

STATEMENT OF H.E. DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM, SECRETARY GENERAL
OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY TO THE FIRST SESSION
OF THE POLITICAL NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE RWANDESE
GOVERNMENT AND THE RWANDESE PATRIOTIC FRONT
ARUSHA, TANZANIA, 11 AUGUST 1992

Honourable AHMED HASSAN DIRIA, Minister of Foreign Affairs
and International Cooperation of the United Republic of
Tanzania and Representative of the Facilitator,

Your Excellency, BONIFACE NGULINZIRA, Minister of Foreign
Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of Rwanda, and leader
of the Delegation

Distinguished CHAIRMAN of the Rwandese Patriotic Front
Mr. ALEX KANYARENGWE Distinguished Representative of Senegal,

Distinguished Representatives of Burundi, Uganda, Belgium,
France and the United States of America,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with a sense of hope that I address this first session
of the political negotiations between our Rwandese brothers.
But, allow me, from the outset, therefore, to express my deep
sense of gratitude and appreciation, firstly, to the Mediator
H.E. Marshall Mobutu Sese Seko, President of the Republic
of Zaire who has, since the outbreak of hostilities in
October 1990 spared no effort not only to bring about immediate
cessation of hostilities but has also taken several steps,
including consultations within and outside the region, in
his capacity as Mediator to bring about the peaceful resolution
of this fratricidal conflict. Today's meeting, SHOULD
be seen in the context of all previous efforts including
the summit meetings held at Mwanza, Dar es Salaam and Gbadolite.

Mr. Chairman, the role of the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, H.E. ALI HASSAN MWINYI as Facilitator, no doubt, has contributed significantly to the current positive development in the Rwandese conflict. Indeed, I recall, with appreciation, that it was in Mwanza here in Tanzania, on October 17, 1990 that the first regional initiative to bring about the cessation of armed hostilities between our Rwandese brothers was taken.

On behalf of the Organization of Africa Unity and on my own behalf, I wish, therefore, to express our thanks for the encouragement and support he has given to us all, in particular, our Rwandese brothers in the search for peace in their country.

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, the commitment of the leaders of the region, especially the neighbours of Rwanda, has been eloquently evidenced by the several consultations and actions they have taken since the start of armed hostilities in Rwanda in October 1990. It would be recalled that the initiative to send military observers, under my supervision, to monitor the earlier ceasefire agreements, was taken by the leaders of the region. The expenses for the logistical and financial needs of the observers were borne by the countries of the region. This mark of sacrifice again underscores the commitment of the leaders of the region to the early restoration of peace in the Republic of Rwanda. The OAU can only hope that they will continue to provide the necessary support as we strive to achieve peace in Rwanda.

As I have repeatedly stated, the Rwandese conflict is first and foremost an African problem. The OAU, together with the Mediator, the Facilitator and the leaders of the region would spare no effort, and make any sacrifice in order to ensure that peace returns to Rwanda sooner rather than later.

In this task, we shall of course welcome encouragement and support from our friends outside Africa. It is in this respect that I welcome the expression of support from the governments of Belgium, France, Germany and the United States of America. I also wish to take this opportunity to thank the governments of Belgium and France for their initial material support for the work of the Neutral Military Observer Group which I have the singular honour to supervise.

Soon after the Arusha talks of 10 to 12th /July, Mr. Chairman, I appointed Dr. Mapuranga, OAU Assistant Secretary General in charge of Political with Affairs as my special Representative in Rwanda. He was immediately despatched to Kigali to consult with the Rwandese authorities on all aspects of the deployment of the NMOG. We also set about consulting with all concerned in order to assemble, as soon as practicable, the observer group comprising Nigeria, Senegal, and Zimbabwe. In the meantime, I personally discussed with Presidents Abd. Diouf of Senegal who is the Chairman of the OAU and Ibrahim Babangida of the Federal Republic of Nigeria matters related to the NMOG, in particular, and the peace process in Rwanda in general. Similar contacts were established with the Zimbabwe authorities albeit at a different level. On the question of the 4th Country, the current Chairman held consultations with President ALI HASSAN MWINYI, the Facilitator. The government of Egypt was approached but has, unfortunately, informed me of its inability to participate in the work of the NMOG. I have, however, been in touch with the Representative of the Current Chairman of the OAU to identify, as soon as practicable, another country which could replace Egypt.

In the meantime, the Senegalese Contingent has^{been} in Kigali for one week^{now}. The Commander of the NMOG, Major General OPALEYE of Nigeria is also expected in Kigali to day. I have in the meantime directed my Special Representative to ensure that there is an immediate deployment of the observers once, at least, two contingents are in place in Kigali.

Mr Chairman, while in Rwanda, my special Representative had the opportunity to visit the frontline. He visited the MUTARA, BYUMBA and RUHENGERI sectors all in the north of Rwanda. I am happy to note here that, despite minor incidents, the current cease fire is holding. My special Representative has also informed me that there currently exists a determination on the part of both parties, in particular, the respective forces to respect the ceasefire. I, therefore, wish to urge

our Rwandese brothers to consolidate the achievements of the last ten days by creating the necessary congenial and brotherly atmosphere which would serve as an inspiration to their respective forces in the field.

Perhaps at this juncture, Mr Chairman, I should pay tribute to the OAU Member states which have made concrete contribution in terms of human and material resources in order to ensure the early installation of the Neutral Military Observer Group. I refer here to, the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Republics of Senegal, and Zimbabwe who have positively responded to the request to send military observers to monitor the ceasefire. I therefore, wish to express my deep sense of gratitude to President Abdou Diouf of Senegal, our Current Chairman, President Ibrahim Babangida of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe for answering the call of Africa.

Mr. Chairman, the work of the Neutral Military Observer Group and the sacrifices of their countries as well as of the neighbouring countries and of Africa's friends would have been in vain if our Rwandese brothers do not commit themselves genuinely to the pursuit of durable peace. I trust I can count on them on this score.

As I have had occasion to state before, the social, human and economic cost of conflicts in Africa has been horrendous and unless we can put a definite end to conflicts, Africa will continue to be mired in confusion and our people condemned to misery and suffering. In the Rwanda Conflict, the main victims have been and continue to be the common people,

the aged, the women and children.

Last May, during my visit to the Ngarama camp established to house the displaced persons in Rwanda, I had the opportunity to witness for myself, the untold suffering and pain that the current conflict has brought on the Rwandese people. Today, thousands of Rwandese, mostly women and children have been displaced by the war. The Rwandese people, Mr. Chairman, deserve a better deal.

Mr. Chairman, the eyes of AFRICA and the world are today upon us all but more upon the Rwandese Government and the Rwandese Patriotic Front. What we in the OAU, or in the neighbouring countries and all the other observers can do, is to assist in providing the facilities for such negotiations. We can help in encouraging the parties to respond to the yearning of the people of Rwanda for an end to the war and to the restoration of peace in their country. We can help in encouraging them along the path of negotiation, in the full knowledge that both parties to the conflict and the people they represent generally, stand to reap the benefits of peace in their country.

All this, however, can make sense and indeed be worthy of the effort if the parties themselves are genuinely and resolutely committed to the search for peace. I know there will be obstacles, but let us not allow these impediments to stand in the way of peace.

We as observers cannot replace or substitute the parties to the conflict. The Onus for bringing about peace in Rwanda rests squarely on you the Rwandese Government and the Rwandese Patriotic Front. I am sure you take this responsibility seriously. As I have repeatedly said, the OAU has no interest in the present conflict, other than doing whatever we can to assist in promoting a peaceful settlement to it.

We stand on the side of peace and we shall remain on the side of peace in this or any other conflict.

Today, a real chance for peace is presenting itself. Our collective challenge is to ensure that the present momentum is sustained so that we can build on the gains of last month's meetings here in Arusha and in Addis Ababa. We should muster all the political courage and determination so that the present disposition of the parties to a peaceful settlement is consolidated. We should not let this chance slip between our fingers.

Let me, therefore, assure you that the Organisation of African Unity considers it as a duty to assist in bringing peace and to restore hope to the Rwandese people. Our sole interest in this matter is to be helpful and to see to the early restoration of peace so that the Rwandese displaced in their country and those currently outside their country can return home to their loved ones. We shall never waiver in this task.

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, it is in the light of the commitment of all of us to peace in Rwanda that today's meeting and the negotiations that would follow, to us, offer our Rwandese brothers the rare opportunity to make peace. I have no illusion about the difficulties that lie ahead. But I have faith in peace. I urge our Rwandese brothers here to demonstrate the highest sense of love for their country, their people and exhibit the spirit of compromise, the spirit of give and take in the critical days that lie ahead of us all. But I remain convinced that our Rwandese brothers will live up to the challenge that confront them.

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you and wish this meeting every success.