

STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY

Mr. JOAQUIM ALBERTO CHISSANO,

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC

OF MOZAMBIQUE, BEFORE THE

FIRST ASSEMBLY OF THE

AFRICAN UNION

Durban, South Africa, July 9, 2002



His Excellency Mr. Thabo Mbeki, President of the Republic of South Africa;

His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy, Secretary General of the Organization of the African Union (OAU);

Excellencies;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to address, on behalf of the Government and the People of Mozambique and on my own behalf, the First Assembly of the African Union (AU).

I would like to express my gratitude to the Government and People of the Republic of South Africa for the hospitality and for the excellent working conditions accorded to my delegation since our arrival in this historical and beautiful city of Durban.

I would also like to seize this opportunity to congratulate H. E. Thabo Mbeki, President of the Republic of South Africa, for his unanimous election to preside over the current Session of the Assembly. I assure him of Mozambique's full support and collaboration as he discharges his noble task.

I commend H.E. Mr. Levy Mwanawasa, President of the Republic of Zambia, for his tireless efforts ahead of the affairs of the Organization of the African Union. Under his leadership, although short in time, the OAU has achieved positive advancements.

Equally, I wish to pay tribute to former President Chiluba for his role in the rebirth of this African spirit.

Mr. President,

The launching of the African Union is an important landmark in the history of our Organization.

The adoption of the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly and the Statutes of the Commission, the establishment of the Executive Council, and the Permanent Representatives' Committee will pave the way for the smooth and effective functioning of the key organs of the African Union, with a view to meeting the challenges we set to ourselves in creating the African Union.

The African Continent is currently faced with multiple problems including underdevelopment, absolute poverty, conflicts, external

debt, refugees and displaced persons, poor infrastructure as well as the high level of HIV/AIDS infection, that affect negatively the welfare of its people.

As a matter of fact, Africa remains the only region in the world where poverty is rising, with 70% of poor people living in the rural areas. And, as we are all aware, the people living in rural areas are more exposed to natural disasters, wars and conflicts; furthermore they are the most affected by the scourge of diseases, including malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS.

The African Union has to play a critical role for the reversal of this appalling situation. It must be built on bold structures and functional mechanisms that can enable us to address properly these problems, including the negative effects of globalisation.

Mr. President,

There is a well demonstrated linkage between peace and development. Long-term conflict prevention demands commitment and perseverance. We are of the view that the prevention of conflicts should aim at addressing their root causes, including poverty, hunger, epidemic diseases and underdevelopment. We must seek viable and effective ways to address the debt burden, low levels of ODA and FDI, the question of market access by African products to developed countries, the digital divide, in order to place ourselves better in the world economy.

The instrument, we the African leaders, are developing to fight these problems is the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). I am happy to note that, in a short period, much ground has been covered, due to the commitment of our very able technical experts. As member of the Implementation Committee I want to pay tribute to the good work they are doing.

Next year, in July, the city of Maputo will have the great honor of hosting the Second Ordinary Conference of the African Union. I am sure, as from now, that one of the main topics in our agenda will be the assessment of the progress made in the consolidation of the African Union and in the implementation of NEPAD.

I have high hope that substantial progress will be reported by this time next year. My optimism is based on the enthusiasm we all witness across the continent, not only among State institutions, but increasingly also among the civil society, in particular the media community, NGO's and the private sector.

We believe additional efforts ought to be carried out within our countries for the dissemination of information on NEPAD and to make this initiative known and appropriated by every segment of our peoples in order to ensure its successful implementation. The support already expressed by many partners of Africa is most welcome indeed. I salute the encouraging results of the G8 Summit, recently held in Kananaskis, Canada, where the world most industrialized countries expressed their support to NEPAD. I also salute the African Delegation, which represented us at the Summit, for the job well done.

Over the time, different countries will experience different degrees of difficulties in achieving the necessary reforms to fit into the new scenario of the African Union and in implementing NEPAD; ups and downs will be part of the process, but our resolve for political, economic, social and cultural changes, along the lines of our initiatives, is there.

Along this process we have to work on the basis of the reality of our continent, to build the African Union, as well as our countries. The more we know about ourselves, the better we will contribute to good reforms; criticism and advise will be more constructive. The media must create the correct perception about our objectives and about our endeavors to accomplish them. Therefore, an interaction to foster a common understanding among all stakeholders will be of paramount importance.

When I speak about stakeholders I am referring to all beneficiaries of the establishment of the African Union. These are the journalists, business communities, intellectuals, religious groups, trade unions, farmers, politicians, as well as governments.

Therefore, we must maintain a stronger partnership between our governments and the African media, in order to keep all segments of our societies fully mobilized to support and be part of the reforms across the continent, as an essential step to win over poverty and build a better future for all.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are encouraged to note that, in the light of our decision at the 37th Summit in Lusaka last year, a significant work has been done with a view to incorporating the Central Organ of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution into the African Union. I am sure that the adoption by the Summit of the Protocol on Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, will give an additional impetus to the Union's efforts aimed at tackling conflicts in Africa.

Our States should also vigorously engage in the promotion of a culture of peace through greater co-operation, solidarity and above all a renewed commitment to the African advancement. I am convinced that the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding on Security, Stability, Development and Co-operation, will be a bold step in the right direction.

I would like to express Mozambique's satisfaction over the positive steps taken by the people of Angola and of the Comoros aimed at bringing peace and stability to their countries. This only proves that we Africans are able to find home-grown solutions to our internal conflicts. It's my strong believe that the Inter-Congolese Dialogue will lead to the same results. May I express our concern to the deteriorating political situation in Madagascar. We associate our selves with all African Union Members States in their efforts aimed at finding a peaceful solution to the conflict in that sister country.

As Africans, let us join our hands in helping Angola and the Comoros to consolidate their achieved peace and their post war national reconstruction. Our engagement to peace and more peaceful Africa is in line with the spirit of the African Union and NEPAD.

Mr. President,

In the effort to fight poverty, the Government of Mozambique approved a Poverty Reduction Strategy Plan, known as PARPA, for the period 2001-2005. The Plan is the principal instrument to guide the Government and other stakeholders in fighting poverty. The PARPA strategic vision is founded in two imperative aspects: the need to maintain peace and stability; and the need for rapid, sustained and broad-based economic growth where the private initiative plays an important role. The Government's objective is the substantial reduction of absolute poverty in Mozambique from 70% to less than 60% in 2005 and less than 50% at the end of the decade of 2000.

Mozambique is also busy producing a long-term strategy, the "*Agenda 2025*", which is based on a constructive dialogue by all segments of the society on the future of the country. The agenda aims at creating, through a participatory and inclusive process, a national strategic vision for development, as well as strengthening the government and civil society partnership in defining and implementing national policies. It is our sincere hope that PARPA and "*Agenda 2025*" at the national level will contribute for the success of the NEPAD and the African Union.

**Mr. President,
Dear Colleagues,**

As we inaugurate today, the African Union, here in Durban I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the media, in particular the African media, for their role in making this initiative well understood and accepted in our continent and beyond. They have done a great job to Africa, although we all agree that much still remain to be done.

NEPAD is coming at the right moment. Over the time I believe the work being done by our very able NEPAD Steering Committee will be transferred to the structures and institutions of the African Union; NEPAD will permeate all of them and its successful implementation will be their reason for existence. On the other and, the African Union will work closely with the Regional Economic Communities, such as SADC, ECOWAS and others. Given the number of people involved in all these institutions, as well as other stake-holders, having NEPAD as their main activity, I have no doubt in my mind that we are going to win the war on poverty in Africa. Let us all be part of this success.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate that the Government and People of Mozambique look forward to welcome you all in Maputo at the next Meeting of this Assembly in 2003. The preparations to host the Assembly are well advanced and the presence of all Member States, for the first time in the history of the existence of our Independent State, will pay a great honour to our people, who have endured untold sacrifices for the attainment of the noble objectives of freedom, peace and development for Africa.

I thank you very much.

Durban, July, 2002

AFRICAN UNION UNION AFRICAINE

African Union Common Repository

<http://archives.au.int>

Organs

Peace and Security Collection

2002

Statement

African Union Commission

Peace and Security

<http://archives.au.int/handle/123456789/2480>

Downloaded from African Union Common Repository