

# **Presentation by H.E. Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, President of the Republic of Nigeria, Chairman of the Group of 77, at the dialogue with G-8 Leaders**

**Tokyo, 20 July 2000**

---

Thank you Prime Minister Mori for the introduction and the warm welcome. I also thank you for the invitation to this dialogue with the leaders of the G-8 prior to your Summit starting in Okinawa tomorrow. I think it provides timely and useful opportunity for me, the Presidents of South Africa and Algeria, as well as the Prime Minister of Thailand to share our thoughts with you on the main challenges for development in the developing countries.

2. Before I proceed any further, I would like on behalf of myself and my colleagues, to express our deep condolences to the Emperor, the Prime Minister, Government and people of Japan on the passing away of Her Majesty Empress Dowager and Prime Minister Obuchi.

Mr. Chairman,

3. The challenges for development are the same endemic issues that, as leaders of developing countries, we contend and grapple with daily. They evoke the real constraints to better life for the citizens of developing countries and the stability of their societies.

4. The South Summit which took place last April in Havana, Cuba, dealt with these fundamental issues under the four broad themes of:

- Globalisation.
- South-South Cooperation.
- North-South Relations.
- Knowledge and Technology.

The following major challenges and pressing global issues were extensively discussed:

- The excruciating external debt burden.
- Declining ODA and inadequate FDI flows.
- Negative impact of globalisation.
- Debilitating poverty.
- Corruption and looted funds.
- Endemic conflict situations.
- Inadequate human resource development and educational facilities.
- Devastating impact of pandemic diseases (HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis).
- Environmental degradation and natural disasters.
- Inequitable international financial and trading systems (reform of the international financial architecture and trading regime).
- Poor or non-existent information technology, resulting in what has now come to be known as the "digital divide".
- Increasing marginalisation of the UN in global decision making.

5. We are, therefore, pleased that this dialogue is taking place at this time. We are hopeful that from it and the subsequent G-8 Summit, clear guidelines for an action-oriented partnership can emerge. It is in the true interest of our global community that this should be the case. We believe that this can be done and will be done. At the beginning of a new century and millennium, filled with great hopes and aspirations for all

humanity, this should be the way forward.

Mr. Chairman,

6. The debt problem is the major impediment to development in most countries of the South. In this regard, it is our strongly held view that all debt relief or remission measures, especially the HIPC Initiative, must be made more inclusive and flexible in their application. We are convinced that genuine and sustainable growth would continue to elude many developing countries, especially those in Sub-Saharan Africa, in the absence of debt cancellation.

7. The issue is particularly urgent and pressing in societies in transition, such as mine. The question is how do you strengthen democracy, democratic institutions and ensure stability in a situation where the burden of debt servicing is choking off the capacity of the state to make needed investments in social and economic sectors. We believe that the "community of democracies" must see the need for action in this regard as a special imperative.

8. We recognise the grave threat posed by the debt question, poverty, corruption, looted funds, terrorism and drug trafficking to the stability and prosperity not only of the developing but of all countries. They are essentially global challenges for development and peace.

9. Our Foreign Ministers who attended the Miyazaki Meeting with their G-8 counterparts have conveyed to us the positive spirit of their dialogue and the manifest desire on the part of their G-8 colleagues for a viable partnership between the North and South. It is our hope that the Okinawa Summit will build upon this.

10. We must deal with the challenges for development not as separate entities but, in partnership, as members of the same global family with shared interests and responsibilities. Common cause demands common action.

11. I thank you.