With the dismantling of Apartheid and the installation of an elected Government of National Unity in South Africa, the OAU has closed the chapter on decolonization in the continent. Of course, the struggle for decolonization, and especially that against racism in South Africa, enjoyed the support of millions around the world and especially in this country. It was the sustained massive public demonstrations and protests, sit-ins and campaigns of disinvestment in the legislatures and campuses around the United States which pushed the sometimes reluctant administrations, to take a definite stand against institutionalized racism in South Africa. Africa is infinitely grateful to those millions, who in selfless commitment to the cause of justice, stood in solidarity with the people of South Africa.

Africa won in its battle for political freedom and against racism, partly because it had the support of the greater part of the world. We now need the same kind of solidarity - if we are to extend the reaches of our freedom to the economic domain to liberate the people of the Continent of Africa from the oppression of grinding poverty and economic under-development. The Continent also needs to re-focus its attention to matters of governance, of human rights and of conflicts, which stand to undermine all the efforts at development and peace.

Africa has [now] taken the challenge of democratization seriously, even in the face of the myriad of problems it faces. Today, in the continent, more and more countries are
converting to political pluralism as multi-party elections have become a frequent occurrence. Five years ago, we could count how many African countries had multi-party elections. Today, we can count how many do not.

**Diversity and Tolerance**

It has not been an easy or smooth transition from overwhelmingly single-party political systems and military rule to multi-party politics. This transition has in some cases brought the political fabric of countries, under severe strain, as contrasting and sometimes contradicting interests, in society have had to be balanced.

"Rwanda was an indictment to us all. It was a failure for Africa, the United Nations and humanity at large."

One of the unintended effects of the new political liberalization has been the rise of the ugly specter of tribalism, ethnicity, religious intolerance and other tendencies of separation and division. These have equally brought great strain to the social fabric in our countries. The challenge which Africa faces is how to ensure that the genuine identities of religion, ethnicity and tribe are accommodated without allowing the forces of bigotry and all forms of intolerance to exploit that accommodation....

The challenge we face is to build a culture of tolerance and to use our diversity creatively as a source of strength rather than of division. We in the Organization of African Unity who have had the privilege to be closely associated with this process of political transition...are keenly aware of the problems. We need to impress upon those who may triumph in elections that [an electoral majority [in itself is] not always sufficient to ensure smooth transition to democratic rule. Equally, those who lose elections also need to understand that defeat is part of the democratic process. In fact, we need to know how to lose and how to win elections.

This is an area to which I believe the experience and resources of this country can be targeted. Education to build awareness among the electorate on the processes of elections and those of building and consolidating democratic institutions and governments.

**Support For Democracy**

These democratizing countries need to be assisted particularly in the economic field so as to sustain and strengthen the process of political transition. Otherwise, the strain of poverty will undermine the cause of democracy in the continent.

African Governments are willing to take great political risk and institute unpopular austerity and economic reform measures. These measures have meant less public spending in key social sectors such as health, education, and housing as well as rolling back development of much needed infrastructure. The consequences of these reforms, particularly to the very vulnerable segments of society, women and children have been excruciating.

Africa hoped that the urgings and encouragement it was receiving from the Western World to speed up these reforms, would have been supplemented
by increased resource commitment to support that reform process in the continent. But neither the Western World, nor the international monetary and financial institutions have made available the requisite financial support.

Emphasis in the West and the financial and monetary institutions seem to be on debt repayment rather than on the mobilization of the needed resources to help Africa undertake the reforms which will anchor the continent on sound economic footing.

I see the American role in the economic field falling in two broad categories. I see a role of the United States to invest in society, targeting in particular the rural poor, in those sectors vacated by Governments as a result of Structural Adjustment Programs. Investment in clinics and health centers, primary schools and drinking water for example will help meet needs at grass root level.

Secondly, I see the United States providing leadership at the International level, with the Industrialized countries and the monetary and financial institutions in mobilizing support for reforms and development generally in the continent. I see as a clear priority the issue of Africa's indebtedness. I therefore hope that the United States will take the necessary political decision to provide leadership and to urge for debt forgiveness in the case of Africa, as a means of liberating the Continent from this albatross as well as of supporting the political and economic transition there.

Eradicating Poverty

The social problems of the continent - high birth rates, low life expectancy, high infection rates of the HIV virus and other killer diseases, malnutrition, unemployment, environmental degradation and many others are directly linked to poverty. Likewise we cannot hope to promote human rights or pursue matters of good government unless we address the key issue of poverty which militate against our efforts.

Lessons of Rwanda

Perhaps the most topical of all the problems of Africa are its conflicts. We know the extent of death, destruction of property and infrastructure as well as of the damage, to social fabric, these conflicts have brought about in the Continent. The phenomenon of seven million refugees and fifteen million displaced persons has partly been brought about by these wars and conflicts.

"Africa is infinitely grateful to those millions, who in selfless commitment to the cause of justice, stood in solidarity with the people of South Africa."

The countries of Africa are now prepared to get out of the limiting traditional political considerations, such as those of sovereignty and misplaced notions of non-interference, and to embrace each other in a partnership to bring peace and stability on the continent. We in the Organization of African Unity see this as a fundamental
transformation; which will prove key to the process of ushering in and consolidating peace. Experience over the last one year, especially with regard to our operations in Burundi and Rwanda, has taught us some lessons. Principal among those lessons, is that Africa needs to wean itself from the dependence syndrome and the misery and backwardness. But unfortunate as the Rwanda conflict is, it should not be allowed to overshadow the many achievements which Africa has had or the sustained efforts been deployed in the area of conflict resolution.

We should not lose sight of the great efforts in the Continent at democratization and economic reform and the positive effects these are beginning to have. It is only if the world sees and knows what Africa is doing that it can render constructive assistance.

"Africa is not a continent resigned to fate but one which is determined to emerge from its present difficulties."

mistaken belief that the rest of the world will always be there. The ambivalence of the world, including the United Nations, to take swift and decisive action as hundreds of thousands of people were slaughtered and millions fled into exiles as refugees and displaced persons in Rwanda was an indictment to us all. It was a failure for Africa, the United Nations and humanity at large.

Now, we take responsibility, in the realization that it is Africa, which can resolve its own problems even if we shall continue to require outside help. It is this realism and preparedness to assume responsibility that is at the root of the new outlook in the Continent and which holds promise. Of course, when we look at what is happening in Rwanda it is easy to fall prey to the usual stereotype view that Africa is a continent where suffering and conflicts are endemic and which is condemned to doing that it can render constructive assistance.

African-American Partnership
Why should the United States care about Africa? Because I believe it is in your interest as well. Africa and this country share common bonds of history and culture. In this rapidly shrinking global village, we need global solidarity to sustain cooperation and our interdependence. Helping Africa to emerge from its present difficulties is therefore in the long term interest of this country. You need a strong Africa which can be a strong partner in global development and not a subject of your constant compassion and unending charity. Africa is not a continent resigned to fate but one which is determined to emerge from its present difficulties.

I thank you.