



ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY

TOM MBOYA MEMORIAL LECTURE

AFRICA AT THE CROSS ROADS

By

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Mr. Chairman,  
Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted and honoured to have been invited to speak before this distinguished forum and to honour the memory of Tom Joseph Mboya - a great son of Kenya, a champion of East African Unity, a dedicated Africanist, and an indefatigable fighter for the cause of freedom and justice.

Unfortunately, I personally did not know Tom Mboya that well. I met him only once. This was in 1964 when as a young man of twenty two and serving as my country's Ambassador in Cairo, I came to Nairobi on my way to Dar es Salaam specifically to meet with him. He received me in his office very graciously. Young and inexperienced as I was and aware of his personality I was naturally overwhelmed by the person who sat right in front of me in his office. Our meeting was short lasting about thirty minutes. But in those few minutes during which we discussed East Africa and African issues I was impressed by Tom Mboya. I was inspired by his Pan-African commitment and his vision of Kenya, East Africa and Africa. But it would be incorrect to say that I formed my impression of Tom Mboya only at that meeting. My respect for him had come long before I met him. For one must remember that for me those were my formative years and Tom Mboya was certainly one of the pre-eminent political and Trade Union figures of East Africa. And he developed into one of the outstanding political figures of our Continent.

The ideals which he stood for - those of freedom, equality and justice - transcended ethnic, tribal, religious and national divide. These principles were important then as they are important and relevant today as we face the challenges before Africa. How more befitting them can it be to honour the memory of a man of his vision and grand ambitions for the people of Africa than to reflect on our state of affairs and see where Africa stands and assess the prospective future. I therefore ask for your indulgence to speak on issues, which I believe had Tom Mboya been alive, he would have been addressing them with his acknowledged dynamism, vigour, commitment, determination and vision.

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Had Tom Mboya not met a violent and tragic end in the early years of his vibrant life twenty three years ago and had traversed with us the turbulent formative years of the rest of the sixties and seventies, the anguishing difficult years of the eighties and the still difficult but striving and hopeful beginnings of the nineties, he would have agreed with the assertion that indeed Africa now stands at the cross-roads. As we prepare to transit into the new era, perhaps it is important to reflect on where the continent stands today to see what have been the achievements, the failures and what is being done or ought to be done in order to face the future with hope and confidence.

We stand at the cross-roads because we stand at the threshold of a new century and the end of an era, in which Africa saw herself emerge from colonialism, and begin on the engaging task of building systems of government and consolidate the fragile nation states, artificially curved out from Kingdoms to suit the requirements of the empire. It was an era, in which African countries, like the rest of the weak developing world, strove to establish a collective identity of themselves. They founded the Organization of African Unity as an instrument embodying their oneness and one which was to articulate the common identity and aspiration of the Continent. It was an era, in which Africa saw herself dragged into the divisive and destructive politics of the Cold War between the contending ideologies of the Super Powers. It was an era in which Africa made serious effort to promote the welfare of its people - even if those efforts were seriously undermined by the compounding effects of the imbalances in the inequitous world economic system as well as by some internal policy failures.

Mr. Chairman,

This day, eleventh November, twenty eight years ago in 1965, Mr. Ian Smith, led a rebellion of white racist settlers, and declared the Unilateral Declaration of independence in the then Southern Rhodesia. He swore that never black majority rule in southern Rhodesia in a thousand years. Today, eleven years after the defeat of racial tyranny in that country, Mr. Ian Smith is a free person living comfortably as a citizen of an independent, democratic, multi-racial Zimbabwe.



Today Mozambique, Angola, Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde and Sao Tome and Principe are independent countries, members of the African family of free nations having triumphed over colonial and fascist Portugal. Namibia has been wrested from the clutches of colonialism and Apartheid and is now a free nation. Scores more of African countries, gained independence from France, the United Kingdom and Spain. And in soon to be thirty years, the Organization of African Unity, will have seen its membership grow from thirty two in 1963 to fifty one at present.

In South Africa, hope lingers on the horizon as we have seen steady progress in the dismantling of Apartheid. Notwithstanding the progress, a lot remains to be done. The country is still governed under Apartheid laws and the De Klerk Government has not demonstrated sufficiently that it is irrevocably committed to a speedy end to apartheid. In addition, we continue to be seriously concerned by the mounting violence in the townships as well as the lack of unity among the anti-apartheid forces. Disunity and violence can only undermine the struggle to end apartheid and benefit those who wish to perpetuate the status quo. As we continue to demand of the South African Government to take effective measures to end violence, we also call upon the leadership of the black majority to demonstrate political courage and continue dialogue aimed at restoring unity of purpose and action, in its struggle to dismantle apartheid.

Freedom has been the single most important achievement for Africa. The success of our struggles against colonialism means today that apart from the unfinished business of ending apartheid, Africa is basically free. This did not come easily. Political agitation, mass action and in several cases bitter wars of liberation which cost lives, were the prices we had to pay for our political independence. We had to pay the exacting price because we realized that without freedom we could not apply ourselves fully to the tasks of our own development. For a people in bondage and whose freedom is chained or circumscribed can not maximize their potential. We fought for independence because it was the only means to our freedom and liberty, to our ability to take our destiny into our own hands.

But independence brought along with it, the consequent challenges of governance and defining and building an African identity which had been emasculated and subsumed in the colonial sub-culture.

When colonial Europe gathered in Berlin in 1884 and partitioned Africa, it did so, to suit its imperial convenience. Kingdoms of Africa were divided arbitrarily, and given names - some of them quite alien. Colonial systems of government were imposed while those traditional and relevant to Africa were supplanted and discarded. Colonial violence held those artificial creations of the present nation states in Africa in check and subservient to Empire.

Independence, meant that we had to make sense of those artificial creations and imported systems of government in a charged atmosphere of contending nationalisms. The new governments had to deal with kingdoms and factors of tribalism in their attempts to balance the contending political demands within the new nation states. As we are all aware this was not an easy task indeed. The challenge of maintaining law and order had to be met, sometimes brutally. A combination of inexperience, the legacy of colonial violence and indeed, the over-zealousness of those in power to stem opposition, bred excesses and promoted paramilitarism in Africa. However, the pains of growing up apart, we have made commendable progress. Today, notwithstanding their vulnerability, our nation states are a living reality in Africa.

What is also a reality is a distinct African identity, recognizing the oneness of the people of our Continent. This we have achieved against tremendous odds. Today the Organization of African Unity is a reality and playing a key role in articulating that common identity of Africa. We may have problems among ourselves but we still recognize that we are united in our common identity as Africans.

Mr. Chairman,

In Africa today, we have a fair share of problems which need immediate resolution. But none needs more resolve and determination than the pervading issue of conflicts in the Continent. Conflicts both within and among nations have continued to decimate our societies and destroy valuable infrastructure and property. They have separated and divided families and turned them into instruments of their own destruction. They have created refugees, undermined peace and stability in the Continent and seriously compromised the ability of our countries to pursue development as time and valuable resources have been diverted to meet the exigencies of prosecuting those conflicts. The over six million refugees and twelve million displaced persons is an indictment to Africa and we should not allow it to continue in perpetuity.

Conflicts have engendered hate and suffering, killed creativity and industry and effectively stifled the hopes of those caught in the cross fire. Conflicts may have killed millions but they have also killed the hearts of the millions who are still alive. Today wars in Somalia, Mozambique, Angola, Liberia, Rwanda and Sudan speak of Africa as a continent beset by unending conflicts.

Human rights remains a burning issue on the Continent. There are prisoners and detainees being held in many areas of the continent and the freedom of many more is circumscribed for political expediency. Forced disappearances still do occur on the continent. Other fundamental freedoms such as freedom of expression, of worship, of assembly and of political participation, continue to be impaired through a variety of means including force.

In addition to the conflicts and abuses of human rights, rigidities in our government systems have failed to respond to the changing needs of a changing population on the Continent. Politics of exclusion have locked entire segments of our population out of meaningful political participation and recourse to conflict and fragmentation has invariably been the consequence.



The failure to balance political opportunities, within our political systems has given rise to separatism including clannism, as the only logical remedial alternative for those disenfranchised. The lack of political cohesion, sentiments of separatism, and rigidities of government continue to be serious obstacles to peace and stability in many countries in Africa. This is why it is important that Africa--the most diverse of the continents should foster a spirit of mutual regard, accommodation and a culture of tolerance. Politics of inclusion will certainly be an insurance against division in our Continent.

Mr. Chairman, While problems abound in the continent - some inherent in the legacy of colonialism, some resulting from the international economic and political situation and some directly linked to our own human and policy failures, there is nonetheless a new determination in the continent to correct the situation.

There is now in the continent a new enthusiasm and hope that Africa can now begin addressing itself seriously to the issue of conflicts. There is a new determination to ensure that conflicts within nations and among nations are dealt with decisively. What represents a new beginning is not attempts to resolve conflicts but the new sense of purpose, urgency and disposition of countries to do so. In the past, through a combination of techniques, Africa, has, through the Organization of African Unity tried to settle conflicts. While these attempts continue, they have been greatly facilitated by the now consolidating acceptance by Member States, that conflicts - all conflicts can not be confined to where they occur, but have implications beyond and should therefore be handled collectively. In addition there is a consolidating view that while the principle of the non-interference into the internal matters of Member States remains sacrosanct, it can not be taken literally and allowed to stand in the way of constructive action in the face of acute suffering and serious threat to human life. Conversely, a strong view is now held that human life being sacrosanct has to be protected and preserved. This sense of concern and caring is emerging as a positive force in the whole dynamic of conflict resolution in the continent.

Humanitarian intervention apart, there are efforts under-way to create permanent arrangements for resolving conflicts. There is now a decision to establish within the Organization of African Unity, a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. This will enable the Organization to respond speedily and effectively to conflict situations. The mechanism will be readily available to countries as a point of reference in circumstances of conflict. What is encouraging in the decision to establish the mechanism is the inherent recognition and acceptance that conflicts must be addressed comprehensively and collectively and that in this task, the Organization of African Unity, not only has an opinion to give but indeed has a central role to play in fulfilling that task. This new perspective of realism and agreement to begin addressing conflicts seriously, is indeed encouraging. And this is a far cry from the days when sovereignty was invariably invoked at the mere suggestion of attempt to help countries resolve conflicts.

Mr. Chairman,

The acute economic difficulties in which our countries now find themselves, have not daunted their resolve to struggle for better living standards for their people. The struggle has involved immense sacrifice and political courage on the part of Governments. Our countries now almost without exception have accepted the challenge of structural adjustment and economic reform. More and more, they are willing to take political risks, in the knowledge that the transition to full economic recovery will not be smooth; at times will have to be painful. Of course those who have borne the brunt of that pain have been the poor and economically vulnerable segments of our societies. Government spending cuts across the board have undermined the safety nets in our systems which protected them from the vagaries of economic fluctuations. These reductions have translated into access by fewer people to schools, medical care, drinking water and medical facilities among others.



Spending cuts have crippled universities and research institutions and as salary levels have plummeted our finest minds have emigrated to the developed countries in search of greener pastures. This hemorrhage of indigenous human power has added to the external flow of financial resources by way of wages and emoluments paid to the expatriate staff - mostly less qualified but who come appended to the aid programmes we receive from abroad.

The reduction in health care, has meant higher mortality rates, malnutrition and disease. Overall, the deep cuts in government spending has meant less ability of governments to invest in human development, and to build social infrastructures necessary to meet the needs of an expanding population which is projected to double by the year 2015 if not sooner. The full implications of these restructuring measures can be realized when put in the context of how Africa compares globally. According to the United Nations Development Programme, by 1989, countries with the 20 per cent of the world's population had per capita incomes some 60 times greater than those with the poorest 20 per cent. Human development has been particularly severely affected in Africa which accounts for 18 out of the 20 lowest ranking in the Human Development Index.

Despite all these handicaps, Africa is continuing with reforms and bold and creative policies have not only halted the steady decline of our economies but have, in fact, in some cases restored modest growth to them. This is an encouraging beginning which can only be sustained if the adjustment programmes are targeted to the overriding imperative of eliminating poverty and are accompanied by an additionality of resources. Equally important, and if structural adjustment is to be sustainable, it must not undermine the social gains which have been achieved nor destroy the social infrastructure already in place. Rather, such adjustment should be aimed at rationalization of the system and bringing fiscal discipline and efficiency to it.

Mr. Chairman,

Structural reform and good management if accompanied with additionality of resource flows, will of course stem economic decline and restore growth and productivity to the economies of the individual African countries. Yet if the orientation of our economies; production and trading patterns will remain unchanged, there is little likelihood that we can achieve sustainable economic growth. The internal restructuring must be undertaken in tandem with gradual diversification of production patterns and trade. The continued mono-culture of commodity dependent economies and traditional trading patterns which emphasize the vertical linkages with the developed North will not lift our economies from the cyclical morass to which they are forced to fall victim. On the contrary, we will continue to be appendages of the economies of the developed North, operating on the margins of the world economy and unable to make any impact.

The first place to begin is to take the challenge of economic integration in the Continent seriously. We have to lift intra-African trade from the present appalling 5% of our total trade to higher levels. We should begin to buy from each other, to rationalize our industry and avoid duplication. We should expand and create a larger home market and take advantages which economies of scale and integration offer. To do so, we must begin dismantling the many artificial and real barriers which colonial legacy and prejudices erected between our countries and peoples. One of the major barriers to intra-African trade is ignorance about each other. African countries do not know what is available in Africa either in terms of goods or human power. We readily look abroad when we need to import anything. We look to the outside when we think of experts. We should now begin looking inward, to learn about ourselves, to know what is produced and where, what expertise is available and where. If we succeed in establishing lateral linkages between our countries, we will have begun seriously on the road towards continental integration.

We must harmonize our economic administrative and monetary systems among others. We should defeat the prejudices of regionalism and language in the Continent. If the French, the Portuguese and the English can be the most ardent advocates of European integration, why should it be difficult for those in Africa who merely speak their languages to cooperate. We should see ourselves as one people, bound by the same fate and destiny. After all, those in Europe, America or Asia do not see those differences we think we see in ourselves. If a child starves in the Horn of Africa or war breaks out in Francophone or Lusophone Africa, it is Africa and the Africans who are stigmatized collectively.

Mr. Chairman,

Within the OAU, countries are rising to the challenge with purpose and determination. In efforts started in Lagos in 1980 when the Lagos Plan of Action was adopted and culminating in the signature at Abuja - Nigeria last year of the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community, Africa is beginning to re-seize the initiative. Central to the effort of setting up a Pan-African Economic Community is the realization that the splintered and constrained individual economies of the continent can not withstand the rigour of competition at the market place. The solution lies in their integration. For in the world of tomorrow, it will be the large and more integrated economic entities which will survive. It is the same realization which is guiding Europe, America, Asia and the Pacific as they seek to establish larger economic entities. It is only through integration that Africa, as a continent can remain relevant and hpe to be productive and competetive, at the world market place.

Central also to the effort is the new determination of Africa to take the issue of development in its own hands even if we may continue to benefit from external assistance. If we can, by ourselves, determine the context and direction of our development objectives and manage to translate them into tangible programmes, we will have crossed the most important obstacle; and begun on the road of true economic independence. The signature of the Abuja Treaty, was a political statement and the launch of an economic blue-print for the Continent. Already, considerable start-off work has been accomplished within the Organization of African Unity emphasizing initially the coordination of the work of the Regional Economic Groupings and the elaboration of protocols on those sectors considered most integrative and catalytic to rapid continental integration.



As we await the full ratification of the Treaty and its entry into force, the more demanding task of taking the Community to the people remains. In the final analysis, it will be a Community of people and not simply that of goods and services. The people therefore must be educated about it, about their stake in that community and freely be convinced to accept that it is in their interest and that they have a corresponding role to play in its consolidation if not obligation to do so. The Community must be understood as a vehicle for articulating in their oneness and promoting their cooperation. What made the East African Community - a Community, was not simply because our countries traded with each other. It was because human bonds were created. Similarly, if the Pan-African Community is to be created and endure, it will have to be anchored in people, and their regard for one another. It places on us and particularly on institutions like yours the challenge to begin the process of education - of awareness building - of taking the Community to the people of Africa.

Mr. Chairman,

Apart from the efforts at the continental level, tangible progress has been made at regional level. Regional groupings like PTA, ECOWAS and SADCC, have done commendable work in bringing their respective regions economically together. In the Preferential Trade Area, we have seen steady progress in eliminating duties and tariffs on goods in the inter-country trade. The UAPTA has been adopted as a unit of exchange in the region and the use of UAPTA travellers cheques is now widely accepted. A Payments Clearing House is now in operation and so too does a PTA Bank. A common insurance scheme has made vehicle movement and inter-state road transport dependent trade easy. All these have combined to bring about facilitation of the movement of goods and services in the region and boosted trade. In ECOWAS similar achievements have been made; in addition to the very significant liberalization of movement of people within the region. Under SADCC, the countries of Southern Africa have been able to coordinate development strategy, and rationalize common use of resources in project execution and management.

It is our view at the OAU that as the building blocks of the future Community get more established and become stronger, their projects and programmes will continually be aligned with the continental agenda of integration and will be synchronized with the work programmes of the Organization. We believe that stronger regional Economic Communities are consistent with the objective of building a Strong Continental Community.

Mr. Chairman,

Africa recognizes that ultimately, the responsibility for her development is Africa's. This is why, as we continue to restructure and reform our economies at home, we want to bring to the effort, a continental dimension, in the full knowledge that integration is the key to meaningful economic development. We recognize however that Africa will still need massive resources to complement the efforts being expended here. For ultimately unless there is an inflow of additional resources the efforts at structural adjustment and stabilization will be hamstrung. We need additionality of concessionary resources, better terms of trade, relief of the excruciating debt burden, and better prices for our commodities among others.

While obviously Africa will continue to need international solidarity in mobilizing the resources necessary to meet the acute needs of the Continent, it will, in addition, have to reach into its own pockets in matters such as meeting the humanitarian needs of those languishing as refugees, displaced or victims of natural calamities. For charity begin at home and our religions teach us that God helps those who help themselves. When I speak of Africa reaching into its own pockets, I have in mind the potential that exists in Africa to mobilize resources from among those of us who dispose some financial means and better still those who are rich. Yes there is misery and want in Africa, but not every body is starving. There are also rich

- indeed very rich people on the Continent. My strong view is that we need to open a new perspective on how we see humanitarian questions in Africa. For I think, we have not thought of much less - begun to exploit the considerable potential for humanitarianism which exist in the Continent. Instead, we have remained prisoners of the assistance mentality, and we readily look to Europe, America or Asia for assistance to deal with even the most basic humanitarian needs in the Continent. I speak in these terms because I know that a large portion of the resources which the many non-governmental charity organizations distribute to the needy in Africa, are collected - not from people who are rich - but from ordinary working people who are also in need. The difference is that they are sensitized to the plight of those more needy elsewhere in the world and are willing to share - to contribute nickels and pennies which add up to sizable amounts. Likewise in Africa, it is possible to sensitize those who are better off - rich or otherwise, to chip in to the humanitarian effort in the Continent. Charity and goodness of heart are not qualities unique to the Europeans, Americans or Asians. In Africa, we do not only have kind people but our very societies are built on principles of mutual support, of community and fellowship. It is time we reached out into our own goodness and even in a limited way, begin to help. It can make great material and moral difference. If it is possible in Europe, for charity organizations to mobilize resources, it surely must be possible also in Africa to demonstrate a spirit of caring and sharing, with our own kith and kin. I realize that it is not all that easy, but we should begin to make an attempt to tap into our humanitarianism including insuring that proper systems and procedures are devised to collect, control, properly manage and channel the resources to those in need.

Mr. Chairman,

Perhaps nowhere does the humanitarianism of Africa need to be demonstrated with utmost urgency more than in Somalia. The human drama which is still unfolding in that country is an indictment to our collective humanity; and we must rise to the challenge. As we continue to strive for



a lasting political solution to the war in that country, we should also continue to respond to the acute humanitarian needs of the millions who face imminent death there. I wish in this connection to reiterate my deep appreciation and that of the Organization of African Unity, to the many non-governmental organizations such as Save the Children, ICRC, OXFAM, Doctors without Borders and others which pioneered humanitarian relief to the people of Somalia and continue to do so against many odds and risk. But in addition to our appreciation, we should also be able to render assistance in a concrete manner and to show that Africa also cares. I am glad that a number of African countries have responded to the appeal for humanitarian assistance and have contributed food and medicine. Still a lot more needs to be done by way of responding adequately to the needs of our brothers and sisters there. Is it not possible, even with our limited means to send doctors and nurses to help? Is it not possible to contribute food stuffs and medicine from within Africa and channel it to Somalia? I think it is quite possible if we put our minds and determination to it.

Mr. Chairman,

For the first time since independence, the people of Africa are themselves advocating change and agitating for it. Governments are increasingly being compelled to respond to this agitation by allowing the necessary political dispensations to enable people participate directly and more effectively in the process of political governance and economic management. This flexibility of governments is a radical departure from the thinking of the past that expressing a view contrary to or different from that of the government was sacrilegious and taken as treason. Today mechanisms of government are beginning to respond to the changing needs of society. There is increasing realization on the part of governments that if they remain steeped into maintaining the status quo, they will become irrelevant to the people they are supposed to serve. The new needs of the youth - a population now coming of age - employment, social amenities, the environment, AIDS Pandemic and others, are all challenging governments to review their programme priorities - realizing at the same time that as our societies develop they become complex and thus require more sophisticated ways of managing them.

Mr. Chairman,

Perhaps more encouraging and representing the most substance in the now emerging Africa, is the new approach to matters of political governance. The new approach now hinges on the principles of democratization and multipartism, human rights and popular participation. As countries are challenged to bring about greater democracy and converting to multi-party elections, the key consideration has been how the people can be empowered and situated at the centre of the political process. The new openness in governments is manifesting itself in increasing freedom of expression in the Continent.

We now see a budding press which is motivated, and even if at times understandably impatient and angry, still relatively free nonetheless. Accountability of governments to the electorate, restraining the arbitrary powers of the police and security forces; empowerment of the judiciary and greater respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are beginning to be accepted as essential attributes of any functioning democracy.

Today many countries have acceded to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights as well as to other International Human Rights instruments. Many have allowed and encouraged creation of Human Rights National Committees which act as watch dogs and do monitor the performance of Governments in the field of Human Rights. These national committees are complementary to the OAU Commission on Human and Peoples Rights which was created specifically to oversee the observance by governments of their commitment to the protection and promotion of Human Rights. More important in these sets of actions taken by governments is the underlying recognition of their role in the promotion of human rights and corresponding obligation to preserve them. It is a recognition that the respect of these rights is not a favour which governments can dispense or withdraw at will, but an obligation inherent in good governance. It is equally a recognition that we surely do not have to await censure by the outside world to have regard to the sanctity of life and worth of the African as a human being.

Mr. Chairman,

Obviously, the development which has been the most visible and generated the most activity and anxiety is the question of multi-party elections. It is the gradual conversion to multipartism which has given practical expression to the process of further democratization. Democracy involves the right to choice and the freedom to exercise it. The new opportunities which now present themselves are opportunities for the people to decide on how they are governed, by whom and for how long.

It is evident that Africa is shirking its autocratic past and bringing flexibility into its systems of government. It has begun on the road to consolidating democracy and putting in place firm foundations for structures which will enable it to push forward. This is a critical juncture. For if we are ultimately able to build strong institutions of democracy, we will have crossed an important obstacle to economic recovery, growth and development. Democracy is an engine of development, and if through its full exercise we can empower the people, we will also be able to harness their creativity and industry. Freedom engenders purpose and ability to pursue that purpose. Indeed Africa is at the cross-roads and our future, how we will face it as a continent, will depend very much on how we manage the question of democracy; and transition generally.

Democratization, will make meaning and difference to the people of Africa if in its purpose it enlarges the scope of their political participation and enhances their freedom. It is freedom they want and it is political participation they ask. For this simple but fundamental reason it is necessary to ensure that the process of democratization - especially as it relates to the election process is carried out in an orderly manner and without prejudice to social stability and without undermining the gains that have been made. Without smooth transition, and anarchy is allowed to creep in as we fail to contain our political exuberance, or extremism, we will have done a fatal blow to the cause of democracy in the Continent.



Management of the transition, acquires central importance in the entire process of democratization in our countries. We should, therefore, refuse to allow the few fringes of society to undermine our collective freedom, by propagating sectarian and exclusionist politics under the guise of democracy. If we manage to bring about balance in our relative freedom in the transition, we will have prepared fertile ground in which democracy will grow and blossom. Equally, we should be ready to accept that in any election, only one individual or party can secure a majority of the electoral votes. But beyond the numerical majority, no one emerges victor or vanquished. It is the collective triumph of the will of the people and a natural course of the process of democracy which must be respected if elections are to make any meaning, at all.

Mr. Chairman,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Africa is determined to achieve and triumph over the many ills which currently beset it. It is a determination rooted in Africa's belief in herself - the resilience of its people and the enormous potential it possesses. This determination is manifesting itself in the form of the fantastic movement for change which is now sweeping the Continent. It is a movement for a better tomorrow. But in order for this movement to take root and bring about with it that better and prosperous tomorrow, which we seek, it must bring us all together into an alliance for change. People, governments and non-governmental institutions, must converge into an alliance to defeat the many prejudices against Africa and the self-serving stereotype notions advanced by the detractors of our Continent.

We must fight the image of Africa as a continent impermeable to change, where conflicts are endemic, where there is no regard to the sanctity of human life and where there is simple disregard for tomorrow. To do so, we will need not only our determination but unity and above all - belief in ourselves and in our ability to triumph.

This moral renewal is perhaps now needed more than before in the history of our Continent. These are times when the continent has lost the geostrategic importance it had as a pawn in the game of the cold war. These are times when the multiplication of global problems has created new priorities for the donor countries of Europe and the United States. The problems of the former Soviet Union, of the former East European Countries and of Yugoslavia, have not only diverted the attention of Europe from Africa but require resources to be resolved. And even if assurances may continue to be given that there will be no diversion of resources from Africa, the reality is not the case. There is simply, diminishing interest in the poverty and misery of Africa. We should begin to realize that we have nowhere else to turn but to ourselves.

Mr. Chairman,

When I say there is diminishing interest in our poverty is not to be unappreciative to those countries which continue to assist Africa. Quite to the contrary. What I mean is that given the gravity of the African condition and the repeated calls which have been made, the response of the developed North to our needs has been quite lukewarm indeed. Our calls for a New International Economic Order have fallen on deaf ears and our appeals for increased flow of resources, have been set aside as even the agreed Official Development Assistance targets have remained unattained - excepting the few happy exceptions such as the Nordic Countries. Underlying this lukewarm response is in my view, a reluctance to accept the principle of fighting poverty in Africa and thus committing resources for the objective. This contrasts very sharply with the ready and generous response with which Europe and the United States have given to the needs of Eastern Europe and Russia. For not only are billions of dollars in development assistance being channelled to that region, a Bank for the Reconstruction of Eastern Europe has been set up in London for the purpose. If the argument is that economic restructuring and transition to market economies will need additional resources in the countries of Eastern Europe, why is the same logic resisted when it comes to Africa.

Mr. Chairman,

I am not trying to suggest opposition to the countries of Eastern Europe or others receiving assistance. What I am saying is that Africa should awaken from the slumber of self-delusion that the world cares and will necessarily come to our rescue. Yes we must continue to require of the international community to recognize that the world is one and that the developed world will be affected by Africa's poverty one way or another. The developed north can not insulate itself from the global poverty. But at the same time we must ourselves recognize the limitation of this argument and begin on the road to self-reliance.

Such is the critical situation in which the Continent finds itself. Africa must now create a new strategic importance for itself - not one predicated on the role of an intermediary in global militarism of the Super Powers but one build on our socio-economic relevance in the world of today and of tomorrow. We can do it only if we have faith in ourselves and defeat self-doubt which the years of domination has imposed on our minds. This self-rediscovery is more necessary now as I see disturbing signals that Africa is losing the zeal, energy, sense of solidarity, unity of purpose and action which made it possible for it to score important victories in the sixties and seventies. Our will to fight, to stand for what we collectively believe in as a continent, seems to be caving in under the burdens of the hard economic times, our countries are going through. Now we prefer to negotiate separately. We seem ready to accept individualized dealings under the self-deluding thinking that we can get better deals or settlement. Now we are being divided when it comes to negotiating our debt problems, or economic arrangements while those we negotiate with are doing so as a cartel. The London and Paris Clubs are associations of the rich. Why then should Africa accept being divided?



Mr. Chairman,

Africa is doing a lot at home. Tremendous efforts are being expended to bring about economic reform, to democratize our countries, to end our conflicts. There is definitely a sense of purpose and direction in the continent, and that is a very healthy sign indeed. We should persevere and prove the sceptics wrong. But my concern is that Africa's view of herself, her role and place in the emerging order, now seems very uncertain indeed. We seem to have lost a sense of collective purpose as a continent in the world affairs and have succumbed to the unilateralism of others. We therefore need to rekindle our spirit of self-esteem and belief in ourselves as a continent. We need to rekindle the spirit of continental solidarity and of collective action. It is only by articulating our collective identity, our collective view and determination to function as an entity that we can retrace our foot prints to the days when Africa spoke as one and was heard as one. These are the days which Tom Mboya left behind. It is the spirit which he advocated and it is the legacy he bequithed to Africa. It is the Africa he helped build and it is the Africa we must preserve in his memory.

I thank you.