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Emperor of Ethiopia

“The making of Africa will not wait”

We welcome to Ethiopia, in our name and in the name of the Ethiopian Government and people, the Head of States and Governments of the independent African nations who are today assembled in solemn conclave in Ethiopia's 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 a 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, on which we have embarked, the making of Africa, will not wait. We must act, to shape and mould the future and leave our imprint on events 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 on later and no earlier than other geographical area on this globe. Africans,

no more and no less than other men, possess all human attributes, talents and deficiencies, virtues and faults. Thousands of years ago, civilisations flourished in Africa which suffers 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 her 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 not extended recitations from us. The period of colonialism into which we were plunged culminated with our continent fettered and bound; with our 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 and 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 lackeyhood. Africa was the market for the produce of other nations the sources 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 and 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 colonisers 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.

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's, 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 the 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 humour 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 colonisers, shunning recrimination and bitterness and forswearing the luxury of vengeance and retaliation, lest 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, and special attributes. But we also know that unity can be and has been attained among men of the most disparate origins, that difference of race, of religion, of culture, of tradition, are no insuperable obstacle to the coming together of peoples. History teaches us that unity is strength and cautions us 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 sepulchral 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 realisation 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 of African unity is already lined with landmarks. The last years are crowded with meetings, with conferences, with declarations and pronouncements. Regional organisations 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. The 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 recognise 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 to be reduced, and 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 matters 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 the 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.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 arrangements may, for a time, linger. Regional organisations may fulfil legitimate functions and needs which cannot yet be otherwise satisfied. But the difference is in this: that we recognise 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 take action 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 balkanised continent, would derive much satisfaction from the unhappy spectacle of thirty and more African States so split, so paralysed and immobilised 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, and the Casablanca Powers, of these and many more. Let us put an end to these terms. What we require is a single African organisation through which Africa's single voice may be heard, within which Africa's problems may be studied and resolved. We need an organisation which will facilitate acceptable solutions to

dispute among Africans and promote the study and adoption of measures for common defence and programmes for cooperation 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 of 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 accomplishments. 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 organisation 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 organisation 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 specialised bodies to work in particular fields of competence assigned to the organisation. 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 our 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 specialised 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 concentration by each nation on those productive activities for which its resources and 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 a 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 neighbouring 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

An additional project to be implemented without delay is the creation of an African Development Bank. A proposal to which all our Governments have given full support and which has already received intensive study. The meeting of our Finance Ministers to be held within the coming weeks in Khartoum should transform this proposal into fact. This same meeting could appropriately

continue studies already undertaken of the impact upon Africa of existing regional economic groupings and initiate further studies to accelerate the expansion of economic relations among us.

The nations of Africa, as is true of every continent of the world, had from time to time dispute among themselves. These quarrels must be confined to this continent and quarantined from the contamination of non-African interference. Permanent arrangements must be agreed upon to assist in the peaceful settlement of these disagreements which, however few they may be, cannot be left to languish and fester. Procedures must be established for the peaceful settlement of disputes, in order that the threat or use of force may no longer endanger the peace of our continent.

Steps must be taken to establish an African defence system. Military planning for the security of this continent must be undertaken in common within a collective framework. The responsibility for protecting this continent from armed attacks from abroad is the primary concern of Africans themselves. Provision must be made for the extension of speedy and effective assistance when any African State is threatened with military aggression. We cannot rely solely on international morality. Africa's control over her own affairs is dependent on the existence of appropriate military arrangements to assure this continent's protection against such threats. While guarding our own independence, we must at the same time determine to live peacefully within all nations of the world.

Africa has come to freedom under the most difficult and trying of circumstances. No small measures of the handicaps under which we labour derive from the low educational level attained by our peoples and from their lack of knowledge of their fellow Africans. Education abroad is at best an unsatisfactory substitute for

education at home. A massive effort must be launched in the educational and cultural field which will not only raise the level of literacy and provide the cadres of skilled and trained technicians' requisite to our growth and development but, as well, acquaint us one with another. Ethiopia, several years ago, instituted a programme of scholarships for students coming from other African lands, which has proved highly rewarding and fruitful, and we urge others to adopt projects of this sort. Serious consideration should be given to the establishment of an African University, sponsored by all Africans States, where future leaders of Africa will be trained in an atmosphere of continental brotherhood. In 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 matters 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 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, and 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 spectre 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 denuclearised 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, who 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 organisation 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 organisation 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 organisation 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 United Nations and its specialised 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 African peoples? Will this meeting be memorialised 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 dangers which confront us are no less great. The immense responsibilities which history and circumstance have thrust upon us demand balanced and sober reflection. If we succeed 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 days ahead with the prayer that we who 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 entrusted their fate to our hands.