

# Mali

## President Konare Delivers Anniversary Speech

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[Anniversary speech by President Alpha Oumar Konare on 21 September; place not given—live or recorded]

[Excerpts] My dear compatriots, 22 September is the date every year when, as in a ritual communion, the long chains of past, present, and future generations of our history come together. Independence, which we are celebrating in all simplicity due to current constraints, was, it must be recalled, achieved after a long struggle. [passage omitted]

In choosing democracy, the Malian people have opted for rebirth. In choosing to promote private initiative, the Malian people have opted to have merit rewarded. In choosing solidarity, the Malian people have opted for lasting human development. The Third Republic is the fruit of the people's commitments. I can assure you that for the moment it has acted in a blameless manner. It has settled down to a patient task of recomposition and social renewal. The government has favored dialogue and consultation in all circumstances without giving in to a spirit of resignation, which is proof that it has the necessary determination. The social peace that has now been restored after an exceptionally difficult year does not make us regret the price paid for it, because I believe in the creed that Mali can obtain its former glory only through tolerance and reconciliation. The young Malian democracy is today among the most active in the world regarding responsibility and mutual respect. Pluralism is a reality, and it is an opportunity that we are seizing. Furthermore, in the near future, democracy will be strengthened through the decentralization of public authority. Local executives will soon be elected with extended jurisdiction. I can foresee a bright setting for all entrepreneurs in this country, both young and old, men and women, city and rural dwellers. I can tell them it is another opportunity that we have to seize, but we need to operate within our means.

My dear compatriots, we are now spending what we should save and invest for tomorrow. Instead of financing this expenditure through domestic resources and earnings from national production, we have earmarked resources from foreign aid for that purpose. We are now spending the aid granted to us during the years of adjustment in exchange for our development efforts. Surely this can only go on for a while. Today, foreign assistance has begun to wane. Our partners themselves can no longer afford to assist others. The time has come to embark on domestic adjustments. This is what is at stake in the measures taken by Abdoulaye Sekou Sow's government. I approve of these measures, because they are necessary. For many of us, this would mean more austerity measures. I know that this certain aspect of the measure could be distressing for professionals. I would

like to call on workers who could be affected by future changes to know that these changes are indispensable, and if they are not made today, they will have to be made in the future. In any case, the price will be much higher. All this is painful for me, but I would be failing in my duty and assigned commitments if I favored sentiment over reason. We need to save and eliminate the continual fall in our earnings through a fierce battle against fraud and through the moralization of the administration. I will see to it that jobs are better preserved and all operations are conducted with consultations, rigor, and transparency. I will see to it that a long-term development plan will soon be launched. This plan will be based on the national capacity and new alternatives and will take into account the population's concerns.

My dear compatriots, the problems in the management of public finances are of the kind that will jeopardize the total objectives of financial reorganization and economic growth. In light of a weak international economic growth of 2 to 3 percent, a current and future reduction in aid to Africa as a result of social conditions in donor countries and competition from former Eastern Bloc countries, and negative domestic growth in real terms, which was 0.8 percent in 1993, the speedy reestablishment of our economic balance is the only reasonable option for preserving the future and enabling us to consider the possibility of growth and promoting it.

Please allow me to say that I appreciate the fact that in spite of disagreements, the great majority of political parties, unions, and associations answered the government call to examine ways of saving the country from danger. It is through this that one distinguishes the descendants of a millennial culture shaped by the higher interest of the nation. It is in the name of this nation that the Armed Forces and national security agencies received in their midst soldiers from the Movements and United Fronts of Azaouad, who were previously opposed to them and who have now in defense of the democratic process joined them to embark together in newfound unity on new struggles on the economic front and nation-building. [passage omitted]