would seem to me that we should be able to build a culture of tolerance. This is an important element in formulating the code of conduct for all the political parties. The basic issue here is that whatever political parties people may belong to, they are all Tanzanians. There is no justification to suggest that one is more patriotic because one belongs to a particular political party. Our political parties may have different programmes or based on different political ideologies but in the end we are all patriots. We are all Tanzanians. In this regard, differences between political parties reflect the different perceptions and approaches to our efforts towards national reconstruction and development and not to our common identity as Tanzanians. Indeed, differences between political parties should be seen as a healthy

exercise in building a pluralistic society. We should therefore work towards strengthening our freedom and unity within a framework of diversity of views. We should avoid confrontational relations between and among our different parties which could lead to polarisation within our society.

At this juncture, it is important to point out that a number of measures must be put in place to ensure and promote our unity within our diversity of views. We ought to work towards the strengthening of our democratic institutions. To this end, the first thing that comes to my mind is the independence of the judiciary. The people and their parties must respect judicial decisions and while the courts must not be indifferent to the political process, they should be above partisan party politics. The second element is the role of the legislature in national decision-making. There is an imperative need for the legislature to work on the basis of the general aspirations of the people and protect the interests of all citizens. The third element in formulating the code of conduct is to ensure the existence of a dynamic, free and responsible press. While we should promote the basic freedom of the press we should at the same time demand that the press should be responsible, and supportive of national efforts and safeguard national ethos.

Equally, I believe that we need to embody in our political culture, the principle of alternation in office and to underline that power is not the monopoly of one group and that it is held in trust on behalf of the people. It is the people in whose name power is held and exercised. Humility towards the people, responsibility to them, and fairplay towards political protagonists, should be woven into the political fabric of our society.

The fifth and final remark I would like to make in connection with the theme of the conference is to situate our immediate preoccupations as we prepare for the October General Elections in the context of the current political situation on our continent. There is no doubt that Africa is going through what may be characterized as a dual transition. Africa is, indeed, experiencing a simultaneous transition of political democratization and economic reforms. These two socio-economic phenomena are also intrinsic in the State of Politics in Tanzania. The major preoccupation on the continent at the moment is, like Tanzania, how to manage this dual transition.

Over the last few years a number of African countries have embarked on the process of democratization. This particular pattern of democratization on the continent reflects the basic departure

from the politics of liberation struggles to the politics of nation building and economic emancipation. For some countries the process has been difficult but for others the process was smooth and encouraging. This, indeed, reflects the political maturity of the African peoples and their democratic institutions.

It is my hope and wish that the dual transition in Tanzania will be based on the country's past experiences, especially as the bastion of the liberation struggles in Africa and defender of freedom, equality and justice for all. Indeed, it is time that Tanzania draws on its rich experience in political management within and outside the country to ensure that the present dual transition is smooth and effective.

Let the experience of Tanzania in managing this dual transition be a model for the rest of the countries on the continent who have not yet gone through this process. I am, indeed, confident that the contribution of this Conference will go a long way in ensuring the realization of the basic aspirations and demands of the people of this country.

MR CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

In conclusion, I would like again to stress the significance of this Conference and the forthcoming elections. I would like to take this opportunity to appeal to all political parties to work towards ensuring free, fair and peaceful elections. All parties must commit themselves to respect the outcome. Indeed, like in any other election, there will be winners and losers. But, in the final analysis the triumph of popular choice means that it is the people who are the real winners. What is critical is for those who win to know how to win and be magnanimous in victory and those who lose to know how to lose by accepting it as a natural course of the democratic process.

But, as Tanzanians prepare for October 29 the political parties and all those concerned should think beyond the General elections. One of the basic issues to be addressed is how to ensure that whatever government is elected, will address itself to the basic needs and aspirations of the people. The incoming administration must be able to address the burning issues including that of corruption which has become endemic and which is destroying

the very fabric of our societies in Tanzania as elsewhere in Africa. The political parties must also work together to ensure the unity and stability of this country which are very essential determinants of any meaningful efforts towards the building of a democratic society and the social and economic betterment of our people.

It is important to bear in mind that Africa is in the periphery of the world system. And one of the ways of restoring the continent to good footing is to ensure that the dual transition both in its political and economic context is properly managed. Africa is a combination of all our countries and what happens in Tanzania is of direct relevance, interest and concern to the rest of the continent. This is particularly so considering, this country's historic role in the struggle for freedom, justice and equality. Tanzania, despite its poverty and under-development, has always been identified with stability and unity. Let the emergence of pluralism therefore serve to consolidate and build on that unity, peace and stability. Let it be a means of promoting greater transparency and accountability. But above all, let it also serve to harness the energies of Tanzanians towards socio-economic transformation.

With these remarks, I declare the Third Conference on the State of Politics in Tanzania officially opened and I wish you every success in your deliberations

THANK YOU