

**STATEMENT BY H.E. DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM
OAU SECRETARY-GENERAL AT THE 1991 ANNUAL MEETING OF
THE BOARDS OF GOVERNORS OF THE AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK
AND AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT FUND;
ABIDJAN, COTE D'IVOIRE, 7-9 MAY 1991**

Mr. Chairman of the Board of Governors,
Honourable Governors,
Your Excellency Babacar Ndiaye,
President of the African Development Bank,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is for me a singular honour to be given this opportunity to address your annual meeting, for the first time since I assumed the Office of Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity. As the President of the ADB has just pointed out; I believe this is the first time in the history of the OAU that its Secretary-General has had such an opportunity to address this distinguished gathering. Permit me therefore to place on record my special gratitude and thanks to President Houphouet-Boigny, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, for having graced this important Conference by his distinguished patronage, to my friend and brother Babacar Ndiaye, the ADB President for his kind invitation and, to you Mr. Chairman, for inviting me to address this concluding session of the Boards of Governors of Africa's most important development finance institution.

Mr. Chairman,

We are entering the last decade of the twentieth century with both uncertainties and expectations. The uncertainties have been occasioned by major events that are taking place in the world, with far-reaching implications for Africa; in particular, the growing tendency towards regionalism and inwardlooking policies that are inimical to international trade expansion and capital movement. On the ecological front, environmental degradation which has been exacerbated by the post Gulf war flames, has heightened the state of human insecurity, particularly for us here in Africa. Our Heads of State and Government adopted a Declaration on these and other issues last year, in which they mapped out an effective African response. Much attention was devoted in that Declaration, to the situation in Africa, particularly, the socio-economic problems facing the continent. African leaders reiterated their collective resolve to deal effectively with those problems. As development bankers, you must all see yourselves as integral part of the forces to deal with the current problems in Africa, because development cannot take place where there is anarchy, instability or armed conflict.

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Mr. Chairman,
Honourable Governors,

In about one month from now, Africa will be making history in Abuja, the new Nigerian Federal capital where, at the 27th Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, African leaders will be signing the Treaty establishing an African Economic Community. This will be indeed, a culmination of the efforts that all our countries and organizations have deployed since the adoption of the Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act of Lagos in April 1980. The signing of the Treaty expected to take place on the very first day of the Summit on June 3, will be significant in itself, as a demonstration of Africa's unflinching commitment to close ranks, mobilize and unite all its forces and resources in response to the challenges of the decade of the nineties, and indeed the second millenium. As Finance Ministers and Governors of Central Banks, your participation and collective contribution to the work that lies ahead will be very crucial in the building of a strong, united and prosperous Africa.

Permit me, Mr. Chairman, at this juncture to pay special tribute to my friend and brother Babacar Ndiaye, the ADB President under whose able and dynamic leadership our two organizations have become close to one another and have undertaken many joint activities in areas such as the African debt crisis, commodities and, above all, in the preparation of the Draft Treaty establishing an African Economic Community. Together with the ECA, we have now established a formal working relationship in order to address a number of challenges facing our continent in an efficient and cost-effective way.

Today, within the ADB Group as a whole the African Development Bank alone, has a capital base of 23.05 billion U.S. Dollars and it has become a major source of development finance for Africa, from its humble beginning of nearly thirty years ago. We in Africa realize fully the importance of the ADB, especially in the current situation where external financial resources are not forthcoming or, at best are a mere trickle; when the prices of our commodities have continued to collapse in the world markets; when the debt crisis is threatening the survival of many of our countries; and when foreign private investors are frantically pulling out from Africa in spite of the strenous effort on the part of our countries to implement adjustment programmes and policy reforms. The ADB Group is thus Africa's last resource and as such, it should assume even greater responsibilities. The entire institution must gear up in order for it to provide effective support to Africa during the decade of the 1990's and beyond. At this juncture I would like to seize this opportunity to express my profound appreciation and that of the OAU to those countries which have contributed to the Sixth Replenishment of the Fund. I would also like to encourage and urge them to make further efforts so that the Fund is raised to the level commensurate with our expectations and requirements.

The strength and continued growth of the ADB will not only depend on the soundness and efficiency of its management, but also on the support of its members - both politically and financially. In this connection it is for me a happy duty to express special appreciation to the non-regional members of the ADB, from whose support the Bank has drawn much financial strength without compromising the African character of its Charter.

Mr. Chairman,
Honourable Governors,

I started this brief statement with a reference to the recent world events, in particular the growing tendency towards greater regionalism. One important lesson to be drawn from these developments which have taken place, be they in Western or Eastern Europe or even in the Gulf, is that a strong political commitment of governments and especially that of the major world powers, is the single most important factor that can determine failure or success of any endeavour. Thus, overnight, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development was created for Eastern European Countries, with a solid capital base of 12 billion U.S. Dollars; 50 per cent of Poland's official debt has been wiped off and; billions were poured into the Gulf in order to restore peace. All these constitute clear manifestations of positive political will that is required to relaunch Africa's socio-economic development.

It is therefore, very clear that, with just a little movement by the major powers, such scourges as disease, poverty and ignorance can be eradicated, and humanity can enjoy unparalleled comfort in peace, stability and security. At the same time it has to be recognized that sustained development is the foundation of an enduring peace and that, having financed a war in order to establish peace, it has become even more urgent to embark on a massive socio-economic development so as to guarantee lasting global peace and security. Peace will bring not only the absence of wars, but also an end to human deprivation. And I need hardly emphasize that continued global poverty constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security. Thus the ADB's role in promoting Africa's developmental efforts must be seen in the wider context as making an important contribution to the preservation of peace.