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OPENING ADDRESS BY M. SAMIR AMIN ON THE OCCASION OF THE
CONFERENCE ON AFRICA AND THE PROBLEMATICS OF THE FUTURE

(Dakar, 18 July 1977)

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On behalf of Dr. NICOL and myself, and of you all, I have great pleasure in welcoming here, in the person of M. Malick SOW, Directeur du Plan of Senegal, the official and friendly presence of a colleague from the host country. I should like to ask him to convey our thanks to his government. Senegal, the host country, and its government have never failed in their solicitude towards pan-African institutions and particularly IDEP, and towards all formes of cultural and scientific dialogue.

I should also like, in Dr. NICOL's presence, to thank UNITAR of which he is the Executive Director, for its participation and support. Dr. NICOL and Mr. Philippe DE SEYNES, his collaborator, have done us the honour of choosing IDEP for the holding of this pan-African conference. This conference forms part of a series of operations organized by UNITAR, covering all the continents, concerning the issues of the future. I therefore convey to you my personal thanks and those of all our colleagues and, I am sure, of the whole meeting, for this choice which does us honour. The financial support, of UNITAR, but also your intellectual support, particularly that of M. Philippe DE SEYNES, were particularly decisive this preparation.

I must not forget to welcome and to thank a number of people. Firstly the Swedish S.A.R.E.C. whose material support was indirectly decisive, since it is financing UNITAR's activities concerning the issues of the future, and also very directly, because the additional finance both for the preparatory phase and for the holding of this conference was granted by the S.A.R.E.C. But it is not only financial support which the S.A.R.E.C. is giving us. It is also an intellectual, moral and political support of primary importance. The S.A.R.E.C.

has never failed to support the autonomous thinking of the countries and continents of the Third World, and we are grateful to it for this.

I should also like to thank the French Co-operation for its important financial and intellectual support. The French Co-operation, by agreeing to second to us full-time a high-quality expert, and partially to finance the holding of this to finance the holding of this conference, has once again borne witness to the interest it takes in the activities of our Institute. Already during the Conference of Ministers of ECA held last February in Kinshasa, the French Minister for Co-operation had made known his appreciation IDEP's activities.

I welcome to Dakar the many participants, about forty intellectuals and very high-level officials coming from the various regions of our continent, whose exceptional quality is evidence of the interest which is taken in activities of this type organized by our institute. I express a particularly warm and fraternal welcome to the representatives of the liberation movements, the A.N.C., the S.W.A.P.O and movements of Zimbabwe who are present here. In this house it has been a tradition for 7 years to regard the liberation movements of the not yet independent regions of our continent as an integral part of the African continent.

I welcome the presence of a number of other distinguished friends and guests, particularly Monsieur Paul-Marc HENRY who, at the head of the O.E.C.D. Development Centre which he was directing until recently, has supported the preparation of this conference. I greet the Interfuture group of O.E.C.D. which felt it was important for our colleagues of the developed countries to take part in this conference. I should also like to welcome the presence of Mr. MUSHAKHOJI who represents the United Nations University, the small but select group of friends from the other continents, Asia and Latin America, and last but not least, the representative of the association of research institutions in the African continent, Mr. BUJRA, the Executive Secretary of CODESRIA.

I will go directly on to the purpose of this conference, so that our work can start immediately, this morning.

This Conference should, I feel, mark a stage in the autonomous thinking of the African continent concerning its future. But it must also be considered by us all very modestly as only a stage, if not, fortunately, the first stage, at least a preliminary stage. Therefore we are concerned with thinking about the preparation of the subsequent stages of this type of necessary activity of reflexion concerning the future of our continent in the perspective of its uncompleted battle for liberation.

During this conference here, we propose very simply to try to explore the main alternatives for a possible economic development of the African continent in a world context that has now been challenged and concerning whose future the same questions are being put on all sides. Indeed you will have noticed that the title of this conference is not the future of Africa, but "Africa and the problematics of the future". This problematics, these issues of the future are in fact universal, common to all the peoples and nations of the earth, and Africa occupies a place, whether acceptable or not, in this world community.

In order to explore these main alternatives, I think that we must assume that we can advance in a number of directions. First, we must consider, and perhaps be ambitious enough to define, the ultimate purposes of development: of development in general, but more particularly development in the historical conditions of Africa. If, as certainly most of us wish to do, we have the ambition to participate in the reconstruction of a world which respects more than in the past the personality of every nation and the particular contribution of every people, I believe that we cannot but question tirelessly the ultimate purpose of development and consider the impact of possible developments on the autonomy and the contribution of every people and every nation to the universal community.

More technically, we shall doubtless have to explore a number of world scenarios, to use a know well-known term. We will of course stress the place of Africa in these scenarios, but it must be borne in mind that we are necessarily dealing with a number of scenarios which concern the whole of international relations. Ever since the United Nations General Asembly solemnly adopted a declaration of intent concerning the revision of the international economic order and the setting up of a new international economic order, there have been an increasing number of scenario-makers. They are of all kinds. The political and social significance of these scenarios, their degree of seriousness and sophistication, vary greatly. But once again, in this field as in the others, the scenario-makers are recruited more in the countries of the North than in those of the South. It is up to us to take part in a reflexion, as systematic and serious as possible, so that we too can present out own thinking as to the scenarios for the future of our continent. In this connexion we shall have to explore the place of Africa in these different possible scenarios and even to go further, to define national development strategies that more or less consistent with these scenarios. It would be of no use to amuse ourselves - it would be only an amusement - with thinking about the future of the world and of international relations, if we did not at the same time question and discuss the content of national development policies. For the international order is nothing but the resultant of the national orders.

How should we judge these scenarios, by what criteria, on the basis of what perspectives? We propose to you, because we think that is the attitude of any African patriot, that we should adopt two fundamental criteria which were those adopted by the common platforms of the African States on the occasion, for example of the OAU meetings: the two criteria, which we believe to be indissolubly linked, of the **strengthening** of national independence (even if it be in a context of inter-dependence, but then real interdependence, not declared inter-dependence which barely conceals a one-way dependence) and of a popular development, that is a development which really meets the needs of the broad popular masses. These are the criteria, in English of self-reliance, and in French of "développement autocentre".

These are the questions which are on the agenda of this week's work. They are considerable. Fortunately we have available, apart from the quality of the participants here assembled, the results of a preparatory work which, I am sure, will help to organize a fruitful discussion in plenary, but above all in the working groups.

We wanted first of all to have available a basis of sound knowledge concerning the recent past and the present of our continent. For this purpose we have produced an "economic survey" covering the 25 years 1950-1975. It is a large volume and very serious. It is a working document of great interest and, I must say, of exceptional quality. The difficulty of the task must not be under-estimated. African organizations apparently much better endowed than we are have not so far managed to produce as much. Hence this document has at least the merit of being so far unique. I wish to extend to the two colleagues who, thanks to the generosity and intelligence of UNITAR and SAREC, were able to do this work, Messrs. HAMID and GAKOU, my personal thanks and those of us all. The analytical results of this document will be submitted to you today and will constitute the starting-point of our discussions.

We have also proposed for you a draft analysis of the future on the basis of 3 sets of scenarios. Without entering into the details of these scenarios which will be the subject of sustained thinking during a week's work. I will say that they consist of: a first scenario which assumes a continuation of the line of dependent development which our continent has experienced during the last 25 years; a second scenario which takes seriously certain orientations of the new international economic order and envisages an effective revision of the international division of labour but remains within the perspective of an international division of labour that is still unequal for the coming historical period, and a third scenario which would take extremely seriously the declared goals of an "auto-centred, self-reliant development, both at the national and the continental level, and even at the level of the Third World.

These scenarios which I ventured to propose to you six months ago, when we were beginning to organize the preparation of this conference, are here submitted for your criticism: a criticism which, I hope, will be vigorous and which will enable us all to emerge enriched from this stage of our work.

I am sure that our work will culminate in a high-quality publication: two large volumes. One concerning the past, which is already prepared, an essential book which has far been sadly lacking, on the development of Africa from 1950 to 1975, which is in a way also the result of a systematic reflexion conducted at IDEP over 7 years. And a second volume which will include, together with the suggested scenarios and the result of criticism and discussions, a programme for further research contemplated on the scale of the whole African continent. I am sure that this programme will obtain the generous support of all those who have understood the important reasons for which they gave their support to IDEP at this stage in the preparation of the work. This programme will be implemented with the collaboration of all the African research institutions who are members of CODESRIA.

I should also like to remind you that this conference is being held under the moral auspices of important African and Third World organizations: the Third World Forum and the Association of Third World Economists. Most of you are members of these organizations and often very active members, serving on their Executive Committees. Hence this conference forms part of a general programme of Third World thinking about its future. Therefore it is a programme intended primarily to strengthen the intellectual "self-reliance" so to speak, of the Third World. So it involves Third World thinking about its own future, based on its own concerns and interests. Thanks to the support of the Bariloche Foundation, our Latin American colleagues have done some pioneer work in this field and have worked out a draft world scenario which for once, and I venture to say, as opposed to that of the Club of Rome, was not based on the concerns

of the North but those of the South. Similar conferences will be held in Asia, in the Middle East, and in Latin America, and will probably culminate in Algiers where, on the occasion of the meeting of the Council of the Third World Forum, there will be a conference of the three continents on the same theme. At the same time, the Association of Third World Economists, some of the African Officials of which are present here, has undertaken to reflect on this theme with a view to the Conference of Non-Aligned countries which will be held in Havana in 1979 and to make a critical assessment of the new international economic order. For by the time of the Non-Aligned meeting, the new international economic order will be 5 years old. Five years and already some years of experience and of cruel failures, since neither UNCTAD IV held last year, nor the North-South Dialogue which has just ended, have led to any kind of result. Therefore the new international economic order is highly likely to end up, like so many resolutions, in the dustbin of history.

On my own behalf I venture to suggest to you a global line of thinking for this conference. Should we not, right now, start to consider whether certain guidelines of thinking and action should not be shifted from the sphere of the international order, that is from the revision, through dialogue or confrontation (I never exclude either the one or the other) of international relations to a sphere which depends more on ourselves, that is on our national policies of self-reliant development? By this I also mean that we should explore further the possibilities of "collective self-reliance," i.e. of an integration, not in the sense of a widening of markets in the conventional sense, but an economic and political integration of the various portions of the Third World. The theme of African Unity is one which the African peoples formulated at the end of a century of common history of struggles against foreign colonization. This theme has remained powerful enough for us to be able, I hope, effectively to consider from that angle the possibilities of a better co-operation which, among other effects, would have the consequence of strengthening our bargaining power, even our power to confront the developed regions.

I would like to conclude by recalling that, through its active participation in this kind of activity, IDEP is fulfilling a far from negligible rôle. As an institution for training senior officials, IDEP cannot conceive the training of cadres who are to be policy-makers and not subordinate executive staff, without seriously envisaging the organization of research which will provide a thorough grasp of the thinking on development strategies, both national and international. Failing this, it must be clearly said, all the talk - for it would just be talk - about "self-reliance", about auto-centred national development, and about the new international economic order, would be very much like the somewhat demagogic speeches of armchair politicians. Our Institute, the only Pan-African institute for economic and social development, cannot regard these problems as minor aspects of its activity. Indeed, at a time when "intellectual self-reliance" is the order of the day, it would be difficult to understand if IDEP refrained from thinking about these themes. A few days ago in Geneva, the Executive Director of UNITAR and the directors of the United Nations institutes forcefully recalled that the rôle of those institutes was precisely to serve as a solid basis in the United Nations system and in the State of each region for conducting systematic thinking concerning the national and international development strategies. A few weeks earlier, a group of experts meeting in Kuwait to prepare another big United Nations Conference, the Conference for technical co-operation between developing countries, stressed the generally relevant nature of experience which has so far been transmitted too exclusively from the North to the South. If this is so, it is not for IDEP to teach ready-made recipes for development, which indeed do not exist. I am sure that this conference is going once again to provide relevant and high-quality material for IDEP's teaching, a kind of material which will enable us to get away from the beaten track whose bankruptcy is now clear.