

Africa Liberation Day

Statement by Mr. Kamallesh Sharma, PR on May 25, 2000

Mr. Chairman,

It is with a great sense of historic significance that I speak on this important commemorative event. Africa Liberation Day is a day of great significance, not only to the people of Africa, but to the entire world. It celebrates the mighty victories of the liberation struggle, the advance of free Africa, and the spirit of liberty and equality which has transformed our world during the last fifty years.

Africa and Asia have been bound by ancient and widespread links, exchange of ideas, goods and people, and, in the shared experience of the colonial period, collective disempowerment, deprivation and exploitation. In India, specially, we have always believed that our freedom and development was incomplete till it was accompanied by the development and freedom of our African brothers and sisters. This Afro-Asian spirit flowered in Bandung and, in many ways, led to the creation of the Non Aligned Movement, with its credo of independence of thought and autonomy of action.

When we gained freedom, both Asian countries and countries of Africa faced mammoth developmental challenges. The First Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, referred to these shared aspirations, when addressing the first Asian African Conference at Bandung. He said, "We have been left behind in the race, and now we have a chance to make good. We have to make good rapidly $\frac{1}{4}$. if not we shall fade away not to rise again for a long time to come. We are determined not to fail. We are determined, in the new phase of Asia and Africa, to make good." It is this shared promise that drives us as we take the floor on issues of concern to that fraternal continent and people in diverse forums and of course, today.

Solidarity and liberation today translates largely into solidarity and effective partnership in economic and social transformations. The best of intentions and goodwill for African economic development have to be matched by the provision of adequate resources. This is the crux of the problem. Ten years ago, in 1991, requirements of Africa for external finance were estimated at US \$ 30 billion in 1992 by the United Nations, to be followed by an annual increase of at least 4 per cent. Today, for several reasons, the needs and urgency are far greater. But the inflow of capital to the African countries has in fact steadily declined from \$ 28.2 billion in 1995 to \$ 20.8 billion in 1996. OECD/DAC assistance in 1997 amounted to only \$ 18.7 billion. The African continent is a net transferor of resources abroad, estimated at over 25% of domestic savings. A UNDP study had noted two years ago, sub-Saharan African Governments transfer, to their creditors, four times what they spend on health care of their people. And this is when the debt is not being fully serviced. This is a compelling demonstration of shortfall of external resources for achieving internationally agreed development objectives in Africa.

We are convinced that given Africa's resources and limitless potential, it has the capacity to emerge as a major global force in the present century. Knowing well the determination and will of the African countries, what is needed is the willingness of the international community to come forward in true partnership for African development. Asia would be privileged to be a partner in this great and historic enterprise.

While the liberation struggles in Africa have been successful, the tasks of development and increased prosperity must continue to be at the forefront of the international agenda. In this regard, the role of the international community is clearly defined - avoid providing prescriptive solutions, but instead be supportive of the strenuous efforts and actions that the African countries themselves are taking. We hope that this solidarity would be manifest in our work here at the United Nations as we move forward into the twenty first century.

Mr. Chairman, I echo the benediction 'God Bless Africa'.