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All-African People's Conference

**SPEECHES BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF GHANA
AT THE OPENING AND CLOSING SESSIONS
ON DECEMBER 8th AND 13th, 1958**

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SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF GHANA AT THE
OPENING SESSION OF THE ALL-AFRICAN PEOPLE'S
CONFERENCE ON MONDAY, 8TH DECEMBER, 1958

Fellow African Freedom Fighters, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my considerable pleasure to welcome here today many official delegates who have come from all over this vast continent of ours to confer together in this All-African People's Conference, as well as the fraternal delegates, observers and other visitors to Ghana. My country is once again host to a gathering of Africans speaking for Africa and Africans, and in welcoming you as Prime Minister of Ghana I am deeply conscious of this fact. Yet my real role here today is that of the Leader of a Political Party, and it is as the Chairman of that Party that I want to address you.

As I look round this hall, my pride overflows at the sight of so large a number of African comrades-in-arms who, imbued with the fervent desire to see Africa free, unfettered and united, have gathered here together on African soil for the first time in the history of our Continent. This assembly marks the opening of a new epoch in our Continent's history and it will be recorded in our annals in illuminations worthy of its significance as the First All-African People's Conference.

We have had Pan-African Congresses before—in fact, five of them—but all of these, by force of circumstances, were carried on outside Africa and under much difficulty. Never before has it been possible for so representative a gathering of African Freedom Fighters not only to come together, but to assemble in a free independent African State for the purpose of planning for a final assault upon Imperialism and Colonialism.

Congratulations for making this possible are due in large measure to the organisers, the sponsoring nationalist and trade union bodies; but without the ready response and determination of the participants to make their way here, in many instances against great odds, our Conference would certainly not be so fully representative of the African's aspiration to freedom and independence. This fact is in itself a wonderful achievement, and I know that it will be written into the records of Africa's chequered history when the last bastion of Colonialism has been rased to the ground.

Invitations were sent out to all *bona fide* political and trade union organisations regardless of their political complexion or the relationships which exist between them in their various countries, for if we are to attain the major objective to which we are all committed—the total liberation of Africa—then it is necessary to bury our political hatchets in the interest of Africa's supreme need.

Only eight months ago I had the honour to welcome to our country political delegates on a different level—that is, the official representatives of the Governments of the independent African States. That Conference, unlike this one, was sponsored, organised and confined in its participation to heads of Governments and their representatives. The idea of that Conference arose out of informal talks at the time of Ghana's Independence Celebrations on the 6th March, 1957. A preparatory committee composed of the Ambassadors of the participating States held a series of meetings and as a result a provisional agenda was drawn up and a date was fixed for the convening of the Conference. The date fixed was April 15th, 1958, and the venue chosen was Accra.

There is one point in connection with that Conference which I would particularly like to elucidate for the benefit of the representatives of the non-independent territories who are here today. That is the decision to confine the April Conference to governmental level. We did so with the greatest reluctance, as we were well aware of the desire of our comrades still under the yoke of foreign imperialist domination to be present.

I would like to mention here that the matter that concerned us most in connection with the convening of the April Conference was the question of inviting representatives of political parties in the dependent territories to participate with the representatives of the independent countries. We were only too conscious of our commitment to helping, by all possible means, the speedy achievement of independence by Colonial territories in Africa. That Conference was thus sponsored collectively and organised collectively by the eight independent African States who had decided to call it. The only distinctive role which Ghana played was to act as host to the delegates. This present Conference is the consummation and affirmation of that decision.

You will have read the declarations and resolutions unanimously reached at the Accra Conference, which pledged Ghana, in communion with her fellow African independent States, to support the struggle of the dependent peoples for the speedy determination of Imperialism and Colonialism and the eradication from this Continent of Racialism. As I have always declared—even before Ghana attained her present sovereign status—"the independence of Ghana will be meaningless unless it is linked up with the total liberation of Africa." We have not moved from this premise nor shall we budge one jot from it until the final goal has been reached and the last vestiges of Imperialism and Colonialism have been wiped off this African Continent. We disdain to hide these aims and objects of ours. We proclaim them freely to the world.

We have pride in our determination to support every form of non-violent action which our fellow Africans in Colonial territories may find it fit to use in the struggle for their legitimate rights and aspirations. We make no apology to anyone,

and we will not allow ourselves to be deflected from this just Cause, a Cause wholly in consonance with the principles enunciated in the Charter of the United Nations.

It was in this spirit that I suggested to the representatives of several African nationalist and trade union organisations who happened to be in Accra during the first anniversary celebration of Ghana's Independence in March this year, that they should take the initiative in organising a conference at which they could air as they liked their views on Colonialism, Imperialism, Racialism and the other subjects on our agenda. I assured them that such a conference would have the full moral support of all the Governments of the independent African States; an assurance which I am happy to say was fully endorsed by the resolutions unanimously adopted by the Accra Conference in April this year.

Out of this informal suggestion, there was set up by the representatives of the various political parties and trade unions then present in Accra, a preparatory committee charged with arranging the present Conference. That your labours are well rewarded is evident by the presence of this large assembly here today, and you are to be warmly congratulated. The Cause we embrace is a noble and irresistible Cause. As long as we remain true to that Cause—the Cause of national freedom and independence—we have nothing to fear but fear itself. As the call sent out by the preparatory committee exhorts, "Peoples of Africa unite! We have nothing to lose but our chains. We have a Continent to regain. We have freedom and human dignity to attain!"

As I said earlier on, this Conference opens a new era in our African history and our struggle is to wipe out Imperialism and Colonialism from this Continent and erect in their place a union of free, independent African States.

The climax of our earlier Pan-African Congresses was the Fifth, which was held in Manchester in 1945, where I had the good luck to be made a joint secretary with Mr. George Padmore, who is now my Adviser on African Affairs. That Congress was perhaps only less historic than this first All-African People's Conference. For that Conference brought together for the first time Africans directly delegated and springing directly from nationalist and trade union organisations in Africa, as well as having Africans among its organisers. All previous Pan-African Congresses had been organised and made up largely of those outside Africa who had the cause of African freedom at heart. The moving spirit in those congresses was Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, and he played no small part in our 1945 Congress, where we laid down the programme of action for the various territories in Africa for continuing the struggle against Colonialism and Imperialism.

Now a new situation has arisen in Africa. Some of us have since 1945 thrown off the trammels of Imperialism and set up independent sovereign States. Other territories are drawing

near to freedom. Nationalist ferment in Africa is gaining momentum. Therefore this Conference must make a new appraisal of the position which exists in Africa today. We must here work out the new strategy and tactics for gaining our hoped-for aspiration and objective, namely the freedom and independence of Africa.

Our deliberations must be conducted in accord and our resolutions must flow out of unity. For unity must be the keynote of our actions. Our enemies are many and they stand ready to pounce upon and exploit our every weakness. They play upon our vanities and flatter us in every kind of way. They tell us that this particular person or that particular country has greater or more favourable potentialities than the other. They do not tell us that we should unite, that we are all as good as we are able to make ourselves once we are free. Remember always that you have four stages to make:

1. the attainment of freedom and independence;
2. the consolidation of that freedom and independence;
3. the creation of unity and community between the free African States;
4. the economic and social reconstruction of Africa.

And here we must stress that the ethical and humanistic side of our people must not be ignored. We do not want a simple materialistic civilisation which disregards the spiritual side of the human personality and man's need of something beyond the filling of his stomach and the satisfaction of his outward needs. We want a society in which human beings will have an opportunity of flowering and where the humanistic and creative side of our people can be fostered and their genius allowed to find its full expression. Much has been said and continues to be said about the inability of the African to rise above his low material wants. Frequent reference is made to his non-contribution to civilisation. That this is an imperialist fiction, we all know. There have been great Empires on this African Continent, and when we are all free again, our African Personality will once again add its full quota to the sum of man's knowledge and culture.

Today most of our people live in serfdom and helotry. For many generations they have been pushed into the limbo of forgotten men, unsuccoured mentally and spiritually. How can slaves, denied the right of free expression and free thought, become savants or exponents of the arts? Culture and civilisation throughout the ages have flowed from a leisured class, an aristocratic class, with the background and material endowments which have made possible the devotion to this side of human endeavour. I say that once Africa is free and independent we shall see a flowering of the human spirit on our Continent second to none. The African Personality in liberty and freedom will have the chance to find its free expression and make its particular contribution to the totality of culture and civilisation.

But just now our attention is upon the struggle to see our Continent completely emancipated and free. This struggle must be undivided. We cannot give it half our attention. It is a heavy and many-sided battle and demands everything that we are able to give it. Its complexities are manifold, and I see from our agenda that you are alive to them. The official delegates at this Conference are going to be called upon to deliberate on some of the major problems facing our Continent today: problems, which, while they receive the consideration of eminent associations of experts, still remain unsolved, simply because these experts dodge the simple fact that they are incapable of solution within the dividing system of Imperialism and Colonialism. These problems which we are about to deliberate here are of wide dimension. They mar and twist relations throughout Africa today and will, alas, with independence, leave heavy legacies of Irredentism and Tribalism behind to be solved. Your deliberations are to range over such problems as Colonialism, Imperialism and Racialism; the arbitrary divisions on our Continent with their resultant frontier perplexities; tribalism and racial laws and practices and religious separatism, and the position of traditional authorities, particularly in the evolving free democratic society on which our eyes are focussed.

Let me say a few words to you out of my own experience as the Founder and Leader of a political party which led the struggle for independence in our country. You may not think it amiss for me to offer you some advice on the basis of our experience of the struggle against Colonialism. I talk not from books but from life. Nor do I try to fit facts into theory for fear of being misinterpreted. Our whole struggle was planned to face up to the facts as we found them.

My first advice to you who are struggling to be free is to aim for the attainment of the Political Kingdom—that is to say, the complete independence and self-determination of your territories. When you have achieved the Political Kingdom all else will follow. Only with the acquisition of political power—real power through the attainment of sovereign independence—will you be in a position to reshape your lives and destiny, only then will you be able to resolve the vexatious problems which harass our Continent.

But this power which you will achieve is not in itself the end. It is the means to an end, and that is why the use to which power is put is so important. Today, Africa is convulsed with the desire to be free and independent, and coupled with this will to independence is an equal desire for some form of African union or federation. There is a searching after Africa's regeneration, politically, socially and economically, within the milieu of a social system suited to the traditions, history, environment and communalistic pattern of African society, which, notwithstanding the inroads made by Western influences, still remains to a large degree unchanged. In the vast rural areas of Africa,

the people hold land in common and work it on the principle of self-help and co-operation. These are the main features still predominating in African society, and we cannot do better than bend them to the requirements of a more modern socialistic pattern of society.

We must re-dedicate ourselves to the task of organising our people and leading them in the struggle for national independence. Africa must be free. We must then use the political power which the people vest in us through freely won elections to bring about the speediest economic and social reconstruction of our countries, so as to provide a higher standard of life for all the people.

And looking forward, we see that, coupled with the consuming aspiration for freedom spreading like a forest fire across Africa today, there is an equally irresistible current which is rising higher and higher as the final day of liberation advances. And that is the burning desire among all the peoples of Africa to establish a community of their own, to give political expression in some form or another to the African Personality. It is this desire which animated my Government and the Government of Guinea to initiate recently certain action which we hope will constitute the nucleus of a United West Africa which will gain the adherence of other independent States as well as those yet to come. We further hope that this coming together will evolve eventually into a Union of African States just as the original thirteen American colonies have now developed into the 49 States constituting the American community. We are convinced that it is only in the inter-dependence of such African unity that we shall be able truly to safeguard our individual national freedom. We have no illusions about this being an easy task. But with the spirit and determination there, and the goodwill and co-operation of our people, we shall, I am firmly convinced, reach our objective.

It is only within this context of interdependence and co-operation, regardless of the constitutional framework in which it will ultimately find expression, that we shall be able to solve the disastrous legacies of Imperialism, especially the arbitrary divisions of peoples on our Continent, done to satisfy the greed and avarice of Colonial and Imperialist Powers. Their days are now coming to an end.

Some of us, I think, need reminding that Africa is a Continent on its own. It is not an extension of Europe or any other continent. We want, therefore, to develop our own community and an African Personality. Others may feel that they have evolved the very best way of life, but we are not bound, like slavish imitators, to accept it as our mould. If we find the methods used by others are suitable to our social environments, we shall adopt or adapt them; if we find them unsuitable, we shall reject them.

I hope that we shall not repeat on the African Continent the petty squabbles and constant disharmonies, the wars and national disasters which have dogged the history of other Continents. It is our belief that with all Africa free, the peace of the world will be better guaranteed, for the elimination of Imperialism and Colonialism will remove those jealousies and antagonisms which have led to two World Wars and are keeping us now in a constant state of tension with the threat of nuclear weapons.

The liberation of Africa is the task of Africans. We Africans alone can emancipate ourselves. We welcome the expressions of support from others, for it is good to know that we are wished well in our struggle; but we alone can grapple with the monster of Imperialism which has all but devoured us. Already we have made inroads into many imperialist strongholds, and we look forward to the year 1960 as the beginning of the end of Colonialism in Africa. In that year our comrades in Nigeria, in Togoland, in the Cameroons and in Somalia will join those of us who already are holding guard over free, independent Africa. With their accretion we shall gather greater inspiration and shall be able to accelerate our offensive against Colonialism.

Yet while we believe that Africa belongs to the Africans, we are not racialists or chauvinists. We welcome into our midst peoples of all other races, other nations, other communities, who desire to live among us in peace and equality. But they must respect us and our rights, our right as the majority to rule. That, as our Western friends have taught us to understand it, is the essence of democracy.

We find it rather ironical that we in Africa have to be reminding the European communities on our Continent of this fundamental principle to which they give so much lip service but to which they pay so little heed in practice. They use racial doctrines as instruments of political domination. They manipulate the electoral systems to suit their convenience in a manner which makes a mockery of the whole conception of Parliamentary Democracy. Invoking the principle of democracy, we say that Africa belongs to Africans!

Fighters for African Freedom, I appeal to you in the sacred name of Mother Africa to leave this Conference resolved to rededicate yourselves to the task of forming among the political parties in your respective countries a broad united front, based upon one common fundamental aim and object: the speedy liberation of your territories.

Down with Imperialism, let us say. Down with Colonialism. Down with Racialism and Tribal Division. Do not let the Colonial Powers divide us, for our division is their gain. Let us recall that our Continent was conquered because there were divisions between our own people, and tribe was pitted against tribe.

Do not let us also forget that Colonialism and Imperialism may come to us yet in a different guise—not necessarily from Europe. We must alert ourselves to be able to recognise this when it rears its head and prepare ourselves to fight against it.

Friends and Comrades, I enjoin you to let us close our ranks. For the day we stand in serried line, that day Colonialism in Africa is defeated. And we must bury that pernicious system with all speed. Only with the internment of Imperialism will Africa be free from menace and live and breathe in liberty, where men of colour shall walk with head held high in human dignity.

Fellow African Freedom Fighters still carrying the burden of Imperialism, pull together. We who have won our freedom stand uncompromisingly behind you in your struggle. Take heart. Unite your forces. Organisation and discipline shall command your victory. All Africa shall be free in this, our lifetime. For this mid-twentieth century is Africa's. This decade is the decade of African independence. Forward then to independence. To Independence Now. Tomorrow, the United States of Africa.

I salute you !

PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH AT CLOSING SESSION OF
CONFERENCE ON 13TH DECEMBER, 1958

Fellow Fighters for African Freedom, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am happy to be here this morning to say farewell to you and to congratulate you on the way you have shaped up to the heavy responsibilities set by the Conference agenda.

I am delighted to see so many people of African descent from abroad attending this Conference. Although, as I said in my opening speech, this is primarily an All-African People's Conference, it has warmed us to see here so many of our brothers from across the sea. We take their presence here as a manifestation of the keen interest in our struggles for a free Africa. We must never forget that they are a part of us. These sons and daughters of Africa were taken away from our shores, and despite all the centuries which have separated us, they have not forgotten their ancestral links.

Many of them have made no small contribution to the cause of African freedom. Names which spring immediately to mind in this connection are those of Marcus Garvey and W. E. B. DuBois. Long before many of us were even conscious of our own degradation, these men fought for African national and racial equality.

Long may the links between Africa and peoples of African descent continue to hold us together in fraternity. Now that we in Africa are marching towards the complete emancipation of this Continent, our independent status will help in no small measure their efforts to attain full human rights and human dignity as citizens of their country.

As delegates started to pour into Accra just over a week ago, the whole world was wondering whether it would be possible for so many of you, coming from different parts of this Continent and speaking different tongues, to sink your individual differences and unite on a common programme. As the Conference has proceeded and I have had more opportunity of meeting you, I have drawn more and more pleasure from seeing the strengthening among you of the desire not only for African freedom, but for unity between each other.

Whatever the world may have been thinking when they saw you all converging upon Accra, we have demonstrated to friend and foe that African peoples left to themselves can direct and manage their own affairs. Our enemies no doubt thought that it would be possible to exploit our differences, but they have been sadly disappointed. You have displayed a maturity and responsibility worthy of the noble cause of African Freedom and Independence.

In many ways this Conference was much more difficult to organise and direct, because its scope and representation was so much greater, than that of the Accra Conference of Independent African States. But you have risen to the occasion with dignity and tolerance and reconciled all points of view.

There is no doubt that the passionate desire for freedom, the burning aspiration to break the yoke of colonial slavery, the eagerness to seek our Independence Now, is the bond which draws us all closer and closer together. Indeed, we have gone beyond this stage and pointed the way towards the creation of unity among the different groups in the respective countries, so that you will go back and build a broad-based united front against the common enemy—Colonialism and Imperialism.

If the Accra Conference gave birth to the African Personality, this All-African People's Conference has laid the foundation for the African Community. From here we shall go forth with renewed strength and determination to join all our forces, having created a climate for unity between the independent States and those of us in Africa who still have freedom to attain.

Two currents have therefore merged into one at this Conference: the current of Independence and the current of Interdependence. The unity of action which Ghana and Guinea have started has received the endorsement of this Conference. More than that; you are going to give it your active co-operation and support. And most important, we look forward to the adherence to the Union of those of you who will shortly become free and independent.

From now on, Africans will look to themselves and to a community of their own, separate and distinct from those other artificial communities which seek to bind us in an unnatural way to other Continents.

While this was primarily a Conference of dependent peoples, a bridge has been built between the Freedom Fighters throughout the Continent. In other words, this Conference has linked together the Independent States with the dependent territories in a common front. It can be said that this Conference has fulfilled the hopes of those of us who now enjoy independence and who have pledged ourselves to give the fullest support to the struggles of those still fighting for their independence.

Another thing which this Conference has done (and this, I think, is almost as important as anything else) is to have brought so many of you together and given you the opportunity of getting to know each other; of sharing your common experiences and appreciating the fact that Colonialism and Imperialism is our common enemy. You can only destroy this enemy by organising yourselves effectively for the achievement of independence. This aim, therefore, must be the over-riding objective. Nothing must distract you from this major goal. Once you have attained independence, all the other evils which flow from Colonialism and Imperialism, such as racialism, tribalism, frontier irredentism, etc., can be tackled and solved.

This Conference has demonstrated to the world that you are able to come together and deliberate your problems without the help of others. We here have given a last notice to the Imperialists to "Quit Africa." Our next All-African People's Conference will not repeat this order of going, for I am sure that at that time our meeting together will be to celebrate the Imperialist retreat from Africa. We are determined to be free and no force on earth is going to deprive us any longer of this inalienable right to freedom and independence.

This Conference has also helped us to discover the source of our weakness, that is, the divisions within our own ranks. Now we are resolved to eradicate these divisions and put an end to the traditional tactics of Imperialism of "divide and rule" which aim at pitting tribe against tribe, country against country, individual against individual. From this Conference we shall go forth firm in our purpose not to allow ourselves to be used for our own subjugation and oppression. The scales have fallen from our eyes. We have got a clear vision of the future and we shall, from now on, march forward in solid phalanx, united in the spirit of brotherhood and solidarity, so formidable in our strength that all the forces ranged against us shall not prevail.

We see our economic future as lying along the path of an African Socialist pattern of society, which will bring nationalism within internationalism, and in accordance with which we shall regenerate the social life of our Continent. If I may summarise, I would say that our aims are briefly these :

- (1) National independence and sovereignty.
- (2) Independence in an African Community.
- (3) Economic and social reconstruction on the basis of African Socialism.

This Conference has proved signally that the bringing together of all of us is one of the best ways of cementing our unity. I therefore hope that we shall be able to arrange before long for a meeting of the leaders of the independent African States and those in the territories which are shortly to join our African community of free nations. Several of them have already expressed their desire for us to get together and talk over the desirability of their coming into the union of which Guinea and Ghana have formed the nucleus.

Also, since the role of the trade unions in the struggle for African freedom and its regeneration is so important, I look forward to a meeting of an All-African Trade Union Conference. The trade unions represent an important side of our economic life. There are other equally important sections which I also hope will get together in the interests of the developing economic reconstruction of Africa. I refer particularly to the African business men, who, until now, have been suppressed by the monopoly of foreign interests. Let them take the initiative and we

shall give them our full support. It is not enough for them to complain that they are being kept out by more powerful competitors. Collectively they can help themselves. For it is important that they play their part in our economic reconstruction. And since we envisage for our people a full and rounded life, we hope that we shall also see the convening of a cultural conference, which will help to enhance the African Personality and bring it to flower.

These are the ideas which I want to throw out, as I feel that only by coming together in conferences of this kind can we learn to know each other and work together in harmony towards the fulfilment of the African Community and the African Personality.

Again, I feel that I must congratulate you in achieving so much just by coming together here and developing a spirit of unity in action against the domination of Colonialism and Imperialism. You have more than fulfilled the hopes of the most optimistic of us.

Let us go away from this Conference buoyed up by this spirit of unity and with renewed determination to strengthen our organisations. For disciplined organisation is the key to the attainment of African Independence. The task before you is clear.

Africa is on the march. Forward to final victory.