



*Organization of African Unity*

**AFRICA-EUROPE SUMMIT**  
**UNDER THE AEGIS OF THE OAU**  
**AND THE EU, CAIRO, 3 – 4 APRIL, 2000**

*Opening session*

**STATEMENT BY DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM,**  
**SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE**  
**ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY**

**STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL**  
**OF THE OAU AT THE AFRICA – EUROPE SUMMIT**  
**UNDER THE AEGIS OF THE OAU AND THE EU**  
**CAIRO, 3 – 4 APRIL 2000**

**Your Excellency President Hosni Mubarak**

**Your Excellency Abdelaziz Bouteflika**

**Your Majesty**

**Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government**

**Distinguished President of the European Commission**

**Excellencies**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

I wish, at the very outset, to express our appreciation and gratitude to His Excellency President Hosni Mubarak, the Government and People of the Arab Republic of Egypt for hosting this important Summit and for the warm hospitality extended to us since our arrival. I wish to pay tribute to the Current Chairman of the OAU, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, and to the Presidency of the European Union, Prime Minister Antonio Guterres for their untiring efforts in creating propitious conditions for the convening of the Summit.

For the past 500 years, the continent of Africa and Europe have sustained a relationship of such a profound nature that it has impacted and is still impacting on the social, cultural, political and economic life of the African people as it has to the people of some European countries as well. It is unfortunate that they only time during these five centuries when the

relationship between Europe and Africa has been addressed holistically took place more than on hundred years ago in Berlin. And at this occasion, the destiny of Africa was determined without the participation of Africans.

This Summit, taking place at the advent of a new century and a new millennium, is therefore quite significant. It is an occasion for reaffirming and reinforcing our common bond, and also for rectifying the anomalies of the past. The summit provides an opportunity for developing a strong foundation for a new and constructive partnership that is built not so much on the basis of the past, but more pertinently, on harnessing the immense potential of our association based on mutual interest and respect.

It is critical that our partners understand the determined efforts that Africa is deploying in overcoming its problems. It is quite obvious that the negative consequences of the setbacks confronting Africa – be it in the spheres of conflicts, environment, diseases, or even poverty -- ultimately affect its partners, particularly the closest one - Europe. It is in this context that the partnership that needs to be built between Africa and Europe has to foster a new strategic orientation so as to promote the achievement of our common goals.

It is in this regard that the issue of the debt burden generates a lot of concern for African Governments and People, because its negative impact undermines the efforts towards socio-economic recovery and development.

While we do appreciate the efforts that are being made to alleviate the impact of this burden on the overall socio-economic development of our countries, it is quite evident that these measures are not adequate.

The need for a faster, deeper and broader process of debt relief to Africa needs not be over-emphasized. The time-frame for countries to benefit from debt relief facilities needs to be shortened so as to compliment the impetus generated by domestic efforts for change. We should not wait for a major catastrophe to occur, or until a country demonstrates acute signs of vulnerability, for consideration to be given for debt relief. Similarly, the magnitude of the relief given should not only be consistent with the ability of any African country to pay, but it should also enable African economies to enhance their dynamism, and more particularly to cope with the demands of poverty alleviation.

I wish to emphasize that Africa is committed to pursue its agenda for peace, cooperation and development. This is not merely an inspirational ideal, but it is a practical imperative in this era of globalization. Africa is also committed to strengthen its unity and solidarity as clearly affirmed in the Sirte Declaration in which African leaders decided to create an African Union by the year 2001 and to accelerate the implementation process of the Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community. Africa is also determined to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law as a fulfillment of the legitimate aspirations of its people. It is therefore important that in our endeavour to forge a new and dynamic partnership



between Africa and Europe the concerns and objectives of Africa should be clearly recognized.

Such a partnership should be built on a framework that consolidates African unity, cooperation and integration and that avoids mechanisms that would tend to fragment the continent thus compounding its weaknesses. It is my hope that this Summit will address the essential components of such a framework including facilitating the access of Africa's products to the European market. Such a framework would be congruent with the aspirations of the African peoples and would enhance Africa's strength so that the continent can become a dynamic actor in the global system and a solid partner for Europe.

I Thank You.