

June 27 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1994

50 years ago, Army had an all-American backfield of Doc Blanchard and Glenn Davis. And one was called Mr. Inside and one was called Mr. Outside, reflecting that they had different skills, but they were both all-Americans. I think that's what we have today, and I think it's the best thing for the country. And I think in the

weeks and months ahead, we'll see it proved out.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:16 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks to the White House Conference on Africa

June 27, 1994

Thank you very much, Mr. Vice President. Ladies and gentlemen and distinguished guests, thank you so much for participating, and thank you for your understanding of our tardiness here today and for waiting so that I could at least share a few of my thoughts on this subject.

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 promise.

And it became crystallized for me in a way in our involvement in Somalia, which I will always believe was a well-motivated and good thing to do that saved hundreds of thousands of lives but which was presented, I think, quite honestly but wrongly to the American people as something that could be done on a purely humanitarian basis, when in fact, unless human tragedy is caused by natural disaster, there is no such thing as a purely humanitarian enterprise.

And as we dealt with that and dealt with the complexities of trying to hand over power to the United Nations mission and the question of how long was long enough and what the U.N. could do and what our responsibilities were as a police force, in effect, after the Pakistani comrades in arms were killed there and dealing with all the various interpretations which could be given to those roles, it struck me again how we needed good intentions in Africa. We

needed attention to Africa. But we also needed to bring the best minds in our country and around the world together to try to learn and to grow and to develop a policy that would make some sense and really had a chance to unleash the human potential of the people of the African continent in ways that would lead to a safer and more prosperous world, a better life for them and a better life for us.

I wish very much that I had had the chance to just sit here for the last couple of days and listen to all of you. I never learn anything when I'm talking. And I know I need to learn a lot. I was so jealous when the Vice President told me he actually got to come and sit in on one of the seminar sessions and to listen to your wonderful speech, madam, and we thank you for coming. But I assure you that I will follow the results of this conference very closely.

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, 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, I 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 anti-apartheid 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 prisms through which we viewed Africa have been shattered. In the post-cold-war and post-apartheid world, our guideposts have disappeared, and it may be a very good thing if we respond in the proper way. We have a new freedom and a new responsibility to see Africa, to see it whole, to see it in specific nations and specific problems and specific promise.

It seems to me that a lot of what we would like to see occur in Africa is what we would like to have happen everywhere. We'd like to see more prosperity and more well-functioning economies and more democracy and genuine security for people in their own borders. We'd like to see sustainable development that promotes the long-term interest of our common environment on this increasingly shrinking globe.

Africa illustrates also 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. It's not confined to Africa as you see in Europe and the effort we have made to try to contain the conflict in Bosnia even as we worked to resolve it.

The United States is presently supporting seven peacekeeping efforts in Africa. And I have issued new guidelines to help us do this work more effectively. I've already discussed Somalia, but we've had special envoys to the Sudan and Angola. We supported the Organization of African Unity's attempts to find new ways to resolve conflicts there and elsewhere.

The daily reports from Rwanda, of course, remind us of the obstacles we face. There we have provided material, financial, and statistical support for the U.N. peacekeeping mission, more than \$100 million in humanitarian relief. We've insisted that those who are committing genocide be brought to justice. And we supported the French decision to protect Rwandans at risk.

This action will end as soon as the United Nations is ready to deploy peacekeepers. And we will redouble our efforts to make sure we're providing all the support we can for that and to make sure it happens as soon as possible.

I'm not sure that we can fairly view what has happened in Rwanda as an aberration but simply as the most extreme example of tensions that can destroy generations and disrupt progress and delay democracy. It seems to me that in the face of all of the tensions that are now gripping the continent, we need a new American policy based on the idea that we should help the nations of Africa identify and solve problems before they erupt. Reacting is not enough. We must examine these underlying problems.

I know one of the underlying problems—and I've been following this on the television, your meeting—is the enormity of outstanding debt. Last year we announced a policy at the G-7 meeting of writing off 50 percent or more of the debts of selected African nations that carry the heaviest debt burdens, and we will continue that. But we are actively searching for new solutions to that problem as well.

And let me just, among others, challenge all of you here who have to work within the existing Federal guidelines—and I just named our Budget Director the new Chief of Staff, and I don't want to criticize tough budget guidelines, because they help us to get the deficit down—but one of the difficulties the United States has that a lot of our partners don't have in writing off debt is that debt, even if it is not worth very much, is required under our budget rules to be scored with a certain value. And we have to really work on that because we often find ourselves, because of the mechanics of this, in a position that can be quite counter-productive.

This is a problem not just in Africa but elsewhere as well. We are actively searching for new solutions to this problem. And I believe that we have to do something about it. Even though we know lightening the debt load won't solve all the problems, we can't solve a lot of the other problems unless we do it.

The long-term goal has to be sustainable development. And the statistics are pretty grim. Look at what is happening to natural resources, to population, to the gap between rich and poor. Look at what has happened to per capita income in so many countries in the decade of the 1980's.

Africans have a daunting set of challenges before them. And yet we know that they can't do what people are always urging me to do: Just pick out one thing and do it; forget about

all the rest. *[Laughter]* Right? You heard that before, here? The problem is, it gives you something to say you did, but it may not solve the problem. I was very impressed by the writings of Professor Homer Dixon, who argued that all of these fronts must be moved on at once. There is no silver bullet; there is no magic cure. It would be nice if we could just work on one or two issues, but unfortunately it's not possible.

When the representatives from 170 nations meet in Cairo at the population conference in September, they will approve a plan of action that attacks this problem at its heart, one which will eventually bolster families, improve the social and economic status of women, and provide the kinds of family planning and health services that sustainable development requires. The United States is a proud partner in embracing this strategy, which will eventually raise living standards and enable us to raise children better throughout the globe. I hope all of you will be supportive of that endeavor.

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. Someday they'll be like me and they'll wish it weren't happening. *[Laughter]* But it's a good sign. And the lights of freedom shine brighter. It's all part of it, right?

I think South Africa has given a great cause for hope not only on the African Continent but throughout the world. President Mandela spoke to you, I know, by videotape, and I thank him for that. I thank Reverend Jackson and others who worked so hard to make those elections work well there. 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, "You know, we campaign in poetry, but alas, we must govern in prose." *[Laughter]* 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 3-year, \$600 million trade, investment, and development program, which is a beginning of that but must 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 at least when you leave here to help us to develop an American constituency for Africa that creates lasting links between our people and their peoples and that will help to drive not only the continent ahead but will help to drive a meaningful, sustained agenda here at home.

We can do this. And maybe the most important thing I can do to work with you in the aftermath of this conference is to do whatever the President can do to develop that constituency, to explain to the American people of whatever race, region, or background, why Africa matters to all of us and to our common future. But all Members here of the Congress who have participated in this, including many who have tried to have more attention drawn to Africa for years and years and years, know that that is the first thing we must do in our democracy.

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 which has occurred, there is a lot of hope in Africa, even though, for example, there are problems in Sudan, where division delays development; there is Senegal; there is Mali; there is Namibia; there is Botswana. 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.

I say this because one of the problems I always find in trying to discuss this with people who are not otherwise engaged is that they read about all these terrible problems, and they think, "Look, we've got all we can say grace over and then some. We're trying to get you to do less, and here you try to get me to think about this." This is a conversation I have now, you know, in the White House and around in town here.

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

which 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 that also gives you an excuse to walk away. You get the best of all worlds, "I really care about this, but lamentably there's nothing I can do."

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 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.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:55 p.m. in Room 450 of the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Wangari Muta Maathai, founder of Kenya's Green Belt Movement; President Nelson Mandela of South Africa; and Rev. Jesse Jackson, head of the U.S. delegation to observe the South African elections. The related memorandum on assistance for South Africa is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Message on the Observance of Independence Day, 1994 *June 27, 1994*

As we celebrate July 4, a momentous and magnificent day in our nation's history, we give thanks for the liberties that our courageous Founders struggled to secure. Declaring the American colonies independent and free, these brave patriots risked everything they held dear to ensure a better future for their children and grandchildren. Today, we fiercely defend the once radical notion that each individual possesses rights that our government is obliged to respect and to guarantee. The powerful ideals for which the Founders fought have become standards of citizenship around the world.

Our country's Founders gave of themselves to create a better future. As heirs to their legacy,

we can do no less. If we are truly to pay tribute to them, we must rededicate ourselves to using our precious freedoms with renewed responsibility. We must work together to rebuild our neighborhoods and bring healing to our torn families and communities. We must strive to end the violence that plagues our society and to give our children the chance to grow up in safe and supportive environments. On our nation's birthday, let us rededicate ourselves to making those choices in the same way Thomas Jefferson and his compatriots did so many years ago—with a hopeful eye toward the future.

Best wishes to all for a wonderful holiday.

BILL CLINTON

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Reception in New York City *June 27, 1994*

Thank you very much. Boy, he was hot tonight, wasn't he? [*Laughter*] I think he's great.

Thank you, Chairman Wilhelm, for your outstanding leadership and for your extraordinary