



HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY HAILE SELASSIE I
Emperor of Ethiopia
Address 1

History reminds us that strength lies in unity and encourages us to set aside our differences in pursuit of shared objectives, working together with all our collective power toward the realization of true African brotherhood and unity. Unity is a universally accepted ideal. While we may debate methods and strategies, the essence of our common purpose remains clear when stripped of semantics. We are committed to establishing a united African community. Our continent, in many ways, remains unfinished, awaiting its builders and visionaries. It is both our duty and our privilege to awaken Africa's potential, not aiming for a nationalism reminiscent of nineteenth-century Europe or narrow regional identities, but rather fostering the vision of a united African brotherhood focused on achieving a grander and more noble purpose.

Questions for consideration: What general and specific reasons does Emperor Haile Selassie I give to justify the establishment of a united African community? What is the original purpose of the Addis Ababa Convention, according to Emperor Selassie I? Why does Haile Selassie I believe in the attainment of unity of African nations, despite the diversity of African nations? What steps must be taken to achieve a complete union of African states, according to Haile Selassie I? If African leaders agree to use Addis Ababa Convention to establish the foundation of unity of African States, but they fail to achieve unity sixty decades later, what will they have proven to the world, to Sub-Saharan Africans and their posterity? What does it signify for a group of citizens or countries to achieve unity?

In Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, May 1963

We welcome to Ethiopian, in our name and in the name of the Ethiopian Government and people, the Heads of States and Governments of independent African nations who are today assembled in solemn conclave in Ethiopian capital city. This Conference, without parallel in history, is an impressive testimonial to the devotion and dedication of which we all partake in the cause of our mother continent and that of her sons and daughters. This is indeed momentous and historic day for Africa and for all Africans. We stand today on the stage of world affairs before the audience of world opinion. We have come together to assert our role in the direction of world affairs and to discharge our duty to the great continent whose two hundred and fifty million people we lead. Africa is today at mid-course, in transition from the Africa of yesterday to the Africa of tomorrow. Even as we stand here, we move from the past into the future. The task which we have embarked, the making of Africa will not wait.

We must act, to shape and mold the future and leave our imprint on event as they slip past into history. We seek at this meeting to determine whether we are going and to chart the course of our destiny. It is no less important that we know whence we came. An awareness of our past is essential to the establishment of our personality and our identity as Africans. This world was not created piecemeal. Africa was born no later and no earlier than any other geographical area on this globe. Africans no more and no less than other men possess all human attributes and talents and deficiencies, virtues, and faults. Thousands of years ago, civilizations flourished in Africa which suffer not at all by comparison with those of other continents. In those centuries, Africans were politically free and economically independent. Their social patterns were their own and their cultures truly indigenous. The obscurity which enshrouds the centuries which elapsed between those earliest days and the rediscovery of Africa are being gradually dispersed. What is certain is that during those long years Africans were born, lived, and died. Men on other parts of this earth occupied themselves with their own concerns and in their conceit, proclaimed that the world began and ended at their horizons. All unknown to them, Africa developed in its own pattern, growing in its own life and in the Nineteenth Century, finally re-emerged into the world's consciousness.

The events of the past hundred and fifty years require extended recitation from us. The period of colonialism into which we were plunged culminated with our continent fettered and bound; with once proud and free peoples reduced to humiliation and slavery; with Africa's terrain cross-hatched and checker-boarded by artificial and arbitrary boundaries. Many of us during those bitter years were overwhelmed in battle, and those who escaped conquest did so at the cost of desperate resistance and bloodshed. Others were sold into bondage as the price extracted by the colonialists for the protection which they extended the possessions of which they disposed. Africa was a physical resource to be exploited and Africans were chattels to be purchased bodily or, at best, peoples to be reduced to vassalage and lackey hood. Africa was the market for the produce of other nations and the source of the raw materials with which their factories were fed.

Today, Africa has emerged from this dark passage. Our Armageddon is past. Africa has been reborn as a free continent and Africans have been reborn as free men. The blood that was shed, the sufferings that were endured are today Africa's advocates for freedom and unity. Those men who refused to accept the judgment passed upon them by the colonizers who held unswervingly through the darkest hours to a vision of an Africa emancipated from political, economic, and spiritual domination will be

remembered and revered wherever Africans meet. Many of them never set foot on this continent. Others were born and died here. What we may utter today can add little to the heroic struggle of those who, by their example, have shown us how precious are freedom and human dignity and of how little value is life without them. Their deeds are written in history of Africa's victory, although proclaimed, is not yet total and areas of resistance still remain, Today, we name as our first great task the final liberating of those Africans still dominated by foreign exploitation and control. With the goal in sight and unqualified triumph within our grasp. Let us not now falter or lag or relax. We must make one final supreme effort; now when the struggle grows weary, when so much has been won that the thrilling sense of achievement has brought us near satiation.

Our liberty is meaningless unless all Africans are free. Our brothers in the Rhodesia, in Mozambique, in Angola, in South Africa cry out in anguish for our support and assistance. We must urge on their behalf their peaceful accession to independence. We must align and identify ourselves with all aspects of their struggle. It would be betrayal were we to pay only lip service to the cause of their liberation and fail to back our words with action. To them we say, your pleas shall not go unheeded. The resources of Africa and of all freedom-loving nations are marshalled in your service. Be of good heart, for your deliverance is at hand. As we renew our vow that all of Africa shall be free, let us also resolve that old wounds shall be healed, and past scars forgotten. It was thus that Ethiopia treated the invader nearly twenty-five years ago, and Ethiopians found peace with honour in this course. Memories of past injustice should not divert us from the more pressing business at hand.

We must live in peace with our former colonizers, shunning recrimination and bitterness and forswearing the luxury of vengeance and retaliation; let not the acid of hatred erode our souls and poison our hearts. Let us act as befits the dignity which we claim for ourselves as Africans, proud of our own special qualities, distinctions, and abilities. Our efforts as free men must be to establish new relationships, devoid of any resentment and hostility restored to our belief and faith in ourselves as individuals, dealing on a basis of equality with other equally free peoples.

Today, we look to the future calmly confidently and courageously. We look to the vision of an Africa not merely free but united. In facing this new challenge, we can take comfort and encouragement from the lessons of the past. We know that there are differences among us. Africans enjoy different cultures, distinctive values, special attributes. But we also know that unity can be and has been attained among men of the most disparate origins, that differences of race, of religion, of culture, of tradition, are no inseparable obstacle to the coming together of peoples. History teaches us that unity is strength and cautions us to submerge and overcome our differences in the quest for common goals, to strive, with all our combined strength. for the path to true African brotherhood and unity. There are those who claim that African unity is impossible, that the forces that pull us, some in this direction, others in that, are too strong to be overcome. Around us there is no lack of doubt and pessimism no absence of critics and criticism. These speak of Africa, of Africa's future and of her position in the Twentieth Century in spectacular tones. They predict dissention and disintegration among Africans and internecine strife and chaos on our continent.

Let us confound these and by our deeds disperse them in confusion. There are others whose hopes for Africa are bright, who stand with faces upturned in wonder and awe at the creation of a new and happier life, who have dedicated themselves to its realization and are spurred on by the example of their brothers to whom they owe the achievements of Africa's past. Let us reward their trust and merit

their approval. The road to African unity is already lined with landmarks. The last years are crowded with meetings, with conferences, with declarations and pronouncements. Regional organizations have been established, local groupings based on common interests, backgrounds and traditions have been created. But, through all that has been said and written and done in these years there runs a common theme. Unity is the accepted goal. We argue about techniques and tactics. But when semantics are stripped away, there is little argument among us. We are determined to create a union of Africans. In a very real sense, our continent is unmade. It still awaits its creation and its creators. It is our duty and privilege to rouse the slumbering giant of Africa, not to the nationalism of Europe of the Nineteenth Century, not to regional consciousness, but to the vision of a single African brotherhood bending its united efforts toward the achievement of a greater and nobler goal.

Above all we must avoid the pitfalls of tribalism. If we are divided among ourselves on tribal lines, we open our doors to foreign intervention and its potentially harmful consequences. Congo is clear proof of what we say. We should not be led to complacency because of the present ameliorated situation in that country. The Congolese people have suffered untold misery, and the economic growth of the country has been retarded because of tribal strife. But while we agree that the ultimate destiny of this continent lies in political union, we must at the same time recognize that the obstacles to be overcome in its achievement are at once numerous and formidable. Africa's peoples did not emerge into liberty in uniform conditions; Africans maintain different political systems; our economies are diverse; our social orders are rooted in differing cultures and traditions. Further, no clear consensus exists on the 'how' and the "what" of this union. It is to be, in form, federal, confederal, or unitary? Is the sovereignty of individual states reduced, if so, by how much, and in what areas? On these and other questions there is no agreement, and if we wait for agreed answers, generations hence matter will be little advanced, while the debate still rages.

We should, therefore, not be concerned that complete union is not attained from one day to next. The union which we seek can only come gradually as the day-to-day progress which we achieve carries us slowly but inexorably along this course. We have before us the examples of the U.S. A. and the U. S. R. We must remember how long these required to achieve their union. When a solid foundation is laid if the mason is able and his materials good, a strong house can be built. Thus, a period of transition is inevitable. Old relations and arrangement may, for a time be longer. Regional organizations may fulfil legitimate functions and needs which cannot yet be otherwise satisfied. But the difference in this is: that we recognize these circumstances for what they are, temporary expedients designed to serve only until we have established the conditions which will bring total African unity within our reach. There is, nonetheless, much that we can do to speed this transition. There are issues on which we stand united and questions on which there is unanimity of opinion. Let us seize on these areas of agreement and exploit them to the fullest. Let us act now, action which, while taking account of present realities, nonetheless constitutes clear and unmistakable progress along the course plotted out for us by destiny. We are all adherents, whatever our internal political systems of the principles of democratic action. Let us apply these to the unity we seek to create.

Let us work out our own programmes in all fields - political, economic, social, and military. The opponents of Africa's growth, whose interests would be best served by a divided and balkanized continent, would derive much satisfaction from the unhappy spectacle of thirty and more African States so split, so paralyzed and immobilized by controversies over long-term measures goals that they are

unable even to join their efforts in short-term measures on which there is no dispute. If we act where we may in those areas where we adopt will work for us and inevitably impel us still farther in the direction of ultimate union. What we still lack, despite the efforts of past years, is the mechanism which will enable us to speak with one voice when we wish to do so and take and implement decisions on African problems when we are so minded. The commentators of 1963 speak, in discussing Africa, of the Monrovia States, The Brazzaville Group, the Casablanca Powers, of these and many more. Let us put an end to these terms- What we require is a single African Organization through Africa's single voice may be heard effectively. Africa's problems may be studied and resolved. We need an organization which will facilitate acceptable solutions to disputes among Africans and promote the study and adoption of measures for common defense and programmes for co-operation in the economic and social fields. Let us, at this Conference, create a single institution to which we will all belong, based on principles to which we all subscribe, confident that in its councils our voices will carry their proper weight, secure in the knowledge that the decisions there will be dictated by Africans and only by Africans and that they will take full account of all vital African considerations.

We are meeting here today to lay the basis for African unity. Let us here and now, agree upon the basic instrument which will constitute the foundation for the future growth in peace and harmony and oneness of this continent. Let our meetings henceforth proceed from solid accomplishment. Let us not put off, to later consideration and study. The single act, the one decision, which must emerge from this gathering if it is to have real meaning. This Conference cannot close without adopting a single African Charter. We cannot leave here without having created a single African organization possessed of the attributes we have described. If we fail in this, we will have shirked our responsibility to Africa and to the peoples we lead. If we succeed, then, and only then, will we have justified our presence here. The organization of which we speak must possess a well-articulated framework having a permanent headquarters and an adequate Secretariat providing the necessary continuity between meetings of the permanent organs. It must include specialized bodies to work fields of competence assigned to the organization. Unless the political liberty for which Africans have for so long struggled is complemented and bolstered by a corresponding economic and social growth, the breath of life which sustains freedom may flicker out. In our efforts to improve the standard of life of our peoples and to flesh out the bones of our independence, we count on the assistance and support of others. But this alone will not suffice, and, alone, would only perpetuate Africa's dependence on others.

A specialized body to facilitate and coordinate continent wide economic programmes and to provide the mechanism for the provision of economic assistance among African nations is thus required. Prompt measures can be taken to increase trade and commerce among us. Africa's mineral wealth is great. We should co-operate in its development. An African Development Programme which will make provision for the concentration by each nation on those productive activities for which its resources and its geographic and climatic conditions best fit it is needed. We assume that each African nation has its own national development programme, and it only remains for us to come together and share our experiences for the proper implementation of a continent-wide plan. Today, travel between African nations and telegraphic and telephonic communications among us are circuitous in the extreme. Road communications between two neighboring States are often difficult or even impossible. It is little wonder that trade among us has remained at a discouragingly low level. These anachronisms are the remnants of a heritage of which we must rid ourselves, the legacy of the century when Africans were isolated one from

the other. These are vital areas in which efforts must be concentrated, this African institution, the supra-national aspects of African life would be emphasized, and study would be directed toward the ultimate goal of complete African unity. Ethiopia stands prepared here and now to decide on the site of the University and to fix the financial contributions to be made to it.

This is but the merest summary of what can be accomplished. Upon these measures we are all agreed, and our agreement should now form the basis for our action. Africa has become an increasingly influential force in the conduct of world affairs as the combined weight of our collective opinion is brought to focus not only on matter which concern this continent exclusively, but on those pressing problems which occupy the thoughts of all men everywhere. As we have come to know one another better and grown in mutual trust and confidence, it has been possible for us to coordinate our policies and actions and contribute to the successful settlement of pressing and critical world issues. This has not been easy. But coordinated action by all African States on common problems is imperative if our opinions are to be accorded their proper weight. We Africans occupy a different - indeed a unique - position among the nations of this Century. Having for so long known oppression, tyranny and subjugation, who with better right can claim for all the opportunity and the right to live and grow as free men? Ourselves for long decades the victims of injustice, whose voices can be better raised in the demand for justice and right for all?

We demand an end to colonialism because domination of one people by another is wrong. We demand an end to nuclear testing and the arms race because these activities, which pose such dreadful threats to man's existence and waste and squander humanity's material heritage are wrong. We demand an end to racial segregation as an affront to man's dignity which is wrong. We act in these matters in the right, as a matter of high principle. We act out of the integrity and conviction of our most deep founded beliefs. If we permit ourselves to be tempted by narrow self-interest and vain ambition, if we barter our beliefs for short-term advantage, who will listen when we claim to speak for conscience, and who will contend that our words deserve to be heeded? We must speak out on major world issues, courageously, openly, and honestly, and in blunt terms of right and wrong. If we yield to blandishments or threats, if we compromise when no honourable compromise is possible, our influence will be sadly diminished and our prestige woefully prejudiced and weakened. Let us not deny our ideals or sacrifice our right to stand as the champions of the poor, the ignorant, the oppressed everywhere. The acts by which we live and the attitudes by which we act must be clear beyond question. Principles alone can endow our deeds with force and meaning. Let us be true to what we believe that our beliefs may serve and honour us.

We reaffirm today, in the name of principle and right, our opposition to prejudice, wherever and in whatever form it may be found, and particularly do we rededicate ourselves to the eradication of racial discrimination from this continent. We can never rest content with our achievements so long as men, in any part of Africa, assert on racial discrimination constitutes a negation of the spiritual and psychological equality which we have fought to achieve and a denial of the personality and dignity which we have struggled to establish for ourselves as Africans. Our political and economic liberty will be devoid of meaning for so long as the degrading spectacle of South Africa's apartheid continues to haunt our waking hours and to trouble our sleep. We must redouble our efforts to banish this evil from our land. If we persevere, discrimination will one day vanish from the earth. If we use the means available to us, South Africa's apartheid, just as colonialism, will shortly remain only as a memory. If we pool our resources and use them well, this specter will be banished forever.

In this effort as in so many others, we stand united with our Asian friends and brothers. Africa shares with Asia a common background of colonialism, of exploitation, of discrimination, of oppression. At Bandung, African and Asian States dedicated themselves to the liberation of their two continents from foreign domination and affirmed the right of all nations to develop in their own way, free of any external interference, The Bandung Declaration and the principles enunciated at that Conference remain today valid for us all. We hope that the leaders of India and China, in the spirit of Bandung, will find the way to the peaceful resolution of the dispute between their two countries. We must speak, also of the dangers of the nuclear holocaust which threatens all that we hold dear and precious, including life itself. Forced to live our daily existence with this foreboding and ominous shadow ever at our side, we cannot lose hope or lapse into despair, the consequences of an uncontrolled nuclear conflict are so dreadful that no sane man can countenance them. There must be an end to testing. A programme of progressive disarmament must be agreed upon. Africa must be freed and shielded. as a denuclearized zone, from the consequences of direct albeit involuntary involvement in the nuclear arms race.

The negotiations at Geneva, where Nigeria, the United Arab Republic and Ethiopia are participating, continue, and painfully and laboriously progress is being achieved. We cannot know what portion of the limited advances already realized can be attributed to the increasingly important role being played by the non-aligned nations in these discussions, but we can, surely derive some small measure of satisfaction in even the few tentative steps taken toward ultimate agreement among the nuclear powers. We remain persuaded that in our efforts to scatter the clouds which rim the horizon of our future, success must come if only because failure is unthinkable. Patience and grim determination are required, and faith in the guidance of Almighty God. We would not close without making mention of the United Nations. We personally have throughout our lifetime been ever guided and inspired by the principle of collective security would not now propose measures which depart from or are inconsistent with this ideal or with the declarations of the United Nations Charter. It would be foolhardy indeed to abandon a principle which has withstood the test of time and which has proved its inherent value again and again in the past. It would be worse than folly to weaken the one effective world organization which exists today and to which each of us owes so much. It would be sheer recklessness for any of us to detract from this organization which, however imperfect, provides the best bulwark against the incursion of any forces which would deprive us of our hard- own liberty and dignity.

The African Charter of which we have spoken is wholly consistent with that of the United Nations. The African organization which we envisage is not intended in any way to replace in our national or international life the position which the United Nations has so diligently earned and so rightfully occupies. Rather, the measures which we propose would complement and round out programmes undertaken by the United Nations and its specialized agencies and hopefully, render both their activities and ours doubly meaningful and effective. What we seek will multiply many times over the contribution which our joined endeavours may make to the assurance of world peace and the promotion of human well-being and understanding. A century, hence, when future generations study the pages of history seeking to follow and fathom the growth and development of the African continent, what will they find of this Conference? Will it be remembered as an occasion on which the leaders of a liberated Africa, acting boldly and with determination, bent events to their will and shaped the future destinies of the African peoples? Will this meeting be memorialized for its solid achievements, for the intelligence and maturity which marked the decisions taken here? Or will it be recalled for its failures, for the inability of Africa's leaders to transcend

local prejudice and individual differences, for the disappointment and disillusionment which followed in its train?

These questions give us all pause. The answers are within our power to dictate. The challenges and opportunities which open before us today are greater than those presented at any time in Africa's millennia of history. The risks and the dangers which confront us are no less great. The immense responsibilities which history and circumstances have thrust upon us demand balanced sober reflection. If we succeeded in the tasks which lie before us, our names will be remembered, and our deeds recalled by those who follow us. If we fail, history will puzzle at our failure and mourn what was lost. We approach the day ahead with the prayer that we have assembled here may be granted the wisdom, the judgement, and the inspiration which will enable us to maintain our faith with the peoples and the nations which have entrusted their fate to our hands.