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**SECRETARY-GENERAL'S SPEECH TO THE BRIEFING-  
MEETING ON SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND CULTURE  
ADDIS ABABA, 26TH MARCH, 1993**

**Your Excellencies**

**Mr. Layashi Yaker, Executive Secretary of UNECA**

**Ladies & Gentlemen**

This is again one of the occasions where we meet to put our heads together and to address the concerns of our continent. I would like to thank you sincerely for responding to our invitation and to welcome you to your House.

The rationale behind this meeting, I understand, is to listen to one of Africa's recognized scientist, Prof. Odhiambo who will share with us his rich experiences, his concerns as well as his frustrations at the bottlenecks impeding Africa's advancement in the crucial field of science and technology. At the same time, the meeting is invited to exchange views and advance inputs on issues of the hour relating to the role of science and technology in our continent's development.

It is a fact that in the past, our Organization has rightly focused on the liberation struggle. As a result, not sufficient focus was made on other pertinent sectors such as economic development, science, technology and culture, social affairs, etc. Now that the decolonization process is completed and with the expected liquidation of apartheid in the near future, it is time that we focus on issues of development - the issues of bread and butter. The emphasis on economic cooperation and integration in the spirit and letter of the Abuja Treaty for the establishment of the African Economic Community should be seen in this context. In meeting this challenge, the OAU has to reorganize its own house and prioritize its plans in order to meet the challenges of the 90s and beyond. Among the priorities of the priorities is obviously the crucial sector of science and technology. The future of the world is dependent on the advancement of science and

technology, and for us in Africa, we have to recognize that it is in this sector which can make a difference whether our Continent forges ahead in the 21st Century or remains in the periphery.

Having said this, let me hasten to add that while political issues have tended to dominate the work and activities of our Organization in the past, it would be incorrect to ignore some of the efforts made and achievements scored in the scientific domain. At the level of the OAU Regional Offices in Lagos, Nairobi, Yaounde, scientific activities and research are continuing and efforts to create a scientific base never redressed. At the level of the General Secretariat, some major activities were undertaken and to cite some examples, one has to refer to the first initiative of its kind in the field of science and technology, that is the Kampala Seminar on "Nuclear Science and Technology for Peace in Africa held in March 1990" and its follow-up, another is the ongoing preparations for the convening of a Biotechnology Conference in collaboration with PUST, and lastly is the introduction of the Gold Medals Award to African Inventors in cooperation with WIPO. But these are very modest achievements indeed.

Now is the time for Africa to give the most deserved priority to the development of science and technology in our countries and our Continent. This development must be all encompassing through training, post graduate and post doctoral training. Now is also the time to use technology and science adapted to our circumstances, situations and environment. In so doing, we need to pool Africa's resources together, make use of our qualified scientists and as far as possible avoid duplication.

*The challenge is enormous. But it is a challenge which we can meet and overcome. Indeed, it is one which we cannot afford not to tackle head on. For in the final analysis, it is inconceivable to visualize an economic breakthrough for our continent and peoples if we neglect or marginalize the areas of science and technology.*

*Mr. chairman,*

*I have said this is a challenge that we must meet and we have the capacity to do so if we so determine.*

*For it is needless to say that Africa is rich in potential, rich in its natural and human resources. The shining proof of Africa's potential is the existence of African internationally recognized scientists, one of whom is honouring us by his presence with us, Prof. Odhiambo. This prominent Scientist and dedicated Pan-Africanist whom I have particular honour and privilege to welcome in our midst has made strides in different directions within his domain. He established the African Academy of Sciences as well as the International Centre for Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICIPE) in Nairobi. Professor Odhiambo is sowing the seeds of some projects the most recent of which is to sensitize the African leaders on Science and Technology. Professor Odhiambo as a founder, pioneer and leader of ICIPE has done outstanding work. It is my understanding that while he will continue to be keenly interested in the development of ICIPE, he intends to relinquish his position as Director in the next two years so as to devote more time and energy in "the mobilization of resources - both intellectual*

*and financial - for science-led development in Africa, through Institutions such as the Research and Development Forum for Science-led Development in Africa (RANDFORUM) and the proposed African Foundation for Research and Development (AFRAND).*

*Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, on your behalf and on my own, I wish to welcome most sincerely, one of Africa's finest internationally acclaimed scientists and committed Pan Africanists.*

*I am particularly gratified that we are having this session and discussing this important subject at a time when our Organization is marking its 30th Anniversary. It is, indeed, apt that as we do so by inter alia focusing on issues of science, technology and culture.*