

THE MWALIMU NYERERE FOUNDATION



STATEMENT BY

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AT

**THE OPENING OF THE NYERERE WEEK CONFERENCE ON:
AFRICA'S ROAD MAP TO DEVELOPMENT AND SELF RELIANCE:
REALITY OR MYTH**

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GOLDEN TULIP
DAR ES SALAAM

Chairperson,

I am delighted and honoured to officiate at this opening session of the International Conference which is an integral part of the 2004 Nyerere Week Conference. I would like at the outset to thank all those who in one way or another have contributed to make this event possible. This of course includes not only the various scholars and other personalities who have been requested and agreed to present various papers which will form the basis of our discussions in the next two days but indeed all of you here present who have come to participate in the Conference deliberations.

Your presence and collective efforts constitute a clear tribute to the Father of our Tanzania Nation and one of Africa's most illustrious sons and leaders. This Conference is part of the celebrations of the life and achievements of Mwalimu. There can be no better homage to the late President Nyerere than to strive to pursue vigorously the values that he espoused, the aspirations and objectives that he fought for and the wisdom that he generously shared with the Tanzanians and the African people as a whole. It is also fitting that this event is not just a Tanzanian event. Rather it is a joint undertaking with our brothers and sisters of South Africa. For Mwalimu, besides being an outstanding and revered leader of the Tanzanian people and a highly respected international figure and statesman, was above all dedicated and uncompromising Pan Africanist. He viewed the challenges and opportunities facing our people not in national isolation but within the context of the larger African paradigm.

The theme of this Conference, "Africa's Road Map to Development and Self Reliance," as well as the sub-themes, Higher Education in Africa, Social Development and Health, Conflict Resolution, Truth and Reconciliation and Democracy and Good Governance, are some issues which preoccupied Mwalimu during his lifetime. Like Kwame Nkrumah, Mwalimu viewed the freedom and independence of our country as incomplete without the total liberation of our continent. He became one of the architects and reliable pillar of the struggle for the prosecution of Africa's liberation, and it is a matter of great satisfaction that he lived to see the end of colonialism, racism and apartheid with the dismantling of the apartheid system in South Africa. But as we all know, to Mwalimu the end of classical colonialism and racial subjugation in the continent was just the beginning of a new and crucial challenging battle for Africa's development. And for him development meant an all encompassing process which first and foremost meant the uplifting of the lot of the ordinary people. He strongly believed in and advocated self reliance within our nation and within our continent conscious as he was of the fact that the development of Africa must be first and foremost the responsibility of the African people themselves. An astute observer and active participant of international affairs that he was, Mwalimu was keenly aware that no nation can do everything on its own. International cooperation is vital. Mwalimu's emphasis on development on the basis of self reliance was based on the rejection of excessive dependence and in favour of genuine interdependence between nations rather than what the late elder statesman of China Deng Hsiao-ping denounced in his United Nations General Assembly special Session address in 1974 as the "Interdependence of a donkey and the Rider."

I am mentioning all this as a background merely to assent that Africa's road to development and self reliance is something which has been preoccupying our leaders for years. To what extent have we succeeded in at least laying the foundation towards that path is a matter which I will leave participants at this Conference to ponder. I wish nonetheless to offer a few observations as to the challenges facing our continent, the shortcomings both real and artificial and the struggles that lie ahead if our continent is to emerge successful in its development process in the context of attaining sustainable self reliant development.

It is tempting to start with the international setting. The continued inequity in the international system, the transformation of the world from a multi-polar or at least bipolar to a uni-polar one and its consequences especially for the smaller countries – the bulk of which are in Africa; the vagaries of globalisation if pursued without taking into account the legitimate interests and concerns of the developing countries especially the least developed among them (of which Africa has a majority) as well as the repercussions for our continent of old and new threats – and how these impact negatively on Africa's Development Agenda – are all matters of common knowledge. I shall however refrain from this approach. Rather, I would like to look at ourselves – a sort of introspective analysis.

What are the shortcomings that have faced our countries and are within our means to resolve without international assistance? What have we done to address them? What have we done to create the enabling environment for economic and social transformation in the

continent by *inter alia* using the continent's immense potential both human and material? Have we done enough to confound our critics who consider Africa as a continent where conflicts are rampant, human rights abuses tolerated and corruption including in high places the order of the day in some societies and where some of its people are forced to vote with their feet? To what extent has Africa responded to Madiba Nelson Mandela and President Thabo Mbeki's call for an African Renaissance?

I cannot pretend to answer all these questions. I can however offer some observations on the basis of a privileged position that I had for twelve years in following closely developments in our continent.

The first observation that I can make is that Africa is changing and doing so primarily because the African people expect and demand changes. Ours is a continent in transition both in political and economic terms. Economic reforms are increasingly becoming a rule rather than an exception. The process of democratisation is firmly on course. Ten or so years ago, genuine democratic elections were an exception. Today, effective resistance to democratic dispensation are exceptions. It is my conviction that despite setbacks here and there, the process of democratisations in our continent is irreversible. This month of April alone we have seen the triumph of the ballot box in two important African countries – Algeria and South Africa. The people of our continent who have fought against colonialism, and all forms of racial discrimination are more and more determined to control their destiny. They are determined to have a say on how they are governed, by whom for what period, and towards which goals.

While welcoming this positive trend in our continent, there is no room for complacency. We must continue to look at the larger picture involving the process of good governance and participatory democracy in the entire continent.

Governance should be considered as the totality of the exercise of authority in the management of a country's affairs comprising of the complex mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights and mediate their differences. In building good governance, there is also the need to address some misconceptions of democracy within and outside our continent. Democracy has often been characterised as the participation of the people in electing a government of their choice through the ballot box.

There is no doubt that elections are indeed a crucial state in a democratic process. Yet, while elections are indispensable, they themselves do not provide adequate condition for the building of democracy and good governance. Elections *per se*, are not the panacea for sustainable democracy and good governance. Put differently, the existence of a multiplicity of political parties, the conduct of free and fair elections and the performance of Parliament under the leadership of an elected government, crucial as they are, do not always guarantee governance into a democratic system.

Perhaps more critical than the electoral system which I consider to be vital, is the need to build viable institutions to sustain democracy and promote good governance. In addition to building and/or consolidating such institutions as Parliament, the Judiciary, the Police,

the Media, Independent Election Commissions, Ombudsmen, Parliamentary Oversight Committees, higher trained civil servants at national and local governments, we need also to take into account, specific factors related to the building of governments in Africa. One of these factors is the need to strengthen the quality of leadership so as to ensure the promotion of people centred decision making process. This naturally calls for greater transparency in decision making as well as accountability. African leaders must place national interests before self or group interests. Power must not be seen as an end in itself, but rather, as a means to promote the wider interest of the people. But more critically, power must be vested in the people and not in their leaders. Political power must be discharged with a deep sense of responsibility for the well being and interest of the people. Only in this way can we ensure that democratic governance works for pro-poor development in Africa. And this was what we learned from Mwalimu. His whole political life was a shining example of how a conscious leader exercises power and authority for the people.

It is at the same time a truism that one cannot talk of democracy and good governance without ensuring the observance of human rights. It is encouraging to note that African countries have gradually recognised this. Indeed, in many countries, national institutions dealing with the protection and promotion of human rights have been established and are gaining experience and credibility. It is also gratifying to note that African countries have agreed to the establishment of an African Court on Human and Peoples Rights.

Needless to emphasize, Africa has more reasons than any other continent to protect, promote and safeguard human rights. Our

continent has suffered and was traumatized by all kinds of indignities and human rights abuses, from slavery to colonialism and during the apartheid era. The hopes that our people had that all would end with independence were dashed because we saw serious abuse being committed by some of our own governments. Now it is completely unacceptable to tolerate any abuse of human rights particularly bearing in mind that our countries are not only signatories to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights but also to the African Charter of Human and Peoples Rights.

Indeed, as Africans, we must be, and be seen to be in the forefront in the defence of the principles of liberty, equality, justice and human dignity. Yet, regrettably and notwithstanding the progress achieved by many of our countries, the fact remains that violations of human rights – in some cases on a massive scale – continue to occur in some parts of our continent. In the interest of our people and fidelity to the Human Rights Instruments which our countries have subscribed to, it is imperative that we must put an end to these violations and ensure the observance, promotion and protection of human rights in all our countries. To realize this objective, we need to build a strong partnership that brings together governments, non-governmental organizations, organizations of civil society and individuals.

As I have already observed, in the course of this Conference, you will also be discussing conflict resolution. Africa continues to suffer from man made and natural disasters. In the context of the former category, the scourge of conflict continues to afflict our continent although admittedly considerable progress has been made to address the problem.

Conflicts have been a curse on our continent. They have caused untold suffering, loss of life and destruction of property. They engender hatred and a culture of violence within our societies. They traumatize generations of Africans and undermine the very fabric of our societies. They affect the most productive section of our societies and jeopardize the chances of African children to have a decent and dignified life. They have devastated our women and in the process undermine a crucial component of our societies. They produce orphans and armed children and constitute a fundamental obstacle to our socio-economic endeavours. Conflicts remain, by and large, the main root cause of humanitarian tragedies in our continent which has the inenviable record of hosting the largest number of refugees and displaced persons. Furthermore, as a result of the unbearable burden created by the massive influx of refugees to countries of asylum the environmental degradation caused and resentments and frustrations generated among local populations, there has been a decline in the traditional African compassion and hospitality towards the refugees.

Africa needs to put a definite end to this scourge. In this context it is gratifying to note that there has been recently a significant de-escalation of these conflicts. Africa leaders under the overall umbrella of the African Union using among other things the recently reinforced African Peace and Security Council have made giant strides in resolving some of the major conflicts. Indeed one of the remarkable developments taking place in the continent is the leadership provided by Africans themselves in resolving African conflicts. This development must be consolidated and further strengthened.

Chairperson,

If I have dealt at some length on the issues of democratization, good governance, transparency and accountability, human rights and conflict resolution, it is because I believe that without tackling them, it is not possible to deal seriously with issues of socio-economic transformation and confront the challenges that face our continent in this rapidly globalising world. It is nonetheless important to stress that in the socio-economic field, a lot has happened and is happening in the continent.

African countries have been undertaking bold economic and structural reforms aimed at improving the performance and efficiency of African economies. These reforms have taken place amidst a backdrop of severe socio-economic conditions facing our countries and in a particularly difficult international political and economic environment. And to compound the situation, these efforts by African countries, more often than ever, have been severely affected by the unbearable debt burden.

At the same time these economic reforms have had their social cost especially among the most vulnerable segments of our populations. The negative effects have included lowering of health, nutritional and educational levels for millions of children, rampant unemployment and under-employment, particularly among the youth, women, school-leavers and even among university graduates, and generally increasing poverty for the majority.

This situation has contributed to exacerbating tension within the societies and making the tasks of governments more complicated. These social problems need to be effectively addressed if the on going important and essential economic and political reforms are to be sustained and achieve their intended objectives.

With a view to meeting the challenges of development on the basis of self reliance, African counties in addition to safeguarding and promoting political stability need to create an enabling environment for economic growth. Such an environment should include peoples involvement in the development process, a well trained workforce a strong private sector, and the right investment climate with regard to legislation and infrastructure. Incentives should be given to local people and Africans who are overseas to invest in their countries and thus making a significant contribution to the development efforts of our societies. The question of regional integration should be pursued vigorously. In this respect, it is encouraging to note that there is currently a deliberate and sustained movement towards African economic integration as evidenced by the escalation of integrative policies and actions within the various sub-regional communities in the continent such as the East African Community, the Southern Africa Development Community, COMESA and ECOWAS.

I believe that African countries are now, more than at any time, fully aware that Africa's economic liberation lies in taking political unity and economic integration seriously. The launching of the African Union in Durban South Africa in July, 2002 and the events that have unfolded since then including in particular the promotion of NEPAD as the AU's Programme and the establishment of the Pan-African Parliament attest

to this. Of course, considerable challenges and obstacles still lie ahead. But there is no viable alternative.

As we consider the challenges that confront us and in particular strategies to avoid marginalization of the continent, it is imperative that we equip ourselves to cope with the vagaries and exploit the opportunities of globalisation. In this respect, I wish to emphasize the crucial role of human resource development. Experience has demonstrated that those countries that have invested on a sustainable basis in this sector, have reaped considerable rewards. We only have to look at the development in countries like Japan or the so called Asian tigers of South East Asia to illustrate the point.

Africa must invest heavily in all sectors of education, and particularly higher education and applied research. However, foundation of higher education is dependent upon effective primary and secondary school curriculum. In Africa today, Universal Primary Education system is the weakest in the world. Cuba, a small developing country confronted with many challenges and forced to divert a lot of its resources for defence purposes, spends heavily on education and now is talking of universal university education. It has one of the best medical systems in the developing countries.

The state of physical infrastructure and shortage of learning materials and teachers are usual problems in most primary schools in Africa. Many pupils have to share textbooks in crowded classrooms and more often than not in poorly furnished classrooms. Persistent poverty and debt has limited many of our countries to allocate adequate resources and provide free access to both primary and secondary education.

Africa should view education as a leading sectoral priority which represents a value added process to development.

At this juncture, I would be remiss if I do not refer to perhaps the greatest challenge that faces African countries today. However, I am of course, referring to the HIV-AIDS pandemic which is also one of the sub-themes of this Conference.

Nothing constitutes a greater threat to the very survival of our people than this horrible pandemic. The statistics are horrifying. 29.4 million out of a total of 42 million HIV-AIDS victims world wide are in Africa. Every single day, thousands of mothers and fathers have to hold their hopeless infants and face the grief of losing a partner and a reality, often unknown, of themselves facing an impending agonising death and living behind destitute orphans. Furthermore, HIV/AIDS is worst among the youth. Most of our colleges have most students in the age of 19 – 28 in whom the prevalence of new infections is high. In brief, this disease is decimating our populations and creating havoc with our economic and social programmes. The Secretary General of the United Nations, KOFI ANNAN has rightly characterised the HIV/AIDS pandemic as a Weapon of Mass Destruction.

We must therefore combat this pandemic with all the means at our disposal. We must change our behaviour pattern and get rid once and for all a lackadaisical attitude towards it. We can belittle the crisis only at our own peril.

Chairperson,

In my remarks I have attempted to highlight the challenges and opportunities that face our continent in Africa's Road Map to Development and Self reliance. In the last 44 years since many of our countries achieved their independence, our countries have gone through various phases. There have been moments of optimism especially in the early days of post independence. And there have been moments of pessimism. We have had our trials and tribulations. For quite some time, given the state of the continent, cynics and detractors had reasons in labelling our continent as one where everything that can go wrong has gone wrong. But now things have changed. I truly believe in the Africa's rebirth for as I said Africa is changing and changing for the better. We need to maintain and sustain this momentum. This is why I believe that the Road Map to Africa's development and Self reliance is not a myth but a reality.

There is a growing recognition among our peoples and leader that we are our own liberators and that the development of the African continent is first and foremost the primary responsibility of Africans. We need to continue to put our own house in order so as to forge a mighty stride towards genuine freedom from political oppression and economic deprivation. We must see to it that Africa establishes its own niche in this world of globalisation competitiveness and Information Communication Technology.

Africa has the will, the means and the resources to take its rightful place in this century which President Thabo Mbeki has described as an African century. We can achieve this by making effective use of our continent's resources and the talents of our people.

African governments should endeavour to mobilise the immense energies and resources of our people. To do this, they should *inter alia* ensure the mobilisation and equitable participation of our women not only in the process of economic and social development but also in all other spheres of human endeavour including in the area of governance. Our governments should engage the civil society as full partners in the social, economic and political programmes, and provide opportunities for your youth to exercise their intelligence, talents and dynamism. For its part, the civil society should not hesitate to engage governments with constructive dialogue on issues which are of primary concern to the people.

And one more thing. We must take the issue of self reliance seriously. I am not in anyway advocating that Africa should start behaving as if it were an island unto itself. Self reliance does not mean autarky We are part of this world and we must interact and work with others. We must therefore continue to strive for enhanced international cooperation and partnership with the rest of the world. But, we must stop paying lip service to self-reliance. To start with, we need to change our behavioural pattern of excessive dependency. Those things that we can do on our own within our nations and among the larger African community we must do. We should not expect foreign governments to shoulder responsibilities which should be ours to undertake. And people must also stop taking governments as the be all and end all for the development of our societies and upliftment of our lives. Those to whom we give the responsibility of leadership must also stop taking our countries as if they were their personal fiefdoms.

Chairperson,

I cannot conclude my remarks without paying tribute to the co-organizers of this conference – the University of Venda for Science and Technology. To our South African brothers and sisters, let me assure you on behalf of the Board of Trustees of the Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation of our profound appreciation for your contribution but above all for your continued commitment in honouring the Father of our Nation Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere. Thank you for your engagement. Thank you for your commitment which speaks volumes of the ties of brotherhood and friendship that bind the peoples of South Africa and Tanzania. Let me also take this opportunity to congratulate you and through you the people of South Africa for having done Africa proud by holding free and fair democratic elections in your country a few days ago.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for your kind attention and it is now my honour and privilege to declare open this Conference.