



Organization of African Unity

**STATEMENT BY
DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM,
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE OAU,
ON THE OCCASION OF
THE COMMEMORATION OF THE BIRTHDATE OF
THE LATE MWALIMU JULIUS KAMBARAGE NYERERE**

DAR-ES-SALAAM, TANZANIA

14 APRIL 2001

Mr. Chairman, *Rtd. Chf. Justice Francis Nyakwira*

Distinguished Guest of Honour, Your Excellency
Amani Karume, President of Zanzibar

MAMA MARIA Nyerere — *Hon. Fredrick Suleiman, A.D. & U.R.I.*
Your Worship the A.C. J.P. & D.A. & S. J.
Honourable Ministers,

Leaders of Political Parties,

Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Members of the Board of Trustees of the Amani Karume Foundation
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am gratified to be here on this occasion to commemorate the birthdate of a great son of Africa, a staunch Pan-Africanist, a distinguished Statesman, the Founding Father of the Tanzanian nation, the late Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere. I wish to pay deserving tribute to the Executive Director and to Members of the Board of the Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation for their foresight and initiative in proposing this auspicious commemoration of Mwalimu's birthdate.

We have convened here not only to pay homage to the Mwalimu's life whose memory remains very dear to our hearts, but also to reflect collectively on an ideal that he so profoundly espoused and to which he devoted his whole life. By so doing, we have taken a step towards the fulfillment of the pledge that many of us made when we mourned his passing away to commit ourselves in continuing to pursue the great ideals that he dedicated his entire life, particularly, the pursuit of the dignity and unity of all Africans irrespective of ethnic, race, religious or cultural backgrounds.

There is also another significance to this event. Our continent is today at the threshold of the dawn of a new era. There is a new momentum unleashed by the historic Decision adopted by the 4th Extraordinary OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government, in Sirte, Libya on 9 September 1999. From Sirte to Lome, and back to Sirte again, the quest for elevating the degree of continental unity has gathered pace and there is an evident determination to pursue the vision for greater unity and cohesiveness among the African people. Indeed, so fast has the pace and momentum for unity been, that even as I speak to you, already the required two thirds of OAU Member States, including Tanzania, have ratified the Constitutive Act thereby ensuring that the dream of establishing an African Union will soon be a reality. Thirty days after I have received all the required instruments of ratification, the Constitutive Act will enter into force and the foundation for our Union will have been laid.

The decision to establish the African Union challenges us to come to grips with some of the complex issues that Mwalimu Nyerere, and the other Founding Fathers were grappling with in pursuing the Pan-African dream. In a way therefore, by convening here today to reflect on Mwalimu's vision for unity in Africa, we are not merely celebrating his cherished views and lifelong ideas on the subject. I do believe that we are also trying to draw lessons from his experience, and to gain more insight into the mindset of our Founding Fathers so as to understand the long cherished vision and to better position ourselves in surmounting new challenges and adapting to contemporary realities.

I first met Mwalimu in 1959 when he came to Zanzibar as part of the efforts to promote unity among the Zanzibaris in the struggle for freedom. I was then a young man of 17 and was involved in youth and student politics while I was at the King George VI Secondary School. I still remember the very powerful message that Mwalimu delivered at a public rally in Mnazi Mmoja Grounds. On that occasion, he urged Zanzibaris of all colours, creed, and political affiliations, to subordinate their artificial differences to the greater cause of unity, arguing that only through unity and determination could the struggle for freedom be won. Mwalimu's advice was pertinent and wise then, as it would certainly be pertinent and valid today in the context of urging all Zanzibaris whatever their political identities, to place a special premium on unity and cohesion in the interest of stability, security, justice and development in the Islands.

Forty-one years later, on 18 September 1999, I visited Mwalimu at the Carlton Apartments located near the Tanzanian High Commission in London. In the presence of Mama Maria, I had a long conversation with him, that turned out sadly to be the last between us. For, a few weeks later, Mwalimu passed away. As he lay on his bed, visibly in pain, but impressively with a sharp mind and very astute in his thoughts, we discussed various developments on the Continent. At that time I had just returned from Sirte, so I briefed Mwalimu on the decision taken by African leaders to establish an African Union and to accelerate the implementation of the Abuja Treaty. I gave him a copy of the Sirte Declaration. He was quite pleased with these developments and he encouraged us to pursue this path of our Continent's development.

In between these two indelible moments of my personal history, I have had the honour of working very closely with Mwalimu, receiving his invaluable guidance in the pursuit of this most profound ideal among my fellow Tanzanians and in my service within the wider community of Nations. I was privileged to observe Mwalimu the visionary, the humanist, the leader, the activist, and the fighter for the dignity, freedom and the unity of the African people and the statesman of international stature.

I have taken some time trying to highlight this experience only to reinforce the point that for Mwalimu, the issue of unity, whether at the national or Continental levels, has been a lifetime undertaking and commitment. For him, unity was not a mere slogan. It was part and parcel of the development of the African people.

Even before the independence of Tanganyika and Zanzibar, at the height of the nationalist struggle, Mwalimu recognized the centrality of African unity to the peace, security and development of the Continent. In 1958, working with other nationalist leaders in East Africa, Mwalimu invited his colleagues from Uganda, Kenya, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Zanzibar and Malawi to meet in Mwanza, and form the Pan-African Freedom Movement of East and Central Africa (PAFMECA), whose immediate objective was to coordinate the struggle for freedom and independence for all the territories. In 1962, this organization was expanded to include other countries, in particular those of Southern Africa, thus becoming the Pan-African Freedom Movement of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa (PAFMECSA).

During the period of heated exchanges between the Monrovia and Casablanca groups on the approaches and substance of African unity, Mwalimu was among the voices that sought to ensure that the then division that was becoming evident, would not undermine the momentum towards Pan-Africanism that was being consolidated in the late 1950s and providing hope for the African unity. Though espousing a moderating position, Mwalimu, nevertheless, had a very clear vision of African unity. His statement at the Addis Ababa Summit that led to the founding of the OAU was quite revealing. In his characteristic eloquence, he stated, and I quote:

"I do not propose to bother you by stating why Africa should be free and why Africa should be united; why Africa should unite in achieving its freedom and free in achieving its unity. Your Imperial Majesty and those of my brothers who have spoken before me have stated that case much better than I can. It has been even better stated by the suffering of our people; by the blood which our people have shed and are still shedding at the hands of their oppressors; it has been better stated by the millions of our people who died in the slave raids organized all over Africa by those powers whose prestige was built upon the humiliation of Africa....

In our approach to unity we have also discovered a common denominator. We have all repeated our dedication to the achievement of a fully united Africa. But we have all said in effect that just as African Independence has been a process, African Unity is about to be a process. There is not going to be a God who will bring about African Unity by merely willing unity and saying, "Let there be Unity!" It is not in the nature of human action that the will and the fulfillment should be simultaneous. That is not in our power, that is only in the power of the Gods. In human action

there is an inevitable progress between the will to do and the fulfilment of that action. What is required is that immediately after the will the first step should be taken - I repeat then that African unity cannot come by a divine will ...”.

In this statement, and even at this early stage one can capture the central tenets of Mwalimu's vision of African unity; tenets that he consistently upheld throughout his lifetime. Clearly, for Mwalimu, the unity of this Continent is not a voluntary side-agenda for our countries, neither is it a distinct and separate project that is only grafted arbitrarily into the national programmes of Member States.

For Mwalimu, unity is the essence of the African being. It is the ultimate in self-realization and self-actualization for our existence as a people. In this respect, survival at any point in time and our ability to surmount any challenge are determined by our ability to marshal and garner our unity. For him unity is total because the only tenable basic relationship has to be Continental. The rest is transient and when left for too long it becomes anachronistic.

But the vision of unity was not simply a mechanical and instrumental undertaking. The locus of Unity for Mwalimu transcended structures, institutions, and even went beyond space and territoriality. For the late Father of our Nation, at the center of African unity, and particularly its *modus operandi*, is the people, in their larger collectivity. In this case, Mwalimu perceived the virtues of unity not merely in utilitarian terms of economies of scale, larger markets, or enhanced power of numbers or even as a means of offsetting prevailing deficiencies.

By ascribing the quality of unity to the human person, Mwalimu gave it a more transcendental meaning embedded in the integrity of the African people. It therefore means that a full realization of the dignity of African people cannot be achieved without obtaining full unity.

It is important also to stress that for Mwalimu, and for most of the Founding Fathers, the essence of development for the African people entailed a total negation of the existing condition. The legacy of colonialism, the bottlenecks imposed by the global inequities called for fundamental structural changes within societies and between them. Unity, in this case, provided a lever for transformation. It made no sense, and in fact, benefited people other than the African, if it is complacently juxtaposed within the *status-quo*. Therefore, in order to optimize the benefits of unity it is imperative that change and transformation has to be simultaneously initiated.

During the active days of the campaign for Pan-Africanism, especially in the early 1960s, African leaders were preoccupied with the basic question of how to achieve Unity in the Continent. I do remember vividly as a very young Ambassador of the United Republic of Tanganyika and Zanzibar in Cairo, in 1964, during the first OAU Summit the inspiring great debate that took place during this Plenary Session.

Mwalimu held a position which, today with the benefit of hindsight, has been absolved by history. He recognized the difficulties of creating a Continental Government at the time and instead, propagated for a gradual or evolutionary approach of building regional associations that would ultimately become the building blocks of the African union. Indeed, it is this approach that in the 1990s came to be articulated in the Abuja Treaty and underlined the need to establish and consolidate the African Regional Economic Communities as the pillars and building blocks of the African Economic Community envisaged under the Treaty. Mwalimu also took the strong view that the Unity of Africa cannot be imposed but rather forged ahead by the free will of its constituent parts. He also argued strongly against any acts of destabilization in the name of achieving continental unity.

Even within the evolutionary approach, Mwalimu, like most of his contemporaries, was more disposed to promoting closer political integration as a base for the other forms of cooperation. It was in this farsightedness that he convincingly argued for delaying Tanganyika's independence in order to wait for Kenya and Uganda to become free so that they could together forge a political union. He had anticipated the difficulties of establishing closer unity after each country had established its unique national institutions and developed a guarded sense of nationalism.

Of course, Mwalimu was fully cognizant of the complexities of building and maintaining unity and cooperation among independent states at any stage of their development. However, he found it more viable for such difficulties to be overcome within a framework of a political union than when each maintains its complete sovereignty.

The experience of the union between Tanganyika and Zanzibar which was forged at the birth of the young nations bears testimony to Mwalimu's foresight. For almost four decades this union has remained an important example of resilience and viability in uniting the African people. The challenges confronted during its existence and the dynamism it has acquired have definitely been enhanced by the strong political

foundation established at its inception. Put differently, no matter the obstacles that have confronted the Union, and there have been obstacles and there will continue to be obstacles; the strong foundation based on the imperative necessity of the unity of our peoples will always prevail. This is true in the case of the union of Tanganyika and Zanzibar and equally true in other formations and continental processes of unity and integration.

I should hasten to point out however, that Mwalimu's commitment to the strength and dynamism of political unity did not diminish a strong determination on his part in encouraging cooperation and integration for the people of this Continent. At the Second Extra-Ordinary Summit of the OAU held in Lagos in 1980 that led to the adoption of the Lagos Plan of Action, which is a precursor to the Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community, Mwalimu emphasized that national development is not enough unless it is part of a wider African experience. He cautioned, however, that the temptation to create new African institutions should be resisted, instead, ways and means should be found of coordinating and developing regional institutions.

This is a position that Mwalimu remained emphatic with particularly in addressing the challenges of globalization and its impact to the Continent. He cautioned at the occasion of celebrating his 75th birthday, that:

"Africa South of the Sahara is totally isolated in terms of the configuration of developing power in the world in the 21st century. It is on its own. There is no centre of power in whose self interest it is important to develop Africa, no centre. Not North America, not Japan, not Western Europe. There is no self-interest to bother about Africa South of the Sahara. Africa.... Africa has 53 nation-States, most of them in Africa south of the Sahara. If numbers were power, Africa would be the most powerful continent on earth. It is the weakest, so it is obvious that numbers are not power.

Africa south of the Sahara is isolated. Therefore to develop, it will have to depend upon its own resources basically. Internal resources, nationally, and Africa will have to depend upon Africa. The leadership of the future will have to devise, try to carry out policies of maximum national self-reliance and maximum collective self-reliance. They have no other choice.... The small countries in Africa must move towards wider unity or co-operation,

As we enter the new century and the new millennium, and as he observed the predicament of our Continent, Mwalimu became increasingly convinced that the challenge of the new century entailed transcending the nation-states. The fact that the powerful countries of Europe and North America are moving towards unity and they are discarding their sovereignty which they have enjoyed for many centuries should impress on Africa that there is no viability for smaller units. While cautioning that global powers have no interest with Africa, describing the Continent as now to be on its own, Mwalimu urged African countries to move towards unity. He reminded that:

These countries which have old, old, old sovereignty, countries of hundreds of years old, they are forgetting this, they are moving towards unity. And you people, you think Tanzania is sacred? What is Tanzania! You have to move towards unity. If these powerful countries see that they have not future in the nation states - *nyinyi mnafikiri mna future katika nini.*"

It was in the liberation struggle where Mwalimu clearly exhibited the power of unity and its multifaceted impetus in the transformation of this Continent. The symbiosis between unity and freedom was eloquently testified in the zeal, commitment and sacrifice that Mwalimu rendered for the liberation of this Continent. He found it both a duty and an honour for Tanzania to be in the forefront of the struggle. Vehemently and eloquently he argued that the independence of this country was meaningless for so long as other countries of Africa are under bondage of colonialism and were still suffering the despicable system of apartheid. With a sense of particular pride, I vividly recollect the prolonged standing ovation that Mwalimu received in the United Nations General Assembly in 1970 when he categorically and with brilliant eloquence asserted with reference to apartheid South Africa, that as Africans, we can never have a non-aggression pact with aggression itself.

Liberation for Mwalimu was not simply the pursuit of narrow national self-interest in the strategic defense of Tanzania. The anti-colonial struggle and the fight against apartheid was part and parcel of regaining the dignity and integrity of the African people. In the same regard, expanding the frontier of freedom contributed also to the realization of the African potential. Liberation of the Continent was therefore a process of self emancipation, for every individual African, individual community, and individual nation.

The prosecution of the liberation struggle under Mwalimu's leadership underscored right from the beginning the organic linkage that

he consistently maintained between unity and solidarity of the Continent, faith and dignity of the people, and the quest for total freedom. Tanzania's prominent and respected role in the liberation of this Continent has always been guided by these noble principles. Whether it was in active engagement of the people and their armed forces in defense of Tanzania, or in providing a rear base for the combatants and refuge to victims of oppression and atrocities, the notion remained a guiding principle. The foundation that Mwalimu established made this country to become a centre for the African liberation in the true sense of the word.

It was the sense of shared destiny among the Africans that he imparted to all of us that this country never hesitated, even at the depth of its poverty to fulfill the primary obligation of fully supporting the struggle aimed at liberating the Continent. Only two years after independence, Mwalimu pledged at the Summit that formed the OAU, and I quote:

"...we are already making a humble contribution to the liberation of Southern Africa, but we are prepared to do more. In particular we are prepared to support the proposal made by our brother, President Sekou Toure, that 1% of our national budget should be set aside for the purpose of liberating non-free Africa. I want to assure our gallant brother from Algeria, Brother Ben Bella, that we are prepared to die a little for the final removal of the humiliation of colonialism from the face of Africa."

Definitely Tanzania contributed more than the one percent pledged at the OAU Summit.

As we look back at the life and leadership of Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, we cannot but be inspired and strengthened in our resolve to pursue the unity of African People. Unity for Mwalimu was not a mere slogan. He was committed to achieving it and he devoted his entire lifetime in its pursuit. His insights, his discourses, practice and leadership on this endeavour, constitute an invaluable reservoir that we need to harness as our Continent embarks on a new frontier concretizing the aspirations of generations of Pan-Africanists and the Founding Fathers of the OAU. Mwalimu showed us by word and deed the multifaceted dimensions of unity. And today, as we embark on translating this into our present reality, we can draw many lessons that are useful in building the African Union.

We should rejoice that Mwalimu's efforts and those of his fellow Founding Fathers have not been in vain. They had sown a seed, and

though it took a long time to germinate but finally it is now sprouting. The Sirte Declaration and the establishment of the African Union signifies a reaffirmation of the vision for African unity and it underscores the urgency of accelerating the steps towards its attainment.

We can derive consolation that Mwalimu attended the OAU Summit in Algiers in July 1999 where the subject of revisiting the strategy of Continental unity was first broached. He was aware of the new wave of change emerging in the Continent. Though he did not live to see this moment when the structures of a revitalized framework for unity are being put in place, we owe it to him to ensure that the momentum is sustained.

For us in Tanzania, the society of Mwalimu Nyerere, how can we live up to his legacy? Definitely, first and foremost, by maintaining our own national cohesion, unity and solidarity especially within the context of our now thriving pluralistic society. We can and logically must at times disagree. But we should endeavour to do so without being disagreeable. We must treat each other as compatriots of the same nation. We may have different viewpoints but we are all members of the same family. We must avoid allowing our differences to turn into hostile and antagonistic relationships. Above all, we must endeavour to promote understanding and cooperation based on principles of justice, good governance, respect for human and peoples' rights and national concord. This is the minimum that Africa expects from the land of Mwalimu Nyerere.

Equally important, we need to keep the dream of African unity alive. We need to maintain Mwalimu's vision of a shared destiny of the African people. The full realization of our being lies in our collective as Africans. We should therefore strive to build African unity.

As Mwalimu guided us: our freedom, our dignity, our survival and our prosperity as a people depend on our unity as Africans.

I thank you all.