



H. E JOSEPH KASAVUBU
President of Republic of Congo
(Leopoldville)

Address 8

We stand at a pivotal moment, faced with various paths toward achieving African Unity. It is essential for each individual, with sincerity and humility, to engage in determining our direction. This engagement must align with the African ideal that emerged from the preceding Foreign Ministers conference. That gathering identified several shared principles among our diverse nations. We believe that the present moment is ripe for transforming these ideals into a Charter that will affirm the identity of the African continent and enable it to fulfill its rightful role on the global stage, in harmony with its inherent potential.

Questions for consideration: Why does President of Congo use his country's recent experience as a perfect road map to attain the objectives of the Addis Ababa Meeting? What does President of Congo mean when he says that my country's experience has taught us that mutual confidence and respect between partners constitutes the basis of success of all efforts at unity? What steps must be taken in order to achieve unity, according to President Kasavubu? If leaders of Africa fail to fulfill their pledge to establish a solid foundation for unity of Sub-Saharan African nations, but they fail to achieve unity, what will they have proven to Sub-Saharan Africans and their posterity? What does it mean for a group of citizens to be independent or united?

In Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, May 2024

Your Majesty, Mr. President, Honorable Presidents & Dear Brothers.

I hasten to tell you that after the grave troubles which it has undergone, the "heart of Africa" is resuming, its rhythm is beginning to beat at an increasingly normal rate. Yes, and it is not complacency: the Congo has freed itself from that somber period that it knew following its accession to independence. This was not only due to tribalism. It was due essentially to coalition of foreign interests which could not bring themselves to give up certain regions of our country, which geologists often have called the "treasure chest of Africa." At the price of what efforts, at the price of what sacrifices have we been able to bring order to our affairs? Only the passing of time will permit us to draw up this balance-sheet with all the objectivity and calm which it requires. But already we can affirm without fear of contradiction by history that the assistance of the African countries which hastened to our aid in a brotherly way has been a decisive, if not a determining element in our victory. I could not find a better occasion than the one which is offered me today to express the gratitude of our people to all those nations whose sons fell on Congolese soil.

Your Majesty, Mr. President, Honorable presidents Dear Brothers:

I will ask you to observe one minute of silence for the memory of those heroes, and of all those who gave their lives to assure or to consolidate the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Congo. I thank you.

These links sealed in blood are the best pacts which we have concluded with Africa, for whose concept we opted well before our accession to independence. By welcoming a conference of African Foreign Ministers to Leopoldville less than two months after our own independence, the Congo came to understand that this choice was being translated into fact. It further affirmed its choice of non-alignment a short time later by participating in the Belgrade Conference. Non-alignment, an African policy which draws no distinctions have been two constants in all our decisions ever since. We might add in this context that an insidious propaganda which has laid hold of the news of our country has relegated to second place many of our actions since independence, of which Africa can be proud. As soon as we were freed, we rid ourselves of those foreign bases on our soil which might have constituted a pole of attraction for the cold war in the very heart of Africa.

Moreover, we have never ceased to re-affirm our aversion for military pacts which can only remove some degree of sovereignty from our respective countries, limiting our possibility of choice, and thus slowing down the march of Africa. We find ourselves today at crossroads. Several routes are offered whereby we can achieve African Unity. Which one should we choose? Each of us, in all conscience and in all humility must contribute to the reply. The Congolese contribution will be made in the light of an

experience of nearly three years, sad certainly, but very rich in lessons for the future. This experience has taught us that mutual confidence and respect between partners constitutes the basis of success of all efforts at unity. That is why we have avoided letting our own current national reconciliation turn into a settling of old scores. Nothing can be built on hatred, on bitterness, or on vengeance.

We have suffered from tribalism, which is not only a Congolese phenomenon, but one which unfortunately occurs in various guises all over the continent and threatens the stability of our States. Certain circumstances have given to tribalism a symbolic value in the Congo; in these circumstances our efforts to root it out take on the merits of a test for all Africa. These efforts have begun to bear fruit. We feel it would be a poor service to Africa to believe that this improvement is only superficial. How can one arrive at African Unity if at the start one casts doubt on the gains and progress of the states which aspire to this unity? In any case, we shall continue these efforts, which are directed today toward maintaining and reinforcing such confidence by a patient labor of harmonization and bringing together our different entities. We shall ensure that the particularities of each of our regions, which express the diversity and richness of a common heritage, should complete each other without conflict.

This concept is just as valid for the 21 provinces making up the Congo Republic as for the 32 states which now comprise liberated Africa. Only an instrument simple enough to be adapted to all situations through which a country might pass and even more so far, a continent in full evolution will permit us to attain our Objectives. The first of these objectives, without dispute, is to complete the process of decolonization without which Unity can not be complete. The Congo carries a heavy responsibility in this domain. The line of demarcation between free Africa and that part of Africa still under colonial domination passes along its frontiers. We have suffered from the proximity of the colonial regimes, but that only has served to confirm us on the path which we have drawn for ourselves. We shall continue as a sovereign state to make a contribution, which we wish to be as effective as possible. This, I can assure you, always will be unselfishly devoted to the liberation of southern Africa.

This contribution, therefore, will be in conformity with the African ideal, as it has emerged from the Foreign Ministers conference which preceded our meeting. The work of that conference has brought out several common denominators for our different countries. We believe the time is favorable now to translate these ideals into a Charter, which will serve to assert the personality of African continent and will allow it to play a role in the world in harmony with its true potential. I believe the Congo is well placed to speak of this Organization, which has conducted an unprecedented experiment in our country. The experience has been difficult, but its success has proved the effectiveness of the UNO, despite all the

obstacles which it may have encountered. The best means of reinforcing the United Nations, in our opinion consists in respecting all our obligations towards it, and notably the financial obligations.

Your Majesty, Mr. President, Honorable Presidents & Dear Brothers,

I have the pleasure to inform you that despite its economic and financial difficulties, the Congo has just paid up its obligations to the international organization. We are also examining the possibility of purchasing loan bonds issued by the U.N. The prudence, moderation, realism, and thoughtfulness which the Foreign Ministers have shown are the best pledges of the success of our undertaking. As a matter of fact, not only falling behind the march of history has been to be harmful, but also the fact of being to far ahead has been shown several times to be equal harmful. I will spare you the many citations I could make in this connection.

We insist, meanwhile, on underlining so far as economic problems are concerned that setting up of realizable projects modest as they might be, is infinitely more advantageous than the best filled book of unexecuted schemes. We must begin right now to spell out our aspirations. This would be the best guarantee infinitely more advantageous than the best-filled book of unexecuted schemes. We must begin right now to spell out our aspirations. This would be the best guarantee we could give to the 250 million Africans whose eyes are turned towards Addis Ababa today.

I wish finally to restate our gratitude to His Imperial Majesty, Haile Selassie I, to His people, and to His Government for their hospitality. This truly fraternal welcome is no surprise to us, for it is in conformity with the thousand-year-old tradition of Ethiopia.