

**CLOSING REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC AT
THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF UNDERSTANDING**

Bismillahi Rahmani Rahim, Aouzou Billahi Mina Shaytani Rajim
Mr. Prime Minister, Head of the Government;
Ladies and Gentlemen, the members of the Government of Mali;
Mr. President of the National Assembly of Mali;
Honorable Heads of Institutions of Mali;
Ladies and Gentlemen, Honorable Deputies of the National Assembly;
Honorable Representatives of the Signatory Groups to the Agreement for Peace and
Reconciliation in Mali resulting from the Algiers Process;
The Honorable Lead Mediator of the International Mediation Team
and Chairman of the Monitoring Committee for the Agreement;
Ladies and Gentlemen, the Former Prime Ministers;
Mr. Chairman of the National Commission for the Organization
of the National Conference of Understanding;
Ladies and Gentlemen, the Regional Governors;
The Honorable Chairmen of the Regional Councils;
Ladies and Gentlemen, the Heads of the Diplomatic Missions
and International Organizations;
Ladies and Gentlemen, the Representatives of the National Political Parties;
Ladies and Gentlemen, the Participants in the National Conference of Understanding;
Esteemed guests, in your official capacities;
Ladies and Gentlemen;
Dear Sisters and Brothers

We have arrived at the end of an essential exercise that has justified the high hopes placed in it.

An exercise that saw Malians exchanging their viewpoints with frankness, clarity, and responsibility.

An exercise that could not be entirely devoid of passion, as it broached subjects that are inevitably controversial.

But above all, an exercise that never strayed from its goal: to contribute to restoring peace, regaining unity, and achieving national reconciliation.

The enterprise was arduous, and the fears that it raised were legitimate. But once more, our compatriots demonstrated that difficult projects bring out the best in them, convinced that no nation can build itself or rebuild itself in an atmosphere of never-ending dissent and hidden resentment.

For that reason, I would like once more to express my gratitude to all the participants who have worked for the last seven days to brighten our country's future. History will certainly honor them for the useful work they have accomplished. This work is intended to clarify the vision that our people wish to achieve, the steps that must be taken in order to meet the challenges that they face.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the opening of the conference last Monday, standing in this very spot, I had expressed my disappointment about those who were absent. I did so because I believed that the confidence placed in me by the Malian people as the President of the Republic required me to note the significance of our gathering. Indeed, saving our Motherland requires all of the country's sons and daughters to rise above their reservations and to unite to accomplish this essential business for the future of our Nation.

It is therefore an enormous pleasure for me today to state that the National Conference of Understanding proved those right who never doubted that our country could rise to the challenge. We are not harboring false hopes, but neither should we minimize positive signs when they appear.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The symbolic gathering of the large Malian family in this room constitutes one of those positive signs. That people continued to arrive throughout the week can mean but one thing: the desire to participate in the search for Malian solutions to Malian crises. They have but one motivation: to affirm a true national understanding as to our national priorities. This understanding does not consist of a search for a vague consensus in which all is said without anything being resolved. Rather, it emerged following a major effort to exchange views, which I called with great hopes and which succeeded brilliantly.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For an entire week, the pluralistic voices of Mali resonated under the arches of the *Palais de la Culture* (Cultural Center). Voices that at various times expressed anger, pique, hopelessness, and resentment. Voices that sometimes grew harsh in order to criticize, shout, and condemn. Voices that made themselves heard, where previously many had not had the chance to express themselves. Voices that all refused to give up, and that rejected fatalism. Voices that unanimously announced that Mali would recover, for that is our destiny.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Voices that define the realities at the heart of Mali. Of the Mali that demands improved governance, for it can no longer bear the consequences born of corruption, arbitrary decision-making, and impunity. Of the Mali that demands more attention from its decision-makers, whose statements are often inaudible and whose decisions are incomprehensible. Of the Mali that wants its State to offer it fairness and security. These voices also helped us see a desire for national unity that is deeply anchored in the spirit of our countrymen. They emphasized that our life together, even when shaken,

remains our greatest assurance that we can forge ahead. They expressed the fighting spirit of citizens who, despite the trials they have gone through, keep the fire in their hearts alive.

What better proof of faith in our country and in our common destiny than the presence in this room of our compatriots, refugees who have travelled from Burkina, from Mauritania, and from Niger, who overcame all obstacles to come tell the world of their attachment to a nation both united and pluralistic, with fairness and solidarity, which they are determined to help build.

Ladies and Gentlemen the Participants,

Your recommendations are noteworthy for their relevance and exhaustiveness. Your diagnosis was delivered without complacency, and your proposed solutions were crafted with courage and precision. Just as, during the Conference's preparatory phase, you rightly insisted on improved governance. Make no mistake, this is an essential condition for gaining the support of the people, as well as the restoration of a relationship of trust between decision-makers and citizens.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I will shortly be making the decisions that will enable us to capitalize as much as possible on the recommendations of the National Conference of Understanding. As was explained at the opening of the Conference, the elements comprising the Charter for Peace, Unity, and National Reconciliation will be distributed widely. This will include, in particular, the population residing within the national borders, our refugee compatriots, and the Malian diaspora.

The purpose is not to reopen the debate on the issues discussed at the Conference, but to submit the Conference's recommendations to the widest possible range of Malians, in order to record their comments, criticisms, and proposals. This process is unavoidable if we wish the definitive Charter to obtain the maximum possible consensus from the population and from the principal participants in public life.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is true that time is of the essence. It is true that crises are piling up. It is true that we might fear that additional consultations would undo the achievements of the Conference. I well understand all of these reservations. I will respond to them by paraphrasing a quote from our esteemed Dean, the Chairman of the Conference. Like him, I am of the opinion that in dealing with crucial questions, it is possible to reconcile the requirement of inclusivity and the need to progress quickly and well.

For we must avoid weakening the scope and usefulness of the excellent work that you have done by acting precipitously. For that reason, we must take the time to submit your recommendations for the consideration of other Malians. In particular for those who would have liked to be here, but whom the Conference's format did not permit inviting. And especially for those who at the most modest levels have growing concern for the

country. The hour is too serious, and the stakes too high, for us to fail to make the effort to call upon all members of the great Malian family to help perfect the Conference's conclusions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I must express our gratitude to a man whose modesty and humility will certainly suffer from the tribute that will be paid to him. When I asked our esteemed Dean, Baba Akhib Haidara, to be the Chairman of the Preparatory Commission and the Chairman of the National Conference of Understanding, I was not really assigning a mission to him. Rather, I entrusted myself to him, as to an elder whose knowledge of people and life experience I respect. I entrusted myself to his wisdom, to his long experience in public affairs, to his attachment to principle, and to his peerless knowledge of our country.

Our elder showed all of these qualities during the crucial week that is now drawing to a close. If we can rejoice today in the success of this event, it is thanks to the steadfast courtesy with which Chairman Baba Akhib Haidaraa conducted the discussions; thanks to his sense of equilibrium that enabled him to manage unexpected comments (and God knows that there were many); and thanks to the control that he demonstrated to prevent the excesses from devaluing the achievements of the Conference.

Permit me to express our gratitude to the Dean. Permit me as well to renew once more my thanks to the members of the Preparatory Commission team, which so perfectly complemented Chairman Baba Akhib Haidara. I know how immense was the task that it accomplished with self-sacrifice and discretion, the task from which the participants so happily benefited at the Conference of National Understanding.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Conference Participants,

I would also like to reiterate our thanks and our gratitude to the international Mediation, with Algeria acting as the Lead Mediator, for their continuous and varied support. The international solidarity from which we continue to benefit will remain for us a permanent source of inspiration, motivation, and commitment.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Conference Participants,

The Conference of National Unity took place at a crucial moment in our history. The trials that we have undergone and the difficulties that we continue to encounter make our national fabric still fragile, rendering our society vulnerable in several places within our borders.

This is particularly the case in the center of the country, where for some time terrorist groups have tried to profit from the inter-community tensions by inciting repeated and unacceptable violence against the symbols of the State and between populations, thus progressively destroying the everyday ties that bind the country's inhabitants.

I would like to reiterate once more here our compassion for all the victims of this rampant barbarity, and to assure you that the State will do everything possible in the coming days to deploy a multi-pronged plan to ensure the security and justice that the people deserve,

to provide them with all necessary services, and to guarantee their economic and social activities.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Participants,

I have taken to heart the expectations that you communicated to me. I thank you for the total confidence you have vested in me to achieve them. I can assure you that for my part, all efforts will be made to win the battle for our future. The battle for peace, for unity and for national reconciliation.

May Allah

Help our country regain its tranquility by the most beautiful of victories over ourselves, by bringing peace to our hearts, by chasing from them the demons of the destructive anger that prevents us from caring for the brother who needs it or from giving our children or our brothers the education that will save them tomorrow.

Lord, God of Mercy, Grant us this.

This is our prayer as I declare the Conference of National Understanding closed.

I wish a safe trip home to all participants who made the long and often difficult voyage to be present here.

Long live Mali.

Long live the Republic.

Thank you.