

MALI

MOUSSA TRAORE SPEECH AT UDPM CONGRESS OPENING

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[Speech delivered in Bamako by Malian President Moussa Traore on 23 February to the opening session of the first ordinary congress of the Democratic Union of Malian People -- recorded]

[Excerpts] Ladies and gentlemen, delegates to the congress, distinguished guests: I wish to begin this opening speech by expressing to the friendly delegations present in our session the sincere welcome of our people and party.

Their presence among us is a token of friendship and sympathy sent by their parties and people, and we highly appreciate it. I want to express to them the deep gratitude of the Malian people and their party, the UDPM. I also pledge our readiness to strengthen the valuable ties between us. We are all the more determined to work toward this goal as there is need for consultations and solidarity among us at all levels in view of all the hardships being experienced by our countries and our people.

On 10 April 1981, I launched the campaign for the renewal of the bureau of party sections. I fixed the timetable for this operation which was then carried out under the supervision of monitoring commissions. In this line, the bureaus of 10,985 committees, 369 subsections and 52 sections were thus renewed and all the operations were completed on 18 February 1982 with the installation of the last section bureau.

I must take this opportunity to underscore the excellent atmosphere of fairness which generally prevailed during the renewal exercise. Militants made it a point to do their duty as voters in a fair way. There was a massive turn-out during these elections. In this regard, the elections results were cancelled and the operation repeated wherever the need arose. Indeed, emotions were high now and then, but it did not alter the fairness of the elections because reason eventually prevailed thanks to the skill, firmness and vigilance of the members of the monitoring commissions. I want to thank them and congratulate them on behalf of the party.

I also congratulate and encourage you all who have just been elected or reelected. At the same time, I want to emphasize the great charge you have thus been entrusted with and I urge you to demonstrate humility, fairness, vigilance and openmindedness at all times. As I stated before, you must behave as the representatives of all militants -- those who voted for you as well as those who voted against you.

I want to tell those who lost the elections that their defeat should not relax their militant mobilization. The true militant is the one who joins the party out of sincere adherence and not out of selfish motives. The true militant is the one whose first ambition is to serve his fatherland and his community whatever he is. His defeat should not lead him to hold a grudge, to sow division and hatred within the party. Beginning now, we must all become conscious of the dangers which the party and its democratic nature could face if we did not accept the popular will that led to changes. It must never be forgotten that the people are sovereign and that we must accept their choices.

Ladies and gentlemen participating in the congress, a number of valuable lessons can be drawn from those elections, the essential one being that the party engaged in the path of accountability, efficiency and success on 12 February 1981, by addressing its attention to the concern of its militants, by examining its internal problems and failures and by identifying a remedy to them.

Also, we have very often noted the existence of keen rivalry and shocking intolerance between various social and ethnic groups that do not wish to work together. This must be denounced and checked because it is against our efforts to consolidate national unity and solidarity and to establish democracy in our country. In this regard, we must try within the party to devise measures to check those attitudes, to democratize and to moralize elections with a view to preventing attempts by some ethnic or interest groups to eliminate other groups from the party. This is why I want to ask the congress to allow the Central Executive Bureau to design consequent measures.

The revival of the party will only be the common work of its militants and officials. The militants have now accomplished part of their task. It is up to the elected officials to elect, in their turn, the members of the leading organ of the party. Such people must be competent, honest and courageous. Once this is done, you will have to go back in the field to contribute to a better organization for increased production.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is a matter of fact that our country is facing difficult times now.

But we must particularly understand that our current problems have external causes as they result from a very bad international economic crisis, which every country is experiencing. We must, however, understand that we can certainly overcome those difficulties. We have the necessary human, moral and material resources to do so. We have good reasons to be confident and optimistic. While we are counting on assistance from our friends, we must first and foremost count on our own efforts and determination.

Ladies and gentlemen, the first congress of the UDPM is in session at a time when, all over the world and in Africa in particular, people who long for dignity and justice are obliged to suffer unjust wars and atrocious conditions. The Malian people and their party, by my voice, pledge their total solidarity with and support to all those people who continue fighting very courageously and with indomitable faith in South Africa, Namibia, Western Sahara, the Middle East and elsewhere. Everyday that goes by confirms our conviction that their noble causes will inevitably triumph and that they will all succeed.

I only wish that the spirit of the extraordinary congress of February 1981 will continue to lead us, that is, the courage, honesty and self-denial which we showed a year ago. May this spirit continue to inspire us in this decisive stage of the life of our party. Ladies and gentlemen, delegates to the congress, honorable guests, I declare the ordinary congress of the Democratic Union of the Malian People open.