

**ARCO FORUM FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS, KENNEDY  
SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT, CAMBRIDGE  
MASSACHUSETTS, USA**

ARCO FORUM FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS, KENNEDY  
SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT, CAMBRIDGE  
MASSACHUSETTS, USA

**ADDRESS BY**  
**HIS EXCELLENCY PRESIDENT OLUSEGUN OBASANJO**  
*President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*

**AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY**  
**ARCO FORUM FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS, KENNEDY SCHOOL OF**  
**GOVERNMENT, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, USA**  
**30<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER, 1999**

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be here at Harvard, a citadel of academic excellence, whose contributions to different areas of academic and human pursuits have in a profound manner shaped the visions of our world. I am equally proud to note that a number of eminent Nigerian academicians, scientists, administrators and businessmen passed through this great institution, and they too, in the traditions of this noble institution, made worthy contributions to nation building and development of our country.

I am glad for this opportunity to share with you my thoughts on today's topic. I consider the theme to be a matter of life and death for all Africans who in private and in public have reflected on the experience of the continent's history in the outgoing century. In addressing this subject, I will be speaking from my position as one of the typical ordinary Africans who are genuinely anxious about the African condition today, because we are deeply concerned about the fate of our continent, and we have been continually searching for ways and means to brighten the future prospects for the erstwhile Dark Continent.

The enormity of the crisis of underdevelopment in Africa, as compared to most of the other regions of the world, is a painful truth recognized by all. The massive scale of poverty and unemployment, the decay in infrastructural facilities, the impoverished living standards with regard to food, housing, water supply, education and healthcare are well known. The real tragedy is that the current situation represents the final stage in a steady decline in the quality of life in post-colonial Africa.

This descent into lower levels of poverty has been further compounded by violent social and political conflicts such as civil wars, which have dramatically intensified the scale of human suffering in many countries. In several countries, the experience of violence and brutality has dramatically transformed otherwise stable and dignified African peoples into helpless residents of refugee camps,

living on charity and in conditions of extreme distress, fear and insecurity. The agonies of these people have become regular news items flashed on television screens all over the world.

In countries where the people have been spared the destructive violence of internal wars, failed economic policies and repressive political order have combined to induce a steady stream of emigration of professionals and youth to more developed nations. This braindrain of professionals and active youths, who no longer envisage the possibility of a fulfilled life in their own countries, does also represent a major loss to the development potential of Africa.

In the light of the negative development experience and social turmoil, a number of observers, including Africans, have become pessimistic about Africa's capacity for recovery and progress. For such people the new concepts of *A Second Independence*, *African Renaissance*, and *The New Dawn*, currently propounded by significant political leaders, must sound quite utopian, if not pipedreams.

### **Development without the People**

This learned audience will no doubt appreciate that no full account of the African condition is possible without adequate and appropriate reference to the impact of colonialism. As we all know, colonialism established its stronghold on a continent that had already been devastated and depopulated by the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. The immediate result was unparalleled historical transformation of a continent and its peoples. In the words of one of the early nationalist leaders, late Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, 'Africa has suffered in the hands of foreigners like no other continent'. It is virtually impossible to estimate the full social costs of colonialism, from its inception, through its exploitative existence, to the huge human and material resources that went into dislodging it from our continent.

Africans are entitled to celebrate the exit of colonialism from their continent, just in time before the psychological deadline of the end of this millennium. At the same time, a look into our immediate past, not to seek whom to blame for our current woes, but to critically review our realities, will show colonial legacy as an impediment to Africa's progress and development.

Let us face it, the truth is that almost all modern African nation states were conceived and established by colonial design. And until independence, governance of these nation states was the complete antithesis of democracy, being government of exploitation, by the exploiters, and for the exploiters. No matter what apologists for colonialism have to say, all manifestations of progress and development experienced by African peoples under colonialism came by default, certainly not

by the design of those who came to our continent solely for what they could take. Hence the popular sentiments of the early nationalists who preferred freedom in poverty to affluence in bondage.

African nationalists who led their nations into independence have confessed to the daunting challenges in meeting the expectations of their hard-won freedom. Leadership of the nation state felt like the captaincy of a ship which, though legitimately belonged to Africans, had been pre-programmed to move in the direction of colonial goals and objectives. To achieve real nationhood, these African leaders needed to put the African societies and peoples back into the imposed geopolitical shells. They needed to make the governance of African citizens the responsibility of Africans themselves. National development needed to have Africans as the centrepiece, such that progress could be measured in terms of positive impact on the lives of the citizenry.

Mere change of name, as many African countries did, was not enough to subdue the inevitable debate over the nature and purpose of the acquired nationhood. Leadership of the emergent nations were impelled to find quick solutions to the inherited colonial contradiction of development concept de-linked from equitable and democratic governance. Success at managing this contradiction varied from country to country, depending on such circumstances as economic conditions, geopolitical size, ethnic composition, and the number of educated elites to push their differing political visions. But invariably, there was attendant confusion, often chaos and violent upheavals, that came with the formidable leadership task of re-focusing, re-orientating and restructuring the emergent African nation states.

Hardly an African nation escaped a phase of instability as political and intellectual leaders quarrelled and fought each other over the meaning of independence and the purpose of nationhood. And the notion of benevolent dictatorship gained ground as the stable means of moving African nations forward.

### **Military Subversion of Democracy**

Military incursions into African politics in the sixties and seventies were generally greeted with degrees of euphoria. The ordinary African felt a sense of security with the uniform, so to speak. And political thinkers, in disregard of their liberal philosophical roots in democratic theory, hailed the unelected military rulers of the post-colonial state by ascribing to them several virtues.

According to the literature of the day, unlike the politicians who were prone to corruption, the military, by training, was composed of an officer class of honest gentlemen. Whereas the politicians were parochial, the military had broader orientation towards the nationalist interest. The politicians were also burdened with alleged subjectivism and irrationalities of traditional cultural heritage, whereas the military, by virtue of their professional role, were imbued with technical rationality, as well as efficiency. These professional attributes were regarded as eminently functional for development and political stability.

So, scholars argued that what was paramount was holding the nation together, not democratic governance. It was as if the people had no rational preferences or credible expectations from the attainment of political independence. The involvement of ordinary people in the decolonisation struggles was conceived, not as an outcome of the will to be free from colonial exploitation, but as the hypnotic effect of the charisma of nationalist leaders. By this reasoning, after the defeat of the external enemy, and the charisma of the leader had waned, the people reverted to their primordial constituencies which colonization had long ago defined as being in a state of mutual antagonism. Recall that the colonial state had earlier announced itself as a mission to rescue Africans from the ordeals of inter-tribal warfare!

Three decades on, we are now wiser about the military's ability to deliver either democratic governance or material and cultural development. The empirical record is one of shocking failure, except perhaps in one or two cases. The scale of comprehensive corruption and outright plunder of national wealth is truly mind-boggling. Dictators, in some instances, became wealthier than the nation. Rather than promote peace and unity, military rule in fact intensified social conflicts, violence and even provoked secessionist movements by groups claiming to be special victims of oppressive rule. In the last decade, as military rule lost its initial social attraction, it became increasingly tyrannical, wantonly violating human rights and degenerating into a harrowing one-man rule.

In the event, even the military as a professional institution became a victim of self-destructive intrigues of coups, real and imagined, as well as wasteful retirement purges. Redeemers became destroyers.

A good study would surely reveal that the African people were the first to withdraw their initial welcome from military regimes. But while the Cold War lasted, mass resistance by way of strikes, radical journalism, human rights and pro-democracy agitations, were easily frustrated by the international community. The evil regimes were quick to learn that by proclaiming ideological allegiance to

either of the super-power blocs, they would be guaranteed external military and diplomatic support against internal opposition.

The degree of principled international isolation of the Abacha dictatorship in Nigeria would have been difficult to achieve during the Cold War. This international isolation, and the encouragement of pro-democracy and human rights groups facilitated the tempo of internal resistance to dictatorship. Thus in the present circumstance, anti-democratic regimes are more exposed. Democracy is now the byword. Africa is now in the throes of a wave of transitions to democratic governance.

### **A Breath of Fresh Air**

Once again, to invoke the recent experience of transition in Nigeria, there has been considerable relaxation of tension in our political atmosphere. There is a broad feeling of freedom from fear and the expectation that the rule of law can be consolidated into a national political culture. Fuel scarcity and the long queues at petrol stations have in truth vanished. In the last decade of military rule, Nigeria, an oil producing and oil refining nation, could no longer guarantee regular supply of fuel to the populace. The resolution of this problem within two months of our infant democracy has quite legitimately raised expectations about what can be achieved on the economic and social fronts.

But let me emphasise that our commitment to democracy and its values is not at all a theoretical matter. It is not a leisured preference for one constitutional norm against others. It is, on the contrary, a gut reaction to a lived and abhorrent experience. We uphold today the principles of freedom and individual liberty, and renounce tyranny in all its forms, because we have seen where dictatorship can lead us, what it can do to the human soul.

Our commitment to democracy today is not an option. It is a fundamental imperative. It is the one form of government that guarantees the unity of our country in a sustainable way. It is the only system of government that effectively protects us against authoritarianism and dictatorship. It guarantees individual rights and minority rights.

African liberation struggles were all inspired by democratic values and the expectation that only democratic self-governance could deliver genuine material and cultural development. The values of human dignity, equity, justice, and freedom from oppression, exploitation, poverty, and ignorance are core values of democracy. When the realization of these values was blocked by post-colonial dictatorships, the people resumed the struggle.

In the same vein, it is incumbent on our new democracies to deliver those social advantages that are concomitant with economic prosperity. If the prevailing tide of transitions are to concretize as genuine and fruitful democratic transformations, African leaders will have to address a number of challenges, some of which I will now elaborate.

### **The Challenge of Corruption**

A common denominator of undemocratic rule in Africa—civilian or military rule—has been the vast scale of corruption. Apart from the great loss and wastage of national resources, which could have been deployed in enhancing the productive capacities of the national economies, the overt corruption offends the deep moral sensibilities and values of our traditional heritage. To steal from the community has always been considered a very serious offence. This code of behaviour, sadly, failed to be transmitted into the values of our modern society, with the result that some of those who commit crimes against the modern state can even return as heroes to their traditional communities.

The battle against public corruption corresponds intimately to African traditional values of honesty and justice. The impression that Africans have a cultural predisposition to be corrupt is simply a travesty of the truth. We are generous of spirit, and the extent to which we go to express our gratitude and hospitality could easily be mistaken for attempt to bribe, but this is no proof of innate corruptibility. Our expression of gratitude and hospitality never involves goods of excessive value, and it is done openly and transparently. When the gesture is excessive in value and perceived to have ulterior motive, it is declined. Our new democracies can signal their immediate departure from the immoral, undemocratic political culture and begin to harvest popular confidence by the determination to fight corruption without regard to any sacred cows. And that is exactly what we are set to do in Nigeria.

### **The Challenge of Human Rights**

The experiences, under authoritarian regimes, of sadistic tortures, harassment of individuals and the criminalisation of political dissent were truly abhorrent to our people. The right of free expression, the right to advocate a different viewpoint, and to arrive at a consensus after free discussion, must all be considered as profound human needs. In any case, it is well known that African traditions place much premium on long discussion sessions ("palaver") prior to a consensual decision in the village and town assemblies.

## **The Challenge of Minority Rights**

As a result of colonial imposition, most African states have majorities and minorities formed on ascriptive ethnic basis. Therefore, the content or form of democracy in Africa must not only recognise the equality of persons, but also the relevance of cultural units to which each individual citizen has a profound sense of belonging. It can therefore not be a simple question of the majority dominating political power and public life of the nation. Our democratic format and behaviour must show sensitivity to the fears of ascriptive minorities. And such sensitivities will need to be accommodated in the constitutions of the state. If neglected, the anxieties of minority groups invariably build up into veritable opposition, which can threaten the survival of democracy.

## **The Challenge of Gender Inequality**

This is a question that has received much international attention, and African nations have been signatories to various international declarations. In ensuring equity in opportunity and access to significant positions in the society for women, our democratic transitions need a double sensitivity. They must be sensitive both to the traditional as well as the modern sources of patriarchal discrimination against women.

With special regard to the involvement of women in the politics of the modern state, our nascent democracies will need to deliberately facilitate the progress of women through institutionalized affirmative action. For example, to overcome the hurdles faced by women candidates seeking political office, it could be stipulated that political parties reserve some of their candidacy slots for women. Such a requirement would be an interim measure, for a limited period, until female candidates are routinely accepted.

## **The Challenge of Poverty Alleviation**

People do not eat slogans. Slogans, ideas and concepts, which are canvassed among the people, must be shown to have practical outcomes for the improvement of their material and social circumstances. In other words, democracy must produce development or else it would lose credibility and relevance to people's lives. For democracy to endure, it must lead to improvement in the quality of life of the people. It must lift everybody above poverty line. I am convinced that absolute poverty can be eradicated. And it must be eradicated.

## **The Challenge of Youth Development**

Undemocratic governance and its deformed development strategies have especially marginalised Africa's youth in the closing days of the twentieth century. They are also alienated and often abused. Yet teenage youths form about half of Africa's population today. Inadequate provision of places for basic formal education, unemployment, lack of recreational facilities and organized cultural activities, especially in the cities to which teenage Africans drift, lay the youths open to seduction into a disorientating culture of hedonism, as in drug abuse.

In the absence of coherent national programmes which have as their goal the stable development of youth into self-actualizing adult citizens, many fall prey to criminal activities and preventable deviance. In recent years, the abortion of the healthy futures of many an African youth has been completed with their induction as child soldiers into armed bands of power seeking dictators.

Our new democracies will need to design intervention programmes specially focused on the problems and needs of the youth to enable them become inspired bearers of democratic values. In this regard, the rights of youth to proper education, health care and employment will have to be protected if we are to sow the seeds of Africa's democratic future on rich soil.

## **The Challenge of Globalization**

Globalization has been held up as an inevitable process, which now makes irrelevant the salience of nation-state boundaries. It is suggested that the shrinking of the world by rapid developments of information technology now supposedly transfers critical decisions in economic transactions to trans-national forces.

While African democracies cannot afford to shut themselves out of globalization, they must adopt strategies that give them leverage as sovereign players, and not as mimic states whose national budgets must be approved by international lending agencies. In this regard, the new democracies must shed old prejudices against regional co-operation.

The industrialised nations are entering the world market as blocs, note the European Union. African democracies must likewise enhance their competitive strength by consolidating their regional co-operative efforts and multilateral arrangements. The old pan-African vision will have to be revisited to enhance the economic and security empowerment of states.

## **The Challenge of Cultural Identity**

The development strategies of the new democracies must be such that progress does not become a self-alienating venture. The appeal for the preservation of an African cultural identity in a democratic Africa is not the same as the self-serving cultural projects often canvassed by undemocratic regimes, which seek to short-change citizens in the enjoyment of their full human rights by projecting false models of African democratic tradition. Rather, it is to deepen the conception of human rights of the individual with the positive heritage of the rich community and family values that still exist in rural Africa and urban neighbourhoods, despite the dislocations caused by colonialism and modernization. On this, we may recall the old negritude admonition of Leopold Sedar Senghor : "Assimilate : don't be assimilated !"

## **Nigerian Initiatives**

In Nigeria we have goals which may be summarised thus : For us, democracy is not merely about forms of government. Free and fair elections are not ends in themselves, but only the best possible means for installing representative governments that can be made responsive to the collective hopes of our citizens, and justify their faith in their ability to change things for the better. Our administration has constantly drawn attention to the need for moral regeneration in our country. We reject an exclusively materialist definition of man's destiny. Man must not live by or for bread or naira and kobo alone. We believe that the state has responsibilities to its citizens, but that every citizen also has an equally important responsibility to the state, and to his fellow citizens. Human responsibility is the flip side of the human rights coin. We have in Nigeria singled out corruption as the greatest bane of our society. The pervasive growth of corruption in public life is one of the worst legacies of misrule and bad governance in the recent history of our country. Corruption was allowed to grow unchallenged and unchecked, even when it was glaring for everyone to see. The rules and regulations of doing official business were deliberately ignored, set aside or bypassed to facilitate corrupt practices. With the Anti-Corruption Bill going through the National Assembly, we hope to deploy all appropriate resources to fight corruption to a standstill. It is an all out war.

We have established a special panel to investigate human rights abuses by past regimes and individuals. Reports indicate that the panel has received volumes of petitions by Nigerians whose fundamental rights were violated. Some notorious members of the previous regimes, who have been severally named by surviving victims as perpetrators of assassination, detention and torture of dissenting citizens,

have now been brought to court to face prosecution. This recent development has further won the confidence of the public in the prospects of democracy.

### **Democracy-Development Linkage**

The pursuit of abstract economic growth impoverishes development, if the economy is doing well, but the people are not. People's participatory involvement in democratic governance facilitates the centrality of their goals, values and choices in the development process. People are the end of development. And their well-being is the supreme law of development. Their democratic empowerment is the imperative of every development plan or programme. There is a long list of development plans that have failed because they were conceived above the heads of the people. Only programmes which fully take account of people's choices, their values, their skills and active involvement in implementation can capture their enthusiasm. The people themselves are the best initiators of development.

One basic problem of democracy, particularly in the developing country of Africa, is that it is a very expensive project. Apart from the enormous cost of funding numerous levels of government, democracy is expensive because by its very nature, it must seek to achieve multiple objectives simultaneously. Authoritarian regimes, for instance, are not obliged to bother much with environmental impact assessments before embarking on industrial projects. But democracies must constantly weigh economic value against such other considerations as the rights, and even the sentiments, of citizens who may disagree with objectives and benefits of a development policy.

It is not without reason, therefore, that dictatorships such as we have experienced in Nigeria, tend to prefer state-controlled economies in which the minutest decisions regarding economic and industrial policy are made by a few and imposed on the many. A centralised economy, by whatever name called, is much easier to manipulate and corrupt.

Our Administration, on the other hand, is determined to evolve a system in which the role of government is primarily directed towards the making of laws and regulations, the administration of justice, and the provision of general security and enabling infrastructure ; while the private sector is left with the major role of being the engine of growth and development.

Empowering private enterprise in this way is not, however, without its imperfections and distortions. Private enterprise depends a great deal on the ability to raise capital. And since we do not live in a perfect world, it is often the case that only those who already have capital, or can raise it, have the opportunity of

acquiring even more. A major task of democratic governance is, consequently, always to so arrange the affairs of the state as to continuously expand access to capital. But in spite of this and other limitations, private enterprise does minimise graft, greed and corruption, at least at the level of state operations, and democratises the process of economic and industrial planning and growth.

### **The Debt Burden and its Dangers**

It is at the level of internal economic relations that the idea of a free market economy begins to show the contradictions and distortions inherent in it. In the mid-seventies, for instance, the United States Agency for International Development suspended all aid to Nigeria, on the grounds that Nigeria did not at the time require international financial aid, mainly because of the revenue it was deriving from oil exports. Indeed, a great deal of pressure was put on successive Nigerian governments of the time, by international financial institutions and multi-national companies, to go out and borrow money. Successful borrowing, the governments were told, was a persuasive index of the financial and economic health of the country. The first "jumbo" loan was obtained from the World Bank at this time. It was, in relation to the massive indebtedness of Nigeria today, a mere pittance.

But today, Nigeria's debt burden stands at well over 30 billion US dollars, and continues to escalate, not because of any further borrowing, but because of the interest that continues to accrue on the money already borrowed. In 1985 we owed the Paris Club around five billion US dollars ; we have not borrowed a cent since, but arrears of principal and interest have brought this figure to 21 billion US dollars today.

Conventional wisdom enjoins us to neither a lender nor a borrower be. A certain version of economic theory tells us, on the other hand, that the capacity to borrow is evident of a buoyant economy. Our reality, however, is much more prosaic. No significant measure of development is at all possible for as long as we must continue to pay up on these loans strictly in accordance with agreed schedules. Rescheduling is a mere palliative. It does not address the substantive problem of a huge and unwieldy debt exposure. Three times so far we have had re-scheduling and if anything, it had aggravated our debt situation and impoverished us further.

### **Democracy as a Global Project**

Before now, it could be rightly said that we in Nigeria adopted democratic norms primarily because it was the fashionable thing to do. In recent years, however, our experience of tyranny and dictatorship has transformed that

previously formal preference into a deep-seated, internalised creed. Today, we affirm democracy and its values because it is good for us, and not because the world demands it of us.

But why should the rest of the world be concerned with our peculiar predicament? Why should the industrialised world be interested in the fate of an impoverished Third World country like Nigeria? The reasons, I hope, are sufficiently obvious.

In the case of Nigeria, we could choose to severely minimise our involvement, if not totally repudiate our responsibilities to actively participate in sub-regional, regional or even global affairs. We could declare a policy of Fortress Nigeria, and withdraw from our major role in peace-keeping and peace-enforcement activities in ECOMOG, and the rest of Africa and the world. We could then use the money we save from such withdrawals to improve the quality of life of our own citizens.

But we reject all these options, and choose instead to remain valid and hopefully viable members of the world community. Taking this latter course means, naturally, that we as a government must continue to live precariously with the ever present possibility of internal discord and upheaval, arising from popular frustration. Very few of our citizens are ever likely to accept that fulfilling our international obligations justifies the inevitable deprivations they must suffer as a result of this. The prospect of sub-regional or regional disharmony is an even more tangible danger in these circumstances, if we should choose to look to the internal well-being of Nigerians, with scant concern for what happens around us.

And for these reasons, therefore, we respectfully ask : what is the dividend that we can legitimately anticipate in so deliberately courting internal hardship and possible social upheaval, as we meticulously continue to discharge our international responsibilities in world affairs, without a visible and reciprocal concern by the rest of the world for our own difficulties? Why, in these circumstances, is it so difficult for the industrialised world to understand and concede that we and they do have a mutuality of interests which need to be vigorously protected by them and by us?

When we demand relief, in terms of reduction, from our debts, we do so because such reduction would naturally leave us with greater resources to dispose, not only of our domestic responsibilities, but also of our international obligations. When we demand that the governments of the industrialised countries assist us in recovering the vast sums of money stolen from us and deposited in foreign banks, we do so because it would make it easier for us to meet our other international

obligations, and thereby afford us greater flexibility in respect of the speed with which we discharge our obligatory domestic commitments.

Essentially, however, what we seek is not charity, not even reward, but support and understanding. We are striving in Nigeria, instead, to create an environment that is conducive to investment. And that is what we seek ; Investment. We seek a fairer and more rational understanding of the difficulties that African countries face, especially as they strive to enthrone an enduring democratic culture, and simultaneously to provide for their peoples the basic amenities of modern living as proof of democracy dividend.

If ever there was any truth in the saying, that no man is an island entirely unto himself, surely it must be now, at the end of the twentieth century, when the interests of nations and states have become so closely interwoven that every upheaval in Kosovo, or in East Timor, has the potential at least of threatening the stability of the entire world.

We can find no rational justification for what now appears to be a policy of selective intervention, on the part of the industrialised nations. Ever so often we are told, that the major deterrent to active financial intervention in countries like Nigeria is their notorious instability, and their pervasive corruption. But it is inconceivable that Nigeria, for instance, could ever be any more unstable or corrupt, than Russia is today. Yet banks and companies from the United States, Canada, Japan and Europe are constanly falling all over themselves on the streets of Moscow, looking for whom to give financial assistance to.

It is surely hypocritical, if you will permit me to say so, that the older democracies should continue to harangue us in the younger democracies, about the necessity to persevere in our efforts to build sustainable democratic cultures in our countries, while at the same time refusing to make the most elementary concessions that are necessary for this project to have a realistic hope of succeeding. Where is the promised and much needed help to the economies in transition?

Poverty is not a democratic virtue. Poverty and democracy are strange bedfellows. Instead, poverty breeds frustration, and frustration frequently breeds aggression, both domestic and external. It cannot be in the interest of the industrialised nations that Africa, indeed the developing world, should be constantly in turmoil. A concession here, in the matter of reducing the hideous debt burden that we carry ; a concession there, in the matter of the repatriation of funds stolen from us, can achieve a great deal more than all the sanctions in this world can, after things have fallen apart, and the military have again intervened,

purportedly on behalf of the suffering masses. Then it would be too late. And nobody should blame us because we would have sounded enough warning.

This is the modest message I bring to you today. Let us all together work to build a fairer, more stable world in the twenty-first century. Let the strong sustain the weak. And let the weak be given a chance to pull themselves up by their own exertions. The new millennium will witness rapid progress if nations see themselves as each other's keepers. Let a lifeline be given in time where it is necessary to avoid double tragedy.

In any case, the struggle of Africans for democratic empowerment has been consistent through the ages. We feel confident that our young democracies will develop robustly in the new millennium. We are determined to move on from transition to real transformation.

I thank you. May God bless you all.