

Programme Director;
Your Excellency, Vice President Dr Mohammed Gharib Bilal;
Honourable Ministers and Deputy Ministers;
The Leadership of Chama Cha Mapinduzi;
The Leadership of the Somafco Trust;
Sponsors and Partners of the Somafco Trust;
The Academic Community;
Members of the Diplomatic Corps;
The Business Community;
Students and Youth;
Distinguished Guests; and
Ladies and gentlemen:

Ham Jambo (HALLO)!!!!

I am humbled by the singular honour of addressing this historic event that marks the twentieth anniversary of the handing over of the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College (SOMAFCO) to the government and people of Tanzania.

Accordingly, I bring with me a message of deeply-felt gratitude from the people of a free and democratic South Africa to the Tanzanian nation for all the sacrifices and contributions they have made during the dark days of the anti-apartheid struggle.

Indeed among the countless contributions by the people of Tanzania to the African National Congress (ANC) during the difficult days of exile was the land on which SOMAFCO was built in Mazimbu.

This land was offered to the ANC with the aim of empowering the exiled South Africans with education and the necessary skills which would be sorely needed once the apartheid state was defeated and replaced with a democratic government.

I also wish to take this opportunity to thank Baba wa Taifa, the African visionary and inspiring leader, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, whose vision of African solidarity made all this history possible.

Among us today and serving as the Vice President of the United Republic of Tanzania is his Excellency Dr Mohammed Gharib Bilal, who served as the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education during the handover ceremony of SOMAFCO.

Similarly, I would also like to thank Dr Bilal for successfully re-integrating SOMAFCO into the Tanzanian education system in a seamless way.

Twenty years ago today the late President of the ANC, Oliver Tambo, handed back this land, along with its superstructure, to the people of Tanzania. As such, a reflection of this shared history is in order.

But first we need a summation of what SOMAFCO was all about to enable us to have a better picture of this history. The exodus into exile by the South African youths in the mid-1970s necessitated formal schooling, especially because of the age of many of the youth.

Consequently, SOMAFCO equipped these young people with education so that they could contribute to the liberation struggle as well as play a positive role in different ways in the post-apartheid society.

In other words, SOMAFCO prepared the youth for the challenges of life and succeeded in that task.

As such SOMAFCO served as a sanctuary for many young people who had escaped the debilitating effects of a gutter system of education known as Bantu education, whose chief design, according to Dr Verwoerd, the architect of apartheid himself, was to 'produce hewers of wood and drawers of water'.

Yet SOMAFCO represented the antithesis of this detestable conception of education in that its objective was to issue forth graduates with a well-rounded education and a balanced philosophical outlook with a better appreciation of the human condition.

SOMAFCO also provided an opportunity for students to explore the political, economic and social world in a critical fashion, providing them with more avenues to advance their growth and development, not only to be better human beings, but also, to be good citizens of the world.

Ladies and gentlemen;

Having outlined the purpose of this project let me move on to the gist of my focus for today.

To make sense of this inspiring event, I propose to first reflect on the meaning of the history of SOMAFCO in the context of the struggle for freedom and international solidarity; and then identify lessons we need to draw today as we strive for reconstruction and development of the African continent.

Of course underlying all these noble efforts to rebuild the continent of Africa is and has always been the all-important issue of education, which was what SOMAFCO was all about essentially.

Programme director;

I would like to contend that in the grand scheme of things SOMAFCO was and remains first and foremost a symbol of human solidarity.

As our shared history shows, solidarity between our two nations as represented by our leading liberation movements, the ANC and the then Tanganyika African National Union (TANU), goes back a very long time indeed.

In keeping with the spirit of African solidarity, the ANC responded to a request by the TANU for 20 nurses to replace the British nurses who had left upon the onset of independence. This was solidarity in action, which would subsequently be returned many times over

Necessarily, to appreciate this noblest of principles we need to see and understand this historic college in the context of the commitment by the Tanzanian government to support the liberation struggles of fellow Africans.

In this regard, the Tanzanian government donated the land to the ANC in Mazimbu.

The donated land was then developed to meet institutional needs of various kinds, including, essentially, SOMAFCO, and in addition, the Dakawa Arts Centre, two libraries, two nursery and primary schools, day care centres, boarding accommodation, youth centres and a sporting field.

It is self-evident that all these facilities could not be developed by a poor, exiled liberation movement from its own resources.

While the government of Tanzania provided this land, the ANC depended on funders and donors from across the world to be able to put up these facilities.

In this regard history will forever thank many European and Asian Nations, as well as a host of other funders for the generous and comradely contributions they so selflessly made towards both the realisation of these huge projects and their day to day running and maintenance.

It bears emphasising that the driving force behind this invaluable contribution by these countries and other friends of freedom, such as Tanzania, was the commitment to support the course of freedom of the people of South Africa.

Once again, these contributions were motivated by the principle of international solidarity.

In saying this I also wish, on behalf of the people of our country and our liberation movement, the ANC, to once again express heart-felt gratitude to the people of all these nations for flying the banner of international solidarity high, sometimes at a great cost to themselves.

Be that as it may, no cause can be nobler than contributing to the attainment of liberation of humanity. Indeed every people hunger to determine their own fate under conditions of freedom.

Tribute is also due to other European as well as African countries and the United Nations, for providing funding and other different wherewithal for the successful running of SOMAFCO.

As it turned out the teaching staff of SOMAFCO was drawn from different nations, including The Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, England, Ireland, Poland, The German Democratic Republic, Australia and the United States of America.

In this sense, because it attracted volunteers from different parts of the world mainly defined by commitment to the anti-apartheid struggle and a desire to make a difference to the lives of fellow human beings, SOMAFCO became a sort of microcosm of the world community of nations.

More than anything, in as much as all these volunteers made an impact on the SOMAFCO community, I am certain that living in that community in turn left an indelible and deep impact on these volunteer corps for a variety of reasons.

For one thing the high-minded values encapsulated in the vision of freedom, unity, democracy, non-racialism, non-sexism and justice that comprised the bedrock of the ANC as a liberation movement defined the essence of the curriculum, philosophy and the culture of SOMAFCO.

Attesting to this enduring experience, Sherry McLean, one of the volunteers who taught at SOMAFCO, had this to say:

'This was about human-ness, tolerance, understanding, questioning and above all patience. These components of life at SOMAFCO have been an important part of my own development and remain with me to this day.'

SOMAFCO thus helped with the development of profound feelings of solidarity that expressed itself in practical terms, with many of the volunteers from the developed North foregoing the creature comforts of their societies to rough it up under difficult African conditions with a view to making a contribution.

More than that, Tanzania and other African states often parted with their meagre resources with the view to ensure the total liberation of the African continent. In some cases they paid the price for this solidarity by earning the ire of the apartheid regime, which never hesitated to use its mighty military prowess to punish those who dared to support the liberation forces.

Programme Director;

What then are the necessary lessons we need to draw from this historical experience as we wrestle with post-apartheid and indeed, post-colonial challenges with which we are faced today?

To remain faithful to history, we should all remember the two key elements of the SOMAFCO project: that is, solidarity and self-reliance.

When the late Oliver Tambo handed over Somafco on the 09 July 1992, he made a telling remark that he hoped that these projects would forever represent the friendship and solidarity between our two nations.

Further accentuating this desire to uphold this historical thread of solidarity is the humanistic adage: 'The spirit of SOMAFCO', to characterise and recapture the essence of this history between

us.

I therefore wish to emphasise the responsibility faced by all of us, the graduates of SOMAFCO and the membership of the ANC, to continue with the task of educating our people about this history which we so intimately share.

It is our duty, especially us South African leaders and descendents of the liberation struggle, to further research and write about this history with the view to educating posterity about where we come from.

Today the people of Africa as a whole are faced with common challenges that impinge on our common, indissoluble destiny as a people.

No single African nation will be able to transcend these strangulating challenges, including the current global economic crisis, all on its own.

We need to harness this common history as Africans to chart a way forward that will lift us out of the abyss and set us on an irreversible path of reconstruction and development.

All along we should tap into our anti-colonial history and the strong bonding that developed from this era, enabling us to work together towards our common goals of freedom.

Our developmental challenges today call for similar spirit of partnership and solidarity.

In much the same way we need to harness this shared history with all progressive-minded people and nations in the developed North.

Just as our indivisible humanity enabled us to work together, rising above our superficial difference to fully embrace our common humanity, so do we also need to continue in this spirit in addressing persistent challenges facing people in the developing world.

It is the duty of all of us to utilise this unity to address modern challenges facing the African continent. On the strength of this unity we should then recognize under-development as yet another form of oppression and combat it with the same energy and commitment.

I must at the same time applaud past and present efforts by many in Africa to keep this legacy of international and African solidarity alive.

In this we are following in the great footsteps of visionary Africans who came before, such as Sol Plaatje, Patrice Lumumba, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, Nelson Mandela, Chief Albert Luthuli, Moses Kotane, J.B Marks, Frantz Fanon, Walter Rodney, Kwame Nkrumah, Samora Machel, Thomas Sankara, Amilcar Cabral and Augustino Neto.

We are pleased that today their vision for unity and renaissance is being carried forward across Africa through programmes and institutions such as NEPAD, The Pan-African Parliament, the African Peer Review Mechanism and the African Union.

For its part the ANC continues to work with other countries and progressive forces to promote the transformation of the African Agenda and a better world.

We continue to seek a path of hope, internationalism, human solidarity and promoting mutual friendship among peoples of the world, informed by the tangible and moral support we received from the establishment of SOMAFCO as a worthy historical experience.

As I have tried to show, the anti-apartheid struggle developed moral values of human compassion and solidarity far beyond mere opposition to the apartheid social system. It clearly posited a different world defined by unity, democracy, non-racialism, non-sexism and justice, values which were desirable not only in the post-apartheid South Africa but in human society in general.

Going forward, I wish to challenge all of us today to espouse these tenets that emerged during the groundswell of international solidarity against the apartheid crime against humanity, a solidarity profoundly upheld during the historical epoch of SOMAFSCO.

We now know as a matter of experience that solidarity can enable humanity to re-imagine a new, better world, a world that is human-centred in its philosophical system and yet respectful of the natural world we live in.

Ladies and gentlemen;

The second key consideration which I would like us to extract from SOMAFSCO experience is the critical issue of self-reliance.

Indeed it was the notion of self-reliance that led the government of Tanzania to offer land to the ANC so that instead of going cap in hand asking for necessities, the ANC could put the land to the needs of the exiled community.

One of the key implications of this gesture is that the people of Tanzania had an abiding confidence in the ANC to pull itself up by its bootstraps.

They understood that for a liberation movement aiming to defeat the abhorrent system of racial domination and in its stead construct a democratic government there was a prefigurative need to prove its mettle by getting its hands soiled even under conditions of struggle.

Self-reliance is an indispensable virtue for all of us as Africans today as we seek to expand the floor of development for our nations.

Relying on ourselves presupposes observing particular irreducible principles and an adherence to norms and values that underpin any striving for self-development.

Such values that guarantee self-development include democracy, rule of law, good governance, education, health, and the desire to empower ordinary Africans to fend for themselves in their daily lives in conditions congenial to the fulfilment of human development.

From a psychological and practical viewpoint, the success of SOMAFSCO was a model of what a post-apartheid South Africa could be if we worked together, guided by the spirit of selflessness and a commitment to a mobilising vision.

In post-apartheid South Africa today this legacy of SOMAFSCO continues to guide us as we confront the accumulated disabilities of history which among other things sought to subjugate the African mind to a perpetual life of inferiority through a malignant education system and other means.

Let us remember that the students of this historic institution are the inheritors of a particular history and should therefore be aware that this reality places considerable obligations on their shoulders to uphold this great legacy.

At the end nothing can pay tribute to these key values of self-reliance and solidarity between our two nations more than ensuring that this facility, which has been incorporated into the Sokoine University of Agriculture, continues to contribute to the developmental needs of Tanzania and its people.

Not only that, I strongly believe that this project can only serve as a reference point for many existing education institutions, and even inspire those not yet conceived of, to throw themselves to the task of the development of Tanzania.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

After the small but edifying experience of SOMAFSCO, what then should be the role of education in advancing the developmental interests of not only South Africa and Tanzania but the African

continent at large?

Deferring to the innate authority of this institution as a knowledge production site, I will not delve into scholastic contentions about which conception of education is most desirable for human society.

Rather, I want to proceed by arguing broadly for the need for African intellectuals, scholars, thinkers, in a word, all types of African workers involved in the enterprise of knowledge production, both in Africa and abroad, to help Africa turn the tide.

To further illuminate my point, I want to ask whether, at the moment, Africa produces enough intellectuals and scientists with the requisite consciousness to bring meaning to the current notion of creating African Solutions to African problems?

While knowledge is not racially or regionally determined, there are plausible grounds to contend for a need for a transformative conception of scholarship whose epistemological starting points assume Africa as the centre.

Such attitude to university and intellectual orientation to Africa's challenges sees and comprehends reality in African terms, basing its approach on African socio-cultural assumptions.

While developed societies can today afford to advance the view that universities should pursue knowledge for its own sake, it should be remembered that colonial domination thrived on the basis of European scholastic support system.

My contention is, in substance, in history societies have always considered sites of knowledge production as organically linked to their defining essence and creating conditions for their mobility.

The first point to acknowledge in this regard is the fact that advancement in technology and increasing globalisation has tilted the balance of forces, such that borders are becoming porous, thus increasing mobility of human capital across the globe.

Africa is the biggest victim of this phenomenon, which has come to be known as brain drain.

As such, African leaders must take the space and time to attend to this challenge in order to realise the vision of African scholarship envisioned when establishing SOMAFCO.

In this regard, our duty as leaders, intellectuals, academics, and educationists is to commit ourselves to equip the African child from birth to retirement with the cognitive and education tools that encompass a life-long commitment to learning and to generating knowledge within the context of abiding loyalty to the African interests.

As the Greek philosopher Diogenes Laertius noted ages ago "The foundation of every state is the education of its youth."

This difficult task will of course require that we elevate African knowledge systems from their permanent banishment to "African studies" in universities such as Oxford School of African Studies.

We need to be at the forefront of using African knowledge systems in mainstream sciences and information technology studies.

If we fall behind in these areas, we will perpetuate the disconcerting notion that African knowledge systems are, at best, based on hearsay passed on from generation to generation and at worst are mere superstitions that have no logical or scientific proof.

African academics are therefore best suited to fuse "western" and African forms of knowledge systems in order to contribute to sustainable and long-term African development.

African scholars must also tap into the opportunities that naturally arise out of diversity of African

communities, exploiting the multiplicity of various cultures to produce better forms of knowledge, translating ultimately into more appealing and competitive knowledge forms.

The second area that requires our attention is the role of African scholarship in shifting the relationship of universities as "ivory towers" that encourage the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, to ensuring that knowledge leads to the betterment of society, economically and otherwise.

The former United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan, emphasised the liberatory value of education when he submitted that:

'Education is a human right with immense power to transform. On its foundation rest the cornerstones of freedom, democracy and sustainable human development.'

The example of SOMAFSCO contains enough lessons, particularly regarding the philosophical injunction that education needs to serve the needs of human development, morally, spiritually and socio-economically.

With this in mind, I wish to call upon African scholars, thinkers, researchers, teachers and indeed all leading African minds to join hands in the task of investing in research and development, information communication technology and infrastructure development as a launching pad for African development.

While basic literacy is pivotal and a rich culture of philosophy of education for defining the African condition and determining the best course of action is needed, we also need the hard sciences as the foundation upon which the future of Africa is to be built.

Research and development is key to the African vision of shared growth, equitable development, developing indigenous knowledge systems and technological advancement.

Modernity is driven and sustained by research and development and no doubt Africans can ill-afford to fail in this indispensable area of knowledge if we are to make any headway.

Also notable is the need to use investment in research and development to groom young African scientists and researchers so that as Africans we begin to hold our own in the international community of knowledge production and distribution and to that extend, determine the direction of our future as a people.

Related to the area of research and development is the challenge of aggressively working on advancing our capability in information communication technologies as a catalyst for reconstruction and development, especially in stimulating industrial capacities.

We learn from studies by the World Bank that investment in broadband penetration can have a massively positive impact on economic growth.

From the viewpoint of national economies a 10% increase in broadband penetration generates a 1.4% increase in GDP Growth for the developing countries.

A key challenge is therefore to increase broadband penetration so that we can realise the associated benefits for countries within Africa.

We are required to accelerate investment in broadband infrastructure to achieve high growth potential in the information and communications technology.

We believe that strategic investment in that sector will allow Africa to increasingly play an important role in the development of new applications and technological innovations that are relevant for the needs of our continent, and that this will ensure a continued multiplier effect on economic growth.

It is also increasingly clear, as Nepad has shown, that infrastructure development within and

between our nations ranks quite high as a strategic area for African development.

Poor infrastructure is holding Africa down. We know that at present poor road, rail and power facilities do slow down the movement of people, goods and services within and between African countries.

As a result it is easier and cheaper for coastal countries to import items from far across the oceans than purchase them from their neighbours.

The North-South corridor programme is a key initiative of the African Union to address this challenge. There are several other similar infrastructure projects across Africa.

The above challenges and ongoing efforts at addressing them need that from time to time we hold up a mirror to ourselves to have a useful measure of our strengths and weaknesses.

For their part, governments cannot succeed on their own, without basing their efforts and ultimately, vision, on scientific know-how generated by the academic community.

Similarly, the academic community will be hard put breaking new ground in their various areas of endeavours without the much needed resources from government and a free and unfettered space to carry out their duties.

Destiny has imposed on African political leaders and scholars the ineluctable responsibility to work together not only for the mutual benefit of both, but more critically, for the interests of the African people at large, including posterity.

Ladies and gentlemen;

In conclusion, I wish once again to thank the people of Tanzania for the magnanimity of spirit they showed to us during our hour of need and at a time when they were not yet fully settled in conditions of freedom.

We are also indebted to all the inter-continental partners, including those we could not mention in this address, who sent material and human resource support to provide quality education and skills training at SOMAFCO.

We are equally pleased that the youth of South Africa, under the aegis of the SOMAFCO Trust, have taken a keen interest by actively engaging in exchanges with their youth counter-parts in Tanzania, further cementing our people-to-people ties.

I trust that from this point onwards our people will elevate relations to a higher level, inspired by our shared, glorious if difficult history of struggle symbolised by SOMAFCO.

I thank you for your kind attention!!!!!! Asante Sana