

**STATEMENT OF
DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM
CHAIRMAN MWALIMU NYERERE FOUNDATION
AT THE OPENING OF THE MODEL UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
KARIMJEE HALL, DAR ES SALAAM
19 OCTOBER 2001**

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Chairman Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation
At The Opening of The Model United Nations
General Assembly
Karimjee Hall, Dar Es Salaam
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It is with great pleasure that I join you in celebrating the 56th anniversary of our global institution, the United Nations, through the convening of a Model General Assembly of the World Body, here at the Karimjee Hall in Dar es Salaam.

The celebration of this year's anniversary takes place against the backdrop of two major events – one negative and tragic and the other positive and rewarding. On the negative side, we are all aware that we are going through a rather turbulent international situation. The dastardly terrorist attack on September 11 on the World Trade Centre in New York and the Pentagon in Washington has aroused the anger, anguish and condemnation of the American people and their administration as it has also aroused our collective outrage. This wanton criminal act which has caused the loss of thousands of innocent lives – Americans and many other nationalities – has also led to serious repercussions of a political, economic, security and strategic dimensions including the war being launched on Afghanistan which unfortunately has also led to some civilian casualties.

All of us have been affected in one way or the other by the tragic events in the United States. The need for a coordinated and collective international action against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations

could not have been more glaring and more pressing. In order to achieve that objective no forum is more appropriate than the United Nations. This then brings me to the positive and rewarding event which I have also eluded to in my remarks. The Award to the United Nations and its distinguished Secretary General Kofi Annan of the Noble Peace Prize eloquently testifies to the relevance and vital role of the United Nations in the promotion of peace and security. It also signifies the recognition of the sterling role being played by the world number one public servant in the pursuit of peace and in the service of humanity.

I believe that participants of this model of the United Nations General Assembly will bear these factors in mind when they commence their deliberations. Indeed, under the circumstances, it would have been very tempting for me to address international issues. But I have chosen to more or less confine myself on the African experience since African issues in addition to their own relevance, are also currently at the core of the United Nations Agenda and especially in the Security Council.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The very act of creating a United Nations Association here in Tanzania demonstrates a commitment to what the global body stands for, an aspect that gives many of us hope and optimism for the future of our societies. Indeed, you as the youths of this country, who are the custodians of our collective future, to espouse the higher ideals of peace, unity, equality and development for the whole world provides an invaluable asset that we need to maintain and consolidate. I do realize that in the context of the

challenges that are confronting you today, holding on to these ideals is a feat of no mean an undertaking.

The 56th anniversary of the creation of the United Nations finds Africa at a major crossroad. After having experienced the worst trauma of rampant conflicts, instability and severe economic recession during much of the past two decades, we are entering the new century and new millennium with some prospects of overcoming some of these major hurdles.

Last year we had a major breakthrough in resolving a devastating conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The peace process in the Democratic Republic of Congo is gaining momentum. Right now, as we are meeting in this Hall, an inter-Congolese dialogue is taking place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, with the aim of ending the war and establishing ^{PEACE} and stability in the Democratic Republic of Congo. There is also encouraging progress in the conflicts of Sierra Leone, Comoros, Burundi, and the Mano River Basin countries (particularly between Liberia and Guinea).

In the political and economic spheres, we are witnessing an increased commitment to the democratization process in a number of African countries. There is a determination to build a culture of pluralism, to provide a space of participation for the civic and private sectors, and to allow different political perspectives without generating hostilities. The landmark Political Accord between CCM and CUF signed in Zanzibar on October 10th this year, reinforces this trend .At the same time, in the last couple of years the economies of many African countries have registered positive growth

rates, providing a cause for hope on the future of this Continent if the trend can be sustained and consolidated.

Yet, together with these positive developments, Africa is still faced with formidable challenges, some of which, if not contained urgently, will offset the achievements that have been made in the past two decades. First and foremost, we are not yet out of the woods in as far as the scourge of conflicts is concerned. The people of Angola have not yet enjoyed permanent peace in their country. The destabilizing actions and wanton killings perpetrated by UNITA rebel forces continue to be a source of grave concern. Similarly, in Southern Sudan, a conflict with devastating humanitarian consequences, is still raging on after more than 15 years. And Somalia continues to be afflicted by conflict and anarchy.

Furthermore, there is now a looming danger of a resurgence of conflicts based on religion, ethnicity, region, and what is now commonly known as xenophobia – which is hostility towards people from other places. In some of our societies in Africa, lives are being lost and property destroyed due to differences in religious perspective or due to ethnic background of communities. Indeed, peace, stability and security still constitute major challenges for our Continent.

Whereas conflict has been very much overt in its impact, the most insidious and devastating calamity that has befallen our Continent is the HIV-AIDS pandemic. During the past ten years, AIDS has been the single, most indiscriminate and devastating killer of the largest number of African people. It has killed more people than those who have died from the total

number of conflicts in the Continent during the past two decades. By afflicting most severely the age group of 15 to 24 years old, the pandemic affects the most productive segment of the population thus also undermining the future of our Continent. The disease has created more orphans who have been traumatized after the ordeal of living with parents suffering from AIDS, and even more seriously, it is now having its heaviest toll on women and girls, who are the cradle of human survival. AIDS is thus a serious disaster for Africa, which calls for urgent and concerted action.

Whereas since its detection in the 1980s, the disease has spread rapidly to all parts of the world, Africa now has the highest number of infections, patients and, more tragically, death victims. The social and economic impact of the pandemic is devastating, and the human and psychological effect catastrophic. Indeed, as the numbers show, many people are now infected with the virus and the disease, but it is equally true that almost each one of us, almost every African family, and almost every community in the continent has been affected in one or way or the other. The consequences to our economies in terms of budgetary expenditure as well as lost revenues are enormous

Alongside the HIV-AIDS pandemic, African countries are still grappling with the challenges of overcoming the pervasive poverty that afflicts our people. The positive performance of our economies in the past few years, has not ameliorated the pervasive poverty that impinges on the daily lives of our people. Poverty remains menacing, despite the resolute and sometimes painful measures taken to eradicate this humiliating situation. In some cases it contributes, and even compounds, situations of instability and

conflict, occurrence of disasters, and the spread and resilience of pandemics. Africa possesses the onerous quality of being the richest Continent with the poorest people.

The poverty crunch becomes more manifest in the context of the present challenge of globalization in which dramatic advances in technology and communication are enabling rapid movement of goods, capital, and information across the world. At the same time, new ways of generating wealth are emerging and there is a re-alignment of trade and investment globally. This new situation creates opportunities for Africa in terms of acquiring new technologies if it positions itself properly; but it also engenders the threats of marginalization and subordination in the system of global transactions. Indeed, despite all these advances, Africa's share in global ^{TRADE} remains less than 1%, and in the same regard the Continent receives less than 3% of the share of investment to developing regions, and this is despite the various concessions that our nations have provided.

Of late, the frequency and intensity of natural disasters, particularly floods in some parts of our Continent, and drought in other parts, has caused a lot of suffering and death among our people. Efforts are being pursued to develop a Continental capacity for effectively and promptly responding to such catastrophes.

I should also mention among the challenges confronting our Continent and our country today is the task of vitalizing our systems of governance. The current endeavour of consolidating the democratization process, enhancing the rule of law, and fostering a respect of human rights constitutes

a critical element in the attainment of a vision of a better Africa for all our people. Our countries have embarked on a path towards providing a capacity for African people to determine how they are governed, by whom, and for how long. Similarly, there is a determination to strengthening the structures that ensure the prevalence of justice and the basic rights of all individuals and communities. The Africa that we all want to see evolve is one that is freed from the prevalence of threats of intimidation and alienation, and one that provides prospects for the mutual development of individuals and communities in our societies.

Clearly, this is a tall order. It is in surmounting these challenges and realizing the vision that we all aspire for that the role of volunteerism becomes critical. In the context of our Continent and our country, none of these challenges – eradicating conflicts, eliminating poverty, combating HIV-AIDS, coping with globalization, effectively confronting natural and man made disasters, and improving systems of governance – can be overcome without each one of us proactively and reactively committing ourselves to making a contribution.

We all know that no size of a military force, no number of humanitarian workers, and no efforts by United Nations and OAU mediators can guarantee permanent peace in our Continent if each of us does not take it as her or his responsibility to contribute towards maintaining peace and averting conflicts. Even more profound and closer to our reality, how many public and private hospitals and health workers should be established and employed in order to combat the HIV-AIDS which is destroying the fabric of our societies? Even if there is an infinite number of these, still we will not

win over this dreadful disease. It requires the voluntary action of all us to participate in preventive campaigns, to extend love, compassion and care to those who have been infected, and to change our own behaviour so as to stop the spread of the virus.

The limitations that apply to formal structures in overcoming the challenges of conflicts and HIV-AIDS are equally relevant on the issues of poverty, disaster management, and in countering the negative effects of globalization. In the same regard, our quest to establish participatory structures of governance cannot be realized without the voluntary involvement of all of us, particularly by you as the youths. It is through your determination to undertake fully your civic responsibilities; engaging in democratic education; promoting the culture of tolerance, understanding and dialogue; and remaining vigilant to abuses of rights that can ensure the development of good governance in our societies.

It should be quite obvious that when applied to the African context, and indeed to many contexts of developing countries, the notion of volunteerism is not alien to our culture. Indeed, the very survival and resilience of African communities, even today, can be attributed to the prevalence of this notion of giving and sharing by the individual to the society. Nevertheless, by proclaiming 2001, as the International Year of Volunteerism, the United Nations did not simply want to recognize this cultural trait associated with our Continent. It wanted to underscore the importance of promoting the culture of volunteerism and to appreciate its benefits both to the individual and to the society at large.

As you embark into the deliberations of the General Assembly this morning and in examining the burning issues confronting the world and Africa today – it should be realized that the concept of a global village that we are attaching to the world today, will have a true meaning only when fundamental principles of a village are applied. These principles include genuine concern on the predicament of each member of the village, the well-being of each member is linked to the good of all, and that no part of the village is allowed to suffer while the other parts thrive. The culture of volunteerism constitutes a major essence of this process.

I thank you for your attention and now officially declare the Model General Assembly open.