



ORGANISATION OF AFRICAN UNITY

TRIBUTE BY
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IN HONOUR OF THE LATE PRESIDENT
HABIB BOURGUIBA

CONGO HALL

12 APRIL 2000

Your Excellency, the Ambassador of Tunisia

Assistant Secretaries General

Ladies and Gentlemen

We have convened here this afternoon to pay tribute to an outstanding son of Africa, the first President of Tunisia, 'Le Combatant Suprême' Habib Bourguiba who passed away last week on 6th April 2000. President Bourguiba was a great militant and a courageous fighter who led his people in the struggle against French colonialism to the ultimate victory in 1956. The remarkable achievements gained by the people of Tunisia during the three decades of his Presidency will remain a testimony of his visionary leadership, exemplary determination, and unwavering commitment to the development of his People. We shall never forget his endeavour to modernize his country through social and economic reforms. We recall with particular pride his universally acclaimed role in effectively promoting the liberation of the Tunisian Woman.

President Bourguiba shall be remembered as a great Pan-Africanist who worked and sacrificed not only for the emancipation and advancement of the Tunisian people, but also for the liberation and development of the countries of the region and the Continent as a whole. Under his leadership, Tunisia's support to the Algerian struggle of independence is a matter of record.

Despite the incessant pressure, including the bombardment of Tunisian territory, with the consequent sacrifices, President Bourguiba, his Government and People, never compromised their support for Algeria's liberation struggle. His firmness and resolve in support of freedom and dignity set a fine example that was to inspire the leaders and people of the other Frontline States in our Continent. In the same regard, his invaluable contribution to the struggle against colonialism and apartheid in our Continent shall forever be cherished.

We, at the OAU, shall continue to honour President Bourguiba as among the Founding Fathers of our Continental Organization. We remember with fond memories and gratitude his contribution to the unity that this institution represents and the vision and wisdom articulated in its charter.

The best way to mourn the passing away of this great Son of Africa is to continue with the ideals that he stood for. We need to treasure and emulate his uncompromising stance on equality in all spheres, and his rejection of extremism of every kind.

The passing away of President Habib Bourguiba is a loss not only to the Tunisian people, but also a loss to Africa as a whole. We are here to pay tribute to another great African leader who was loved and respected by his own people; honoured and admired by the people of our Continent; and recognized and acclaimed by the international community.

As we Pray to the Almighty to Rest His Soul in Eternal Peace, we convey our heartfelt condolences to President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, the Government and People of Tunisia, and to the family of the late President. We deeply share their grief and pray for them to have the strength and courage to overcome this sad event.