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**Main Speech by Premier Zhou Enlai, Head of the
Delegation of the People's Republic of China,
Distributed at the Plenary Session of the
Asian-African Conference**

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Summary:

Zhou Enlai calls for increased cooperation between the countries of Asia and Africa at the Bandung Conference.

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MAIN SPEECH BY PREMIER CHOU EN-LAI [Zhou Enlai], HEAD OF THE DELEGATION OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA, DISTRIBUTED AT THE PLENARY SESSION OF THE ASIAN-AFRICAN CONFERENCE

Mr. Chairman and Fellow Delegates:

The Asian-African Conference on which the whole world is focusing its attention has begun its session. The Delegation of the People's Republic of China deems it a great pleasure to be able to discuss the common problems of our Asian and African countries at this Conference with the delegations of the other participating countries. We must first of all thank the five sponsoring countries, Burma, Ceylon, India, Indonesia and Pakistan, whose initiative and efforts have made it possible for us to meet here. We should also thank the host of this Conference, the Government of the Republic of Indonesia, for the excellent arrangements it has made for the Conference.

It is the first time in history that so many countries of Asia and Africa have gathered together to hold a conference. On these two continents live more than half of the world population. The peoples of Asia and Africa created brilliant ancient civilizations and made tremendous contributions to mankind. But, ever since modern times most of the countries of Asia and Africa in varying degrees have been subjected to colonial plunder and oppression, and have thus been forced to remain in a stagnant state of poverty and backwardness. Our voices have been suppressed, our aspirations shattered, and our destiny placed in the hands of others. Thus, we have no choice but to rise against colonialism. Suffering from the same cause and struggling for the same aim, we the Asian and African peoples have found it easier to understand each other and have long had deep sympathy and concern for one another. Now the face of the Asian-African region has undergone a radical change. More and more countries have cast off or are casting off the shackles of colonialism. The colonial powers can no longer use the methods of the past to continue their plunder and oppression. The Asia and Africa of today are no longer the Asia and Africa of yesterday. Many countries of this region have taken their destiny into their own hands after long years of endeavours. Our Conference itself reflects this profound historical change.

However, the rule of colonialism in this region has not yet come to an end, and new colonialists are attempting take the place of the old ones. Not a few of the Asian and African peoples are still leading a life of colonial slavery. Not a few of the Asian and African peoples are still subjected to racial discrimination and deprived of human rights. The courses which we peoples of the Asian and African countries have taken in striving for freedom and independence may vary, but our will to win and preserve our freedom and independence is the same. However different the specific conditions in each of our countries may be, it is equally necessary for most of us to eliminate the state of backwardness caused by the rule of colonialism. We need to develop our countries independently with no outside interference and in accordance with the will of the people.

The peoples of Asia and Africa have long suffered from aggression and war. Many of them have been forced by the colonialists to serve as cannon fodder in aggressive wars. Therefore, the peoples of these two continents can have nothing but strong detestation of aggressive war. They know that new threats of war will not only endanger the independent development of their countries, but also intensify the enslavement by colonialism. That is why the Asian and African peoples all the more hold dear world peace and national independence.

In view of the foregoing, the common desire of the peoples of the Asian and African countries cannot be anything other than to safeguard world peace, to win and to preserve national independence and accordingly to promote friendly co-operation among nations.

Following the armistice in Korea, the Geneva Conference brought about a cease-fire in Indo-China on the basis of respect for the right to national independence and with the support of the Conference of the five Colombo powers. As a result, international tension did somewhat relax at that time and fresh hopes were brought to the people of the whole world, and particularly to those of Asia. However, the subsequent development of the international situation runs counter to the hopes of the people. Both in the East and in the West the danger of war is increasing. The desire of the Korean and German peoples for peaceful unification is being frustrated. The agreements on the restoration of peace in Indo-China reached at the Geneva Conference are endangered. The United States continues to create tension in the Taiwan area. Countries outside of Asia and Africa are establishing more and more military bases in the Asian and African countries. They are clamouring openly that atomic weapons are conventional arms and are making preparations for an atomic war. The people of Asia shall never forget that the first atomic bomb exploded on Asian soil and that the first man to die from the experimental explosion of the hydrogen bomb was an Asian. The peoples of Asia and Africa, like those in other parts of the world, cannot be indifferent to the ever-increasing threat of war.

However, those who are committing aggression and making preparations for war are after all extremely few, while the overwhelming majority of the people throughout the world, regardless of what social system they live under, want peace and are opposed to war. The peace movement of the people in different countries has become more extensive and intensive. They demand the end of the armament race and preparations for war. They demand that first of all the big powers should reach agreement on the reduction of armaments. They demand the prohibition of atomic weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. They demand that atomic energy be used for peaceful purposes in order to bring welfare to mankind. Their voices can no longer be ignored. The policy of aggression and war is becoming more and more repugnant to the people. The plotters of war are resorting ever more frequently to threats of war as an instrument of their aggressive policy. However, threats of war can frighten into submission no one who is determined to resist. They can only place the threat-makers in a more isolated and confused position. We believe that if only we are determined to preserve peace together with all the peace-loving nations and peoples of the world, peace can be preserved.

The majority of our Asian and African countries, including China, are still very backward economically owing to the long period of colonial domination. That is why we demand not only political independence but economic independence as well. Of course, our demand for political independence does not mean a policy of exclusion towards countries outside of the Asian-African region. However, the days when the Western powers controlled our destiny are already past. The destiny of Asian and African countries should be taken into the hands of the peoples themselves. We strive to realize our own economic independence; nor does that mean the rejection of economic co-operation with any country outside of the Asian-African region. However, we want to do away with the exploitation of backward countries in the East by the colonial powers in the West and to develop the independent and sovereign economy of our own countries. Complete independence is an objective for which the great majority of Asian and African countries have to struggle for a long time.

In China, ever since the people became masters of their own country, all their efforts have been directed to the elimination of backwardness left behind by the prolonged semi-colonial society and the building of their country into an industrialized one. In the last five years we have rehabilitated the national economy ruined by long years of war, and have since 1953 started the First Five-Year Plan of economic construction. As a result of these efforts, production in all the main fields, such as iron and steel, cotton cloth and grains, have exceeded the level of any period in the history of China. But these achievements are still very small as compared with our actual needs. Our country is still very backward as compared with the highly industrialized ones. Like other countries in Asia and Africa, we are in urgent need of a peaceful international environment for the development of our independent and sovereign economy.

The Asian and African countries, opposing colonialism and defending national independence, treasure all the more their own national rights. Countries whether big or small, strong or weak, should all enjoy equal rights in international relations. Their territorial integrity and sovereignty should be respected and not violated. The people of all dependent countries should enjoy the right of national self-determination, and should not be subjected to persecution and slaughter. People irrespective of race or colour should all enjoy the fundamental human rights and not be subjected to any maltreatment and discrimination. However, we cannot help being aware that the peoples of Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria and other dependent peoples who have been fighting for independence have never ceased to be suppressed with violence. Racial discrimination and persecution under racialism in the Union of South Africa and other places have not yet been curbed. The problem of Arab refugees of Palestine still remains to be solved.

One should say that now the common desire of the awakened countries and peoples of Asia and Africa is to oppose racial discrimination and to demand fundamental human rights, to oppose colonialism and to demand for national independence, to firmly defend their own territorial integrity and sovereignty. The struggle of the Egyptian people for the restoration of their sovereignty over the Suez Canal Zone, the struggle of the Iranian people for the restoration of sovereignty over their petroleum resources, and the demand for the restoration of the territorial rights of India over Goa and of Indonesia over West Irian, have all won sympathy from many countries in Asia and Africa. China's will to liberate her own territory Taiwan has likewise won the support of all righteous people in the Asian-African region. This proves that the peoples of our Asian and African countries understand each other and have sympathy and concern for one another.

Peace can only be safeguarded by mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty. Encroachment on the sovereignty and territory of any country and the interference in the internal affairs of any country will inevitably endanger peace. If nations give assurances not to commit aggression against each other, conditions will be created in international relations for peaceful coexistence. If nations give assurances not to interfere in each other's internal affairs, it will then be possible for the people of these countries to choose their own political system and way of life in accordance with their own will. The agreements on the restoration of peace in Indo-China were reached at the Geneva Conference precisely on the basis of the assurance of the parties concerned to respect the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of the Indo-Chinese states and not to interfere in any way in the internal affairs of these states. Accordingly, the Geneva agreements provide that the Indo-Chinese states shall not join any military alliance and that no foreign military bases should be established in these states. That explains why the Geneva Conference was able to create favourable conditions for the establishment of an area of peace. But after the Geneva Conference, we witnessed a development in the opposite direction. This is not in the interest of the Indo-Chinese states, nor is it in the interest of peace. We hold that the Geneva agreements on the restoration of peace in Indo-China should be strictly and faithfully carried out. No interference or obstruction from any quarter should be allowed. The question of peaceful unification of Korea should also be solved in accordance with the same principles.

We Asian and African countries need to co-operate in the economic and cultural fields in order to facilitate the elimination of the economic and cultural backwardness caused by the long period of colonial exploitation and oppression. This co-operation should be based on equality and mutual benefit, with no conditions for privilege attached. The trade relations and economic cooperation between us should have for its purpose the promotion of the independent economic development in each country, and not to convert any country into a sole producer of raw materials and a market for consumer goods. Our cultural exchange should have respect for the development of the national culture of each country, and not to ignore the characteristics and special merits of the culture of any country so that we may learn and benefit from each other.

Today when the peoples of Asia and Africa are increasingly taking their destiny into their own hands, even though the present economic and cultural co-operation among ourselves cannot yet be of a very large scale, it can be definitely said that this co-operation based on equality and mutual benefit will have a great future. We are convinced that with the advancement of industrialization of our countries and the raising of our peoples' standards of living, and with the elimination of artificial trade barriers placed between us from without, trade intercourse and economic co-operation among the Asian and African countries will become ever closer, and cultural interflow will be ever more frequent.

By following the principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, the peaceful coexistence of countries with different social systems can be realized. When these principles are ensured of implementation, there is no reason why international disputes cannot be settled through negotiation.

In the interest of defending world peace, we Asian and African countries, which are more or less under similar circumstances, should be the first to co-operate with one another in a friendly manner and put peaceful coexistence into practice. The discord and estrangement created among the Asian and African countries by colonial rule in the past should no longer be there. We Asian and African countries should respect one another, and eliminate any suspicion and fear which may exist between us.

The Government of the People's Republic of China fully agrees to the aims of the Asian-African Conference as defined by the prime ministers of the five South Asian countries in the Joint Communique of the Bogor Conference. We hold that in order to promote world peace and co-operation, the countries of Asia and Africa should first of all, in line with their common interest, seek goodwill and co-operation among themselves and establish friendly and neighbourly relations. India, Burma and China have affirmed the five principles of peaceful coexistence as the guiding principles in their mutual relations. These principles have received support from more and more countries. Following these principles, China and Indonesia have already achieved good results in their preliminary talks on the question of the nationality of the citizens of one country residing in the other. During the Geneva Conference, China also expressed its readiness to develop friendly relations with the Indo-Chinese states on the basis of these five principles.

There is no reason why the relations between China and Thailand, the Philippines and other neighbouring countries cannot be improved on the basis of these five principles. China is ready to establish normal relations with other Asian and African countries on the basis of the strict adherence to these principles and is willing to promote the normalization of relations between China and Japan. In order to promote mutual understanding and co-operation among us, we propose that the governments, parliaments and people's organizations of the Asian and African countries make friendly visits to each other's countries.

Mr. Chairman and Fellow Delegates, gone for ever are the days when the destiny of the Asian and African peoples was manipulated at will by others. We believe that if we are determined to preserve world peace, no one can drag us into war; if we are determined to strive for and safeguard our national independence, no one can continue to enslave us; if we are determined to enter into friendly co-operation, no one can split us.

What we Asian and African countries want are peace and independence. It is not our intention to make Asian and African countries antagonistic to countries in other regions. We want just as well the establishment of peaceful and co-operative relations with countries in other regions.

This meeting of ours was not easily brought about. Though there are among us many different views, they should not influence the common desires that we all hold. Our Conference ought to give expression to our common desires and thus make itself a treasured page in the history of Asia and Africa. At the same time, the contact that has been established by us through this Conference should be maintained in order that we may make greater contributions to world peace.

As His Excellency President Sukarno of the Republic of Indonesia has rightly said, we Asians and Africans must be united.

Let us greet in advance the success of our Conference.

(April 19, 1955)