

Senegal

Diouf May Day Speech Notes Economic 'Crisis'

AB0205094988 *Dukar Domestic Service in French*

2030 GMT 1 May 88

[National address by Senegalese President Abdou Diouf on 1 May on the occasion of May Day celebrations — live or recorded]

[Text] Workers of the towns and the countryside, on this traditional festive feast day of May Day, I address to you my most affectionate greetings and the warm greetings of the entire nation. You have merited these greetings because of the efforts made by each one of you in your factories, your workshops, your offices, your business establishments, and on your farms and fishing boats. We are proud of and grateful for your efforts. As I have always said, the Senegalese worker must be sincerely respected, because I understand his or her daily problems, because I know the daily difficulties of every Senegalese. As you know, these difficulties, like everywhere in Africa and the world, are generated by the world economic crisis. I received this morning the Executive Bureau of the National Confederation of Senegalese Workers [CNTS] led by its secretary general who presented to me the workers' list of petitions. I have decided immediately, this very evening, to make known my decisions on the most disturbing problems, and that is the aim of this message.

By addressing the workers, I am in reality addressing all Senegalese people: the laborers, the craftsmen, the office workers, the fishermen, the farmers, the cattle-raisers, the civil servants, and the housewives. I am also addressing those who are preparing to enter the world of work as well as those who have left the working life after giving their very best. This evening, therefore, I am going to talk to you about your everyday living conditions and your most important concern, your purchasing power.

My dear compatriots, as you know, I dislike demagoguery. What have we not heard in the past few months? The rice price to be lowered to 60 CFA francs! Seeds and fertilizers to be distributed free of charge! Employment for everybody, and immediately, and other promises that are as stupid as their makers, promises they can never fulfill for the simple reason that it is impossible to do so at this time. To believe in such demagogic promises is to have confidence in quacks, believe me. On the contrary, my dear compatriots, we must tell the people the truth. In economic matters, the truth is bitter, but my role, as always, is not to hide this truth from you. One cannot give what he does not have. To enjoy the fruits of one's labors, one must persevere in these labors. This wise saying seems to have been forgotten by those whom I consider dangerous and irresponsible demagogues. My address this evening will be centered on this wise saying. Talking first of all about peanuts: I remind you briefly about my decisions of 1985: the free distribution of 60,000 metric tons of seeds, producer price for farmers

fixed at 90 CFA francs per kg, the abolition of taxes on seeds and fertilizers, accompanied, in the latter case, by granting of subsidies, total freedom in commercialization, the creation of the National Agricultural Credit Fund, and the setting up in 1986 of the Peanuts Price Guarantee Fund. All these measures, and others that were taken, have yielded results instantly. Everybody can judge this for themselves: from 490,000 metric tons in 1984-1985, production increased to 600,000 metric tons in 1985-1986, the first year of (?harvest,) then to 840,000 metric tons in 1986-1987, and lastly, the last farming year in which the yield rose to 960,000 metric tons. Revenues that were paid to producers, thanks particularly to the prices that we offered, rose from 21 billion CFA francs to 34 billion CFA and then to 40 billion, and finally in the last year to 63 billion.

It can be said that the prices of goods consumed by the farmers have also increased. If we take this factor into account — and I do — we can see that the real revenue of peanut producers has increased 2 and 1/2 times in 4 years. These measures were therefore beneficial to the farmers. This is why my policy will be centered on helping the rural dwellers to understand this.

But my dear compatriots, you know because you are well-informed, at the same time, world market prices, over which we have no control — that is, the price we sell peanut oil abroad — have continued to fall. Upon each kilogram of peanuts bought from the peasant, there is presently across the board a 45-CFA franc loss. Major efforts have however been made to economize as much as possible: On the seeds, on collection points, on the functioning of the SONACOS' [National Oil Products Marketing Company of Senegal] factories, and many others. Despite this, as you all know, my dear compatriots, it is with a heavy heart that I announce this decision: The producer price must be lowered. This is because without such a difficult decision, next year, the entire peanut economy sector, that is, the very heart of our agriculture, will collapse. The purchase price of peanuts for this will therefore be 70 CFA francs [per kg]. This price is even still very much higher than the world market price and the producer prices paid by countries in our region.

For the farmers to meet this challenge, they can rely on their seed reserves which, I know, are abundant, even though, as is the case every year, prophets of doom will soon be heard saying that there are no seeds in the granaries. Therefore, I am saying that the farmers can rely on these abundant seed reserves. They can also rely on supplementary seeds, which are also abundant.

These prices are reasonable. The rural world for which major efforts have been made for the past 4 years, as in other sectors, anyway, can increase its production. I give you an example: yield per hectare used to be 560 kg in

1984-1985. It has been about 1 metric ton for the past 3 years. Even if the purchase price drops by 20 CFA francs, if peanut production increases, one's income will be much higher.

Let us talk about rice now. It would be easy to say anything about this issue that affects all the Senegalese families, and the demagogues I have just talked about did not fail to spread lies and nonsense about it. I am forced to say it. You know that the Senegalese people consume a foodstuff they do not produce, at least not sufficiently. We have to overly lower the price of this rice we have to pay for the about 300,000 metric tons from Asia to bring it for instance down to 100 CFA francs for the consumers. Who will buy the millet, the sorghum, or the corn produced by our farmers on our lands and by the sweat of their brows? I rather want to ensure work and fair remuneration for our farmers.

Furthermore, I have just said for the past few years, we have lost a lot of money on our peanuts. You know that this year we will lose 33 billion CFA francs. Therefore, we have to save money to support all our national production, and this is the meaning of the national policy that I defend and that I will always defend against those who want to ruin our agriculture and force us to become beggars of international aid. Let us be clear, the rice sold at 100 CFA francs will not only lead to the ruin of our agriculture, but also will make us unable to guarantee the prices of the leading produces like peanuts, and will even jeopardize some current expenditures of the state. Each of you knows it with conviction. Be it expenditures by the state or home expenditure, no one can cheat. (I know well) that the purchasing power of the Senegalese has plummeted over the past few years. It was alas the price to pay for the recovery of our economy, the effects of which were already felt in the countryside. More time and perseverance are needed again to feel these effects in the cities.

In view of the difficulties met in the families to make ends meet, I decided to make the price of rice 130 CFA francs. it is the maximum that can be done and I firmly stress this point. I call for the support of all the Senegalese men and, more, for the Senegalese women who often understand better the problems of home budget. This cut prompted by social reasons must not discourage them from consuming locally produced cereals, such as (?semolina) and millet couscous, rice-corn food, and peas. Each time they consume them, they will contribute to strengthening the country's development and they will enjoy more diversified food.

Thanks to the improvements made over the past 1 year in the sugar sector, I am also in a position to reduce the price of sugar and I announce to you that the price of sugar is also going to be reduced. This decision was expected to be taken only next year, in line with our calculations and plan of action on sugar. But it can be

taken now thanks to the progress that we have made. The price of granulated sugar will be 300 CFA francs instead of 355 francs, and that of lump sugar 340 francs instead of 375 CFA francs [per kg].

You know already that the price of peanuts has been reduced, and naturally you expect a repercussion on the price of peanut oil. I have also decided that peanut oil will be cheaper. The price of crude peanut oil in drums has therefore been fixed at 350 francs instead of 400 francs [per litre]. Do the calculations: a decrease of 30 CFA francs on rice, 35 francs on sugar, and 50 francs on peanut oil. At the present stage, it is impossible to do better. The new prices will come into force on 4 May this year.

Workers, my dear compatriots, it is my political will that 1 May next year, Labor Day, must come with a much greater number of persons having a stable employment.

This crucial issue of employment also concerns the youths who have decided to devote themselves seriously to their studies in order to learn a trade, laid off workers [words indistinct], street vendors, workers laid off from the parastatals, and emigrant brothers who have returned home. As I have always stressed, employment is a priority of my policy. The delegation for employment, first employment, and re-employment is already operational and every day it receives applications from candidates. I am in close contact with this office to be able to follow its work closely. The National Employment Fund is also operational in the financing of viable projects presented by the promoters of such projects. There are several lines of credit available to all social categories of people who are victims of the economic difficulties we are facing. From now to the end of this year, this machinery will be able to create between 1,500 and 2,000 new jobs. This fund is also intended to deal with the painful case of our jobless graduates, like doctors, whose services we require in some township areas as well as in the remote villages of Senegal, or other graduates like engineers, master's degree holders, and all those who have completed their courses and are waiting to be employed in the production process.

I am also thinking of [words indistinct] like the construction sites to generate jobs. You heard me talk about the national [word indistinct] which will soon be implemented. Under these projects, jobless people will, for example, be employed in the implementation of large projects such as reafforestation, construction of schools and health centers, construction of feeder roads, maintenance of existing infrastructures, and so on. I am not forgetting the development of the Cayor Canal, the development of the (Borlou) Valley, or the construction of anti-salt dikes and dams in the Ziguinchor and coastal regions. There must be a national, dynamic movement around the issue of employment. New and original ideas must come from everywhere. We will have the means to implement these viable projects and to solve the employment problem in our country. We already have the

means, and I am convinced that if we succeed in this policy, our foreign friends will place further means at our disposal. But everyone must be involved in the solution of this problem, most of all the youths themselves, for it is their future that is at stake. I am making an appeal to them and I am certain that this appeal will be heard.

Let them think of projects that we can implement. Together we will work to ensure that they are useful to their nation. Therefore I say that there must be a national, dynamic movement around the employment issue. But to achieve this, we need to close our ranks and to achieve social and family cohesion. We must at all times create the bases for a frank dialogue, without the lies that some of my brothers and sisters were recently the victims of. In the spirit of solidarity demonstrated through the decisions I have just made concerning the purchasing prices for our farmers and the prices of certain commodities, I call on all of you to demonstrate that you are responsible people. [Diouf concludes speech in the Wolof language].