

## Speech by Deputy President Thabo Mbeki at the United Nations University

### THE AFRICAN RENAISSANCE, SOUTH AFRICA AND THE WORLD

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We must assume that the Roman, Pliny the Elder, was familiar with the Latin saying, "Ex Africa semper aliquid novi!" (Something new always comes out of Africa). Writing during the first century of the present millennium, Pliny gave his fellow Romans some startlingly interesting and supposedly new information about Africans. He wrote:

"Of the Ethiopians there are diverse forms and kinds of men. Some there are toward the east that have neither nose nor nostrils, but the face all full. Others that have no upper lip, they are without tongues, and they speak by signs, and they have but a little hole to take their breath at, by the which they drink with an oaten straw ... In a part of Afrikke be people called Pteomphane, for their King they have a dog, at whose fancy they are governed ... And the people called Anthropomphagi which we call cannibals, live with human flesh. The Cinamolgi, their heads are almost like to heads of dogs... Blemmyis a people so called, they have no heads, but hide their mouth and their eyes in their breasts." (*Cited in: "Africa: A Biography of the Continent": John Reader, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1997.*)

These images must have frightened many a Roman child to scurry to bed whenever their parents said, "The Africans are coming! The strange creatures out of Africa are coming!"

Happily, fifteen centuries later, Europe had a somewhat different view of the Africans. At the beginning of the 16th century, Leo Africanus, a Spaniard resident in Morocco, visited West Africa and wrote the following about the royal court in Timbuktu, Mali:

The rich king of Timbuktu ... keeps a magnificent and well-furnished court ... Here are great store of doctors, judges, priests, and other learned men, that are bountifully maintained at the king's cost and charges. And hither are brought diverse manuscripts or written books out of Barbarie, which are sold for more money than any other merchandise.' (Reader, op cit.)

Clearly, this was not the Dog King of which Pliny had written at the beginning of the millennium, but a being as human as any other and more cultured and educated than most in the world of his day. And yet five centuries later, at the close of our millennium, we read in a book published last year:

"I am an American, but a black man, a descendant of slaves brought from Africa... If things had been different, I might have been one of them (the Africans) -- or might have met some... anonymous fate in one of the countless ongoing civil wars or tribal clashes on this brutal continent. And so I thank God my ancestor survived that voyage (to slavery) ... Talk to me about Africa and my black roots and my kinship with my African brothers and I'll throw it back into your face, and then I'll rub your nose in the images of the rotting flesh (of the victims of the genocide of the Tutsis or Rwanda)... Sorry, but I've been there. I've had an AK-47 (automatic rifle) rammed up my nose, I've talked to machete-wielding Hutu militiamen with the blood of their latest victims splattered across their T-shirts. I've seen a cholera epidemic in Zaire, a famine in Somalia, a civil war in Liberia. I've seen cities bombed to near rubble, and other cities reduced to rubble, because their leaders let them rot and decay while they spirited away billions of dollars -- yes, billions -- into overseas bank accounts ... Thank God my ancestor got out, because, now, I am not one of them.' (*"Out of America: A Black Man Confronts Africa": Keith B. Richburg. Basic Books, New York, 1997.*)

And this time, in the place of the Roman child, it is the American child who will not hesitate to go to bed when he or she is told, "The Africans are coming! The barbarians are coming!"

In a few paragraphs, quoted from books that others have written, we have traversed a millennium. But the truth is that we have not travelled very far with regard to the projection of frightening images of savagery that attend the continent of Africa.

### **Images of hope and despair**

And so it may come about that some who harbour the view that as Africans we are a peculiar species of humanity pose the challenge: How dare they speak of an African Renaissance? After all, in the context of the evolution of the European peoples, when we speak of the Renaissance, we speak of advances in science and technology, voyages of discovery across the oceans, a revolution in printing and an attendant spread, development and flowering of knowledge and a blossoming of the arts.

And so the question must arise about how we -- who, in a millennium, only managed to advance from cannibalism to a "blood-dimmed tide" of savages who still slaughter countless innocents with machetes, and on whom another, as black as I, has turned his back, grateful that his ancestors were slaves -- how do we hope to emulate the great human achievements of the earlier Renaissance of the Europe of the 15th and 16th centuries?

One of our answers to this question is that, as Africans, we recall the fact that as the European Renaissance burst into history in the 15th and 16th centuries, there was a royal court in the African city of Timbuktu which, in the same centuries, was as learned as its European counterparts.

What this tells me is that my people are not a peculiar species of humanity! I say this here today both because it is true, but also because I know that you, the citizens of this ancient land, will understand its true significance. And as we speak of an African Renaissance, we project into both the past and the future. I speak here of a glorious past of the emergence of homo sapiens on the African continent.

I speak of African works of art in South Africa that are a thousand years old. I speak of the continuum in the fine arts that encompasses the varied artistic creations of the Nubians and the Egyptians, the Benin bronzes of Nigeria and the intricate sculptures of the Makonde of Tanzania and Mozambique. I speak of the centuries-old contributions to the evolution of religious thought made by the Christians of Ethiopia and the Muslims of Nigeria.

I refer also to the architectural monuments represented by the giant sculptured stones of Aksum in Ethiopia, the Egyptian sphinxes and pyramids, the Tunisian city of Carthage, and the Zimbabwe ruins, as well as the legacy of the ancient universities of Alexandria of Egypt, Fez of Morocco and, once more, Timbuktu of Mali. When I survey all this and much more besides, I find nothing to sustain the long-held dogma of African exceptionalism, according to which the colour black becomes a symbol of fear, evil and death.

I speak of this long-held dogma because it continues still to weigh down the African mind and spirit, like the ton of lead that the African slave carries on her own shoulders, producing in her and the rest a condition which, in itself, contests any assertion that she is capable of initiative, creativity, individuality, and entrepreneurship. Its weight dictates that she will never straighten her back and thus discover that she is as tall as the slave master who carries the whip. Neither will she have the opportunity to question why the master has legal title both to the commodity she transports on her back and the labour she must make available to ensure that the burden on her shoulders translates into dollars and yen.

An essential and necessary element of the African Renaissance is that we all must take it as our task to encourage her, who carries this leaden weight, to rebel, to assert the principality of her humanity -- the fact that she, in the first instance, is not a beast of burden, but a human and African being.

But in our own voyage of discovery, we have come to Japan and discovered that a mere 130 years ago, the Meiji Restoration occurred, which enabled your own forebears to project both into their past and their

future. And as we seek to draw lessons and inspiration from what you have done for yourselves, and integrate the Meiji Restoration into these universal things that make us dare speak of an African Renaissance, we too see an African continent which is not "wandering between two worlds, one dead, the other unable to be born."

### **"A rediscovery of ourselves"**

But whence and whither this confidence? I would dare say that that confidence, in part, derives from a rediscovery of ourselves, from the fact that, perforce, as one would who is critical of oneself, we have had to undertake a voyage of discovery into our own antecedents, our own past, as Africans. And when archeology presents daily evidence of an African primacy in the historical evolution to the emergence of the human person described in science as homo sapiens, how can we be but confident that we are capable of effecting Africa's rebirth?

When the world of fine arts speak to us of the creativity of the Nubians of Sudan and its decisive impact on the revered and everlasting imaginative creations of the African land of the Pharaohs -- how can we be but confident that we will succeed to be the midwives of our continent's rebirth? And when we recall that African armies at Omduraman in the Sudan and Isandhlwana in South Africa out-generalled, out-soldiered and defeated the mighty armies of the mighty and arrogant British Empire in the seventies of the last century, how can we be but confident that through our efforts, Africa will regain her place among the continents of our universe?

And in the end, an entire epoch in human history, the epoch of colonialism and white foreign rule, progressed to its ultimate historical burial grounds because, from Morocco and Algeria to Guinea Bissau and Senegal, from Ghana and Nigeria to Tanzania and Kenya, from the Congo and Angola to Zimbabwe and South Africa, the Africans dared to stand up to say the new must be born, whatever the sacrifice we have to make -- Africa must be free!

We are convinced that such a people has a legitimate right to expect of itself that it has the capacity to set itself free from the oppressive historical legacy of poverty, hunger, backwardness and marginalisation in the struggle to order world affairs, so that all human civilisation puts as the principal objective of its existence the humane existence of all that is human!

And again we come back to the point that we, who are our own liberators from imperial domination, cannot but be confident that our project to ensure the restoration not of empires, but the other conditions in the 16th century described by Leo Africanus: of peace, stability, prosperity, and intellectual creativity, will and must succeed! The simple phrase "We are our own liberators!" is the epitaph on the gravestone of every African who dared to carry the vision in his or her heart of Africa reborn.

The conviction therefore that our past tells us that the time for Africa's Renaissance has come, is fundamental to the very conceptualization of this Renaissance and the answer to the question: Whence this confidence? Unless we are able to answer the question "Who were we?" we will not be able to answer the question "What shall we be?" This complex exercise, which can be stated in simple terms, links the past to the future and speaks to the interconnection between an empowering process of restoration and the consequences or the response to the acquisition of that newly restored power to create something new.

### **Learning from Japan**

If, at this point, you asked me whether I was making a reference to the Meiji Restoration and its impact on the history and evolution of this country, my answer would be, Yes! However, I would also plead that you should not question me too closely on this matter, to avoid me exposing my ignorance.

But this I would like you to know that in the depth of my ignorance, I am moved by the conviction that this particular period in the evolution of Japan, to the point, today, when her economic problems are those of a surfeit rather than the poverty of resources, has a multiplicity of lessons for us as Africans, which we cannot afford to ignore or, worse still, not to know. And if we as students are badly informed, you have a responsibility to be our teachers. We are ready to learn and to become our own teachers as a result.

We would also like you to know that our determination to learn is exemplified by the willingness we have demonstrated to learn on our own from our experiences. I refer here, in particular, to the period since the independence of many of our countries. Among many Africans, this has been referred to as the neo-colonial period.

This constitutes an honest admission of the fact that an important feature of African independence at that stage was that the development of these independent states was determined by the reality that the fundamental, structural relationship between the independent states and the former colonial powers did not change. As a consequence of the acquisition of independence, new state symbols had been adopted and were displayed daily. New state institutions were created. Political and other decision-making processes commenced, which represented and signified the formation of new nation-states. At last, Africans were governing themselves.

However, reality, including the purposes of the Cold War, dictated that the former colonial powers continued to hold in their hands the power to determine what would happen to the African people over whom, in terms of international and municipal law, they no longer had any jurisdiction. The mere recognition that this signified a neo-colonial relationship, rather than genuine independence, affirmed the point that the peoples of our continent had not abandoned the determination to be their own liberators!

Much of what you see reported in your own media today, represented, for instance, by the exit from the African stage of a personality such as General Mobutu Sese Seko of the former Zaire, represents the death of neo-colonialism on our continent. And so we must return to the question, "Whence the confidence that we, as Africans, can speak of an African Renaissance?"

What we have said so far is that both our ancient and modern history as well as our own practical and conscious deeds convey the same message: that genuine liberation, in the context of the modern world, is what drives the Africans of today as they seek to confront the problems which for them constitute a daily challenge.

### **Defining liberation**

The question must therefore arise: What is it which makes up that genuine liberation?

The first of these (elements) is that we must bring to an end the practices as a result of which many throughout the world have the view that as Africans, we are incapable of establishing and maintaining systems of good governance. Our own practical experiences tell us that military governments do not represent the system of good governance which we seek.

Accordingly, the continent has made the point clear that it is opposed to military coups and has taken practical steps, as exemplified by the restoration to power of the elected government of Sierra Leone, to demonstrate its intent to meet this challenge when it arises. Similarly, many governments throughout the continent, including our continental organisation, the OAU, have sought to encourage the Nigerian government and people to return as speedily as possible to a democratic system of government.

Furthermore, our experience has taught us that one-party states also do not represent the correct route to take towards the objective of a stable system of governance, which serves the interests of the people. One of the principal demands in our liberation struggle, as we sought to end the system of apartheid was: "The people shall govern!" It is this same vision which has inspired the African peoples so that, during the

present decade, we have seen at least 25 countries establish multi-party democracies and hold elections so that the people can decide on governments of their choice.

The new South Africa is itself an expression and part of this African movement towards the transfer of power to the people. At the same time, we are conscious of the fact that each country has its particular characteristics to which it must respond as it establishes its democratic system of government.

Accordingly, none of us seek to impose any supposedly standard models of democracy on any country, but want to see systems of government in which the people are empowered to determine their destiny and to resolve any disputes among themselves by peaceful political means.

In our own country, conscious of the need to properly handle the contradictions and conflicts that might arise among different ethnic and national groups, aware also of the fact that such conflicts have been an important element of instability on the continent, we have made it a constitutional requirement to establish a Commission for the Promotion of Cultural, Language and Religious Rights.

In this context, we must also mention two initiatives which the continent as a whole has taken through the agency of the Organisation of African Unity. We refer here to the establishment of the inter-state Central Organ for the Prevention and Resolution of Conflicts which is empowered to intervene to resolve conflicts on the continent and which is currently working on the design of an instrument for peace-keeping to increase our collective capacity to intervene quickly, to ensure that we have no more Rwandas, Liberias or Somalias.

The second initiative to which we refer is the adoption of the African Charter of Human and People's Rights, which sets norms according to which we ourselves can judge both ourselves and our sister countries as to whether we are conducting ourselves in a manner consistent with the defence and promotion of human and people's rights. Like others throughout the world, we too are engaged in the struggle to give real meaning to such concepts as transparency and accountability in governance, as part of the offensive directed against corruption and the abuse of power.

### **Popular rule and political rebirth**

What we are arguing therefore is that in the political sphere, the African Renaissance has begun. Our history demands that we do everything in our power to defend the gains that have already been achieved, to encourage all other countries on our continent to move in the same direction, according to which the people shall govern, and to enhance the capacity of the OAU to act as an effective instrument for peace and the promotion of human and people's rights, to which it is committed.

Such are the political imperatives of the African Renaissance which are inspired both by our painful history of recent decades and the recognition of the fact that none of our countries is an island which can isolate itself from the rest, and that none of us can truly succeed if the rest fail.

The second of the elements of what we have described as the genuine liberation of the peoples of Africa is, of course, an end to the tragic sight of the emaciated child who dies because of hunger or is ravaged by curable diseases because their malnourished bodies do not have the strength to resist any illness.

What we have spoken of before, of the restoration of the dignity of the peoples of Africa itself, demands that we deal as decisively and as quickly as possible with the perception that as a continent we are condemned forever to depend on the merciful charity which those who are kind are ready to put into our begging bowls.

Accordingly, and again driven by our own painful experience, many on our continent have introduced new economic policies which seek to create conditions that are attractive for domestic and foreign investors,

encourage the growth of the private sector, reduce the participation of the state in the ownership of the economy and, in other ways, seek to build modern economies.

Simultaneously, we are also working to overcome the disadvantages created by small markets represented by the relatively small numbers of people in many of our nation states. Regional economic associations have therefore been formed aimed at achieving regional economic integration, which in many instances would provide the necessary condition for any significant and sustained economic growth and development to take place.

In our own region, we have the Southern African Development Community, which brings together a population of well over 100 million people. The community has already taken the decision to work towards transforming itself into a free-trade area and is currently involved in detailed discussions about such issues as the timetable for the reduction of tariffs, to encourage trade among the member states and thus to take the necessary steps leading to the creation of the free trade area to which we have referred.

We are also engaged in other initiatives aimed at the development of infrastructure throughout the region, both as an expression of development and to create the basis for further development and therefore a sustained improvement in the standard of living of the people.

### **Cooperation against violence**

As part of the determined offensive to achieve integrated and mutually beneficial regional development, we have taken other initiatives to deal with common regional problems, going beyond the directly economic. I refer here to the establishment of a regional instrument to address questions of regional security, peace and stability, including the building of regional peace-making and peacekeeping capacity. I refer also to the development of a regional system of cooperation to combat crime, including trade in narcotics and illegal firearms, as well as the evolution of common programmes and legislative frameworks to deal with such challenges as violence against women and children.

We are therefore determined to ensure that we end the situation according to which, for many years, Africa recorded the slowest rates of economic growth and, in many instances, actually experienced economic decline. Already, a significant number of countries have shown relatively high rates of growth as a direct consequence of changes in economic policy and, of course, the achievement of stability within our countries, as a result of the establishment of democratic systems of government.

These economic objectives, which must result in the elimination of poverty, the establishment of modern multi-sector economies, and the growth of Africa's share of world economic activity, are an essential part of the African Renaissance. We are certain that the movement towards their achievement will also be sustained precisely because this movement represents an indigenous impulse which derives from our knowledge of the mistakes we have made in the past and our determination to put those mistakes behind us.

I say this to emphasize the point that necessarily the African Renaissance, in all its parts, can only succeed if its aims and objectives are defined by the Africans themselves, if its programmes are designed by ourselves and if we take responsibility for the success or failure of our policies.

As South Africans, we owe our emancipation from apartheid in no small measure to the support and solidarity extended to us by all the peoples of Africa. In that sense our victory over the system of white minority domination is an African victory. This, I believe, imposes an obligation on us to use this gift of freedom, which is itself an important contribution to Africa's Renaissance, to advance the cause of the peoples of our continent.

### **Building on successes**

The first thing we must do, clearly, is to succeed. We must succeed to strengthen and further entrench democracy in our country and inculcate a culture of human rights among all our people, which is, indeed, happening.

We must succeed to rebuild and reconstruct our economies, achieve high and sustained rates of growth, reduce unemployment, and provide a better life for the people, a path on which we have embarked.

We must succeed to meet the needs of the people so as to end poverty and improve the quality of life by ensuring access to good education, adequate health care, decent homes, clean water and modern sanitation, and so on, again a process on which we have embarked.

We must take decisive steps to challenge the spread of HIV/AIDS, of which Africa accounts for two-thirds of the world total of those infected. Our government has taken the necessary decisions directed at launching and sustaining a big campaign to confront this scourge.

We must discharge our responsibilities to ourselves, future generations and the world with regard to the protection of the environment, cooperating with all nations to meet what is, after all, a common challenge.

We must rise to the critical challenge of creating a non-racial and non-sexist society, both of which objectives are also contained within our constitution. I believe that we, who were exposed to the most pernicious racism represented by the system of apartheid, have the historic possibility and responsibility indeed to create a non-racial society, both in our own interest and as our contribution to the continuing struggle throughout the world to fight racism, which remains an unfortunate feature of many societies.

Similarly, we have a real possibility to make real advances in the struggle for the genuine and all-round emancipation of women and have, with this objective in mind, established a constitutional commission for gender equality, which will help our society as a whole to measure the progress we are making to secure gender equality.

Many African peoples throughout Southern Africa sacrificed their lives to help us secure our freedom. Others further afield ignored the fact of their own poverty to contribute resources to guarantee our emancipation. I am convinced that this immense contribution was made not only so that we end the apartheid crime against humanity, but also so that we build a society of which all Africa would be proud because it would address also the wrong and negative view of an Africa that is historically destined to fail.

Similarly, the peoples of Africa entertain the legitimate expectation that the new South Africa, which they helped to bring into being, will not only be an expression of the African Renaissance by the manner in which it conducts its affairs, but will also be an active participant with other Africans in the struggle for the victory of that Renaissance throughout our continent.

Necessarily, therefore we are engaged and will continue to be engaged in Africa's efforts to guarantee peace for her children, to feed and clothe them, to educate them and to bring them up as human beings as human as any other in the world, their dignity restored and their equal worth recognized and valued throughout our universe.

### **Interdependence means global action**

We would like you to join us in the noble struggle to achieve these objectives. The process of globalization emphasizes the fact that no person is an island, sufficient to himself or herself. Rather, all humanity is an interdependent whole in which none can be truly free unless all are free, in which none can be truly prosperous unless none elsewhere in the world goes hungry, and in which none of us can be guaranteed a good quality of life unless we act together to protect the environment.

By so saying, we are trying to convey the message that African underdevelopment must be a matter of concern to everybody else in the world, that the victory of the African Renaissance addresses not only the improvement of the conditions of life of the peoples of Africa but also the extension of the frontiers of human dignity to all humanity. Accordingly, we believe that it is important that the international community should agree that Africa constitutes the principal development challenge in the world. Having made this determination, we believe that we should then all join forces to ensure that we elaborate and implement practical programmes of action to respond to this principal development challenge.

Urgent steps are required to bring about debt relief to the many countries on our continent which suffer from an unsustainable debt burden. Measures must be taken to encourage larger inflows of capital into the continent, taking advantage of the fact of changed economic policies and improved political circumstances which have brought many of our countries into the mainstream of world developments with regard to the creation of circumstances which make for high and sustained economic growth.

The developed world has to follow more generous trade policies, which should ensure easier access of African products into their markets. Further, we still require substantial flows of well-directed development assistance. Accordingly, we believe that steps should be taken to reverse the decline in such assistance which has occurred in many countries of the developed world.

Similarly, as the process of globalization develops apace, enhancing the need for a multilateral process of decision making affecting both governments and the non-governmental sector, it is necessary that, acting together, we ensure that Africa, like other regions of the developing world, occupies her due place within the councils of the world, including the various organs of the United Nations.

It is our hope and conviction that this important member of the world community of nations, Japan, will see itself as our partner in the practical promotion of the vision of an African Renaissance. By acting on the variety of matters we have mentioned and others besides, we trust that Japan will continue to place herself among the front ranks of those who are driven to act not only within the context of a narrowly defined national interest, but with the generosity of spirit which recognizes the fact that our own humanity is enriched by identifying ourselves especially with those who suffer.

When once more the saying is recalled, *Ex Africa semper aliquid novi!* (Something new always comes out of Africa!), this must be so, because out of Africa reborn must come modern products of human economic activity, significant contributions to the world of knowledge, in the arts, science and technology, new images of an Africa of peace and prosperity.

Thus shall we, together and at last, by bringing about the African Renaissance depart from a centuries-old past which sought to perpetuate the notion of an Africa condemned to remain a curiosity slowly grinding to a halt on the periphery of the world. Surely those who are the offspring of the good that sprang from the Meiji Restoration would not want to stay away from the accomplishment of so historic a human victory!

Thank you.

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### **Question-and-answer session following the speech**

**Rector van Ginkel, United Nations University:** Thank you very much, Mr. Mbeki. I think we all understood well your invitation to join you in the promotion of the "African Renaissance," because it has become clear that no single person nor one single country can ever achieve this aim. Achieving this is not just the interest of African countries and the African people, but it is in the interest of the whole world. This is an opportunity at the moment, now that this strong force in fact has been unleashed all over the continent and the concept is becoming more and more known and supported around the world.

Well, you are so kind to say that you are prepared to take on questions. You will be supported in answering the questions by some other experts here on stage, so no one in the audience should be afraid to pose even the most difficult questions, because there is a lot of thinking power from Africa in fact assembled here.

**Q:** Would you give some further details on some of the most important challenges for an African Renaissance?

**Mr. Mbeki:** We are saying, for instance, an important element which needs to be addressed with regard to meeting this challenge of African development is the debt problem. The debt problem has to be dealt with.

You know about the highly indebted programme concerning the poor countries and the slowness in the movement with regard to the implementation of that programme. The periods that are required by the multilateral institutions for countries to prove themselves that they would not act in the manner that will result in the measures of new debt ... are long. The burden continues to weigh down. You have continuous greater outflows of resources out of Africa as result of this servicing of that debt.

Now I do not know if you want us to go into more detail with regard to this question, but the need to address the matter of the debt burden is important, and we're hoping for instance that this matter will be dealt with again.

When President Clinton was in South Africa, we raised it with him. And he undertook that indeed when the G-8 (group of eight industrialized countries) meets he would seek to raise this question. We are hoping that the same position - well, the same position has been taken by the Prime Minister of Japan.

But as I said earlier, the issue of easier access of African products into the markets of the developed world is important. Again, I don't think we have time to discuss this matter in any particular detail. But you see, for instance, a part of what we think is that when we are dealing with the least-developed countries, I am talking particularly about the World Trade Organization, we might start from the position that the products of the least-developed countries should have duty-free access to all of the economies of the developed world.

So that indeed the possibility for the least-developed countries to trade freely with the developed world then becomes one of the ways by which the least-developed become less least-developed.

The third point we are making is that it is necessary to take whatever measures we can take to encourage larger inflows of foreign capital into Africa. I am sure you would be familiar with the figures about this, that when you compare Africa with other regions of the world, Africa will be at the bottom in terms of the regions of the world that attract foreign capital.

I think in part the problem is the persistence of particular images in people's minds about the negative things about the continent. I think, in part, it is to do with a tendency to look at Africa as one whole. So that if something goes wrong in South Africa, people further afield do not say; "Something has gone wrong in South Africa"; they say, "Something has gone wrong in Africa."

So I am saying that one of the things which I think very important is a better communication of what the African people themselves are doing to change their conditions.

The gentleman just has spoken who has been in Kenya and Uganda and Tanzania, and you can see in those countries the great efforts that people have made to move away from one-party states, to address matters of economic policy, to open up these economies in all sorts of ways.

It may well be that that kind of information is not reaching people sufficiently. I am taking in particular here about people who might be interested to invest in the African continent. That's something that needs to be addressed.

I was saying also that the matter of development assistance needs to be addressed, because it is in itself not necessarily bad. It is true that in the past few years private capital inflows into Africa and other developing countries have superceded significantly official development assistance into these countries.

If it was merely a relative matter, it might not be so bad, but you have had arguments that there was a need to reduce development assistance in an absolute way. We don't think this is correct. And we have said that we don't believe the contrasting of development assistance and trade is a correct approach. So, as I was saying, again we could get into the detail of this, (but) I am not sure that would have the time.

We are saying that "Let's all make common determination that Africa constitutes the principal development challenge in the world."

We had a discussion two and a half months ago with the president of the World Bank to discuss precisely this question. To say that if you look at the expenditures of the World Bank group, of the five regions in the world which the World Bank deals with, in all instances, Africa is at the bottom. Whether you are talking about development finance or you are talking about international finance cooperation, talking about concessional money, talking about trade promotion -- it does not matter what you talk about.

In all the various expenditure items of the World Bank, Africa will be at the bottom.

So we were saying, and he agreed fortunately, that why don't we all agree that if you look at the rates of economic growth and restructuring of economies, integration of the world economy, all of these questions. If you look at that, it is clear that the biggest of the development challenges among these five regions with which World Bank deals is Africa.

But the figures don't reflect this. So it is necessary, having said this is the principal development challenge for reasons that are obvious, that then we try and move not only the multilateral institutions, but I think also countries which have got some capacity to move in a way which responds to a determination which says "Africa is our principal development challenge."

The impact of the process of globalization on the sovereignty of countries is an important factor of today's world. The weaker, the smaller you are, the more decisive that impact of globalization is on this matter of sovereignty.

Decisions are taken by the World Trade Organization which we may not be able to influence about tariffs and about the rates at which they must be reduced and so on. Our decisions are taken out of the hands of individual countries; they become multilateral agreements which are enforceable across the globe.

And we believe that one of the correct responses to that process of globalization is to make sure that the smaller countries of the world therefore have a proper place in the decision-making processes of these institutions which take decisions which have a universal impact. And again one we can go into the detail of that, but these are some of the points that we are raising.

**Q:** What sort of role is South Africa ready to play for the development of the entire continent of sub-Saharan Africa?

**Mr. Mbeki:** One of the things that is happening with regard to countries of southern Africa that have been mentioned is that you have had some noticeable movement of capital from South Africa into some of the economies in the region.

For instance you might have seen this in Uganda, that part of the process of the development of the telecommunication infrastructure there is partly as a result of new investment that has been put into that sector by South African companies, as does indeed another telecommunication license I think that is coming in Uganda on which, again, South African companies are bidding.

You would also have seen these things in Tanzania, of an involvement by South African corporations in the privatization processes of Tanzania and in some interesting areas that have already had an impact in terms of improvement of quality, growth of exports in Tanzania, and recovery of production facilities that have collapsed.

You would also see in Tanzania a number of South African mining companies that have come into mining in Tanzania to create new capacities and to expand existing capacity. Or, I do not know which airline you might have used while you were in the region. If you used Alliance Airline, it is a consortium of South African Airways and other airways in the region of East Africa.

So I am saying that you have that whole process of investment from South Africa in the economies of the region, and that would include tourism, so I think that's part of what will happen.

And as I was saying, as the southern African development community we've taken the decision to constitute ourselves into a free-trade area and we are involved in discussions about this. And it would seem to us that one of the things that we need to do, as South Africa, is to perhaps move ahead of the rest of the countries of the region because of the relative strength of South African economy to speed up the process of arriving at that free trade area so that we lower tariffs into the South African economy faster than everybody else. So that indeed countries like Tanzania, which are part of the development community, can then gain that easier and better access into what is after all a larger market.

So there are a whole variety of matters like this which point to, I think, a fairly rapid process of regional economic integration taking place.

**Q:** As immediate post-independence leaders in Africa are now beginning gradually to leave the stage -- the generation that a Nigerian Nobel laureate often referred to as a "wasted generation" -- and your new generation of African leaders are beginning to move center stage in African affairs, can we say for sure that the problem of leadership that has held down Africa so long is about to come to an end?

**Mbeki:** I think, personally, that the matter is not really so much a matter of leaders as a matter of the peoples of our continent. I think that the experience that we've had as Africans, which has meant, as I was saying, military coups, one-party states, meant corruption and so on -- I think (this) has taught the masses of our people ... that some things are no longer permissible.

I think we have the fortunate situation in which we live in the post-Cold War world. And you know the instances on the African continent when people (who) were bad for Africa were maintained in power by various powers because they were useful in the context of that Cold War contest.

I think there are better possibilities now to ensure that we don't have the images of some of the kind of leaders we had in the past, who progressed from being a master sergeant in charge of a platoon and ended up proclaiming themselves emperors. I think that time has passed.

**Q:** There is a requirement, where you have this scheme, that employment of a certain percentage point go to women and to minorities in South Africa. Do you think the competitiveness of corporations would go hand-in-hand with this?

**Mbeki:** No, there is no legislation in South Africa which requires that companies must meet particular quotas. It doesn't exist. What we've done is to say that there are some basic challenges in South African society, such as what I was trying to indicate in what I said earlier.

One of these challenges, and it is a very important challenge, is the creation of a nonracial society. You know what apartheid means. You know what legacy it has left.

Fact of the matter is that if you look at South Africa today, four years after liberation, in terms of the socioeconomic setting of South Africa, it's still essentially an apartheid setting. So racism, we believe it is fundamentally important that that matter be addressed. We also believe, again as I was trying to indicate earlier, that the matter of gender equality, the emancipation of women, is very important if we are going to say this is a genuinely democratic society. But the matter needs to be addressed in a very consistent way.

We have a significant proportion of the South African population who are disabled, who I suppose as in many other countries would in the past have been dealt with as welfare cases. But clearly, our orientation, certainly as far as government and the disabled themselves are concerned, is that they don't want to be dealt with as welfare cases, but they want to be treated as normal human beings. And then things need to be done to ensure that despite their disability they are able to participate as fully as they can in the activities that any other human being would be involved in. And therefore, we are discussing draft legislation which says, these matters need to be addressed: racial discrimination, gender discrimination, discrimination against the disabled.

There's nothing in the legislation which speaks about quotas, which prescribes numbers. Rather, the legislation says that the enterprises, economic institutions, business institutions should themselves work out their own plans as to what they will do to address these issues. So there is no legislative compulsion; therefore, what you might have been told about "You are therefore obliged to take a person who happens to be black, or a woman, or disabled, despite the fact that they are incompetent" - there is no such legislation, and there would not be such legislation either.

But I must make the point that in our society, it is not possible to leave the matter of the racial disparities, the racial differences, to leave those matters unaddressed.

Because if you did, you would indeed be asking for a very big explosion in that society tomorrow, because the majority of this population which continues to suffer from that apartheid legacy surely will not say, "It was enough for us to be able to get the vote, but it is perfectly all right to continue with a society which continues to discriminate" against them in other ways.

I must say that in reality, many of the foreign investors who have come into the South African economy have been very conscious of these particular matters. I know, for instance, of corporations that didn't require any persuading, did not require any legislation - as soon as they took decisions that they wanted to invest in the South African economy and so on, who actually went out of their way to ensure that they themselves recruited and trained people from among black society, so that they could bring them into positions of management and so on. Because they did not want to reproduce within their companies the South Africa of old, where you would walk into a South African boardroom and you would not think you were in Africa, you would think you are in Europe.

So I'm saying there are companies that have decided on their own, without any persuasion from anybody, to address this matter because they understood the challenge of the creation of this nonracial society themselves, and the importance to themselves as corporate citizens, in terms of ensuring stability in the country.

**Q:** What are the preferable sectors in South Africa in which people might be interested to investing?

**(Mr. Moss Ngoasheng, economic advisor to Mr. Mbeki):** The question really will take us the whole afternoon if we're going to deal with it in detail. But I mean just to make a few general points on this matter:

One: The reintegration of the South African economy into the world economy itself offers a whole range of opportunities in terms of modernization. So you are required to do quite a bit of work in terms of identifying those sectors. That's a general point.

And I think that one of the great opportunities that we have in the country is to grow and develop the infrastructure within the country, to service the broad range of requirements and needs that we have in the various areas of our people.

So infrastructure development in its general form is an area for investment: water, electrification, housing, municipal infrastructure and so on. That's an area where as a government we are quite active, the Development Bank of Southern Africa, which is the development arm of the state, is a very active player. We have the (Bank's) C.O. here; if you have some interest in that regard, you can speak to him. They're piloting a lot of public-private sector partnerships in that area.

We recognize that mining remains the main sector in the South African economy, and therefore mineral processing and mineral beneficiation is an area where we are seeking greater involvement, and in fact, we are happy that there is a lot of interest from Japanese corporations in that area.

The other area which we think offers a lot of opportunities in South Africa is the area of furniture manufacturing and processing of the forest resources that we have.

The general electronics and IT sector is a very fast-growing sector in the South African economy that I think offers again a whole range of possibilities, and we are quite happy to see that a lot of Japanese corporations are back in the economy and making a lot of products from South Africa.

We have a substantial auto component and auto-producing sector, and we probably are one of the largest, fastest-growing after-market producers of components that go into various international markets. We were in Brazil last year and we were surprised to find that some of the auto manufacturers in Brazil actually order all their seats and other components from Port Elizabeth in South Africa. They produce the car in Brazil but the seats are produced in South Africa...

So there are a number of areas that we can talk about for the rest of the afternoon, but I think those are just the highlights.

The reality of the matter is that the South African economy is bubbling, and there is a whole range of opportunities, and at a distance sometimes you are unlikely to see those. So we invite you to come down and look at those opportunities: the Development Bank of Southern Africa, the Industrial Development Corporation, the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Investment in South Africa organizations will be able to assist all investors interested in coming down.

**Q:**Do you have an explanation for this kind of extraordinary response by the leaders and people of South Africa to their long years of oppression?

**Mbeki:**And so to the last question. I think that the people of South Africa recognize the fact that all of them are South African. I think that is a matter that is fundamental to the willingness and the capacity to accommodate one another. South Africa belongs to all who live in it. I'm saying that I believe, that indeed all of us believe, that South Africa belongs to all of us.

And secondly, I think that the manner in which the country developed historically produced a mutual dependence among South Africans regardless of colour, which the system of apartheid tried to undermine, but couldn't succeed. And therefore I think that there's a recognition that "If I want to succeed, I can only achieve that success with the assistance of my neighbour."

That mutual dependence, which developed as a history of the evolution of our country, makes the South Africans know that it is better that they cooperate among themselves in order to achieve success rather than they fight against one another.

I think also that in the course of the struggle to end apartheid, we arrived at a point where the apartheid regime saw that it could not really defeat the liberation movement, and we ourselves in the liberation movement would not give up, but it might very well take us a bit of time to get to the result of ending the system of apartheid. Therefore, by the time we entered into negotiations, both sides knew that they had not defeated each other, and that both of them were capable of a lot of destruction, and that in the end if you had a lot of destruction, as I was saying, both (sides) will lose something. So in a situation like that, I think it became obvious to everybody that the only way out was not to seek victory one over the other, but rather to find a settlement that would be acceptable to both.

One other thing that happened was that we did in fact spend very many years talking among ourselves as South Africans about the future of South Africa. Many people think that the process of negotiations began in 1990. In fact the process of negotiations to bring about change began five or six years earlier.

And that had to do with a lot of interaction among people who were in the leadership of the society, in various points of leadership in the society: in business, academic world, the religious leadership, sporting people, all sorts of people, the regime itself.

And that particular process was in reality focused on seeing whether we could together elaborate a common vision about the kind of South Africa we want. So as I say, for five or six years we were talking among ourselves to say, "When we say we want a democratic society, what are we talking about? When we talk about an economy that addresses the interests of all the people rather than a small minority that is white, what are we talking about?" All of these questions... And indeed, by the time the formal negotiations started, the formal open negotiations started with the government in 1990, they had developed a common vision about what kind of South Africa we wanted. As a consequence of which, one of the things that we agreed was that we need to put into the constitution a set of constitutional principles which would be agreed by everybody, so that all of the various political formations in the country would participate in the process of drawing up and agreeing (on) those constitutional principles.

So that those principles then became the framework within which the new constitution could be drawn by an elected board. The advantage of that was that even the smallest political player in South African society could make an input into drafting that framework of constitutional principles, so that even if they didn't get elected in the elections that then took place afterward, they didn't feel threatened, because they knew that the new constitution that would be drafted would be drafted in the context of these constitutional principles, which really constituted a consensus about which direction South Africa should go.

And I'm saying that's a consensus which many people worked at, from five or six years before 1990. And I think it's a total of these two issues, the totality of these things, which in the end I think continue to say to South Africans, "There is no benefit to be gained from any policies which seek to discriminate against another South African."

There is no benefit to be gained by anybody in the pursuit of policies that might seek revenge for things that were done in the past. Because in the end, if you took that route, what you would in fact be saying is that we must reopen the conflict. And as I was saying, in the end as South Africans we came to the conclusion that the continuation of our conflict would benefit nobody.

Thank you.