

AFRICAN UNION

الاتحاد الأفريقي



UNION AFRICAINE

UNIÃO AFRICANA

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ADDRESS DELIVERED BY HIS EXCELLENCY
ALPHA OUMAR KONARE
ON THE OCCASION OF THE SECOND ORDINARY SESSION
OF THE ASSEMBLY OF THE AFRICAN UNION:
MAPUTO, MOZAMBIQUE, 10 JULY 2003

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- **Excellency, Mr. Chairperson,**
- **Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,**
- **Excellency, the Secretary General of the United Nations,**
- **Honourable Ministers,**
- **Excellencies, Representatives of
International Organizations,**
- **Excellencies, Ambassadors,**
- **Distinguished Guest,**
- **Honourable Delegates,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is my singular honour and privilege, first and foremost, to extend to you personally Mr. Chairperson, my most sincere felicitations on your auspicious election to the Chair of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union.

May I also express my profound gratitude to you, distinguished Heads of State and Government, for your mark of confidence in my country, Mali, through my humble self, whom you have elected to the high office of Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union.

This election has, indeed, done us great honour. At the same time, however, it is for us a heavy responsibility, the stakes and demands of which we fully realise.

Excellency, Mr. Chairperson,

The task before us is immense; but we shall do all in our power to live up to this enormous challenge, and thus deserve the trust you have reposed in us.

We are aware that the playing fields have not been lying fallow, as they were forty years ago when, after an age-long trek and shared sufferings, they opened up for your illustrious predecessors – the Founding Fathers of the Organization of African Unity – to whom it is my privilege today to pay glowing tribute for the pertinence of their vision and for the courage with which they waged the struggle for the Continent's liberation.

The fields have not been lying in waste; for, following in the footsteps of the visionaries, valiant men and women, all dedicated to the cause of Africa, propelled by the momentum generated in Addis Ababa and by the inspiration infused by Sirte, have broken new ground, paving the way for our Continent to sail ahead on a more even keel.

The playground has, indeed, not be lying unattended; for, very recently, men and women have given of their best, exerting all their energies, to steer the ship of Transition and bring it successfully ashore. I need hardly say that it is thanks to the hard work and perseverance of these men and women that we have been able to gather here today to chart a new course.

In recounting these successes, we have in mind no less a personality than our brother AMARA ESSY and his entire team. Permit me, Mr. Chairperson, to join in extending our heartfelt commendations and gratitude to these men and women of quality for a job well done.

Excellency, Chairperson,

Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,

Honourable Ministers,

The social and economic progress of our people in an environment of peace and security remains at the top of our Organization's agenda.

May I, on this score, say loud and clear – fortunately without breath – that Africa's dreams have long remained in limbo; timeless dreams, ceaselessly nurtured and ceaselessly expressed. It is a fact that, in some parts of the Continent, political turmoil has conspired with severe pandemics including HIV/AIDS, to undermine stability in the affected countries, plunging our peoples into untold misery. It is equally true that economic growth has not always translated into social progress, so much the yearning of our peoples.

The prevailing scenario is gloomy to say the least. However, it should not lead us to forget the giant strides made by African countries since their accession to independence.

The current situation cannot dampen our determination to improve our lot and build the Continent of our dream – a united Africa, strengthened by pluralism and diversity, an Africa that represents a beacon of hope for the present and future generations; generations indeed of African women who, heads high like the lofty mountain, are buffeted by both wind and rain, and who constitute the eloquent embodiment of the joys and sufferings of the peoples of Africa; generations of African youth, hungry and zealous for knowledge especially in this era of new information and communications technologies explosion.

In our contemporary world, the place of isolated successes, and of achievements limited to our national spaces is growing thinner by the day. This is one of the huge lessons to be learnt from the transformations taking place in our global village. Let us garner from this lesson commensurate enrichments for the betterment of our Continent.

Mr. Chairperson,

Distinguished Heads of State and Government,

An African Union built on the values of socio-economic progress, justice, solidarity and sense of responsibility, will excel by its capacity to think and act effectively, thereby finding appropriate responses to the aspirations of African peoples.

A significant boost will be given to the Union by:

- an abiding reference to our cultures, our languages, our common history and our common past;
- an unrelenting expression of the will and determination to unite in a space reposed on the rule of law, solidarity and democracy;
- the building and nurturing of trust among our Member States through dialogue and collaborative consultation; and by,
- economic growth to usher in better living condition for the generality of our populations;

On this score, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) clearly represents a tool for achieving socio-economic progress, a tool capable of crystallizing individual dreams into common actions which will pave a huge way for future successes, provided we rely primarily on our own resources; provided we first mobilize our own resources; and provided we give vent to our own initiatives.

The key to success in implementing the NEPAD programmes is the accession of our peoples to the objectives and goals of our Organization, and the appropriation of its ambitions by the broad spectrum of African societies, namely: members of parliament, workers, the youth, women, businesspersons, artists, intellectuals, sports men and women, media operatives, the entire civil society and others.

Excellency, Mr. Chairperson,

Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,

Africa cannot survive, if it shuts itself from the rest of the world.

The path of partnership which it has embraced must be pursued and consolidated in mutual respect.

It is vital for our Continent to have confidence in itself, to hold its own and assert its image; it is essential that it becomes the engine of its very development and contribute in creating an equitable world, and in establishing and maintaining peace and security in our planet.

Admittedly, Africa is still in need of the continued support and assistance of the international community, tailored to its real needs. The efforts already made by our partners should be stepped up for the sake of international solidarity.

Mr. Chairperson,

Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate to all the Heads of State and Government our profound gratitude for the confidence they have so kindly placed in us, and express, once again, our total commitment to serve the **African Union**, and Africa.

I have no doubt that we can always count on your support, both political and material, which will enable our management team that includes all the workers of our Organization, to rally behind your efforts in order to translate into deeds your directives as well as the decisions of the Executive Council. These efforts will be geared, among other things, towards:

- popularising the **African Union** in order to further consolidate the **Union of peoples** component;
- establishing, without further delay, the legal basis of our Organization and its structures;

- meeting the challenges of Statehood, a Statehood that would differ drastically from what obtained in the past;
- establishing peace and security, I repeat peace and security, in order to better control our borders;
- guaranteeing food security and healthcare for our peoples;
- developing infrastructure, and protecting our environment and our cultural heritage;
- strengthening our negotiation, participatory, training, research, production and trade capacities;
- improving debt management;
- combating **HIV/AIDS**;
- protecting our children by taking, among other things, drastic measures against the use of child soldiers;
- adopting a more pragmatic approach by reducing bureaucracy, and ensuring better management of our resources, in collaboration with the African regional organizations, notably the Regional Economic Communities.

Mr. Chairperson,

Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,

We have no doubt that you will do your utmost to rally Africans in the Continent and in the Diaspora behind our common Organization and bring their formidable drive and enthusiasm to bear, and elicit the rich contribution of African intellectuals both within and outside the Continent in pursuit of our common objective.

Mr. Chairperson,

Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,

We are entirely at your service. Your support will be a crucial factor in the success of our mission to develop Africa and establish peace and security for the advancement of the peoples of the world.

No sacrifice, in the service of **Africa**, our motherland, will be too little!

By the Grace of God, the future is in our hands, and this future will be increasingly defined by no one else but Africans themselves.

May God help us.

I thank you for your attention.