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Prime Minister of the Federation of Nigeria

Address 19

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*I am pleased to say that, from now on, there will be no question of the so-called Monrovia and Casablanca Blocs. We all belong to Africa. It is important that, when we meet on an occasion like this, we try to tell each other the hard facts, the truth about matters, instead of speaking about them behind. It is most important that we become frank in Africa. We are just beginning to know ourselves; and I am very happy, Mr. President, for having the opportunity to meet the very distinguished members from all parts of Africa. I hope that this conference will pave the way to the unity and solidarity of the African continent.*

*Questions for consideration: According to Balewa, what things are prerequisites to achieve a lasting unity in Africa? Why do most leaders of Sub-Saharan Africa at the Addis Ababa Meeting believe that maintaining inherited colonial borders was their best option to maintain peace and stability in the post-independence era? In your views what aspect of inherited colonial borders do most Sub-Saharan African leaders are interested in, and why? If inherited colonial borders are the most impeding factor to unity and independent development, but leaders of Sub-Saharan Africa fail to abolish them and create a new identity for Sub-Saharan Africa, what will they have proven to the world, to the peoples of Africa and to their posterity? If nationalist leaders across the continent united the masses of Sub-Saharan African peoples in their struggle for independence but fail to unite them in post-independence era, notwithstanding their collective desire for unity, what will leaderships have proven to African and to their posterity? What does it mean for a group of citizens to be independent and united?*

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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Your Imperial Majesty  
Mr. President  
Your Excellencies:

First, I want to express the thanks of my country to Imperial Majesty, the Imperial Majesty's Government and the people of Ethiopia for the warm reception which they have given to my delegation and myself. The presence of almost all the Heads of African States and Governments in Addis Ababa is great tribute to your Imperial Majesty personally. The history of the new Africa will always have your name in the forefront, because the unity which we are trying to build in this conference is going to have quite a lot to do with the name of the capital city of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa. Mr. Presidents, His Imperial Majesty sustained a double loss not long ago in the death of Her Imperial Majesty, the Empress, and Prince Sahle Selassie. During your period of sorrow which you have sustained with very great fortitude, our hearts were with you. Mr. Presidents, may I ask all of you, your excellencies, to rise and observe two minutes silence in memory of His Imperial Majesty, the Empress, and Prince Sahle Selassie.

Mr. Presidents, it is exceedingly difficult after so many eloquent speeches which have exhaustively dealt with the subject for me not to make some repetition of the points made. However, Sir, I will try to explain the views and the stand of Nigeria as far as African unity is concerned. I feel that the mere presence of all the Heads of African States and Government here shows the success of the Conference, and I have no doubt that all of us will leave Addis Ababa satisfied that we have done something. It has always been our view in Nigeria that personal contacts and the exchange of ideas are the basis of mutual understanding. I am pleased to say that, from now on, there will be no question of the so-called Monrovia and Casablanca Blocs, we all belong to Africa.

There have been quite a lot of views on what we mean by African Unity. Some of us have suggested that African Unity should be achieved by political fusion of the different states in Africa; some of us feel that African unity could be achieved by taking practical steps in economic, educational, scientific and cultural co - operation and by trying first to get the Africans to understand themselves before embarking on the more complicated and difficult arrangement of political union. My country stands for the practical approach to the unity of the African continent. We feel that if unity is to last, we must start from the beginning. Nigeria's stand is that if we want this unity in Africa, we must first agree to certain essential things:

The first is that African States must respect one another. There must be acceptance of equality by all the States. No matter whether they are big or small, they are all sovereign and their sovereignty is

sovereignty. The size of a state, its population or its wealth should not be the criterion. It has been pointed out many times that the smaller states in Africa have no right to exist because they are too small. We in Nigeria do not agree with this view. It was unfortunate that the African States have been broken up into different groups by the colonial powers. In some cases, a single tribe has been broken up into four different States. You might find a section in Guinea, a section in Mali, a section in Sierra Leone and perhaps a section in Liberia. That was not our fault because, for over 60 years, these different units have been existing and any attempt, on the part of any African country to disregard this fact might bring trouble to this continent.

This is the thing we want to avoid, and, for this reason, Nigeria recognizes all the existing boundaries in Africa, and recognizes the existence of all the countries in Africa. This, I think, Sir, is the basis of the unity which we in Nigeria pray for on our continent. As I have said, we must start from the beginning. I have listened to speeches in this conference, and there have been only a very few members who spoke on the desirability of having a political union. Almost all the speeches indicate that a more practical approach is much preferred by most of the delegation. I am glad to say that the stand we have taken right from the beginning is the stand of nearly almost all countries in this conference. It appears from the speeches as if we were just sitting idle and doing nothing towards the achievement of this unity. For our part, in Nigeria, we are already cooperating with some of our neighbours. For example, the other day, my friend, the President of Malagasy said he could not contact Lagos by telephone from Cotonou. This is no longer the case. Now we can speak directly. What we are trying to do is to link up with all our neighbor by means of telecommunications and by exchanging more postal facilities, and we are already entering into bilateral agreements with many of our neighbours.

We are discussing this matter with the Republic of the Cameroun; we are discussing our common problem with Tchad, Congo (Leo), and with Dahomey. Also, we have direct link with Togo. We hope to continue in this work because we feel that, if we are to unite, it is important that our communications system should be excellent and transport facilities should be such that it would enable us to move freely around, to move not only ourselves but to move more our goods to different parts of the continent. Also, we have been trying in Nigeria to joint other states in trying to discuss common problems — educational and scientific problems.

We feel that it is very important for the nationals of different African countries to have the opportunity of mixing at all levels, not at the Heads of States and Governments level, not only at the Foreign Ministers level, but also at all levels. Let our people travel to different countries in Africa; let them get to know themselves and to understand themselves. This, I am sure, will bring great understanding

among all the people of this continent. So far, our communications system is not what we would like it to be; our transport is bad. This is not our fault. It was the fault of the Colonial Powers because they designed everything for their purposes. It is up to us now - those of us who shape the destiny of our countries — to do what we can improve matters.

Many of the speakers have told us that mere resolutions, mere condemnation is not enough: it is time for action. I would call upon the conference that we now start on the real work. It is in our hand to build, to create and to develop a new Africa for which all of us are anxious to do. Now Mr. President the Hon. President of the Sudan, I think, when he spoke, told us that we should be frank. I think it was the President of Malagasy who said that we in Africa do not want to speak the truth. We have a saying in Nigeria, which is that "Truth is bitter." Mr. President, I want to be frank. I want to tell the bitter truth. To my mind we cannot achieve this African unity as long as some African countries continue to carry on subversive activities in other African countries.

Sir, many of the members have spoken very strongly on the decolonization of the continent. I want to say we in Nigeria are prepared to do anything to secure the freedom of the continent of Africa. There has been a suggestion that we should pull our resources together, that we should make arrangements, if necessary, to help the nationals in different countries in Africa, which are still dependent, to fight their way to independence. We in Nigeria are prepared to do anything towards the liberation of all African countries. I have observed that, when we give assistance to another country which is fighting for its independence, some of us are in the habit of imposing obligations on those States.

That is wrong. If we give assistance to African people in any dependent territory, we should not ask for any obligation on their part because that would come almost to the same point that many of the speakers have made that they would only accept foreign aid without any string attached. I do not believe that any aid, no matter where it comes from, is without strings attached to it. Let us not fall into the same trap. If we assist any dependent territory in Africa, we must see to it that we do not attach conditions to our assistance. This is very, very important if we want to establish the solidarity of the continent of Africa, let make sure that any form of assistance we give is free. It is good, sir, that we have a common pool, but a conference like this cannot discuss the details of such an organization, and it is our view that immediately after leaving this conference, or before we leave, we should appoint a committee - a standing committee - to go into the details of this matter. On the question of colonialism and racial discrimination, I am afraid that we in Nigeria will never compromise.

Now, I come to a very vital matter, which is the development of the continent. The African continent is rich in resources but, unfortunately, these resources are not developed yet. We are born at a

difficult time; we do not have the necessary capital, the necessary equipment, or the necessary know-how for the development of our continent. Therefore, we find it necessary to rely on outsiders for the development of the African territories. I would like to tell you at the conference that we must take every care to know how we invite to assist in the development of our resources because there is a fear, which is my personal fear, that, if we are not careful, we may have colonialism in a different form. Colonialism can take many different forms. Our countries can be colonized economically, if we are not careful. Just as we have fought political domination, it is also important that we fight against economic domination by other countries.

Let us not forget that we in Africa are part of the world. We have our international obligations as well. Whatever we do, we cannot isolate ourselves from the rest of the world. Therefore, in all that we do and in all that we say, we should be careful because we belong to one human society. Mr. President, I always tell people that I do not believe in African personality, but in human personality. The African is a human being and therefore, we have to see to the development of human personality in Africa. I think any talk of African personality is based on inferiority complex. I do not regard any human being — red, white, brown, yellow or green — as superior to me. I regard myself as equal to anybody. I am a human being.

Now some people have suggested, and this is a thing which is already underway. The establishment of an African Development Bank. I hope that, when the Ministers of Finance of different countries of Africa meet in Khartoum, they will be able to produce something which should be of benefit to all of us. Also, a suggestion has been made for the establishment of an African Common Market. This is a particularly good idea, but I must say that we in Nigeria we feel that it is a very complicated matter. We want an African Common Market, but can we do it by taking the continent as a whole? Or can we do it by certain groupings in Africa? What appears to us to be more practical is that we should have an African Common Market based on certain groupings. We are thinking, sir, of a North African grouping which will include the Sudan; a West African grouping which will extend to the River Congo; and East African grouping, which will include almost all the Central African countries.

If we base our examination on these groupings, I think we will arrive at a very successful establishment of an African Common Market, because I think it is good for the trade of Africa. For example, the interstate trade in Africa is 10%, and 90 % is done with countries outside Africa. There is no reason why we should not increase the inter-State trade on this Continent. I think sir that if we are able to establish an African Common Market, we shall overcome many difficulties and we shall be in a position

to stand on our own in relation to the other parts of the world. My fear of our being colonized will disappear if we are able to establish this African Common Market.

The question of disarmament was raised by several speakers. I think all of us feel strongly about this question. Although some feel that disarmament can never be achieved, still others feel that it is most important that the great powers will continue to talk about it because the more they talk about it, the less danger there would be of an open clash. I am glad that they have seen fit to invite some of the African countries to participate in their disarmament talks. The most essential thing which is desirable is to effect disarmament. It is desirable to ban nuclear testing; it is most important that we exercise every possible influence we can upon the great powers to destroy those bombs which they have already got.

If there is a war now, there would be nothing — everything would go. We are now just starting to develop our countries. The mere fact that Africa has been declared a nuclear—free zone will not make Africa free in the event of a world war. If there is a war, we in Africa will be directly involved. It is our concern that there should be peace in the world, and that there should be understanding among the great powers. Some people have suggested that we should organize ourselves into a Defense Bloc. Well, Mr. President and Your Excellencies, all of us have been talking about the bad nature of the armament race. It has been suggested that we should embark on an arm race in Africa. All of us know very well that we are at present incapable of joining such a race. Our idea is that we should not be talking about an arm race. All we should talk about, sir, is how to stop it. and I would not suggest that we should join in that race at all.

A suggestion was also made that we should come together as a bloc in the United Nations. Well, that is a very good idea; but I must tell the conference that in Nigeria we hate the idea of blocs, and we do not like it. If we can find some kind of name for it, such African Committee or an African “Something,” it will be much better, because, the whole idea of blocs is revolting, I think we should try to find better names for these different groupings. I think that we have been working for some time now in the United Nations where our different representatives meet and discuss matters of common interest. May I suggest to the conference that it is time that we find a permanent small secretariat for such an African Committee in New York? That does not mean of course that we instruct our delegates to close their eyes to the wider issues of world problems. But as a Continent which has suffered for so long and as a people who have suffered for so long. I think we must do everything to get our proper position in the United Nations Organization. Some of us have suggested that we should get greater representation in the Security Council and in all the bodies of the United Nations Organization. Well, this has been our stand all the years we have been independent. I said so in New York: I said it in Monrovia. It is essential that the African continent

must have more appropriate representation in the Security Council and all the bodies of United Nations because we have more to gain thereby.

That world organization, I have always maintained, is a sure guarantee of the independent sovereignty of our African states. Mr. President, many of the points have been made, many members have said that we cannot leave Addis Ababa without a charter. I hope we shall not leave here without charter; I hope our Foreign Ministers produce a charter before we leave this city. May I thank Your Imperial Majesty again and may I ask the conference to forgive me for being a little bit frank. I think that is the only way by which we could achieve understanding among ourselves. It is important that when we meet on an occasion like this, we try to tell each other the hard facts. The truth about matters, instead of speaking about them behind. It is most important that we become frank in Africa. We are just beginning to know ourselves, and I am happy, Mr. President for having the opportunity to meet the very distinguished members from all parts of Africa. I hope that this conference will pave the way to the unity and solidarity of the African continent.