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Organization of African Unity

**"THE TRANSITION TO A NEW SOUTHERN AFRICA AND
ITS IMPACT ON AFRICA"**

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL,
H.E. SALIM AHMED SALIM, TO THE CONFERENCE ON
SOUTHERN AFRICA: MAKING HOPE A REALITY**

London, UK

14th June 1993

Mr. Chairman,
Your Excellencies the Convenors,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I must first of all express my gratitude to the Convenors and organizers of this International Conference for the kind invitation extended to the Organization of African Unity to participate in the deliberations of this Conference. I am also grateful to Archbishop Trevor Huddleston and Mwalimu Nyerere the Convenors and Organizers for their timely initiative of calling for a Conference of this nature at this critical juncture in the history of Southern Africa and Africa as a whole.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me, at this point, discharge a pleasant duty by expressing my best wishes to Archbishop Trevor Huddleston, on the occasion of the joyous celebration of his Eightieth Birthday. I am happy with the arrangements that were made for the celebration of this significant event for a man who has devoted the greater part of his life to the struggle for justice, equality and freedom. The people of South Africa, and indeed the people of Africa will never forget the immense contribution of Archbishop Trevor Huddleston to the restoration of human dignity in South Africa. It is our hope that succeeding anniversaries will find the Archbishop in very good health.

Bishop Huddleston epitomizes the immense contribution which the Anti-Apartheid Movement in the United Kingdom and the world generally made to the struggle against institutionalized racism in South Africa. It is this movement which helped build awareness at the grass-root level and it was its tenacity, sacrifice and perseverance which ultimately brought public opinion to bear on Governments to take effective measures against racist South Africa. Through the campaign of support for the liberation struggle; of international isolation of the Apartheid regime; of building a case for sanctions; of disinvestment; of freeing imprisoned freedom fighters, the anti-Apartheid Movement played a pivotal role in moving South Africa towards the new path of change.

Bishop Huddleston was not only an activist and leader of that movement, but he also brought moral weight to the struggle through his selfless devotion to it. As we pay tribute to the Anti-Apartheid Movement we also salute the sacrifice and devotion of individuals like Bishop Huddleston who saw their freedom constrained and chained if other human beings remained in racial and colonial bondage, elsewhere

Mr. Chairman,

For us in the OAU, it is always a call to duty to deliberate on Southern Africa. No other region in Africa has received the attention of the OAU as much as the Southern Africa region has done. This is so because it is in that region that Africa faced its greatest challenge. It is in that region that the greatest threat to the dignity of the blackman is to be found. It is mainly the conditions in

Southern Africa and to a minor extent the conditions elsewhere on the Continent that made Africa endorse the armed struggle as a legitimate means of struggle. And above all, it is the conditions in South Africa that prompted the historic declaration in Mauritius, in 1976, by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government that an attack on a Frontline State was to be regarded as an attack on the whole of Africa.

The significance of its symbolic gesture is obvious. It has come to cement the ideals of brotherhood among the African peoples. Southern Africa therefore occupies a unique place in the minds of the African peoples. They have watched with pride and joy as the settler colonial structures were dismantled and the frontiers of freedom stretched beyond the Zambezi and the Limpopo rivers. They continue to watch as the edifice of Apartheid is being dismantled block by block. Yes indeed, hope is being turned into reality. There are many blocks yet in place, and until the oppressed has the vote, we should maintain our vigilance. This is why we heartily welcome the initiative for this Conference. While we maintain our vigilance, we should also redouble our efforts in assisting the removal of all obstacles to the political process. I am referring to the spate of violence and in particular the violence in the townships. Its continued threat to the political process is a nightmare to all those who follow the developments in South Africa. We cannot just fold up our arms and simply hope for the best. We must and should continue to exert more pressure to ensure that the process is not undermined or aborted. Until April next year, we have to make sure that the work and sacrifices of many decades are brought to fruition. We do not have to be

marathon runners to know that the last mile in the race is the hardest and the most difficult. It is with perseverance and renewed burst of energy that the race will be won. We are looking up to the day when the blackman will, at last, recover the right to cast his vote.

Mr. Chairman,

The transformation of South Africa into a United, Democratic and Non-racial society, will open up new challenges, not only for South Africa, but also for the Southern African region and indeed for Africa as a whole. Just as we bring the struggle against racism to an end in southern Africa, do we begin another chapter of struggle that consists in the reconstruction of the economies destroyed by South Africa's acts of aggression and destabilization. The costs in human and material terms are enormous. The region is still smarting under the pangs of the acts of destabilization. The second struggle is as daunting as the first struggle. We recognize that the primary responsibility for the reconstruction of the economies of the Southern African region lies with the Governments and Peoples of that region. We wish to believe however, that, given the magnitude of the problem, we can still count on those whose solidarity has brought us to the end of the first phase of the struggle. In this connection, we wish to recall with appreciation and gratitude the support we received through the launching of the SADCC, during the heady days of the struggle. SADCC has managed to coordinate development among the countries of Southern Africa, putting emphasis on integrative projects. To an appreciable extent, the Frontline States were able to begin the process

of reducing their dependence on South Africa. Now with the prospects of a new South Africa, the newly formed Southern Africa Development Community will play an important role in evolving a new climate of cooperation and development.

Apart from the reconstruction of infrastructure destroyed by the acts of destabilization, the countries of the region also face the arduous task of economic development. The economic potential released by the elimination of Apartheid, in both human and material resources, is immense. The Economic Community of Southern Africa will seek to harness these resources for the advancement and development of the region. These immense resources bring into the larger African scene tremendous opportunities and challenges, just as the other regions also offer similar opportunities and challenges to one another, and will equally offer to Southern Africa.

Africa, like the other regions of the world, is also trying to build an African home, through the establishment of an African Economic Community. It would seek to pool the tremendous resources of the continent for its socio-economic development. The various regional economic groupings or communities on the continent will serve as the pillars for the African Economic Community. As far as we are concerned, these regional economic groupings are complementary and they reinforce each other.

The countries of Southern Africa, do collectively command considerable resources and know how. The emergence of South Africa from its politics of racial discrimination will release the great potential of its land and people which are now

constrained. The resources of that region combined by the technological know how available there, will create a powerful engine of development in it, and beyond.

Mr. Chairman,

The transition in South Africa as elsewhere in Africa, presents a formidable challenge of political management. It is not only seeking accommodation between divergent views, it is also to ensure that exuberance and political anxiety which accompanies this process of transition, is well managed and channelled properly towards assisting that process. Failure to find an accommodation - a workable balance between those different view points will give impetus to the forces of division and political polarization. Of course proper political management will also ensure that transition is effected smoothly and without undermining the good things which have been achieved in the past.

It is important however to bear in mind that, in order for transition to be meaningful to the people who want their rightful say in matters of governance, it must be real. It must mean real movement from the present limiting or exclusionist set of political rules to a new one which permits all the people to participate in the political game. A facade of change while presenting the fundamentals of the status quo, will only lead to further degeneration and political chaos.

Southern Africa poses a particularly daunting challenge. It is a region with extremely divergent and opposing view points which need to find common ground if that region is to effect transition and build foundations for a new future based on equality, justice and national concord. How Southern Africa ultimately fares in managing all the aspects of its particularly vexing transition, will be a great lesson to the rest of Africa.

If South Africa fails to reconcile with itself, if it fails to find accommodation between the races and their differing views and find common ground, its failure will have confirmed that society into the politics of racial separatism and of political exclusion. It will be a failure for the whole continent and a fatal blow to the cause of democracy in the rest of Africa and the world.

On the other hand, good management of the politics of transition and the birth of a new South Africa, liberated from racism and politics of exclusion will serve as a reference point to the efforts at national reconciliation and unity elsewhere in Africa. We therefore hope for success in South Africa for the sake of the future of its own society and for the good influence it will bring to the cause of justice and democracy in our Continent.

Mr. Chairman,

The problems of transition in Southern Africa as elsewhere in the Continent are multifaceted. They need a comprehensive approach if they are to be resolved. Of course

the onus of evolving that approach, of an all-embracing perspective, rests upon the leadership and the major political players generally. The overriding consideration must be to evolve ways and means of ensuring that those players apply themselves rigorously to the task of promoting national reconciliation and unity and of building a new society founded on the principles of equity and justice. Equally important must be their commitment to peace and to initiate the process of accommodation, healing and renewal upon which the future stability of the continent will hinge. Without that spirit and determination to begin a new political chapter and to defeat the forces of division, the process of transition will stagnate and remain mired into confusion with all the potential for chaos and political violence.

The responsibility of the leadership must therefore extend beyond its preparedness to seek accommodation with the opposition into containing extreme political exuberance within its ranks and making sure in particular that the security forces do not interfere and unduly influence the transition process. In the triple challenge of commitment to unity through dialogue and reconciliation; of managing the various contending views and groups and of ensuring that the security forces play a neutral role, is the most compelling in the process of transition in the entire Continent.

These factors play themselves more visibly and with much potential for explosion in Southern Africa. The success of that region in finding a workable balance of these factors and paving the way forward, will undoubtedly impact positively on the other countries of the Continent.

**Mr. Chairman, Excellencies and
Gentlemen,**

Southern Africa is emerging from racial tyranny, political division and intolerance. It is grappling with the engaging task of finding a new way of doing political business and of building a new society. The prospects for success are bright if the present determination to triumph is maintained and strengthened. At the same time, the obstacles which lie ahead are very real. They must be overcome.

The rest of Africa is also emerging from one political era to another of political pluralism through multipartism. In both cases, the challenge is the management of transition. The parallel process of transition in both parts of Africa holds the key to the future of the Continent. A post-Apartheid South Africa, an Angola and Mozambique at peace, together with the other countries of Southern Africa, will constitute a strong and dynamic force of economic and human development not only in that region but will also spur economic activity in the other parts of Africa. Apart from the economic advantages which will accrue, the political example of successful transition in Southern Africa, in spite of the tremendous odds, will certainly encourage the rest of the Continent. Collectively as a Continent, we have a stake in what happens in Southern Africa as we transit this difficult phase. We should continue to assist, the people of Southern Africa in this, their challenge.

Mr. Chairman,

Economic problems facing African countries in general are grave, but for countries emerging from South Africa's Acts of Destabilization, the problems are particularly serious. But all the constituent parts of Africa are determined to work together to avert what has generally been termed the marginalization of Africa. We believe our partners in the International Community will not fail to supplement our efforts.

Once again, I wish to express my appreciation to the Convenors for their timely initiative. We hope that this initiative, like the one of 1959, will galvanize the International Community for a sustained action during the second phase of the struggle.

I thank you.