



SPEECH

BY

HIS EXCELLENCY, CDE R. G. MUGABE,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE
AND THE CHAIRMAN OF THE ORGANISATION
OF AFRICAN UNITY
AT THE
OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE 34TH ASSEMBLY
OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT
OF THE ORGANISATION OF AFRICAN UNITY (OAU),
OUAGADOUGOU, BURKINA FASO,
8 JUNE, 1998.

Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,
Your Excellency, the Secretary-General of the OAU,
Dr Salim Ahmed Salim,

Honourable Ministers,

Your Excellency, the Executive Secretary of the
Economic Commission for Africa, Mr K.Y.
Amoaku,

Your Excellencies, Heads of Africa Regional
Economic Integration Organisations,

Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Comrades and Friends.

I am very pleased to be here in Ouagadougou; a city that a few months ago was host to the 21st African Nations Cup tournament. We are meeting here in response to yet another demonstration of His Excellency, President Compaore's own personal and Burkina Faso's keen interest in, and commitment to, the furtherance of our continent's pursuit of unity and development.

I wish, therefore, to begin by conveying our deep gratitude to President Compaore, the Government and people of Burkina Faso, for a very warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to us since our arrival in this beautiful country. On behalf of my delegation, I say *merci beaucoup!*

I also wish to avail myself of this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to the Secretary-General, Dr Salim Ahmed Salim, and his staff, not only for the excellent documentation that has been prepared for our meeting, but also for his relentless efforts to follow up and co-ordinate the implementation of the decisions and programmes agreed to in previous Summits. I personally thank him for his support and advice through-out the period of my Chairmanship of our Organisation.

Over the past year, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) has vigorously pursued the twin objectives of promoting, on the one hand, peace, and, on the

other, economic co-operation and integration on the continent. I am pleased to note, in this regard, that at this Summit, our deliberations will integrate these twin objectives. This is as it should be as this is the very first Summit after the inauguration last year of the African Economic Community (AEC). We meet after the OAU and AEC Secretariats have also signed protocols of co-operation with some sub-regional economic organisations. We have no doubt that those that are yet to sign the protocol will do so without further delay.

Africa, once again, is attracting increasing interest and attention within the larger international community. It is gratifying to note that this renewed interest is generated by a veritable African renaissance characterised by positive developments that are unfolding across the continent.

Last year, I had the opportunity as Chairman to take advantage of the Special Ministerial Meeting of the United Nations Security Council on African

Development, to address that august body. In my speech, I highlighted both the progress Africa is making and, at the same time, some of the constraints that we continue to face. I called for assistance in order to bring relief from the crippling debt burden, at a time when terms of trade were continuing to punish us with falling commodity prices.

I also noted that ever stringent conditionalities, dwindling Official Development Aid flow, low levels of Foreign Direct Investment, combined with the unfair terms of trade all contribute to the marginalisation of Africa in a generally unfavourable international economic environment.

I have been much encouraged, since then, by positive developments which include our collective determination to ensure that our voice is heard in deliberations on matters that affect us. We have, to this end, held such continent-wide meetings as the Summit in Gabon to map out an African position on the future of ACP-EU relations. We now enjoy greater cohesion as we approach the 1999

negotiations for successor arrangements to the Lome IV Convention.

African Ministers of Trade and Industry also met in Harare to prepare for what turned out to be a more robust participation of Africa in the Second Ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organisation, which was subsequently held in Geneva last month. Such policy consultations must be intensified, as they will not only facilitate co-ordination of our views abroad, but also contribute to the acceleration of the integration process on the continent. We need to identify and exploit opportunities offered by the globalisation phenomenon in pursuit of economic growth and development for African people.

Your Excellencies, since our last Summit in Harare, a number of significant and positive developments have continued to unfold in many parts of our continent. Untiring efforts have been expended, at various levels with mixed results, in the search for solutions to persistent crises and conflicts. Positive

results were achieved in some; progress towards possible solutions in others seems to be discernible; while, in yet other cases, durable solutions have proved hard to achieve. The OAU and its sub-regional organisations were kept busy, taking initiatives and committing resources to the restoration of peace, order and stability and in defence of our cherished goals and principles.

In the Comoros, the OAU has worked tirelessly for a peaceful solution. A ministerial delegation was dispatched to that country in concrete manifestation of our deep commitment to the protection and preservation of the Archipelago's cohesion, unity and sovereignty. We need to continue with our efforts to ensure that genuine problems are addressed in the process to re-unify the Comoros.

Recent developments in Burundi have raised our expectations about the possible early return of constitutional order and stability to that country. We hope the parties to the conflict in Burundi will indeed

commit themselves to attend the talks that Mwalimu Julius Nyerere plans to convene in Arusha in a few days' time, on 15 June, 1998. All concerned must embrace peace and forsake violence and hatred. Only ourselves can get rid of dangerous prejudices that have given rise to horrific acts of genocide in that country and Rwanda.

I am happy to note that the OAU has agreed on the establishment of an international panel of eminent persons to investigate the genocide that took place in Rwanda and which has affected the neighbouring countries of the Great Lakes region. We particularly welcome the expected international support to provide resources to enable the panel to do its work.

The implementation of the Lusaka Peace Accords in Angola is not yet complete. Although the United Nations has declared the demobilisation exercise complete, reports on the ground show that a disturbing element of renewed and growing banditry threatens great strides already taken in implementing

the Lusaka Peace Protocol. We are, therefore, very concerned that Dr Savimbi has not found it fit to take his rightful place in Luanda after the Government's legalisation of UNITA. Similarly, we are greatly concerned that substantial parts of the Angolan national territory still remain outside central government authority and control. Durable peace and stability cannot be sustained under such conditions.

Somalia remains mired in inter-clan conflicts. We need not remind our Somali brothers and sisters that they have the primary responsibility for ending the divisions and fighting in their country. Ours is to support and complement their efforts. In this regard, I wish to commend the efforts of the Inter-governmental Authority for Development (IGAD), Ethiopia, Egypt and other countries for their show of commitment and contribution to the peace process in Somalia.

Your Excellencies, the question of the Saharawi

Democratic Republic (SADR) appears to be approaching finality in the face of the planned referendum to settle its dispute with Morocco. It is therefore incumbent upon all OAU member states to lend their full support to the referendum process scheduled for December 7, 1998 in accordance with the UN settlement plan which was brokered by the former US Secretary of State, Mr James Baker, in his capacity as the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy. We are very hopeful that the Referendum will finally settle the dispute between the SADR and Morocco.

The OAU continued to have a dialogue on the dispute between Libya, on one hand, and the United States and the United Kingdom on the other, in efforts to seek the resolution of this dispute on the basis of justice, fairness, equity and balance. In the Security Council of the United Nations, we have called for the removal of the iniquitous and debilitating sanctions to which Libya has been subjected over the past six years. This Summit will

receive a report from the Council of Ministers on responses we have so far received to our proposals on possible solutions to this dispute. I wish to thank the Ministers, particularly the Committee of 5 on Libya, for persevering in the search for a solution.

In the Middle East, we have been greatly perturbed by the Israeli government's virtual abrogation of the Oslo peace accords. Israel, in accepting the principle of land for peace, acknowledged that this is the basis for a durable peace in that region. It must now concretely demonstrate its stated desire to peacefully co-exist with others in the Middle East.

The resolution of the Sierra Leone crisis has had the salutary effect of reinforcing our conviction that African problems should first be subjected to African solutions. We have reason to be proud and jubilant over what ECOWAS and ECOMOG achieved in Sierra Leone. We applaud them on their success and on the great honour they have done all of us.

We also wish to recognise and acknowledge the positive role and support given by the OAU, the UN and the Commonwealth in this shared determination to return Sierra Leone to constitutionality. It is our hope and appeal that these organisations remain actively engaged in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Sierra Leone. Post-conflict support in Sierra Leone, as indeed in such other countries as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia and Rwanda, is absolutely necessary if total success in returning these countries to democracy is to be registered.

At the level of the Central Organ, I regret to report that it was not possible to convene a Summit which was planned in February this year. This was owing to lack of a quorum. In our view, and through that experience, it has proved impossible for all members of the Central Organ to attend its meetings at the appropriate levels. If this mechanism is to effectively and efficiently discharge the responsibilities we have reposed in it, there is need to review our position on

the need for Summit-level or even Ministerial meetings. Our Ambassadors in Addis Ababa, like our Permanent Representatives at the United Nations, may well be best suited to serve the purpose for which the Central Organ was created, if it is too difficult for Ministers and ourselves to meet as the Central Organ.

Africa attaches particular importance to the reform of the United Nations and other multilateral organisations in the interests of greater democracy and effectiveness in their decision-making process. In my address to the 52nd session of the General Assembly I had occasion to convey to the United Nations and the wider international community our views on these reforms, including those of the United Nations Security Council. I urge that we continue to be actively engaged in the ongoing discussions on these fundamental issues, both in the Movement of the Non-Aligned countries and the United Nations, on the basis of decisions reached in our previous Summits and the continuing dialogue with other

continents and regions.

I wish, in conclusion, to congratulate our brother and colleague, President Blaise Compaore, on his taking over the Chairmanship of our continental organisation. I wish him all the success at the helm of this important body. Our Summit in Ougadougou will break new ground in the discussion of further ideas and necessary actions to achieve further democratisation, peace and prosperity in Africa. I have every confidence that under his leadership, Africa and the OAU, will continue to register greater progress. I would like to assure him of my full co-operation during this Summit and his entire term of office.

I thank you.

RGM/sp.

1998-06-08

SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY, CDE
R. G. MUGABE, PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE AND THE
CHAIRMAN OF THE ORGANISATION
OF AFRICAN UNITY AT THE OFFICIAL
OPENING OF THE 34th ASSEMBLY
OF HEADS OF STATE AND
GOVERNMENT OF THE
ORGANISATION OF AFRICAN UNITY (OAU)

R. G., MUGABE

OAU

<https://archives.au.int/handle/123456789/6814>

Downloaded from African Union Common Repository