

LCRD Day One (December 2, 1999)
President Kérékou's Informal Opening Comments

The solemn opening ceremony of our conference has now come to a close. But before we go to refresh ourselves, we have a few matters to pass on to you. Many different views have been expressed by the various and eminent speakers who preceded me. However, like the honorable pastor said, we have not come here to foster dissension, and he was right. He was right, because this is not a political nor an economic conference. I believe that you have eyes to see, ears to hear, and the intelligence to understand that this conference is a spiritual conference. It has been called under the auspices and the protection of God. [Applause]

From this moment on, you, as I, will forget those who are elsewhere; no one has the right to waste time trying to figure out who is the initiator of this conference. All those who seek the truth must first listen to what their consciences are telling them. Before us, African Americans and Africans of Africa, are our common ancestors. If we respond, "No!" then our conference is political. If we respond, "No!" then our conference is economic. If we respond, "Yes!" then our conference is spiritual. [Applause] It is because our conference is spiritual that we must not try to compare it to other summits. We must not try to count the number of African heads of state and government present in this room. In the spiritual realm, God wants only a small number, but of good quality. [Applause] These two requirements have been met.

He who, from the depths of his soul, while he was being crucified on a wooden cross, his hands and his feet pierced by nails, examined all that he had accomplished on earth. And His eyes swept over the world, that really was not His world, and concluded, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And then, in conclusion, knowing that He was going away, but that He would be present with us every day, He said, "It is finished."

Dear African American brothers, dear African brothers, this conference should allow you to conclude, on December 5, 1999, in this very room, that the mission is accomplished, that forgiveness has been accepted and that reconciliation is in effect, and that all the peoples of Africa and of the world will hear the echo. For God has already described everyone who speaks here, saying that they have beautiful feet, because they are announcing the good news. You have beautiful feet because you are announcing the good news. I thank you for it. [Applause]