The White House Conference on Africa

The Clinton administration's Africa hands have been reminded that in politics few good intentions are fully understood. In an effort to build the domestic base necessary for an effective and sustainable U.S. policy toward Africa, President Clinton convened a first-ever White House Conference on Africa that spanned some 20 packed hours over June 26-27. The 160 participants included such well-known African-Americans as Senator Carol Moseley-Braun, Representative Maxine Waters, Andrew Young, David Dinkins, Jesse Jackson, and the NAACP's Benjamin Chavis; leaders from most of the private development, education, human rights, and relief organizations involved with Africa; and over 20 representatives from the business sector. Instead of being hailed as an imaginative attempt to address a difficult political challenge, the conference was nearly postponed because of a threatened boycott by members of the Congressional Black Caucus and was largely ignored by the media. The sparse coverage generally focused less on substance than on several myths about the proceedings.

It is an understatement to say that this response to the White House initiative is unfortunate. As events in Rwanda and the looming crises in Kenya, Nigeria, and Zaire evidence, we are in desperate need of new ways of addressing African problems. We are not going to find them until we confront the domestic political and media realities that have confounded this and other administrations' attempts to initiate a serious dialogue on Africa's challenges. One way to start is to set the record straight on the facts of the White House Conference.

As originally conceived, the conference seemed to have two purposes: (1) to focus the attention of senior administration officials, especially President Clinton, on Africa and (2) to enlist the growing number of U.S. groups interested in the continent in a concerted effort to assist Africa. It achieved both of these goals. Never before had so many senior officials from so many different departments of government gathered together to discuss policy toward Africa. It is doubtful that there has been any prior occasion when the President, Vice President, Secretary of State, and National Security Adviser gave public speeches on the same issue at the same event. The conference also brought together the most broadly based group of Americans that has ever gathered to address African issues. The main message of the conference was the need for preventive strategies and constituency-building. The administration is already moving on both fronts. In May, USAID Administrator Brian Atwood led a mission to the Horn of Africa to attempt to avert a famine. In early June, USIA brought together over 800 Americans and South Africans in Atlanta to help mobilize support for the new South Africa.

Over the long run, the conference must be judged on whether President Clinton delivers on his commitment to help develop a constituency for Africa. That would provide the best possible answer to those who dismissed the conference as a public relations exercise. More important, it would place the United States in a position to make a significant contribution to building a better future for Africa.

— Michael Clough
Senior Fellow, Council on Foreign Relations
The White House Conference on Africa
June 26-27, 1994
Excerpts from Some of the Major Addresses

President Clinton
When I became President, it seemed to me that our country really didn't have a policy toward Africa, that we had policies toward specific countries and very often we tried to do the right thing. We did have a policy toward South Africa that had been the subject of much division and then was the subject of a lot of unity after the election. But it occurred to me that we were really suffering from having paid insufficient attention to the entire continent as well as to various regions and specific countries and specific problems and certain great promises.

Africa matters to the United States. It has to matter to us. And the things we want to do, they sound so good, but we know they're hard to do—to have sustainable development, to have reasonable population growth, to stop the environmental decline, to stop the spread of AIDS, to preempt ethnic tensions before they explode into bloodbaths, to protect human rights, and to integrate the rich and wonderful spiritual heritage of Islam with the demands of modern states and the conflicts that must be reconciled in peaceful ways. These are not just conceptual. These are practical problems, not just for Africans but also for Americans.

For decades we viewed Africa through a cold war prism and through the fight against apartheid. We often think, cared in past years more about how African nations voted in the United Nations than whether their own people had the right to vote. We supported leaders on the basis of their anti-Communist or antiapartheid rhetoric perhaps more than their actions. And often the United States, because it was a long way away and we had a lot of other problems, just simply ignored the realities of Africa. But now the prism[s] through which we viewed Africa have been shattered. In the post-cold war and postapartheid world, our guideposts have disappeared. We have a new freedom and a new responsibility to see Africa—to see it whole, and to see it as specific nations and specific problems and specific promise. Africa illustrates a central security challenge of the post-cold war era—not so much conflicts across national borders, but conflicts within them which can then spill over.

As Africans turn away from the failed experiments of the past, they're also embracing new political freedoms. Yes, I know there are too many nations in Africa where tyranny still drowns out opposition in human rights. But as we meet today, more than a dozen African nations are preparing for elections. Opposition voices grow louder.

I think South Africa has given a great cause for hope, not only on the African continent, but throughout the world. And I think the $35 million we spent there last year in trying to prepare for and help make sure the elections came off all right was about the best expenditure of a modest amount of tax dollars that I have seen in many a year. But now the hard work begins. Governor Cuomo of New York used to have a wonderful phrase that he quoted all the time. He says we campaign in poetry, but alas, we must govern in prose. And Nelson Mandela's long travail in prison, for the rest of us who did not have to suffer personally, was an exercise in agonizingly beautiful poetry.

But now that those decades of struggle have come to fruition, they must govern in prose, and we must find prosaic, practical, meaningful ways of helping them. We have launched a three-year, $600 million trade investment and development program, which is a beginning of that, but [may] not be the end. And we have to do a number of other things as well. I want to ask all of you who are Americans to help us to develop an American constituency for Africa that creates lasting links between our people and their peoples and that will not only help to drive the continent ahead but will help to drive a meaningful, sustained agenda here at home.

Let me just say one or two other things. I think it's important as we kind of wrap this up to remember that with all the problems and all the terrible things that are happening and all the economic backsliding [that] has occurred, there is a lot of hope in Africa. For every Rwanda, there is Benin, Malawi, Eritrea, Ethiopia, where people are trying to draw together as a society. In spite of our continuing frustrations with Angola, we look at Mozambique reaching out for national reconciliation, looking forward to new elections.

And I think it is very important, as Americans have to choose whether to engage in the future of Africa, that all the things that are happening [that] are good and positive be known, because we can never develop a constituency for change in this country until people imagine that it will make a difference. And the level of knowledge, frankly, is pretty low, except when something really horrible happens. Then it just cuts through our heart and it seems so overwhelming that we can't do anything about it.

And so I say to all of you, I will do what I can. I will never know as much as those of you who have committed your professional lives to the development of Africa; those of you who have friends and family members there; those of you who have ties of passion and history there. But I do know we need a new policy. I do know we need a policy. I do believe Africa matters to America.

I do know there are a lot of good people there leading
and making good things happen. I do know there are a lot of visionaries there. And I do know my child’s and my grandchildren’s future depends upon reconstructing the environmental and social fabric of that continent. I know that.

And so I say to you, let’s build a constituency. Let’s remind people there are things to hope about as well as things to fear. And let’s go to work and make this the beginning, just the beginning, of a new American commitment to a better future for all our peoples.

Vice President Al Gore
(luncheon address, June 27)

. . . . In part, our interest in Africa arises out of a vision of foreign policy enunciated by the President during the campaign and much of this year. It is a three-pronged vision: one that seeks to promote democracy, promote prosperity, and promote our own national security in an age when the Berlin Wall has been dismantled and people are casting ballots in the Kremlin. Our interest in Africa arises as well from our passionate belief in the common bond of humanity and from the fact that both this President and Vice President speak for 25 million Americans whose roots are in Africa.

Early in this administration, National Security Adviser Tony Lake emphasized our commitment to support Africa in three key areas, reiterating the President’s priorities. We want to promote trade and investment. We want to leverage capital for basic development and infrastructure. We want to support effective government and democracy.

There are those who argue that democracy or free market economies—or, for that matter, attention to the environment—are luxuries Africa cannot afford. What patronizing nonsense. Democracy is not a cure-all. But if ever there was doubt that Africa is ready for democracy, it was surely dispelled when we saw ordinary men and women waiting in line at the polling places for hours and hours in small townships, rural reserves, and great cities along the length and breadth of South Africa. And as for those who argue that free trade will only trample Africa’s small companies and smother its entrepreneurs—well, history shows that when countries choose economic isolation over international economic engagement, their standard of living falls. . . .

Our policy has achieved some notable successes. We have eased the debt burden of Africa’s poorest countries. We have supported democratic transitions. We have influenced the growth of accountable government by conditioning our economic assistance in countries like Zambia and Kenya. We expanded the Africa Regional Electoral Assistance Fund to strengthen democratic institutions. We’ve continued our support for South Africa’s transition to democracy with a $600 million multyear program designed to meet the urgent needs of South Africans for jobs, housing, health care, basic education, and black private sector development. . . .

We have worked to strengthen the [Organization of African Unity’s] abilities to resolve conflicts; helped expand the ECOWAS peacekeeping presence in Liberia; worked with the international community to advance the OAU-brokered peace accord in Rwanda; provided $94 million in humanitarian aid to Rwanda, Burundi, and neighboring states; leased peacekeeping equipment to the UN, and encouraged regional leaders to revive the Arusha process.

Our Agency for International Development has undertaken extensive consultations to develop a new approach for doing business in southern Africa. AID has reached agreement on regional initiatives in four areas—two of them unlike anything it has done before: a Southern Africa Enterprise Fund to encourage indigenous private sector development and a Southern Africa Democracy Fund to strengthen participatory democracy.

Usually, in speeches like these, we try to make news. But this year we have also worked very hard to prevent some headlines from appearing. This spring it looked very likely that there would be famine in parts of the Horn region by the end of the growing season. It is one of the most pressing problems on the African continent. Who here does not have emblazoned in their mind’s eye the images of starving families in Ethiopia in 1984? This time we did not wait. President Clinton dispatched Brian Atwood to the region as his special envoy to coordinate
emergency relief efforts and to lead the way in focusing
development activities on the root causes of famine. . . .
We consulted with and gained commitments from the
European Union to augment and coordinate food delivery
to the region; we energized the United Nations and the
PVO [private voluntary organization] community about
the crisis. . . .

I do not run through this list to argue that we have
solved problems. I mention them only to demonstrate the
depth of our commitment. For in the end, American aid
can only be a catalyst. Those who create real change in
Africa will be the African people themselves. But that is
what we have seen.

Uganda has emerged from years of chaos and a fairly
elected constituent assembly will soon ratify a democratic
constitution for that country. Outsiders didn’t do that.
Ugandans did. Malawi prepares for the first genuine
elections in three decades. Outsiders didn’t create those
elections. The people of Malawi did. Both Madagascar
and the Seychelles recently abandoned socialist rule and
have run free and fair elections. Tanzania has legalized
opposition parties. This wasn’t the work of outsiders. It
came from the aspirations and persistence and courage of
the people of Madagascar, Seychelles, and Tanzania.

The worldwide telecommunications revolution also
holds great promise for Africa. It will spark trade and
investment throughout Africa and accelerate the spread of
ideas and information. Right now there are 55 phones
for every 100 Americans—and less than 1 for every 100
Africans. Private sector projects such as AT&T’s
proposed fiber-optic seabed cable and the LEOs (Low
Earth Orbiting Satellite systems) promise to enrich the
lives of all Africans. . . .

This is not to argue that Africa is in the homestretch.
Democracy has made some progress. But there is so
much more to be done. Many African countries need
reform in both civil service and in education. In too many
African countries, disenfranchised, illiterate populations
have been—and sometimes still are—the victims of those
who won power often through the barrel of a gun and
ruthlessly maintained that power. The United States will
be frank in its condemnations of those who call
themselves leaders but who continue to prosecute wars in
which they risk the lives of hundreds of thousands of their
own people—people who have no voice in their own
destinies—or who, as in Rwanda, butcher those with
whom they must live in peace.

But if we in the United States cannot solve Africa’s
future, we can work with those who have that ability. In
fact, we already have. And for evidence, we need look no
further than those who are in this room. . . . I see
Wangari Maathai, the founder of the Green Belt
movement and a champion of rural Kenyan women. I
see members of the Congressional Black Caucus, now
under the leadership of Kweisi Mfume, which has made
so many Americans aware of African problems and
opportunities. I also see Maya Angelou. The night of
Nelson Mandela’s inauguration, we celebrated in the
Market Theater in Johannesburg, a theater that was in
itself a symbol of hope with its willingness to defy

Representative Harry Johnston
Chairman, Subcommittee on Africa
House Foreign Affairs Committee
(segment of June 27 session also featuring
presentations by Senator Paul Simon [chairman
of the Subcommittee on African Affairs of the
Senate Foreign Relations Committee], Senator
Carol Moseley-Braun, Senator James Jeffords,
Representative Amo Houghton, Representative
Tony Hall, and Representative Maxine Waters)

Following introductory comments citing some major
achievements of U.S. policy in Africa—(1) effective
international leadership in the planning and provision
of humanitarian relief, (2) successful restructuring and
streamlining of the U.S. Agency for International
Development, (3) effective leadership on population
issues, including a special center on population being
set up within AID, and (4) “strong and effective
diplomatic performance” in several countries (e.g.,
South Africa, Malawi, Nigeria)—Representative
Johnston listed four challenges on which “the
administration must focus more attention”:

(1) The United States should develop a comprehensive
approach to conflict resolution in Africa. [For example, I
have introduced comprehensive legislation (the “African
Conflict Resolution Act”) [which would provide] assistance
for the Organization of African Unity, subregional
organizations, demobilization, training of Africans in
conflict resolution, and nongovernmental organizations
involved in mediation in Africa.

(2) We must find a way to increase the funding level
for [the] Development Fund for Africa and ensure
effective funding for the multilateral development banks
that are so important for Africa. . . . Africa is THE
encouraging people to participate in government and in the development of their societies. These are leaders like Nelson Mandela of South Africa and Brian Atwood Administrator Agency for International Development . . . . Africa today is not the Africa portrayed in Robert Kaplan’s “The Coming Anarchy” [The Atlantic Monthly, February 1994]. Yes, there is conflict, even tragedy. Yes, there is environmental degradation. Yes, there are overpopulated cities, overpopulated countries. But for the most part, Africa is much more hopeful than Kaplan suggests . . . .

Think about Uganda or Mozambique or Namibia or Zimbabwe or Ethiopia. These were nations in conflict a decade or less ago. Look at them now. Today, more Africans have access to health care and education than ever before. In many parts of Africa, new agricultural techniques are being used and new markets for farmers are being created. Some of the countries of southern Africa that only a few years ago survived a devastating drought today are producing food surpluses.

What is most significant today is that a new group of African leaders has come to power. These leaders are pushing the continent to realize its potential. They are encouraging people to participate in government and in the development of their societies. These are leaders like Nelson Mandela of South Africa and Sam Nujoma of Namibia, Bakili Muluzi of Malawi, Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia, Issaia Afwerki of Eritrea, Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, Nicéphore Soglo of Benin, Mahamane Ousmane of Niger, and Alpha Oumar Konaré of Mali. All of these leaders have come to power and have had their leadership democratically endorsed within the past two years. Add to this critical core such leaders as Abdou Diouf of Senegal, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, Sir Ketumile Masire of Botswana, and Jerry Rawlings of Ghana, and you have a potential for positive collective action that has not existed in Africa since the days of the postcolonial giants of the first African drive for independence. . . .

There is much that I could say today about our development initiatives in Africa, but I would probably not tell this group of experts much that they did not already know. You know that we are doubling our commitment to South Africa. We will over the next three years provide $528 million to help Nelson Mandela’s government promote black private sector development, improve the infrastructure of the townships and the poor rural areas, and in the process create jobs, redress inequities in the health care and education systems, and strengthen democratic institutions. You may not know that we are also increasing our investment in the southern Africa region. Working closely with SADC [the Southern African Development Community] and other regional entities, we will invest $300 million over the next five years to strengthen economic ties, to capitalize small businesses, to improve transportation and communication systems, and to encourage contacts among nongovernmental organizations and other advocates of democracy. You may not know that we have created a special fund to help the CFA currency countries through a difficult transition after their decision to devalue their currency. This devaluation has already encouraged domestic production as import costs have risen. But we want to build on this to stimulate job creation and help governments restructure their economies.

You probably know that the Development Fund for Africa has been a model for the kind of results-oriented, sustainable development program we want to run all over the world. We want to be more integrated in our approach, more strategic in our focus. And we want to work with partner governments that are open to allowing their own people to participate in the development process . . . .

Today, we are spending twice as much on peacekeeping and disaster relief as we are on development. That’s unavoidable. We need to reverse that ratio, and we can if we engage together in a strategy of crisis prevention. In that regard, the President of the United States took a very important step a month ago when he undertook a crisis prevention initiative in the greater Horn area of East Africa, and there are many people in this room [who] participated in that delegation. This is a unique mission in three ways.

First, we’re attempting to gain the world’s political
leaders' attention and the public's attention before a famine occurs, before we see babies dying on television. Second, we have asked other donors and the nations of this greater Horn region to look at the problem in a regional context. And third, we have asked that our collaborative efforts be viewed not just as another rescue mission, but rather as part of a continuum from relief, to recovery, to long-term sustainable development. . . . We would not have succeeded in this approach if the United States had not brought to the table better information on the situation than anyone else. . . . We had information better than the United Nations, better than the European Community, better than any of the other bilateral donors. . . .

Can we extricate ourselves from the morass of crisis management and enter a new era of crisis prevention? Can we equip our government and the international system with the tools to combat chaos as we earlier provided it with the tools to combat communism? Can we use our ingenuity and our leadership skills to prevent famine, conflict, and environmental disaster in the developing world? . . .

The new leaders of Africa give us the hope we need to overcome the obstacles. . . . We cannot develop their societies for them. But today, through more open, decentralized, and democratic political systems, Africa is unleashing the creative skills and energies of its own people. That makes our investment in Africa's sustainable development a sound one.

Let's hope that next year we begin to spend more on development and less on relief.

Salim Ahmed Salim
OAU Secretary General
(excerpted from his address at the June 26 dinner hosted by Secretary of State Warren Christopher)

. . . . . . With the dismantling of apartheid and the installation of an elected government of national unity in South Africa, the Organization of African Unity has closed the chapter on decolonization in the continent. . . . Africa is now engaged in the monumental task of democratization. . . .

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 separatism and division. These have. . . brought great strain to the social fabric in our countries. The challenge [that] 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. . . . to build a culture of tolerance and to use our diversity creatively as a source of strength rather than of division. Naturally, we see the American experience in social accommodation as the most readily adaptable to the African situation. . . .

The new parties [that] have come into power on the ticket of reform. . . . have to deal with the realities of governance—of meeting the economic needs of the people, balancing the conflicting political interests in society and maintaining law and order. . . . To democratize at a time when you are carrying out an adjustment program means that you have to find ways by which order can be maintained without resort to coercion. . . .

This is why I believe these democratizing countries need to be assisted particularly in the economic field so as to sustain and strengthen the process of political transition. . . . I speak of economic assistance because I am aware of the herculean efforts being undertaken by the continent at instituting measures. . . . designed to halt economic decline and restore productivity, growth, and development. These have been done with, and sometimes without, the support of the international financial and monetary institutions. Africa now realizes that it must take responsibility for the economic mistakes of the past and that to deserve international assistance it must [first] demonstrate that it is doing its best. . . .

At the same time, 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. Africa is forced to look to the commercial capital market, where it lacks certification and collateral, to raise resources to support the reforms at home. Emphasis in the West and the financial and monetary institutions [seems] to be on debt repayment rather [than] on the mobilization of the needed resources to help Africa undertake the reforms [that] will anchor the continent on sound economic footing. . . .

There is. . . . a symbiotic relationship between the sustenance of both economic and political reforms. And

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SUBSCRIPTION RATE: CSIS Africa Notes is sent airmail/first class to subscribers worldwide. The annual subscription price for 12 issues and occasional supplements is $48.00. Please make checks payable to: CSIS Africa Notes, 1800 K Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006, U.S.A.


ISSN 0736-9506
that symbiosis is in resource availability. This is why I see the American role in the economic field falling in two broad categories:

First, I see a national effort at the bilateral level to support the efforts in individual African countries. Through increased resource commitment to the adjustment and restructuring programs, the United States can help ensure that those programs are sustained and strengthened. Equally I see a role for the United States, especially through its development agency, to invest in social 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 social needs at the grass-roots level and would be in keeping with the noble mission of the U.S. development agency.

Second, 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 also see as a clear priority the issue of Africa’s indebtedness. I know that many complex monetary and economic arguments and pleas have been put forward to deal with the question of debt—the Toronto plan, the Trinidad and Tobago terms, and others. But I also know that, beyond legal arguments and economic considerations, the issue of Africa’s external indebtedness is a political one. The total of Africa’s debt is not an amount of any consequence to the creditor countries. I therefore hope that the United States will take the necessary political decision to provide leadership and to urge debt forgiveness as a means of liberating the continent from this albatross as well as of supporting the political and economic transition there.

The social problems of the continent—high birth rates, low life expectancy, high maternal mortality, the high infection rates of the HIV virus and other killer diseases, chronic malnutrition, the high rate of unemployment, rapid urbanization growth, environmental degradation, and many others—are directly linked to poverty. We cannot, therefore, hope to address any of these comprehensively unless we first aim at poverty reduction. Likewise, we cannot hope to promote human rights or pursue matters of good governance unless we address the key issue of poverty.

Perhaps the most topical of all the problems of Africa are its conflicts. We are witnessing the horror of organized carnage in Rwanda. Conflicts in Somalia, Angola, and Liberia still persist and tensions in Burundi and in other countries present Africa with a formidable challenge. The phenomenon of 7 million refugees and 15 million displaced persons has partly been brought about by these wars and conflicts.

In a declaration of the 1990 Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, Africa renewed its commitment to the objective of bringing peace, through the resolution of its conflicts. What was significant about that resolution was that, for the first time, Africa said that all conflicts, including those within states, were the concern of every African and that the OAU had a central role to play in the resolution of those conflicts. In order to give this new perspective and the efforts of the OAU an operational framework, the leaders of Africa decided at the 1993 summit in Cairo to set up a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, and Resolution.

In the course of the last year, our efforts have been directed at making the Mechanism operational and at applying it to the conflict situations in the continent. While it is still early to pass full judgment, I can confidently say that Africa is on the right course. Africa is saying that charity begins at home, that to get assistance one must deserve it through example of effort. Already the Mechanism has dealt with a number of conflicts with success. The timely intervention in Congo, for example, helped defuse the political crisis there.

What we may [find difficult to overcome, at least in the short run], is the central question of resources... necessary to cover the operations of the Mechanism. We have made budgetary outlay for the OAU Peace Fund, and we hope that African countries will, in some other way, share the cost of the operations undertaken within the Mechanism. But even with our efforts, it will still be necessary to mobilize resources from outside the continent. In this respect, I wish to thank your government for the financial support you have extended to the OAU in our efforts earlier in Rwanda and currently in Burundi and at resolving conflicts generally.

Apart from this financial support, experience over the past 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 mistaken belief that the rest of the world will always be there with its compassion and resources to serve the continent. 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 exile as refugees and displaced persons in Rwanda was an indictment of us all. It was a failure for Africa, the United Nations, and humanity at large. But if we put this failure in context, you will appreciate that Africa made the efforts that culminated in agreement to contribute troops to join the United Nations humanitarian effort in Rwanda. By the time the [June 1994] OAU summit in Tunis was over, more than 4,500 African troops had been committed, ready for deployment.

While we understand, appreciate, and fully share the humanitarian concerns of individual countries like France, which is now directly involved in Rwanda, we strongly believe that resolution of the Rwanda tragedy requires the total commitment and involvement of the international community as a whole.

Another lesson we have learned is that Africa needs to be prepared sufficiently to respond swiftly in situations of conflicts. I believe that if Africa had ready forces to draw from, it could have made a difference in terms of troop mobilization for service in Rwanda. This is why I have
urged the earmarking of contingents in African national armies, trained in peace observation and peacekeeping, [that] could be made available for service with the UN or the OAU, where circumstances necessitate. I intend to follow up this idea, which I [again] raised at the [1994 OAU summit in Tunis] with member states.

In all these, I see the American role as being twofold. First, [as] a world leader, America can make a major difference if it supports the OAU politically [in the UN and elsewhere]. Second, provision of added resources, logistically and financially through the Peace Fund, would equally give us the means to operate...

When we look at what is happening in Rwanda, it is easy to fall prey to the usual [stereotypical] view that Africa is a continent where suffering and conflicts are endemic and [that] is condemned to misery and backwardness. But unfortunate as the Rwanda conflict is, it should not be allowed to overshadow the many achievements [that] Africa has had or the sustained efforts being deployed in the area of conflict resolution. Today we celebrate victory in South Africa, we note the peaceful resolution of the Chad-Libya conflict, as we do the stabilization of the situation in Congo and the progress made in Mozambique, Liberia, Somalia, and Burundi...

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. The problems of Africa concern this country just as Africa is affected by practically every major development in this country. . . . You need a strong Africa [that] can be a strong partner in global development and not a subject of your constant compassion and unending charity. . . .