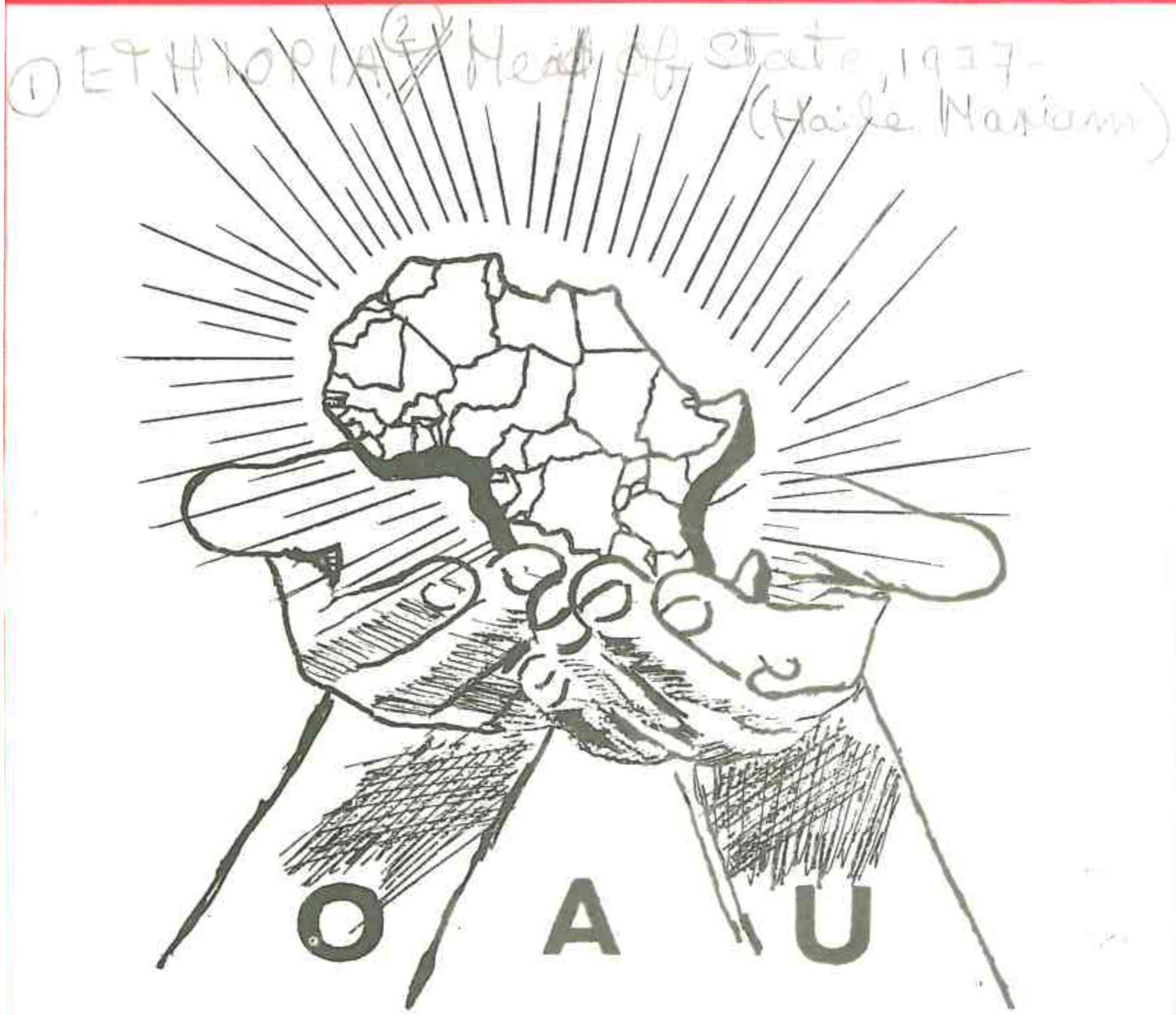


A Address Delivered by Comrade
Chairman Mengistu Haile- Mariam
At the Opening Session of the 34th
Regular Meeting of the Ministerial
Council of the Organisation of Afri-
can Unity Held In Addis Ababa
from February 6 to 15, 1980

Chairman Urges Africa To Face Up Challenge On Zimbabwe



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Opening Session of the 34th Regular
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Distinguished Ministers,

Honourable Secretary General,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Comrades,

On behalf of the Government and people of Socialist Ethiopia and on my own behalf, I would like to express my pleasure at having this opportunity to host in our capital city the Thirty-fourth ordinary session of the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity and to extend to you our warm fraternal welcome.

Before proceeding to express the views of the Revolutionary Government and people of Ethiopia on the special item on the agenda of this session and on the liberation struggle in Africa in general, I deem it appropriate to remember all those African heroes who, throughout the ages, have laid down their lives for the genuine freedom and honour of Africa, and specially those Zimbabwean fighters who have recently been massacred by racists and traitors. I would, therefore, like to ask all present here to observe one minute of silence in memory of our African compatriots.

Excellencies,

We witness today that the paramount goal for which hundreds of thousands of African heroes have sacrificed their lives continues to be the driving force for the oppressed and exploited peoples of Africa and indeed the entire world, thereby preparing them for final victory.

The history of mankind is essentially a history of struggle. As recorded history testifies, this struggle will also continue in the future as long as oppressors and oppressed, exploiters and exploited exist side by side. A glance at African history

reveals that Africa has not been an exception to this general rule. Indeed, the struggle in Africa has been the most bitter and the most sordid in its effects.

Moreover, history shows that ever since European colonialists and racists, dubbed our region as the "dark continent" and portrayed us as being devoid of history, culture, civilization and set out to dominate and exploit us, we observe that the wrongs and injustices perpetrated against us have no parallel in other parts of the world.

Rising with their shields, spears and swords in a heroic and determined resistance against the aggressors who invaded our continent cynically proclaiming that they were bringing us civilization, our African compatriots of that period have left us a glorious and remarkable legacy.

The eventual fall of our continent under the yoke of colonialism was clearly not because our African compatriots lacked courage and determination in the struggle for their freedom and human dignity. Rather, it was simply because the colonialists, taking advantage of their superior armaments technology, carried out atrocities on a colossal scale as attested to by our glorious history.

On the other hand, it is a well known fact that there were then and still are some traitorous individuals and groups who, betraying the honour and the lasting interests of their 'countries, collaborated and continue to collaborate with the enemy, thereby subverting the struggle from within.

Everyone of us also knows that when the liberation struggle was intensified following World War II, similar developments occurred. Throughout the period when our African brothers in Kenya, Algeria, Mozambique, Angola, Zaire, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde and other places rose against the oppressive rule of the colonialists and waged long and bitter struggles, the barbaric massacres carried out by the colonialists against our brothers and the subversions attempted by internal traitors' are indelibly recorded on the conscience of each one of us.

Nevertheless, colonialist atrocities and the conspiracies of internal traitors could not defeat the genuine goals of African heroes. While the fact that there is no power which is capable to overcome peoples who stand united and determined for a just cause has been repeatedly reaffirmed, it is also one which is writ large in the history of the liberation struggle in our own continent.

We, the present generation of Africans are the proud heirs to a glorious history which has been recorded with the blood of our ancestors. The past struggle is still continuing in a more complicated and intensified manner. We have the bounden duty to triumph in this struggle and to add new and victorious chapters to the glorious history of our predecessors.

In this respect, while the contributions of independent African states to the struggle in Southern Africa, especially in Zimbabwe and Namibia, cannot be under-estimated, we cannot say that we have added outstanding new chapters to African history.

In 1965, when a handful of Rhodesian racists under the leadership of Ian Smith and with the collaboration of the British Government declared the establishment of a rebel regime, the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity met in this very Hall with the view to deliberating on the problem and taking appropriate measures.

It is to be recalled that by its decision at the said session, the OAU requested the British Government to discharge its responsibilities as the colonial

power in Rhodesia by creating, within a time limit, an appropriate condition for the establishment of a majority government in lieu of the minority, racist rebel regime. Failing British compliance with the aforementioned request, it was also decided that independent African States sever diplomatic relations with the United Kingdom.

The courageous position taken by the Council of Ministers and the correctness of the timely measures it had adopted at that time have been vindicated by the turn of events in the ensuing period.

When the British Government made it clear that it was not prepared to take action against its "kith and kin" for the sake of African honour and interest, with the exception of some, the independent African States did not implement the common stand agreed upon previously. This shameful situation, which was a laughing stock of the racist and colonialist camps, had left a dark spot in the history of African struggle and a large scar in the conscience of each freedom-loving African. Looking at this situation with dismay, the people of Zimbabwe felt that the only choice left to them was to organize themselves and start armed struggle to regain their freedom and human dignity.

Since the inception of the armed struggle, the people of Zimbabwe have passed through different phases in coordinating their efforts and charting correct directions for the struggle. This process culminated in the formation of the Patriotic Front in 1977.

Realizing that the formation of the Patriotic Front has opened a new chapter in the independence struggle and considering it as the only guarantee for the independence of Zimbabwe, the African States recognized and accepted it as the sole legitimate representative of the people of Zimbabwe and declared their determination to stand by its side.

Having realized that armed uprising was the only language which arrogant exploiters, colonialists and racists, who have been shedding with impunity African blood for centuries, can understand, and firmly convinced that there was no alternative to armed struggle, African states have adopted numerous resolutions at the level of the OAU Liberation Committee, the Council of Ministers and the Assembly of Heads of State and Government to increase moral, diplomatic and material support to the Patriotic Front.

Subsequently, the United Nations and the Non-Aligned Movement have given their full support to the decision of the OAU declaring that the Patriotic Front was the sole legitimate representative of the people of Zimbabwe and that there was no alternative to armed struggle.

Encouraged by the support it received from the international community, the Patriotic Front of Zimbabwe has intensified its struggle and scored numerous victories. It has also paid heavy sacrifices. During the period of the struggle, the aggression and the heavy losses to life and property repeatedly inflicted by the racists and colonialists against the people of the Frontline States, who served as the rearbase have progressively increased in scale and intensity. Realizing that the Frontline States sustained such heavy tolls in life and property because of the principled stand they have taken, and reaffirming the responsibility Africa has towards the liberation struggle, the Heads of State and Government, meeting in Mauritius in 1976 adopted a resolution declaring that they considered any aggression against the Frontline States as an aggression committed against the whole of independent Africa.

In additions, with a view to strengthening the defence capability and replacing damaged property of the Frontline States who were fulfilling the obligations imposed on them by Africans and their regional organization, a committee was established charged with the responsibility of implementing the assistance we had repeatedly pledged to provide them.

Your Excellencies,

As I have stated earlier, independent Africa has consistently expressed its determination to stand alongside the liberation struggle of Zimbabwe and the Frontline States. Given the situation now obtaining in Zimbabwe, however, we can hardly claim in good conscience that we have fulfilled our responsibilities by honouring the pledge we have repeatedly undertaken before the entire world.

In my view, during the entire period of the bitter armed struggle waged by the valiant people of Zimbabwe, we have failed to render them adequate material assistance commensurate with the ability of independent Africa.

Although we, Africans, have been subjected to unparalleled plunder and oppression, we realize





that even today the price we pay for freedom is indeed dear and high. We should have, therefore, aligned ourselves with the entire liberation fighters of Southern Africa and with the peoples and governments of the Frontline States, even if such action required the shedding of our blood.

Other than sending messages of support and passing condemnatory resolutions, we did not accept our responsibilities and fulfil what is expected of us when, in the process of discharging their obligations to Africa in support of the patriots of Zimbabwe, the Frontline States were repeatedly subjected to naked aggressions by imperialists and racists and the lives and property of their peoples were wantonly destroyed.

Because of this complacent attitude we had displayed, racists and imperialists arrogantly continue to strengthen their position and to expand their aggression with impunity.

As a consequence of the complacency and weakness of our organization which is primarily responsible for this important question, the issue of Zimbabwe has unfortunately been placed in the hands of imperialists and racists enabling them to

seek solutions which are convenient and favourable to them through roundtable negotiations at Lancaster House between the Patriotic Front and the puppet of racists, Muzorewa, who is considered to be the arch-enemy of the peoples of Zimbabwe. This situation has compelled the Patriotic Front to assemble its troops in camps surrounded by imperialist, fascist and racist forces, thus forcing their virtual surrender. Further evidence of this is the attempt made early this morning on the life of Comrade Robert Mugabe. It is all the more distressing that such a situation had evolved at a time when the Patriotic Front was almost on the eve of victory.

Excellencies,

Socialist Ethiopia has already made its position known regarding the Lancaster House negotiations. Socialist Ethiopia supports all peaceful efforts leading towards genuine independence in Africa which would have otherwise resulted from continued armed struggle.

However, if we did not accept that it is the foremost duty of our organization to secure independence for those Africans still under colonial

rule; if we did not show indignation at the merciless killing of Africans whose freedom is trampled upon; if we did not accept the fact that imperialists who are playing havoc with the lives of Africans are our enemies; if we expect genuine independence and justice from British imperialism and its agents; then I think we would certainly be deluding ourselves.

In our view, it is inconceivable that the reactionary ruling classes who deprived Africans of their freedom will voluntarily restore it at the conference table.

Although it was clear that the British Government called the Lancaster House Conference with the aim of putting in power their agents of oppression and exploitation in southern Africa, in the convenient guise of free elections, they came to the conference not out of goodwill but as a result of the heroic struggle of the patriots.

Excellencies,

Comrades,

The weakness we have shown in rendering the necessary assistance to the patriots of Zimbabwe and the Frontline States is known to all of us.

It is undeniable that we ourselves contributed to the complexity of the situation by taking different initiatives in a manner contrary to the decisions taken collectively.

It is also undeniable that, at a time when imperialism having reached the end of its unlimited exploitation of human and natural resources, is making a last stand in southern Africa and waging a life-and-death struggle instead of strengthening our determination to have an upper hand, we Africans are indeed weakening in our resolve to face the challenge.

I am pointing out the mistakes we have committed in connection with the liberation struggle of the people of Zimbabwe not to criticize anyone, or to sow discord in our ranks. Neither is it to serve the interests of our enemies, nor to accentuate weakness and defeat, but rather, to face reality, evaluate the extent of the mistakes committed and drawing a lesson from those mistakes, proceed forward in the right direction and with iron determination for the realization of Africa's aspirations and genuine independence. It is also to identify our shortcomings and make the necessary adjustments, thereby further strengthening our posi-

tion so as to be able to attain our common objectives.

If we ourselves fail to make an honest exchange of views and search for the truth courageously and forthrightly, how can we expect and demand from others to pass an honest judgement on us ?

In our view, the real struggle for Africa's genuine independence has not come to an end; it is just beginning. In fact, the decisive and bitter struggle which demands immense sacrifices is still awaiting us in Namibia and South Africa.

We have to seriously consider the consequences of the decisions we shall take on Zimbabwe and the precedence, that could be set by such a decision.

The determined patriots of Zimbabwe have shed their blood and made immense sacrifices in their fight against their enemies. But as the patriots approach the eve of independence, racists and colonialists step up their sinister manoeuvres to foil the struggle of this heroic people and to arrest the tide of history. Unless we take appropriate measu-

res to stop them, these colonialists and racists will not refrain from their mischievous actions.

We are fully aware of the age-old intrigues of the colonialists and imperialists who have been conspiring with a handful of racists and traitors to undermine the struggle of the people of Zimbabwe. Even today, the British Government is implementing its age-old designs through various actions with the objective of prolonging its exploitation of Zimbabwe.

The British Government has continued its nefarious and inhuman deed aimed at preventing the return of the leaders of the Patriotic Front and their fighting cadres who have courageously struggled for long to liberate the people of Zimbabwe. It has also engaged in abhorrent machinations to prevent the repatriation of hundreds of thousands of Zimbabwean nationals who, refusing to accept the oppressive rule of racists and colonialists, had taken refuge in neighbouring countries, and the release of those patriots who had been unjustly detained within the country.

The British Government has restricted the freedom-fighters of the Patriotic Front in camps while, on the other hand, it allows unrestricted

movement to the racist troops of Salisbury and the mercenaries of Muzorewa who are widely deployed to terrorise the population and massacre the Patriotic Front forces that are returning home. It has also allowed the encirclement of the camps of the freedom fighters of the Patriotic Front by the forces of the racist regime of Salisbury.

Furthermore, the British Government is conspiring and collaborating with the bandits of South Africa to covertly or overtly allow the troops of the racist Pretoria regime, to remain in Zimbabwe.

Anyone who has closely followed recent developments can observe that freedom-loving people from certain developing countries in Africa and other continents, who have been victims of aggression perpetrated by several imperialist countries with millions of troops equipped with the latest weapons of mass destruction, have struggled and won impressive victories. We cannot but be conscience-stricken, therefore, by the fact that a handful of racists can act with impunity in Zimbabwe which is of direct concern to the whole of Africa.

In taking stock of this situation, the question that immediately confronts us is not whether a

government reflecting the wishes of the people of Zimbabwe will or will not be formed by their sole and legitimate representatives. Since British imperialism has already answered that question by its actions, a more meaningful question will be as to what Africa must do to counteract and consequently foil the arrogance and conspiracy of Britain and its collaborators.

In their continued manoeuvres, the British Government and its collaborators are not only demonstrating contempt for the patriots of Zimbabwe but are also testing the patience of all the independent peoples of Africa and indeed, all mankind. Now is the time for the struggling peoples of Zimbabwe and the whole of independent Africa to shoulder their historic responsibilities by taking concrete actions to foil these arrogant manoeuvres.

Moreover, I would like to remind this conference that the solidarity of all peace-loving forces of the world is essential to successfully resist and frustrate these world-wide machinations.

It is our view that the struggle of the people of Zimbabwe to achieve genuine independence under the leadership of the Patriotic Front will continue and will entail even greater sacrifices.

What is expected from this conference, therefore, is more than the passing of mere resolutions and declarations. The problem should not be seen as the sole burden of the Patriotic Front and the Frontline States. Neither should we expect British imperialism to hand over genuine independence to peoples through petitions and negotiations.

It is incumbent upon this conference to examine Africa's relations with Britain and to devise ways and means by which the whole of Africa can take speedy and concrete measures commensurate with the international conspiracy facing us and to co-ordinate the efforts of the freedom and peace-loving forces of the world who stand for peace and freedom of mankind.

The situation in southern Africa, and particularly the ongoing struggle for freedom in Zimbabwe has reached a crucial stage and constitutes a principal item of this session.

We owe it to past and future generations of Africans to see to it that the stand we take and the measures we adopt may not extinguish the hope and confidence, which those Africans suffering under the yokes of racism have placed in Africa, thereby

leaving a black spot on the glorious record of our heroic forefathers.

The challenges posed by the present situation in Zimbabwe afford us the opportunity to prove that we are worthy of this historic responsibility entrusted to us. To this end, we have to renew the solemn pledge we made for the total independence of our continent when we signed the Charter of the Organization of African Unity and strive with determination and unity to achieve the genuine goal of our heroic predecessors.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Comrades,

Ethiopia's bitter revolutionary struggle for the attainment of a just economic and social system cannot be viewed in isolation from the struggle of Africa and the rest of the international community to create a new and just economic order.

Having dismantled the archaic and oppressive feudal system today's Ethiopia has become a new land of a struggling people.

The New Ethiopia stands for freedom, equality, justice, democracy, good-neighbourliness and co-operation.

Together with the fraternal African countries, she is now determined to strive, more than ever before, for the realization of a new and bright future for the new Africans.

Finally, I wish you success in your historic deliberations.

Long Live African Unity !