



**Organization of African Unity**

**CONCLUDING REMARKS BY  
DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM,  
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AT THE AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT FORUM 2000**

**UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE CENTRE  
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We have now come to the end of an exciting and challenging session. The deliberations of this morning have been a culmination of a defining moment – as many have put it – in Africa's struggle to combat the HIV-AIDS pandemic.

Having a discussion by Heads of State and Government at a Forum that has brought together representatives from various components of our societies is a unique occasion. We have been inspired by the commitment and dedication of the Heads of State and Government. We have been galvanized by the passion and dedication of organizations and individuals working at the grassroots and in the cities.

This morning's session underscores the point that all of us are involved in this struggle, all of us have a responsibility, and that all of us can make a difference in changing our predicament.

A dialogue has taken place today and in the last four days. It was not simply a dialogue of analysis and understanding; it was one of sharing living experiences, and above all it was a dialogue of commitment, and a dialogue of action.

For those of us who came into this Forum with a conventional understanding of a distinct leadership, out there, ahead of the others – we now realize that all of us are leaders in this, we have a critical role, we have to take the initiative.

It has been inspiring to hear the courage and determination of a 22 year old youth appealing to Heads of State of Government for a partnership; beseeching them that nothing can succeed without involving the youth meaningfully.

It was very moving to listen to a person living with HIV reminding the Forum that people like him are the closest allies in our endeavour against the pandemic.

It was heartening to hear a sister in the *diaspora* yesterday calling out about a reservoir of commitment and capacities located out there and their preparedness to work actively and in tandem with us.

Indeed, this is a Forum that has illuminated on partnerships, on alliance, on consensus, and on a new total leadership.

It has been an empowering Forum for all of us, and it is important that we deliver this message of empowerment urgently to our societies. We realize from the strength we have gathered here that there are a lot of things we can do to turn around the situation.

We have heard at first hand of the way the prevalent social stigma kills the People Living with HIV-AIDS even before they physically lose lives.

We have heard how positive outlook and approaches on the part of individuals, communities, governments and societies at large have enabled many of the participants who came here to live normal lives despite having the virus.

We have been informed of the abundant resources under the possession of humankind – expertise, financial and human resources – that can be deployed even in the next hour to make the world a different place.

We have learnt of the need for a comprehensive approach that should link education, prevention, treatment and care.

It all shows that there are things that can be done immediately that would make a radical difference.

We have reminded each other of the need to deal with this pandemic in the same manner, and with the same determination that we have dealt with other critical challenges that we have confronted. If anything, more, indeed much more, is needed to confront the challenge that faces us. We must challenge each other from this moment onwards by asking each other: what are you doing to put into practice what was decided at this Forum?

The deliberations of this Forum should serve as an important input to the Abuja Summit, which, I believe, will be a Summit with a difference. Indeed, the fate of decisions and commitments made in all other Summits – including the commitment to enhance the democratization process of our societies; the promotion of peace, security and stability; socio-economic transformation; the promotion of continental and economic integration as well as the establishment of the African Union – all these are intricately linked to the struggle against this deadly pandemic.

The Abuja Summit in April next year will be a critical point, to assert our plans, our targets, essentially what Africa should do by itself and what type of support it expects from partners. It should be an action-oriented Summit. The deliberations of this Forum would be a vital contribution towards this goal.

It is also important, that the message of this Forum more urgently has to reach the African people and the partners who are involved in this struggle. That which can be done tomorrow should be taken up immediately – time is not in our side. Above all, in the words of our dear sister Graça Machel, let us mobilize, mobilize and mobilize until we put an end to this threat, which is a threat to our very survival.

Let us focus on the Consensus Declaration and leave Addis Ababa with a total commitment to implementing it. This commitment will be taken to the Summit of African Heads of State and Government in Abuja.

I thank you all for your valuable contributions and bring this session to an end.