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Address 24

President Abboud of Sudan highlighted our collective dreams and the quest for Unity as we stand on the brink of a pivotal moment for Africa, a vision long held by our leaders and embraced by our communities. In this hopeful atmosphere, we come together to confront both internal and external challenges, assured in our capacity as Africans to leverage our resources. The Sudanese populace has eagerly anticipated this vital assembly, convinced that artificial barriers cannot hinder our progress toward Unity. As we embark on this journey, we acknowledge that drafting charters and proposals lacks value without a true commitment to their implementation. Our people call for authenticity in our dialogues, aspiring for a trustworthy space to fulfill a long-cherished aspiration. Unity is crucial for Africa, as our issues stem from a shared origin and a belief in a collective solution. For us, Unity transcends mere reaction; it embodies a clear purpose, diverging from external perceptions that may interpret it as a tool for perpetuating the existing order; instead, we see it as a pathway to forge a meaningful and viable future.

Questions for consideration: What does President Abboud mean when he says that “Unity is an imperative necessity for Africa”? What does Abboud mean when said that “our peoples except frankness and pray for an atmosphere of confidence so that a long-cherished dream may be realized”? What is African long-cherished dream, according to Abboud? Why despite their absence of correspondence to African history and aspirations, the independent African state boundaries drawn up at the partition of Africa have remained revered and unchallenged by post-independence era’s African elites? What were the risks to African leaders in the immediate aftermath of independence to alter inherited colonial boundaries and create a new “identity” for the continent? Can you think of general or specific reasons why rival groups and competitive cross-national organizations emerged in the aftermath of African independence? Even if newly independent African state had ridiculously small markets characterized by a general economic “backwardness,” they failed to unite to create a larger economic space that would create greater effects and ensure a rapid economic growth, why? In your view what does the term sovereignty mean to African nationalists in the context of African independence? What is the difference between independence or sovereignty applied to a group of state and independence or sovereignty applied to a group of people?

In Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, May 1963

Dear Friends.

We are gathered today under the glow of a new dawn which makes the advent of a new era in our Continent. This Africa, the cradle of mankind, where glorious civilizations have blossomed on the shores of mighty rivers, has been for long the prey of colonizers who enslaved her sons, disdained her cultures, and exploited her wealth. We are gathered today to strive for the liberation of those parts of this dear Continent where colonialism wages its last desperate battle and also to encounter another challenge - that of reconstruction, of combatting vestiges of economic and social backwardness, and of readapting foreign system of Government to suit our national temperament and traditions. Furthermore, our multiple and complex problems have to be seen in a wider perspective we have to face them in the midst of ideological conflicts foreign interests that threaten Africa.

Therefore, we meet dear Friends, on the outbreak of a new era, the era of African Unity an idea that has begun to crystalize, having for long been cherished as an ideal by African Leaders and nourished as a hope by the African Peoples. We meet in this climate of hope to defy these internal and external challenges. We meet, inspired by confidence to rally our internal resources by faith among African Peoples and Governments. We are here to analyze, to resolve and to overcome all external obstacles. For we are inspired by this sense of the oneness of Africa. I greet you all in the name of this Unity to which the People of the Republic of the Sudan have always aspired. The Sudanese People have longed and worked for this historic meeting through previous Conferences in which the Sudan participated: fully convinced that artificial differences cannot stand against this Continental surge for Unity.

The importance of this Conference is therefore not only one of magnitude but one for a quest for the definition of complete Unity disregarding blocks and internal divisions, it is also an expression of our determined efforts to view this Unity as an effective means of constructing an African edifice which will reflect our multiple economic, social, and political endeavors and which will, equally effectively contribute towards world peace and stability. All our people are anxiously watching us lay the cornerstone of this magnificent edifice today. They fully realize that the choice of words in drafting charters, proposals and resolutions is meaningless without the dedicated spirit with which they are to be implemented. Our Peoples expect frankness when details are discussed, and when issues are resolved, they pray for an atmosphere of confidence so that a long-Cherished dream may be realized. Unity is an imperative necessity for Africa today. Our problems stem from a common root and have, we believe, a common answer. Unity is not only our most effective answer, but it has for us a message that is essentially and intrinsically different from a plea for Unity by others. Colonial and industrially developed countries may

regard Unity as a method of preserving the status-quo. We regard Unity as an endeavour for the creation of that which should be both ideally and practically.

Dear Friends,

Having set African Unity as our goal we may agree to differ as to the forms in which this Unity may be expressed. It may acquire various and changing shapes. Only by trial can we embark upon the most congenial and durable form. Nevertheless, it is important to declare from this rostrum our dedication to this Unity, both in principle and as an instrument of policy. I am therefore proud and pleased to announce, in the name of the People of the Sudan, our unwavering determination to bring about and realize this Unity. We are more prepared to fulfill our obligations towards this ideal than to enjoy any rights that may accrue. We are prepared to harmonize our foreign, economic, and social policies with other African policies. We are equally prepared to expand our various means of communications to strive for closer physical proximity with our neighbours and with other African States. We are equally dedicated to reviving and promoting spiritual and moral affinities so that a unified African public opinion may emerge. We are fully prepared to work for closer cultural, technical. and social co-operation with all African Governments and Peoples.

Dear Friends.

The Sudan does not understand Unity as an attempt to isolate Africa from the rest of the world; or to absolve ourselves from our international obligations. We believe that the reverse is true. We believe that, with Unity, the African voice will carry more weight, that our role will be more constructive, and our contribution more positive at this critical juncture in the affairs of Mankind. We hope thereby to constitute a moral force which will direct the world towards peace and goodwill - a role which will be in keeping with our cultural, spiritual, and moral heritage. We believe that we can best fulfill this role by adopting the policy of nonalignment, by rejecting foreign military pacts, foreign military bases and by the outright condemnation of armament. Through preparing to undertake this constructive role; we believe that the rest of the world will be impelled to fulfill its obligations towards us. We do not ask the Big Powers merely to refrain from interfering in our affairs or to desist from meddling in our inter-African relations. We demand that these powers undertake and fulfill their responsibilities towards bridging the gulf which separates the haves from the have-nots. We demand fair returns for our primary products in world market, returns which are commensurate with our efforts and which cannot be achieved by fluctuating prices, if they are truly desirous for world peace. We believe that these same powers should devote more of their technical resources to enabling us to industrialize our raw materials in order to raise the economic and social standard of our peoples.

This campaign for national construction should not, however, divert us from an equally imperative task: The task of liberating the rest of our Continent from these remaining pockets of colonialist and racist domination. The Sudan is of the view that measures to achieve these ends must be practical and coordinative. We believe in the establishment of an all-Africa organization through which material aid to Liberation Movements should be channeled and training facilities for Freedom Fighters in our respective countries should be organized. We believe in the application of complete and effective boycott of the Government of Portugal and the Republic of South Africa.

Brothers and Friends.

This first Meeting between the Heads of Independent African States should spell a new page in our inter-African relations. We should delve into the past only to cement our new-found Unity and open up new vistas for genuine future co-operation. The keynote for this co-operation lies within us; it stems from our faith in ourselves and trust in our neighbours and brothers. I hope you will bear with me while I undertake a congenial and pleasant task. May I, on behalf of the Government and People of the Sudan express our sincerest thanks to His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie the First, His personal sympathy and support, and the dedication of His government and People have made this Conference possible. Its resounding success is a tribute to the whole of Africa.

May I finally, on behalf of the People of the Sudan, convey the People of Ethiopia our wishes for their continuous happiness and prosperity. The bonds between us are an ancient and living reality which is forever strengthened by the eternal flow of the Nile.

Thank you all!