

AFRICAN UNION

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**ADDRESS BY MR. ALPHA OUMAR KONARE,**  
**CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMISSION OF THE**  
**AFRICAN UNION, ON THE OCCASION OF THE**  
**OPENING OF THE THIRD ORDINARY SESSION**  
**OF THE ASSEMBLY OF THE AFRICAN UNION**  
**ADDIS ABABA, 6 JULY 2004**

**Distinguished Chairperson of the African Union,**

**Your Majesty,**

**Brother Leader,**

**Distinguished Heads of State and Government,**

**Mr. Secretary General of United Nations,**

**Distinguished Former African Heads of State,**

**Distinguished Members of the Executive Council of  
the African Union,**

**Madam President of the Pan-African Parliament,**

**Distinguished Former Secretaries General  
of Our Continental Organization,**

**Distinguished Executive Secretaries of the  
Regional Economic Communities,**

**Excellencies,**

**Invited Guests,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

From Algiers, where the decisive rendez-vous was made, to Sirte...

From Sirte, where the clarion call was made, to Lomé...

From Lomé, where the foundations of the Union were laid, to Lusaka...

From Lusaka, where the foundation of the African Union was consolidated, to Durban...

From Durban, where the final gathering took place, to Maputo where the march began with the establishment of the Commission...

From Maputo to Addis Ababa today, what an exciting journey it has been!

Addis Ababa, the Capital of an ancient and great country, city of a people who have charted their path of progress by drawing from among the values of age long feudalism, a people who are striving to emerge from a period of a "harsh regime" to embrace a more open, a more modern and more democratic society.

From 9.99 to this day, 6 July 2004, what a distance that has been covered! What an accelerated pace of history in the past one year!

The Commission of the African Union installed!

The Pan-African Parliament launched!

The Peace and Security Council operational!

The African Court of Human and Peoples' Rights and the Economic, Social and Cultural Council soon to be established!

The Court of Justice and the Financial Institutions (the African Central Bank, the African Investment Bank and the African Monetary Fund) on the horizon.

And also, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, can we forget this quest of justice that you have initiated to make more room for women, and give them their rightful place?

In this exciting progress, how can we discount this sterling will to make our Organization, an African Union of peoples through genuine participation of the civil society and the private sector?

And how can we forget this historic advent of the Diaspora as an integral part of the African family?

**Excellencies,**

You have also bestowed us with NEPAD to enlighten our path and to help us to more effectively map our vision; you have given us NEPAD to help us to better define the mission that you have entrusted to us and to better guide our programmes. You have instituted NEPAD and made it a Programme of the African Union, a Programme of responsibility founded on good governance and the policy of non-interference; a Programme anchored on a culture of non-violence and, let it be said, rejection of war.

The imperatives of this new partnership are rooted in a policy which, for Africa, means relying first and foremost on herself and charting by and for herself, a proper place in the world; it also means devising her own Agenda all by herself while of course, lending herself to the views of all stakeholders, under the leadership of the African Union.

**Excellencies, Heads of State,**

**Excellencies,**

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is by resolutely implementing this and similar programmes that we will be able to overcome the difficult and, in most cases, tragic situation prevailing in our Continent; a situation which, we all know, is extremely serious, given the state of health as evidenced by the unrelenting spread of HIV/AIDS and malaria, and the dramatic resurgence of polio; a situation equally evidenced by the persistence of old conflicts and the upsurge of new hotbeds of tension and war.

We have implicit confidence in the process of dialogue in Côte d'Ivoire, and in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC); we trust in the logic of dialogue between the DRC and Rwanda, and in the on-going dialogue in Burundi; and elsewhere in the Continent.

We need to support the Sudanese Government in its efforts to control the Janjawid militia, thereby restoring security and confidence – all of which will pave the way for the return of the displaced people, for strengthening the rule of law, and enhancing respect for human rights; we need to backstop the humanitarian organizations and the Sudanese Government's commitment to immediate and decisive political dialogue.

**Excellencies,**

**Excellencies,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The situation we are facing is not a fatality. Giving way to despair would in today's circumstances, be suicidal. The times are, no doubt, hard. No doubt, all the big international meetings so far organized have not yielded concrete results. The same goes for all the solutions advanced to this day; solutions which have failed to reverse the trend towards Africa's marginalization.

No doubt, the prospects are bleak as highlighted in the 2003 UNDP Report, which made it clear that if things remain as they are, the objectives set in the Millennium Development Goals for 2015 will not be attained within the stipulated timeframe. According to the above Report:

- It is only by 2129 that the goal of Education for All at primary level, will be achieved;
- Extreme poverty can be halved only by the year 2147;
- Infant mortality will be reduced by two-thirds only by 2165.

Admittedly, many promises have been made but none has been kept. Have we therefore the right to fold our arms? Should we not, rather, strengthen our conviction that the time has come to revisit the solution, move out of the current logic in order to meet the basic needs of our people; time to change strategy?

Has the time not come for us to be convinced that we must go beyond poverty, produce wealth, refuse to make the poor even poorer? Has the time not come for us to reject the inevitability of poverty and renounce the easy way of capturing external markets to conquer our African markets?

To change our strategy means drawing our inspiration from the brilliant victories of our peoples in the great battles of the last century against colonization and apartheid; it also means implementing a strategy of visibility, self-assertion and responsibility.

This strategy will require, as in times past, strong unity. In this regard we need to forge unflinching solidarity; we need to make a lot of sacrifice; we need to build new alliances including alliances with the peoples and governments of the world. We need to promote a wider, more assertive Afro-Arab fraternity; a fraternity geared to one Africa united from North to South and from East to West. An Africa that is neither black nor white, nor Western nor Eastern; an Africa that is neither pre-Saharan nor sub-Saharan. We mean an Africa that is first in foremost African rather than Arabophone, Anglophone, Francophone, Hispanophone or Lusophone. An Africa pluralistic and diverse.

**Your Excellencies,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

This strategy, as enshrined in NEPAD must be anchored on the implementation of major continental projects in the field of culture, infrastructure, border management, projects involving border countries, free movement, training and new information technologies, initiatives involving participation in the major debates of the day such as the current debates on GMOs, the environment, global trade and global governance, while refusing that Africa is turned into the “world’s dumping ground”.

Such a strategy challenges us to strengthen our negotiating capacity; it requires that we put in place an “influence – building strategy”. It means that the best men and women of Africa and the best of the African Diaspora should place themselves in the service of the motherland. This strategy also calls for the mobilization of more resources which neither the total cancellation of our debts which we have been asking for over 25 years, nor the doubling of official Development Assistance promised for over 30 years can provide because this amount would represent US\$45 billion in additional resources, well below the US\$64 billion that would be needed each year to implement NEPAD.

Africa today needs a more substantial support to the tune of what Europe received from America soon after the Second World War and what the European Union is now offering its new members.

We have to explore new ways of mobilising resources such as taxation an international financial transactions and taxation on arms sale, as suggested by distinguished personalities.

**Excellencies, Heads of State,**

We have no doubt that you will mobilize the resources commensurate with our ambition which we are determined to achieve with realism and pragmatism while changing our course and establishing our priorities. Realism but also determination because it is not a fight for tomorrow but a battle to be waged from today to avert a new domination. It is a battle to ensure that our people retain the initiative to take advantage of the continental leadership, the widespread African presence on the international arena and our numerous bonds of friendship we have forged in the world.

**Excellencies, Heads of State,**

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentleman,**

Africa is often projected as a risk, a risk for herself but also a risk for the whole world. We totally reject this image. Let nobody make any mistake about this. For us, Africa is a great opportunity despite everything. Our potentials are immense with fresh glimmers of peace appearing in the horizon. This Continent which is twice the size of Russia, three and half times the size the of United States of America, three times the size of China and six times that of the Europe an Union is the ecological lifetime of the world. It is a land so much endowed with natural resources, a land destined to become a demographic power. By the year 2025 we shall have a population of more than 1 billion 300 million Africans, almost as many as a Chinese or the Indians, more than the European Union and the United States put together, with the advantage of a younger population with nearly 8 million below 15.

We will tomorrow become the new market. Tomorrow, we will become the young market. Africa will tomorrow become the number one Continent if this passionate appeal which we made to African Parliamentarians on 18 March this year on the occasion of their Inaugural Session is concretised.

“Give us our countries!

Give us our motherland Africa!

Restore to us our honour and glory;

Give us our redemption by making us citizens of Africa”

This is because another Africa is possible in order to build another world, a world more united and just.

**Excellencies, Heads of State,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

We can assure you today that for this decisive battle the Commission, at the helm of which you gave me the honour of steering a year ago, would be prepared and walking with it, will be millions of men, young people, entrepreneurs, aware that they have their destinies in their hands, people proud to be Africans and people prepared to fight alongside your good selves under your leadership.

**Excellencies,**

We have no doubt:

As in 1963,

As in 1999,

You will continue to make history, and hasten the course of history. There is no doubt that you will continue to live up to the current challenges and to the image and stature of Africa, the land of hope. You will clearly demonstrate that Africa is back in the international arena. Indeed "Africa is back".

Africa's return will be realized with your support. May Africa's return be manifested by a strong presence at gatherings that form part of the international agenda. These include the Athens Olympic Games, which we hope will provide us with an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to the Olympic Truce, the Extraordinary Summit on Employment and Poverty Alleviation scheduled to take place in Ouagadougou in September 2004, the First Conference of Intellectuals from Africa and the Diaspora slated for Dakar from 6 to 9 October 2004, the Tunis Summit on Information and Communication taking place in 2005, the World Football Cup that Africa, through South Africa, will host in 2010 which is expected to become the emblem of the African Renaissance.

May God give you inspiration and come to our help!

May God watch over Africa!

I wish you every success

**Your Excellency President Chissano,**

My I just address one word to you. I would like to say that all that we have achieved over the past months bears your mark. It also bears witness to the great militant you have always been.

**Mr. Secretary General of the United Nations,**

We are very glad about and greatly honoured by your constant presence in our midst and unflagging support. We pay you tribute, you the great man, the great African.

**Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,**

Your massive presence today is a mark of your great leadership.

I would like to tell you that Addis Ababa has opened its doors wide for you. It has given you due recognition.

- from now on a street in Addis Ababa will bear the name of each of our States.
- Moreover, the African Union will henceforth be provided with extensive grounds at its headquarters and elsewhere for its future development.

Thank you, Prime Minister Meles and

Thank you Mayor of Addis Ababa.