



H.E. MODIBO KEITA
President of Mali

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This Conference drives us to uphold the trust placed in us by our people, guiding them toward unity. Our delegation fully appreciates the outcomes of the Foreign Ministers' Preparatory Conference and its recommendations that clarify the facets of inter-African collaboration. We are committed to forming an economic and social committee to boost cooperation across various sectors. Your Majesty, Mr. President, and esteemed brothers, we are devoted to the vital mission of building a liberated, united, and thriving Africa, a vision that has seen many sacrifices. We stand ready to support our brothers facing the aftermath of colonial oppression and racial degradation. With unwavering resolve, we must take systematic steps toward actionable goals while staying true to our principles of liberation and unity. In this honorable endeavor, the people of Mali and its institutions stand with you, for true honor lies in fulfilling our commitments.

Questions for consideration: Why does President Keita believe that it will take time to achieve political unity? Why does Keita believe that it will not be easy to undo colonial legacy? What does President Keita mean when he says that "In order to promote and construct a united Africa, we shall gladly conjure up the danger that lurks behind a divided Africa"? Why does President Keita believe that "It is no longer possible to tolerate the opposition cleverly fostered between groups of states"? If African leaders united against colonialism to achieve independence, but they fail to abolish colonial legacy, including inherited colonial borders, what will they have proven to the world and to the peoples of Africa and their posterity? If the masses of African peoples united to fight alongside African nationalists in their struggle for independence but they were eventually denied the opportunity to unite by African leaders, what would leaders of Africa have proved to Africans and to their posterity? What does it mean for a group of citizens to be independent?

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. President

Honourable Brothers

With my opening words I wish to pay a stirring tribute to the Government of Ethiopia, and particularly to His Majesty the Emperor, who have been able to arrange the best possible conditions for the holding of this Conference, by their brotherly hospitality and their enthusiastic and constant devotion to the African cause. If there are occasions when peoples are entitled to boast with justification of their own achievement the Conference which brings us together at Addis Ababa is one of these. Assembled round one table, the great continent -divided by several centuries of colonization -can claim a major victory over the diversity of peoples, languages and religions that characterizes our continent. To convene in conference at a round table thirty-one African States, still completely imbued with that ardent nationalism which led them a few years ago to independence to organize cooperation between countries like ours that are firmly attached to their recently won sovereignty, will be hailed as an event unique in the history of the world.

Here we see that the new Africa, before it has even achieved total liberation, is leaving its mark on the history of relations between nations by its wisdom, and love for its neighbours; an honour such as this makes it imperative for us to succeed in the name of the peoples who have placed their confidence in us, to guide them towards unity. In the name of humanity to which our meeting has given new hope, in the name also, Mr. President, of our honour and pride as Africans, confronting those who continue to deny us all capacity, for agreeing amongst ourselves, for conducting our own affairs, and for raising in common an enduring edifice -keeping these obligations in mind, the Republic of Mali intends to make positive contribution to this Meeting.

In order to promote and construct a united Africa, we shall gladly conjure up the danger that lurks behind a divided Africa. It is no longer possible to tolerate the opposition cleverly fostered between groups of states. We should be threatened by the cleavage of our continent into antagonistic blocs and should be preparing the most fertile ground for the dangerous transplantation of the cold war to the soil of our common homeland. The period through which we are living today, and which we want to leave behind us, should provide us with a lesson. Sterile opposition must now give place to that brotherly understanding and tolerance which have never ceased to inspire the relations between our populations. 'The President of Senegal, Leopold Sedar Senghor, inviting President Modibo Keila of the Republic of Mali to address you, bears witness in the most striking manner to that which may be achieved by the will of men steadfastly attached to African unity. In these conditions, we are able to tackle the problems that

continue to face us; and is it not in fact true that we have all set ourselves the objective as have our peoples, of reestablishing and safeguarding our dignity, of rehabilitating our continent, and of giving to Africa the place that it deserves in the national arena and the world arena - so many noble aims cannot be fulfilled in conditions of division or distrust, or of competition for foreign support, which is a source of every kind of blackmail.

Your Imperial Majesty, Mr. President, Excellencies, although tradition may require it, we of the Republic of Mali will not adopt diplomatic language, which obliges us to conceal our real thoughts, and to say what we do not believe. If all of us here present are truly animated by the ardent desire to achieve African unity, we must take Africa as it is, and we must renounce any territorial claims, if we do not wish to introduce what we might call black imperialism in Africa. For in our eyes, imperialism is not the attribute of a country, a continent, or a bloc: imperialism is that manifestation of that will to domination of man over man, of a society over another society, of people over people, and the desire to impose at all costs one's own way of thinking, one's own way of life, and one's own method of political and economic development on others; and against this, African unity demands each one of us complete respect for the legacy that we have received from the colonial system, that is to say: maintenance of the present frontiers of our respective states.

It is therefore necessary, and it is indeed even essential that we should put an end in a concrete manner to factors promoting division; respect for the territorial sovereignty and integrity of each state should be made concrete by an undertaking, a multilateral non-aggression pact guaranteed by each of the states gathered here. The conclusion of such an agreement would strengthen inter-African relations, reduce outside interference in this domain, and open happy prospects for African cooperation in the fields of defense and security. Within the framework thus defined, an inter-states conciliation agency which we must set up, would be enabled to meet our expectations in settling the differences that arise between African countries.

Mr. President, you have doubtless guessed my country's desire not to take advantage of the privileged position conferred upon it by Article 48 of our Constitution, which specifies the partial or total relinquishment of sovereignty in favour of any viable African organization. With the prospect of attaining complete unity, the people of Mali have unanimously chosen to examine with discernment the realities of our continent and the experiences of brother nations. What are these realities? It has been affirmed here that the colonial system divided Africa; that is true in one sense, but it may also be said that the colonial system permitted nations to be born. Indeed, if we take certain parts of Africa in the pre-colonial period, history teaches us that there existed a myriad of kingdoms and empires, which look their form

according to tribal and ethnic characteristics, but which today have transcended, in the case of certain states, tribal and ethnic differences to constitute a nation, a real nation.

These are also realities that we must take into consideration, and we believe, for our part, that African unity must also take these facts into consideration if unity is to become a reality. I venture to cite an example - if we desire that our national should be ethnic entity, speaking the same language and having the same psychology, then we shall find no single veritable nation in Africa. The Republic of Mali consists of about ten races, which have transcended ethnic and tribal difference to constitute today the Republic of Mali; but do we not have Songhois, who have found their way to Niger and elsewhere as a result of great movements of humanity; do we not have Fulibes of all colours who have made their appearance, as a result of the processes of development of their societies, in Guinea in the North, in Cameroon and in Nigeria?

Well, if it were necessary to insist that the Republic of Mali, on the basis of the definition of a nation, should be composed essentially of Mandingo, or Fulibes, or Songhois, then we should have problems -and plenty of problems -with our neighbours. It is that reality that we must bear in mind, and another reality too: The African states depending upon the colonial system that they knew and also the development of popular organizations that they have followed more or less of this or that path in building up their structure. While certain African states continue to pursue their economic development along the lines traced by the former colonial power, others have turned to a different form of construction -I refer to socialist construction. Others, finally, have chosen a middle course, and all this taking into consideration the realities of their states.

Well, it is not possible for us to obliterate with a stroke of the brush, like a painter, from one day to the next, all these realities of our states. If we wish to do so, we are storing up for Africa difficult days to come; and I am all the more in a position to speak to you freely on this subject, as I have had two or three experiences in the spheres of both political and state organization; but I do not regret these experiences, as they have been a school for myself and for my friends. This will permit you, Excellencies, to guess already, here and now, what is the attitude of the Republic of Mali towards African unity. This unity which each of us, our respective states, has put at the top of our programmes of action, what does it really mean? In our opinion, the pooling of our possibilities and potentialities so as to achieve progress, while respecting the free choice of each of us. That is what the people of Mali and its party who have resolutely and irreversibly turned their steps along the path of socialist construction of the country since the Congress of 22 September 1960, demand. Honourable brothers, our common undertaking cannot be divorced from the will to dignity for human personalities that animates us, and which must find completely

new expression in this respect at Addis Ababa. In our support and, should I say, our material, moral and military commitment within the crusade that we have opened against the colonialists.

It would indeed be illusory for us, in our positions of responsibility, to wish to play the hoped-for part, while close beside us, sometimes at our very frontiers, our own brothers are reduced to slavery or to the level of beasts, at the mere wish of our-of-date colonialists, who have understood nothing of history, or of the racialists of South Africa. The problem here is a grave one and affects the conscience of the whole of humanity; certainly, the unanimous opprobrium of the members of the United Nations Organization, and the constant and courageous aid of the anti-imperialism states, particularly of our Asian brothers, bear witness to this. This does not alter the fact that the problem is first of all and essentially our own, and that what is happening in Angola, in Mozambique, in Southern Rhodesia, and in South Africa, challenges the validity of all that we proclaim, opposes, the most legitimate aspiration, and obtrudes itself as an insult to all our African soul.

It is time, it is high time to put an end to it; our common organization must make that aim its first preoccupation and must decide here and now to recruit volunteers in our countries for the liberation of these territories; and must induce governments to ensure the unrestricted transport of arms and munition intended for the patriots, and also to contribute to a common solidarity fund to support our brothers engaged in the fight for liberation. Dear brothers, in this field as in that of the common organization that we are undertaking to set up, the Conference of Addis Ababa has a duty to avoid the well-worn paths of those hollow international forums, which has hitherto, alas, been a fair description of many African conference. The dignity of Africa and the earnestness of our common organizations are at stake.

I could not continue without drawing your attention to the danger of subversion in Africa. Indeed, you are aware that in certain states, there are living nationalists of other states, even of states that are already independent. If we really desire to achieve African unity, based essentially in the first instance on confidence between one another, it is essential that this situation should be solved; we can recommend that African unity be preceded by national unity. It would be desirable for those African states, of which certain citizens have been obliged to take refuge abroad, to extend to them the hand of friendship, and facilitate their return to hearth and home in their common native land. Dignity for the colonized Africans, and also the unity of the state represented here: the task is not easy.

The experience of some of us, and those of others, produce rival views in recognizing that harmonization must be brought about wherever that is possible, and in the most highly developed form attainable. As far as we are concerned, our delegation salutes with joy the results of the work of the Foreign Ministers' Preparatory Conference and its recommendations, which have set forth in clear terms

the varied- aspects of inter-African co-operation. I, for my part, shall forbear to repeat them from this illustrious rostrum. Our attention will, however, be directed here to the setting up of an economic and social committee to consider and organize co-operation in the economic, social, and cultural fields, as well as in those of communication and transport.

A happy solution to the problems preoccupying us with regard to the organization and methods of granting foreign aid might be found within the framework of this Committee's functions; thus, in the field of foreign trade, the Committee would work for a rapid harmonization of customs nomenclature, and for an international transit system, and would also encourage administrative cooperation customs matters. The Economic and Social Committee would undertake the study of possibilities for harmonizing commercial legislation in order to avoid double taxation. At the same time, it would set up a civil aviation organization, and could convene a conference with a view to establishing an African maritime navigation company. This Committee, too, could assume the responsibility for establishing an African banking organization.

It would pay particular attention to studying the possibility of setting up an African economic community, as well as the effect of foreign economic grouping on the economy of our continent. Similarly, it is a task of top priority to organize defense of the prices of our primary products, by the establishment of a common price stabilization fund. Systematic investigation of the means of coordinating development plans both at continental and regional level in the field of industrialization, transport, and energy, remains one of the most important tasks of this Committee. Honourable brothers, the activities that I have mentioned will help, I am sure, to promote the progressive emergence of a common attitude towards world economic problems and will lead to the formation of a common front at international economic conferences for defense of the interests both of our people and our state.

Your Majesty, Mr. President, if I have seemed to dwell with insistence on the question of economic co-ordination, I do not underestimate for that reason the special importance of other structures. Above all, I do not wish to neglect political and economic conceptions in a world and in a sphere where the assimilative tendencies with which we are familiar, become daily more clearly defined. I have good hopes that in all our debates we shall remain vigilant, so as not to become a prey to such maneuvers. Africa will find its salvation by the scrupulous daily application of non-alignment between the two great blocs.

The African states, pooling their efforts, must work out an independent African policy in all domains, in face of which a non-African state, a power or a group of powers, will be free to define its own position. At the same time, we must together make a solemn covenant to achieve African unity,

and never to allow our organization to become the tool of a state or a group of states. I do not at all wish either to ignore those other fields in which, whatever the difficulties, our countries can work together and unite their efforts; but there is one field in which co-operation has been fruitful -it is that of our peoples, and particularly of our mass organizations.

The co-ordination of their actions throughout the whole of the continent has been a powerful leaven in the struggle for the liberation of our countries; and their collaboration with their Asian brothers has already over a period of years impressed the image of the 'tiers monde' upon the international conscience. Cementing the unity of our still colonized peoples, tomorrow they will constitute quite naturally the fermenting agent in the new Africa. Our meeting can and should suggest a formula for co-operation in this field in which, alas our affiliation with international organizations appears to be the principal obstacle to be surmounted. A horizontal alliance at first on the African level, afterwards vertical co-operation with the other international organizations, such is the position of the Republic of Mali.

Your Majesty, Mr. President, and dear brothers, I know deeply you feel with me the honour entrusted to us by history of building a free, united, and prosperous Africa, for which aim so many of our comrades have paid with their lives. That is why throughout all the work before us, my delegation and I will join our enthusiasm to yours for the honour, liberty and unity of Africa. Several days from now we shall separate, having voted for resolutions and taken decision which will arouse many hopes in Africa, as well as much apprehension in other parts of the world, but which will also provoke many skeptical smiles in the name of our peoples, we shall have assumed obligations for the cooperation of our states, and for the benefit of our brothers, crushed beneath the yoke of colonial domination or racial humiliation.

Brushing aside every obstacle, contemptuous of all pressures, we must then proceed, stage by stage to concrete actions, looking only to the ideals of liberation and African unity. In this inspiring task, Your Majesty and dear brothers, you will find at your side the people of Mali, its party, its popular organizations and its government, because the truest expression of the feelings of honour and dignity for the free peoples that we are, consists in the faithful performance of the undertakings to which we have freely subscribed.

Thank You!