



Organization of African Unity

Statement by Dr Salim A. Salim, Secretary General
of the OAU Introducing Prof. Dr Roman HERZOG,
Federal President of the Federal Republic of Germany
on the Occasion of his Address on Africa and Germany:
New Challenges in a Period of Transition

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

January 27, 1996

Your Excellency Dr Negasso Gidada,
President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia,

Your Excellency Professor Dr Roman Herzog,
Federal President, Federal Republic of Germany,

Mr. Y.K. Amoako, United Nations Under-Secretary-General,
Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa,

Distinguished Guests,

Excellencies Ambassadors,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have before us today an eminent Scholar and a Statesman, His Excellency Professor Dr. Roman Herzog, Federal President of the Federal Republic of Germany, who will be addressing us on a challenging topic entitled: *Africa and Germany: New Challenges in a Period of Transition*. This is, indeed, a rare occasion for us to be addressed by a man with a dual international status, who belongs both to the World of Academia, and, more importantly to the higher echelon of the world's statesmen.

Moreover, the topic that Professor Dr. Herzog has chosen to address offers us a rare opportunity to listen to such an eminent statesman providing his views on Africa-Germany relations. This is even more significant given the position of the Federal Republic of Germany in the

international system. Indeed, the topic is both interesting and current as both Africa and the Federal Republic of Germany are going through a period of transition. This particular transition is as a result of both individual internal political dynamics and global geo-strategic imperatives related to changes in international relations and diplomacy.

The relations between Africa and Germany have had a significant place in international relations and world history. The fact that both Africa and the Federal Republic of Germany are now going through a period of transition provides an excellent opportunity to explore and reflect on new approaches for strengthening understanding and cooperation between the Continent of Africa and the Federal Republic of Germany. The contemporary experience of Africa-Germany relations should provide the necessary impetus in consolidating cooperation between Africa and Germany and in initiating a new path to meet our common challenges.

We in Africa recognize and appreciate the important role being played by the Federal Republic of Germany in supporting the African continent as it faces the daunting challenges of managing the political and economic transition. It is encouraging to note that even during this period of her own transition after unification, the Federal Republic of Germany has avoided the pitfall of isolationism. Notwithstanding its domestic needs and

challenges, Germany has continued to provide technical and financial assistance to Africa in support of the continent's efforts at economic transformation and development. In the same spirit we look forward to Germany playing an important role together with her partners in the European Union in support of enhanced all round cooperation between Europe and Africa.

Mr. President,

Your visit to Africa comes at a very exciting, even though in some cases turbulent time, for our continent. A new wind of change is blowing through this continent. Indeed, the country you have chosen to visit, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, which hosts the headquarters of both the Organization of African Unity and the Economic Commission of Africa, testifies to the change that is sweeping in the continent. I am sure that during your visit you will not fail to witness this change. The process of democratization which is sweeping through the continent is part of Africa's reality today. We may have setbacks here and there but the process itself is irreversible. And I say this with confidence because the yearning for democracy is a clarion call of the African people. And though there is no dispute in the fact that the international community and especially the global changes that have taken place in the 1990s have made a contribution to this new reality in the continent, the fact remains that what has sustained and will sustain democracy in this continent is the

burning desire of the African peoples to play a centre stage in how they are governed by whom and for what period. Simultaneously with the process of democratization is the process of economic reforms which have been gaining ground throughout the continent. Indeed almost all of the African countries are engaged in one form of economic reform or the other. Structural adjustment policies have been adopted and are being implemented at times at great social and political cost and Africa is determined to persevere on the path of both political and economic reforms in order to serve the best interests of our people.

Evidently, however, for Africa to succeed in its current endeavours we need the support, understanding and solidarity of our friends among whom we count the Federal Republic of Germany. We seek the understanding of our partners in development of what we are trying to do in the continent. We need our partners to appreciate the fact that democracy and economic reforms per se in the continent can not thrive without the necessary support by the international community. We need to put in place specific measures and action plans in support of efforts being deployed by our countries. Indeed internal and external factors have constrained Africa's efforts at economic growth and development. In this connection, it cannot be denied that structural reforms have been one sided. There have been no reforms of the international economic system to meet the aspirations and demands of the developing countries. Africa's mounting external indebtedness and the fluctuation in the commodity prices coupled with

dwindling resource flows in the continent have immensely contributed to the perpetual crisis facing the continent. It is evident that unless some breakthrough can be achieved in this regard, Africa's efforts at the economic and political front will be severely undermined. We therefore look to the Federal Republic of Germany as an important friend and partner of Africa's development to continue to display the sensitivity to these monumental problems facing the continent and to play its own role within the concert of nations at addressing some of these problems.

Mr. President,

Africa's efforts at managing the transition have been seriously undermined by the prevalence of conflicts in the continent. Indeed, if democracy is to thrive in Africa, it demands that we must bring our conflicts to an end. We are making serious efforts in the direction of conflict prevention, management and resolution in Africa. We have established, within the OAU, a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. The primary objective of the Mechanism is to anticipate and prevent conflict before they occur and manage or resolve them after they have occurred to avoid a protracted situations of conflict in the region.

In seeking to put in place support measures aimed at preventing, managing and resolving conflicts in Africa, we have taken into consideration the fact that we live in one of the most eventful periods in the history of Africa. It is a period of hope and uncertainty when developments across the African continent have unveiled an upsurge of new kinds of complex problems and conflicts. In many parts of our continent today, security has become an illusion, while war and human suffering are increasingly becoming a permanent pattern of life. The struggles for the establishment of democratic institutions and greater respect for human rights, are unfortunately in some cases accompanied by protracted political upheavals.

Your visit to Africa coincides with all these developments and the efforts being deployed in the Continent. This visit will no doubt bring you face to face with the reality of the situation on the ground.

I am convinced that your address to us today on the topic: Africa and Germany: New Challenges in a Period of Transition is very timely. I am, also convinced that your academic career as a Researcher and as a Professor of Public Law and Politics as well as your past involvement in Missionary work as a full member of the synod of the Protestant Church of Germany and President of the Federal Constitutional Court, places you in a unique position to speak on the subject you have chosen.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my privilege and honour to present to you His Excellency Professor Dr. Roman Herzog, President of the Federal Republic of Germany.