

TOAST PROPOSED AT THE OFFICIAL BANQUET FOR PRESIDENT ALPHA OMAR KONARE OF MALI

31 March 2000

Your Excellency President Alpha Omar Konare and distinguished leaders of the people of Mali;
Your Excellencies Ambassadors and members of the diplomatic corps;
Deputy President, Mr Jacob Zuma;
Ministers and Deputy Ministers;
Distinguished guests;
Ladies and gentlemen:

It is indeed with great pleasure that we received in our country President Konare, a distinguished leader not only of Mali but also of the peoples of our Continent. Representing a sister country which is the repository of a proud and ancient African civilisation, our esteemed guest, friend and brother stands in the front ranks of those who carry forward the vision of a genuine renewal of Africa.

The children of our Continent continue to be afflicted by many ills, some of which are of our making as the political leaders of our peoples.

Up to now, peace and stability throughout Africa has continued to elude us. The terrible pictures of the victims of war on our Continent continue to be a regular feature of the news programmes we watch on television everyday.

In various countries we have still not arrived at the point where we can say that power is in the hands of the people, with the recent coup d'etat in the Cote d'Ivoire exemplifying the continuing failure of African politics.

Some among us continue to revere the use of force and deify the weapons of war and death, which kill the very masses whose representatives we claim to be and whose interests we claim to serve.

Death is also visited on the children of our Continent by poverty and underdevelopment.

We continue to be confronted, therefore, by the enormous challenge to ensure that our economies grow, that they create more jobs for our peoples, that they provide the means to ensure that these masses enjoy a better life on a sustained basis.

With this goes the equally important challenge to cleanse ourselves of corrupt practice, as a result of which scarce public resources have been diverted into the pockets of a self-serving and self-perpetuating elite whose principal ethic is self-enrichment at all costs.

It is precisely these resources which would give us the possibility to respond to the critical objective of achieving health for all, with special attention to such diseases as malaria, tuberculosis, sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS.

Similarly, these resources would also help us attend to the important matter of education and the development of our human capital, which are both necessary in themselves and an essential condition for Africa's equal participation in the modern world economy and society.

I believe that our generation has an obligation to move Africa out of the dark years of neo-colonialism, which have imposed enormous suffering on our peoples.

As part of this, we will have to ensure that Africa takes her rightful place among the nations of our common universe, no longer an object of pity or contempt and capable of giving practical expression to the high ideals of African solidarity, a shared destiny and African unity.

We draw great strength from the fact that the relations between our two countries are informed by all the objectives I have mentioned which are critical to Africa's renaissance.

These aim, among other things, at ensuring that we use our respective capabilities to contribute to each other's all-round development and selflessly to serve the cause of the peoples of our Continent.

Thus Mali and South Africa are not sister Republics merely because they are both African countries. They are sister Republics because they share a common and noble vision and are committed to do everything they can to transform that vision into the practical reality of Africa reborn.

It is therefore with great pleasure that I am honoured to ask you to rise and drink a toast to the health of His Excellency, President Konare, to friendship among our peoples and the victory of Africa's cause.

The
Thank you.

President!

Issued by: Office of the Presidency