



**BAMA KO DECLARATION
of the
AFRICAN STATESMEN INITIATIVE**

JUNE 8, 2005

We, 15 former heads of state and government from across the African continent, have gathered in Bamako, Mali, from June 5 to 8, 2005, to discuss the individual and collaborative contributions that former leaders can make to address the urgent challenges facing Africa today. We believe that democracy is the sole form of government that permits the development of the range of national institutions needed to ensure sustainable peace, security, economic growth and social well-being. We applaud the spread of democratic values and respect for the rights of citizens in a growing number of African countries. We commit ourselves to continuing to use our good offices to foster dialogue and the peaceful resolution of the continent's conflicts, and to promote human security and democratic models of government that offer citizens the opportunity to choose their leaders freely and participate fully in the political life of their countries. We will continue to work to address the threat of HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other public health crises, and to encourage sustainable economic development and the protection of our rich but fragile ecosystems.

Since leaving office, African leaders have offered their experience and expertise and often succeeded in promoting peace, democracy and human rights across the continent and in international forums. They have sought to safeguard the integrity and transparency of electoral systems, to draw attention to the ravages of malaria, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, and other infectious diseases, to encourage the participation of women in politics, and to improve access to education and economic opportunities for Africans, especially youth. They have acted as mediators in resolving conflicts in a number of countries, while analyzing and drawing attention to the root causes of war in others. Many former leaders have contributed to the development and progress of emerging regional and sub-regional bodies such as the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). At the same time, former leaders also serve as a voice for Africa in the international community.

We acknowledge that Africa is a mosaic where in many places, political leaders – both governing and opposition – and civil society are building and reinforcing the institutions of democratic change and renewal, while forming important alliances to alleviate poverty, combat disease and protect our environments. We welcome the future participation of outgoing heads of state and government in efforts to promote democratic principles, good governance, and human security and development through individual and collective action.

We believe that by harnessing the rich human and material resources available to the continent, it is possible – and indeed vital – to help transform an African dream of peace, prosperity, opportunity into reality for the continent’s citizens. We note with appreciation the work of existing forums to bring together former heads of state and government, including the Club de Madrid, the Council of Presidents and Prime Ministers of the Americas and Boston University’s African Presidential Archives and Research Center, as well as international organizations, academia and non-governmental organizations that have offered technical expertise and created opportunities for former heads of state to serve the continent in meaningful ways. We welcome new initiatives being discussed, such as the Council of Elders by NEPAD, and within the Commonwealth. We support the initiative of the United Nations Development Programme to establish the Africa Governance Institute as an incubator of innovative ideas, an institutional vehicle for assembling tried and tested measures, and a forum for dialogue between international and local partners on governance issues.

In concluding our deliberations over the past three days, we affirm and commit ourselves to the following:

Leadership, Security and Conflict Resolution

Individually and collectively, we commit to promoting strong and sustainable processes and institutions of democratic governance on the continent. We highlight the important role of militaries and security forces in protecting citizens, as well as the necessity for civilian oversight of the military. We recognize the importance of addressing the challenges and root causes of conflicts that undermine the development of accountable and inclusive democratic rule. We encourage the international community to commit resources to the prevention of conflicts and to support fully peacekeeping efforts by regional and international bodies.

We are preoccupied by the prevalence of conflict in a number of African countries, and support efforts by the United Nations, the African Union and other regional bodies to resolve them through dialogue and reconciliation. We will continue to be available to undertake mediation and conflict prevention efforts, and to assist the process of conflict resolution through the development and implementation of sustainable peace processes based on reconciliation, justice and democratic principles.

We affirm that changes of power and political succession should always be based on constitutional rule and democratic principles. We are gravely concerned that a number of countries are still experiencing serious difficulties in meeting such requirements for successful democratic transitions. We urge that inclusive frameworks for dialogue be created in such countries in order to chart a course toward reconciliation and consolidation of democracy.

Sustainable Democratization

We affirm the special responsibility of former heads of state and government to support the development of strong, well functioning legislative and judicial bodies, as well as other public institutions to ensure public accountability. We commit to addressing the barriers that prevent the full political participation of women. We will continue to support the development of free and participatory electoral processes as the method for settling peacefully the competition for power.

We recognize that no election can be separated from its broader historical and cultural context and that elections must be conducted with full respect for internationally recognized civil and political rights. When organized hastily in post-conflict situations and without attention to the root causes of violence or to overcoming previous exclusionary policies and practices, we know from experience that elections can exacerbate rather than resolve instability. Yet, we recognize that while elections are insufficient to create democracy, democratic governance is not possible without genuine elections. Such elections require workable and participatory political systems, and the promotion and support of wider civic and voter education efforts.

Drawing on African traditions of consensus and inclusive dialogue, we note in particular the need to foster internal democracy within political parties, and to develop and reinforce the role of opposition and minority voices in governance structures. We draw attention to the ongoing decentralization programs of many countries and encourage these efforts to extend democratic participation to the communal level. We encourage the international community to commit resources to democratization efforts at all levels of governance. In this regard, we acknowledge the recently proposed United Nations democracy fund and encourage that it be appropriately funded if approved.

Public Health Imperatives

We recognize that deadly diseases, such as malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, create a health crisis that is robbing the continent of valuable human resources and exacerbating poverty. Their unchecked spread undermines confidence in nascent democracies, as citizens' expectations for improved socio-economic standards are frustrated. As former heads of state and government, we want to join with others in government and civil society to promote awareness, mobilize resources and improve access to health care. We encourage in particular the international community to commit the resources necessary to effectively address these public health challenges. We commit ourselves to working toward a continent-wide consensus on an integrated approach to limit the impact of and ultimately eradicate disease. Of serious concern is the increasing exodus of qualified health workers from the continent. In the search for solutions, incentives must be created to retain and reward them.

Social and Economic Development

As former heads of state and government, we have an ongoing responsibility to support efforts that address poverty and stimulate sustainable social and economic growth. During this gathering, we reviewed the initiatives, instruments and institutions essential for Africa's economic development and social well-being, with the understanding that the establishment of democratic institutions at all levels of government is the best way to assure sustainable development. Rural dislocation, environmental degradation and agricultural policies that lead to famine can best be overcome by political systems that are responsive and accountable to their citizens. At the same time, the international community must in our view make greater financial investments in human and infrastructure development on the continent.

Greater efforts must be undertaken in partnership with the international community and international financial institutions to improve food security and access to potable water. Special attention must be paid to improving Africans' access to the internet and other forms of

communication that bind nations and individuals together in today's global economy. We support the promotion of trade and economic exchange within Africa and between Africa and the broader international community in accordance with the NEPAD economic program. In addition, we emphasize the need to invest much more in the continent's educational institutions to train and prepare the youth of today for the challenges of tomorrow. We note with special concern the importance of extending educational opportunities to girls, who are more often than boys denied access to primary and secondary schools.

We wish to express our gratitude to President Amadou Toumani Touré and the Government of Mali for helping to facilitate this meeting of the African Statesmen Initiative, and the Malian people for their hospitality. We also express our thanks to the National Democratic Institute (NDI) for supporting this initiative as well as other organizations that have contributed to this effort. They are: the National Endowment for Democracy; the Club de Madrid; the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; the United Nations Development Programme; the Government of Germany; the Institute for Multiparty Democracy of the Netherlands; the Africa Center for Strategic Studies; the Open Society Institute of West Africa; the Westminster Foundation for Democracy and USAID.

We also express our gratitude for the participation in this meeting of former Canadian Prime Minister Kim Campbell and former Romanian Prime Minister Petre Roman, both Club de Madrid members, and others who contributed to our deliberations.

Nicéphore Soglo, former President, Benin
Ketumile Masire, former President, Botswana
Antonio Mascarenhas Monteiro, former President, Cape Verde
Dawda Kairaba Jawara, former President, The Gambia
Jerry Rawlings, former President, Ghana
Amos Sawyer, former President, Liberia
Albert Zafy, former President, Madagascar
Joaquim Chissano, former President, Mozambique
Sam Nujoma, former President, Namibia
Mahamane Ousmane, former President, Niger
Yakubu Gowon, former President, Nigeria
Manuel Pinto da Costa, former President, Sao Tome and Principe
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Al Sadig Al-Mahdi, former Prime Minister, Sudan
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