

STATEMENT BY H.E. THE SECRETARY GENERAL
AT THE PRESIDENTIAL FORUM ON RANDFORUM,
KAMPALA, 24 - 25 JULY 1995

Mr. Chairman,
Your Excellency President Yoweri Museveni,
Honourable Heads of State,
Eminent Elders,
Prof. T. Odhiambo,
Distinguished Scientists and Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to have the opportunity to participate in this high level meeting marking the convening of the Third Presidential Forum on the Management of Science and Technology for Development in Africa, which will focus this year on "Strategy Framework for Food and Nutritional Security in Africa, 1995-2005". I would like to take this opportunity to convey my profound thanks and appreciation to H.E. President Yoweri K. Museveni of Uganda for first, having extended his personal invitation to me to take part in this gathering, and also for the warm reception and generous hospitality extended to us since our arrival in Kampala.

I wish also to pay tribute to Prof. Thomas R. Odhiambo and his associates for the very commendable project they have initiated for the promotion of Science-led development strategies in Africa as we are preparing to enter into the 21st century.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Indeed, there is no doubt that in the last decade of the second millennium and at the dawn of the third millennium, Science and Technology are bound to play a decisive role in the realization of the goals of endogeneity and self-sufficiency that African countries have set for themselves in order to overcome economic dependence. Overcoming dependence will demand that African countries endow themselves with the scientific and technical knowledge and know-how and also the necessary financing mechanisms that go along with the characteristics and needs of their populations.

We in the OAU, have always considered science and technology as one of the most important tools and the driving force for the socio-economic development of our Member States and for the well-being of their population. In fact, the founding fathers of the Organization did, from the very beginning, feel such a necessity and that is why provision was made in the OAU Charter to set up structures for the establishment and strengthening of instruments aimed at developing Research and Development activities in Member States.

Pursuant to such an idea, our political leaders adopted, in an extraordinary Economic Summit in Lagos, Nigeria in April 1980, **"THE LAGOS PLAN OF ACTION AND ITS FINAL ACT"** which spelt out a strategy of reorienting the African production base to the objective of promoting endogenous development, and to better align production means to consumption patterns. The long term objective of the Lagos Plan of Action is the progressive transition towards economic transformation and the establishment of an African Common Market. It is for that reason that, at their 26th Ordinary Summit in Abuja,

Nigeria in June 1991, the OAU Heads of State and Government signed the **TREATY ESTABLISHING THE AFRICAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY (AEC)**.

The foremost objective in terms of science and technology in the Lagos Plan of Action and the Treaty establishing the AEC consists in stimulating scientific and technical capacity building and application of science and technology as a basis for sustainable and accelerated growth in Africa.

Considering the weakness of their scientific and technical foundation, a great number of African countries do not have the means of acquiring the required technologies for technological transformation. Furthermore, the search for, the choice, and the introduction of technologies in Member States are heavily influenced by technological suppliers, whose concerns do not necessarily coincide with those of African economies. Furthermore, the high cost of technology is an obstacle to the setting up of an endogenous technological capacity. This situation must change if Africa wants to succeed in creating a technical system that would make it possible for the continent to feed its entire population and raise their living standard. Consequently, it is of absolute necessity that scientific know-how be systematically applied to technology in Africa.

One of the major obstacles to these changes and to the promotion of research and development in Africa is that of lack of financial resources. And while we can call for international cooperation, there must be a deliberate and sustained effort on the part of our governments to devote some of our meager resources in this area. Failure to do so will subject the peoples of our continent to perpetual dependence in an area which is so vital for the welfare of our

people and the development of our countries.

There is no doubt that our continent is confronted with serious problems of poverty and underdevelopment. We are equally confronted with the problems of instability as manifested in the recurring conflicts in many parts of Africa. We are also confronted with the changing international situation which unfortunately is not the most favourable for Africa. But only we the Africans can make a difference. Only through our resolve, determination and action can we change our situation for the better.

Happily, it is encouraging to note that there is currently in the continent a clear determination not only to break with the past, but also to reverse the situation. There is determination in Africa to play a more central role in resolving our own conflicts as there is the determination to take seriously the issues of promoting inter-African cooperation and regional integration. But this determination needs to be translated more and more into concrete actions. It is in this context that any initiative taken by many Africans to overcome and reverse the critical situation in which our continent finds itself must be welcomed. For Africa must plan and work for its new future. It is within this context also, that the initiative of AFRAND and RANDFORUM should be viewed.

Mr. Chairman,

At the level of the continental organization - the Organization of African Unity - we are presently embarking on the process of putting in place the relevant structures to service the implementation of the provisions of the Treaty

establishing the African Economic Community. I believe that initiatives such as those of AFRAND aimed at promoting ways and means of building Africa's capacity to take charge of its own destiny are not only timely but most welcomed.

The OAU General Secretariat is ready to cooperate with AFRAND through our existing structures. And we wish to do so while avoiding duplication of efforts and wastage of the scarce financial resources. We see AFRAND as a foundation able to fill the gaps left out by existing structures in a constructive and complementary manner not only for the development of Science based culture in our Member States but also in facilitating science-led development in Africa.

At this juncture, I wish to draw attention to this distinguished gathering, that the theme of this Third presidential Forum, is very much in line with the decision already adopted by the OAU Heads of State and Government in their meeting in Cairo, Egypt, in June 1993 when they launched, through the Assembly Resolution AHG/Res. 224(XX1X) the African Regional Nutrition Strategy (1993-2003). This strategy calls for a number of activities which, I am sure, when implemented, will live up to the expectations of the participants at this gathering. I believe that the OAU General Secretariat and AFRAND should coordinate their efforts towards implementing such a strategy which would go along in our common search for solutions for the promotion of nutrition and security in Africa in the next decade.

In the meantime, I hope that in the near future, the OAU General Secretariat and AFRAND would develop closer working relationships within the

framework either of a cooperation agreement or a memorandum of understanding in order to work together towards the implementation of the many existing strategies for the benefit of our people.

In conclusion, I wish to pay particular tribute to all the Heads of State and Government and Heads of Delegation present at this meeting. Their presence is an eloquent testimony to the importance they attach to the role of Science and Technology in the social-economic development and transformation of our continent.