

SPEECH BY H.E THABO MBEKI AT THE INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE AFRICA LEADERSHIP FORUM: DAR ES SALAAM, 31 JULY, 2014.

Our esteemed host, President Ben Mkapa, Your Excellencies, Members of the leadership of the UONGOZI Institute, Distinguished participants: In his invitation letter to us President Mkapa says:

“(This) inaugural event (of the Africa Leadership Forum) is the first in a series of annual dialogues regarding the pressing and strategic issues facing the Continent, and how we as Africans can contribute in our individual and collective capacities to lead and support Africa’s sustainable development.”

Obviously this is an important and timely question to pose. At the same time, the answers to the question he has posed are by no means self-evident. Accordingly, in the remarks I will make I will indicate perhaps only the subjects we should discuss as we search for the right answers to the difficult challenge presented to us, as well as raise matters about what might be characterized as issues of methodology.

In this regard I believe that as we meet here, we face the task to try to provide practical answers to the important question President Mkapa has indicated, recognizing that this should constitute the very core of our dialogue today.

Accordingly I will try to respect this observation in what I say during my introductory remarks. Once again, as in previous years, this year we were very privileged to have an eminent Tanzanian and African statesman and patriot, Dr Salim Ahmed Salim, as our leader to deliver this year’s Africa Day Lecture in South Africa.

As he conveyed various important messages to our Continent’s current and future leadership just over two months ago, in May – which I am certain also apply to pensioners such as some of us – Dr Salim said: “In order to understand where Africa is headed, I urge our current and future leaders to forge a deep appreciation of where our journeys have taken us so far, and how we have gotten where we are today. Africa today stands proudly upon the legacies of millions of individuals who contributed their entire lives to ensuring that future generations would have greater opportunities. Each of our countries has a unique history forged from the era of colonialism through to today. Africa’s leaders were not only those who sat atop governments, but the

thousands upon thousands more who stirred conversations in the town halls, in the communal homesteads, in universities lecture rooms, in markets, in neighbourhood baraza's and in taverns. Leadership knows no singular shape or size, colour or creed. I hope our next generation of leaders can skilfully build on our past to continue forging our new futures.

It is in this context that as we meet here today I think we must do our best to assess what we should do practically "skilfully (to) build on our past to continue forging our new futures." Further, with regard to what Dr Salim said, I would like to insist that our understanding of what he meant when he spoke of remembering "how we have gotten where we are today", he was referring also to our fierce defence of our independence and our right to self determination as Africans, which provided the possibility for us to elaborate the important and independent Continental policies I will discuss later. The critical task remains that we must continue firmly to defend our inalienable right freely to determine our destiny.

In this regard, inevitably, we must, painfully, be informed by such as:

- Our current practical experience relating to the on-going, tragic and destabilising Libya debacle, where the eminently correct African interventions in 2011 were arrogantly vetoed particularly by NATO, with disastrous consequences; as well as with regard to,
- our very troubled, current relationship with the ICC, in which context Africa's positions have absolutely nothing to do with African encouragement of impunity relating to any and all our leaders, now and in future, but achieving the necessary balance between the inter-linked objectives of peace and national reconciliation on one hand, and justice on the other.

In the context of what I have said, we owe it to ourselves as Africans to defend very firmly such instruments of international law as the UN Charter and the 1960 UN Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples – even and especially in the face of the current persistent attempts by some major world powers practically to abuse their power to repudiate important elements of extant international law!

In the paragraph I cited earlier, President Mkapa refers to "the pressing and strategic issues facing the

Continent”.

I would like to believe that all of us are familiar with these pressing and strategic issues. Briefly, obviously these include:

- i. poverty eradication and achieving human development through sustainable development;
- ii. achieving durable peace and stability;
- iii. achieving national and social cohesion in each of our countries, which must include the emancipation of women;
- iv. institutionalising democratic processes which ensure inclusive and meaningful participation of the population as a whole in the political process;
- v. building capable States which serve the people as a whole without discrimination, and contribute to equitable national development;
- vi. achieving African integration and unity; and,
- vii. ensuring that Africa takes her rightful place among the community of nations.

Of course to realise any of these objectives would require and requires many interventions over an extended period of time.

Properly to answer the challenge that has been posed - how we as Africans can contribute in our individual and collective capacities to lead and support Africa’s sustainable development – would require that first of all we identify the various interventions for each of the pressing and strategic issues we have indicated.

However, as we know, our current Dialogue has been organised under the three themes relating to (a) Diversity, (b) Natural Resources and (c) Partnerships. I will discuss only the first of these, namely the issue of Diversity, essentially and only as an example to indicate the complex processes in which we must engage since, as we surely are, serious about making the required contribution to the solution of Africa’s challenges. Necessarily as we discuss this matter, as with the others, the issue of a relevant policy or policies will arise. Before I discuss this, and since our focus is on our Continent as a whole, I would like to underline what I

believe is an important consideration.

This is that, fortunately, through both the OAU and the AU, Africa has elaborated an extensive set of policy positions, which, at least formally, are binding on all Member States of the AU. As we all know, these approved Continental policies cover a wide spectrum of issues, which include Africa's politics, her economy, war and peace, gender equality, justice, children's rights, education and the development of human capital, culture, international relations, and so on. I believe that this is very important for us here today because it provides at least a point of entry or even leverage to try to persuade our various countries and regions to implement these Continentally-approved policies, where this would help to address Africa's pressing and strategic challenges.

However, I must confess that, as we try to do this, what we would probably find is that many of our countries have not integrated these approved and important Continental decisions within their domestic policies. And, indeed, I am almost certain that we would discover that many of our Governments are not immediately aware both of the existence of these policies and their implications for them as part of the African Union. Before I pass this matter, I would suggest that this is one of the important matters we would have to pursue as we work to activate the motive forces to achieve the African transformation goals we will identify. Thus, in this context, we will have to try to answer the important question – what can and should be done thus to activate our Governments! The existence of the Continental policies to which I have referred also means that when we address the matters on our Agenda, it would be important that we refer to these extant policies, even if it is our view that these need further improvement. It would be to waste time we do not have if, as the saying goes, we try 'to invent the wheel' in this regard.

To return to the matter of the 'Management of Diversity in Africa', I am certain that all of us would like to thank President Mkapa and the UONGOZI Institute for putting this matter on our Agenda.

The African failure successfully to manage our diverse societies has, among others, and very negatively, resulted in:

- persistent social instability;
- civil war and/or violent conflicts;
- exclusion and inequality;
- the absence of social and national cohesion; and,
- failure fully to mobilise our national human capital for development, even leading up to increased ‘brain drain’.

As an example to illustrate part of what I have just said, it is perfectly obvious, for instance, that exactly the failure successfully to manage diversity resulted, among others, in

- (i) the protracted civil war in Sudan which led to the secession of the South and the continuing conflicts in both Sudan’s;
- (ii) the terrible civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone; and,
- (iii) the conflict in the Eastern DRC.

Obviously when we speak of the diversity of African societies in the context of the African nation state, we speak of a ‘nation’ constituted of people who have various ‘sectional’ identities, in addition to their common ‘national’ identity. These ‘sectional’ identities would, for instance, identify citizens of one nation state as:

- members of particular and various ethnic and language groups;
- members of particular and various racial groups;
- members of particular and various religious groups;
- women;
- urban as against the rural populations;
- the youth as against older generations;
- members of various social classes;
- and so on.

I must assume that by now it is patently obvious to all thinking Africans that the all-round and sustained

success of our 'nation states', based on the cultivation and entrenchment of a common sense of national identity and a shared destiny, depends decisively on the proper management of the kind of diversity I have just described.

[As an important aside, I would like to say that I am certain that the country where we are meeting, Tanzania, has important lessons to share with the rest of our Continent in this regard!] In this context, the challenge with regard to all the "sectional" identities I have mentioned is not to treat or respond to them as though they are inimical to the development and entrenchment of a shared sense of national identity and unity.

The real challenge we face is seriously and successfully to answer the strategic questions – what interventions should be made, and by whom, to ensure that these "sectional" identities, while they exist as legitimate "identities" informing the richness of the nation, do not threaten national cohesion and the development of a shared sense of common nationhood. Of course, the attendant question arises – who will pose and answer the questions I have just presented?

In this regard I would like to suggest that the African intelligentsia has a critically important role to play. The older among us will remember the period, certainly during the 1960s and 1970s, when the African intelligentsia in our Universities throughout Africa, as was the case here at the University of Dar es Salaam, made critical and cogent interventions to help define Africa's response to her 'pressing strategic issues'.

I am therefore suggesting that one of the matters we should discuss during our Dialogue is - what should all of us do to help reinsert today's African intelligentsia, including those in the African Diaspora, into the important processes we have convened to discuss! I say this because I know from my own practical experience that in reality we have a significantly large pool of this intelligentsia, a vital repository of the 'brain power/intellectual. resource' we need, which is deeply concerned exactly to help address Africa's 'pressing strategic' challenges.

More comprehensively, as we consider what should be done correctly to respond to the important and urgent challenge of the 'management of diversity', it would help to organise our thinking, planning and action, based on the philosophical (and realistic) construct relating to:

- (a) the objective; and,
- (b) the subjective.

On the objective plane, I would like to believe that successfully to 'manage diversity' requires that:

- (i) all citizens of the nation state, regardless of their 'sectional' identities, should have, and feel that they have the political possibility to help determine theirs and the destiny of their nation as a whole, through inclusive and legitimate processes;
- (ii) these persons should be confident that they share a 'common political citizenship' because of an entrenched system of a non-discriminatory implementation of the rule of law, including a constitutional Charter on Human Rights, all of which are actually and practically respected and implemented, and overseen by a judiciary which is effectively independent of the National Executive authority, is respected by the nation as a whole, and is itself truly loyal to the Constitution and the historic imperatives which inform our African Constitutions: in turn, and in addition, the national documents must incorporate the prescripts contained in the Continental policies we have mentioned, relating to such matters as the rule of law and therefore law-governed societies;
- (iii) all socio-economic development initiatives, affecting all elements of human development, especially those initiated, permitted or facilitated by the State, should be organised in such a manner that the resultant material benefits are shared by all citizens, across their 'sectional identities'; and,
- (iv) all other State/Government activities should be organised and executed in such a manner that practically they confirm, in reality, the shared 'common political citizenship' I have mentioned.

On the subjective plane, it is critical that a determined and sustained intervention is made to shape the consciousness of the citizens of the nation state as a whole. This sustained intervention would seek to:

- (i) inculcate in the national consciousness the sense of a 'common political citizenship' I have mentioned,

supported by what is happening in the objective sphere;

(ii) cultivate respect for the 'sectional identities' to which I have referred, honestly celebrating these as vital components of what makes for the rich diversity which gives a 'unique, distinguishing and welcome character to the nation'; and,

(iii) encourage all those who share the various 'sectional identities' seriously to understand that exactly to preserve and enjoy these identities, they themselves have an obligation to help ensure the acceptance, respect and celebration of their particular 'sectional identities', among others by:

(a) accepting, respecting and celebrating the other 'sectional identities';

(b) informed by the principle of equity, doing everything possible to ensure that theirs and the other legitimate 'sectional identities' do not get destroyed or undermined during the course of the necessary promotion of the shared sense of national identity, unity and national cohesion; and,

(c) immersing themselves in the understanding, etc, of the other 'sectional identities', thus practically to demonstrate the need for the 'other' to reciprocate, and therefore create a diverse nation of various 'sectional but unifying identities'.

Obviously what I have said, relating to our diverse societies, raises the important question – who, then, in spite of the 'sectional identities', should do what, relating to the objective and subjective tasks I have mentioned! I think that it is obvious from everything I have said in this regard that we need interventions from various sectors of our African societies, and therefore the concerted intervention of the broad spectrum of political, business and civil society leadership represented at this Forum.

These include:

1. our Governments;
2. our political parties;
3. business;
4. trade unions and peasant associations;
5. traditional authorities; and the rest of,

6. Organized civil society, including the religious communities, women's and youth organizations, community based and other civil society development organizations, professional associations, the intelligentsia, workers in the field of arts and culture, the public and private media, etc.

I would like to emphasise that what I have said with regard to the mobilisation of what I would like to describe as the motive forces for the realisation of the objective of the achievement of the proper Management of Diversity, rests on or is informed by some important propositions. These are that:

I. leadership is critically important, especially in the context of societies during periods of fundamental social change;

II. without underestimating the importance of the role of individual leaders in this context, actual reality demands leadership at various social levels, avoiding the danger of falling victim to the worship of the cult of personality, focused on particular leaders;

III. consistent with the established principle and practice relating to the exercise of the right of nations to self-determination in multi-national nation states, for this to work requires the entrenchment of the inalienable right of the 'associated' nations to secede from the 'association', based on a democratically expressed decision – thus to 'guarantee' the sustainability of the voluntary association by simultaneously guaranteeing the right to 'disassociation';

IV. processes should be put in place, and practices implemented, to make unity attractive, to borrow an important phrase and perspective on which the Sudanese people agreed as part of their peace agreement to end forty (40) years of civil war;

V. consequently, that the construction of the lasting unity of our diverse societies can only succeed if such diverse components find it of material and other benefit to themselves to remain within the 'association'; and,

VI. the challenge to achieve the imperative of the successful 'management of diversity' in the African nation states demands the practical respect of the positions I have just stated, especially by our multi-sector leadership echelon.

I accept that what I have just said might come across as amounting to nothing more than mere abstract

intellectual propositions, if that. However, humbly I would suggest that we examine these critically. I would like to believe that, at the very least, they would help us further to sharpen our understanding of what we have to do to ensure the success of our interventions to help address Africa's 'pressing strategic challenges'! In this context there is only one other important matter I would like to address, relating to the mobilization of the relevant and significant institutions which the Africa Leadership Forum would have to mobilize.

My comments in this regard relate to what I have said already about the important challenge of the exercise of leadership. I would therefore suggest that, in the first instance, the African Leadership Forum should establish a process of permanent structural cooperation for example with:

- (a) the Africa Forum of former Heads of State and Government and other leaders;
- (b) the existing Foundations which have been established by our former Heads of State and Government;
- (c) other relevant and important African Non-Governmental Organisations such as, as an example only, the Association of African Universities, the NEPAD Business Foundation, and OAUTUU, the Organisation of African Trade Union Unity; and,
- (d) the African Union Commission and such associated institutions as our ECOSOCC, the Economic, Social & Cultural Council of the Africa Union

It would then interact with these to ensure concerted action with regard to the matter I have been discussing, as an example, of the 'management of diversity', and obviously the other strategic matters this Forum will identify. I would like to believe that everything I have said relating to the matters on our Agenda, addressing important matters of methodology, using the 'management of Diversity in Africa' as an example, will, *mutatis mutandis* - to borrow a phrase from other disciplines - apply to other items on our Agenda.

I therefore suggest that, to be practical, essentially to help answer the question – what is to be done? – we should also discuss the important matters of

- (i) managing natural resources, and
- (ii) strategic partnerships, informed by the obligation comprehensively to identify and address the objective

and subjective tasks in this regard, and the required actors in this regard!

There can be no gainsaying the obvious fact that even in the context of the widely prevalent and correct African and global view that – Africa is rising! – all our historic and long-term challenges remain and persist.

It will be the solemn task of the Africa Leadership Forum, to which I assume all of us now belong, at least in spirit, to help our Continent successfully to address these challenges. We meet here invited to participate in the inaugural meeting of this Africa Leadership Forum. All of us gathered here in Dar es Salaam, during the important and joyous occasion of Eid al-Fitr, share a common obligation to ensure that the intentions which informed recognition of the need to establish an Africa Leadership Forum express themselves in what actually happens to bring our collective capacities to bear with regard to ensuring that we actually succeed to use these capacities to address the many pressing strategic challenges of our Continent. I thank you for your attention.