

(13)

BRIEFING TO AFRICAN AMBASSADORS  
BY OAU SECRETARY-GENERAL, DR. SALIM A. SALIM  
MONDAY 28TH MAY, 1990

Excellencies and dear Colleagues,

You would recall in our Last meeting I have stated that before the end of the month or early June I shall endeavour to convene a meeting and to brief you on the status of operations as far as the Council of Ministers and Summit, are concerned. I am therefore grateful for your response to be here.

Before I go to the questions of the CM and Summit in keeping with our understanding I shall endeavour to brief you as brief as possible, on the activities I and the Secretariat have been engaged in since our last meeting.

At the invitation of the government of Cameroon, I made an official visit to Cameroon from 17-25 May. Technically speaking my visit started on 19th. My colleagues in Cameroon were kind enough to enable me do much of the substantive work in two days. I had the privilege of calling on the President H.E. Mr. Paul Bia, with whom I had extended discussions on the issues affecting our continent and also on the issues of the OAU I found him to be most supportive and most sympathetic and also pledged his fullest co-operation to the work of the organization particularly in the light of the present challenges facing our organization. I also had a meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Information and was invited to give an address at the institute of International relations on the economic prospects of our continent in the 1990s.

A word only on this lecture, I found there and also discovered that one or two other countries that have something called the OAU club whose role is to promote at the academic, student and even at the popular level the objectives and aims of the OAU in order to bring the OAU nearer to the ordinary people. I think it is an extremely beneficial institution. I found also that in Nigeria they have something like this. I received the otherday a message that in one of the Universities they are doing the same, but in Cameroon, I was referring to the fact that it is a national thing which we should pursue vigorously and see what we can do using the example of Cameroon and other African countries who may have that on how to bring the OAU better known to the ordinary Africans and other people of decision making. Now as you know this is not a new thing when it comes to other institutions there are national commissions and UN national institutions whose objectives to promote the objectives of the organization and have done fairly well and the UN by far is more known in almost African countries than the OAU is. That is one idea which I thought worth pursuing. I was first exposed to this idea by Cameroon but then I discovered until recently I received a communication from Nigeria that they have such a commission in one university.

I had also in Yaounde, the advantage of taking part in the national day celebration making the festivities of the 18th anniversary on May 18th, and I was very impressed by those festivities and also it provided me another opportunity to meet the entire leadership of the country at the time. So my visit to Younde through I went to Doula by car, was really extremely successful and again like in my previous visit there was a tremendous good will for the organization and I was very encouraged by the support given by the Head of State of Cameroon and his colleagues.



From Yaounde, I went to Togo- It was a short visit but an equally successful visit. I spent about 30 or 20 hours in the country. I was received by the Head of State President Eyadema with whom I had almost two hours of discussions. I met with the foreign affairs Minister and several ministers and again like the case of the President of Cameroon, President Eyadema was very supportive to the organization. Both two Presidents like I believe other Presidents are following very closely the activities of the organization. I had the opportunity to express my own worries except I should say frankly both in Cameroon and Togo I could not raise the question of financial contributions because in both cases the situation is encouraging. Togo has paid every cent and made excess payment and in respect of Cameroon they paid almost half of the current contribution and have no standing arrears. I have not raised it with the President but he was generous enough to raise it himself. He said he was informed by the secretary of the presidency that Cameroon has to pay something like half of its budget and he was going to give instructions to the effect. This is really was moving but in the sense the heads of state are, following the problems of the organization and prepared to do something about it. One more point about my visit to Cameroon and Togo, I found in both countries there is this question of the new political conditionality that is being advocated or forcefully presented by some of our friends in the West, is something which is preoccupied our leaders there, as I think it should preoccupy all African countries. The idea of democratization which in my context with leaders and media and other authorities I made it very clear that Africa one way to respond to the challenges must on its own look inwardly and really make sure that our people are given the opportunity to actively participate in the political economic, and social activities of our societies. This is

a point which is absolutely agreed upon by the Heads of State that I have met. I also talked about the question of human rights and the need to respect human rights and for Africa to be on the forefront for this human rights. All this, there was no controversy<sup>any</sup>, but when the question arises on this attempt to say there is now a term "multipartism" the concept is becoming a new conditionality for assistance and co-operation. Some talk in vague terms, some in blank terms and I was just reading a report by the ASG (co-ordination and Missions) and I should share it with you. When he was attending a meeting in Washington - There were so many who spoke, but it is interesting to notice that the views of the President of the World Bank, the executive director of IMF and the views of the asst. Secretary for African Affairs were identical. They were not pronounced in identical terms but conceptually they were identical in terms of democratic reforms, but in a sense democratic reforms as defined by them, I remember my discussions with Mr. Drepa of UNDP where he talked about the importance of democratic reforms. Democratic reforms is one thing but multipartism. It is a phenomenon which African countries should be prepared to watch out. But I found real concern in the countries I visited, and it is not so much the tough these countries are not for democratisation, respect for human rights or accountability of governments but they are saying really democracy should be a home grown situation that you can not impose from outside what type of system you should have in a respective country. But in addition to IMF conditionality which you are aware of, the questions of devaluation, termination of services for some of the workers etc. Now creeping is a new conditionality political in character of saying there is a possibility as we go future<sup>farther</sup> if you want aid ~~and~~ first you must accept to have democratic reforms and by democratic reforms meaning also multipartism<sup>y</sup>



one can have a big debate on that on the pros and cons and what should be done. I thought to have shared with you because the concern which I found and I think it a concern which is going to manifest itself as we go ahead in the years to come. My visits to Cameroon and Togo, for me, have served frankly as an inspiration for the efforts we are trying to make in the organization.

2. You are all aware of the situation which had erupted between Senegal and Guinea Bissau. When the information got us I thought it was important for the Secretariat to do something and so I decided to sent a message to both Presidents calling for strain and appealing that whatever differences that they may have should be overcome through the process of dialogue between the two countries. As you are aware, happily that there was a statement issued in Dakar to the effect that the two parties had agreed on the methodology for which for them to proceed to the tackling of the problem. I should also mention that during the time of the Darfur incident (I am referring to the capture of the Libyan convoy) I had also sent a message to President Habre and Col. Gaddafi again in the same spirit calling for strain and urging that the situation should not be allowed to escalate. I am happy to report that both two leaders sent me very encouraging responses after my communication with them.

3. On the Senegal-Mauritania conflict I should like to make only one point that the Egyptian State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Burtrus Ghali, after consulting with the parties concerned, is preparing to have a meeting with the two parties comprising of the Ministers of Foreign and internal affairs of both countries sometime in the middle of June in Paris where the representative of OAU Secretary-

General has been invited to take part. We will await the results of that meeting but meanwhile we are also stressing the importance of having a meeting of the commission which is assisting President Mubarek in the mediation efforts before the summit so that the commission can be in a position to make its own judgement and evaluation and whatever recommendations it can make to the summit prior to its holding.

4. You have certainly heard on the news that after consultations and discussion with our Ethiopian colleagues, the host country, we had on the 25th of May signed an agreement which provided the OAU for the use of land of something like 10,000 sq. meters for the construction of the residence of the Secretary-General. Now we have the land at our disposal and what we are trying to do is to move with speed because we are very much aware that in the field of construction the costs are always escalating and everyday passes the cost become more, but again you can not jump and start construction as there are a lot of things to be done so we have created a special committee within the Secretariat which is chaired by ASG(Admin. and Finance) to do all that is required for the purpose of facilitating the construction of the residence. Bearing in mind the financial constraints, and the amount of money already located for the project, I would like to make two observations:

(i) This is a residence which is going to be built as an official residence of the Secretary-General for the years or decades to come. It is going to be an African house. We would send a note to all the missions, those who are in a position to contribute in one way or another, not so much in terms of money, we are talking of things that



would help to make the residence look more African, for example those who have beautiful carvings, marbles to spare, salamics and other things could send to us. We will have first to do what we want to do in good time. I really want to emphasize that we want to move with speed in the construction of the residence. I had the assurance of the Ethiopian government at the level of both the foreign minister and the minister for urban development and housing that we will get maximum cooperation from them and will also get co-operation in the mobilization of those resources that are internally available.

(ii) While still on construction, let me throw an idea which we should not discuss but merely for your consideration. You are aware a few year ago, there was a decision to construct a conference complex for the OAU and I remember that some countries pledged to make some contributions. I know Nigeria, Ghana, Libya and Zaire did. There may be others who like Guinea Bissau, Liberia who made some contribution to that effect. The point now is that the idea was to build an impressive conference complex which will be used by the organization that will cost about 40 million dollars. You know it is not so easy to get that amount but even if you want to get it right now, it seems to me it does not make sense to use the money to build an impressive multipurpose complex when we know that the ECA is going to build a 200 million dollar worth project and one of the rationales for the ECA to get this money, to get authorization through the General assembly of the UN, is that in Addis Ababa the building is going to be used for the meetings of the Council of Minister and Heads of States of the OAU. This is one of the arguments. So really if we go ahead and thinking of building our own building of conference, you will have two complexes one here and one at Africa Hall and we would not look credible as far as the International community is

concerned and we don't have the money to start with. My own idea, after we have consulted on this in the secretariat, what we really need is not a huge conference complex. I talked to professor Adedeji who informed me the money has been obtained and they will start construction. Consequently what we need is conference facilities. I am therefore suggesting for your consideration that instead of building a conference complex as such, we consider the construction of a secretariat building because there is a lot of difficulties in terms of placing of the secretariat personnel in the organization but really the secretariat building is a means but the idea is to build a conference facility which will accommodate 200-300 people that can be used for regular meetings like this or when ministers want to come to consult, the facility can be used. This is an idea I have in mind and we in the secretariat are exploring it but I thought of sharing the idea with you. Again knowing the financial situation of our organization, to get this money from the regular budget is almost an impossibility, given the present situation, but since Member States have accepted the principle of making voluntary contribution we will ask those countries to make use of this amount of money for that purpose. Definitely the cost will be by far less than the cost which has originally been anticipated for the construction of the conference complex. We don't want to be seen as competing in building complexes.

5. The budgetary situation of the organization. Despite all the appeals made, I was happy when I read the report made by the Advisory Committee's sub-committee which was endorsed by the committee that there were some suggestions which frankly I wish if we had consulted because I have already taken action for example the idea that the message to Member States should not be routine messages, they should



be individualized messages to Heads of States or governments asking them to make their contributions, I have done that. Until now the situation is not very encouraging. We have about 3 days to the financial year and that far we have received \$ 10,320,380 which means there are still outstanding \$ 18,942,125 which have not been paid. The number of countries that have paid are 20, talking of the current budget, fully paid are 16 and partly paid are 4. I had some assurances of those who have not paid yet and normally do pay punctually, that I will be receiving the amount of money before the end of this month, but I am not optimistic, let me say I will receive them by the first week of June. Really the question of the budget of the organization still leaves a lot to be desired and particularly the contribution by Member States.

6. In connection with the meeting on environment which is supposed to take place in Mali mid of the year, the government of Mali proposed November but we are going to propose to them November is going to be difficult to hold the meeting. Possibly the meeting should commence early December. It will be difficult because in November we have the advisory committee (first week) and the standing commission on Afro-Arab Co-operation at the end of November. Consultations are continuing and once finalized you would be duly informed.

7. We had the meeting of the monitoring group at the ministerial level which was held in Cairo 20th May. This meeting was convened by the current chairman, Egypt being the chairman of the committee. The meeting was addressed by Nelson Mandela who was visiting Cairo then and a number of clarifications were made at the meeting including how to proceed and it was decided that the monitoring group's

report should be ready by 8th June and submitted to the Secretary-General. I want to stress the 8th of June here since a number of countries here are members of the monitoring group because in the UN, I was informed they are expecting the report to be out by 1st July. So the report of the Secretary-General of the Organization on the question of implementation of the UN declaration has to be ready by 15th June so that it can go through the normal processes of translation etc... The input of OAU Ad Hoc Committee to have an impact on the report of Secretary-General of the Organization must reach the Secretary-General long before the 15th of June. If the ad hoc committee finishes 8th of June, then theoretically it is possible to have the report in Addis by 10th of June and we can fax it to UN Secretary-General in time for whatever observations the Ad Hoc Committee puts to be reflected in the final report of the Secretary-General to the general assembly.

8. On my activities in the next one month I will be leaving on wednesday for Paris, London, Brussels and Geneva. I am going to Paris at the invitation of the African group there. They are organising the observance of Africa Day by holding some sort of colloquium at UNESCO. The invitation was sent to me by the Gabonese ambassador and chairman of the group 3 - 4 months ago, and have accepted it. In the process, I will take a working visit to Paris for three days. I will have a substantive meeting with the Director General of UNESCO and also a meeting with the Foreign Minister of France.

At the invitation of the British government I will proceed to London, and I hope to have discussions with the British government officials 4 - 5 June with the Foreign Minister and other Ministers.



On 6th June there is a seminar organised by the overseas development institute which will discuss the questions of African economic recovery, democracy and economic prospects of the continent. They have invited a number of people including some senior British officials and international institutions.

The visit to Brussels is essentially for the purpose of trying to make contacts with the EEC, ACP group, African ambassadors. The Belgian authorities were kind enough to arrange for me a meeting with the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister and other officials.

In Geneva, where our office there arranged a programme to meet all heads of the agencies who are located in Geneva and with whom we have some sort of co-operation. i.e. ILO, UNHCR, WIPO, WHO etc... literally 10 or 50. I will have discussions with the African group and there is also a reception to mark Africa Day plus the formal opening of our chancery in Geneva.

I expect to be back on 14th of June after which I am going to Lagos where I have been invited to lecture the annual guardian lecture on the implications of the single market to Africa. I will also make a working visit. The President of Nigeria graciously accepted to receive me and I hope I will meet with other Nigerian government officials. It may sound like a morthon because after that I have to go to Madagascar. The President have invited me since the last February Council meeting for an official visit and also to attend the 30th anniversary of the independence, 26th June.

9. The meeting of OAU Liberation Committee was supposed to take place 28 - 29 June but has now been slightly changed to 27 and 28 June at Ministerial level in order to ensure that the Ministers who will be attending the Liberation Committee will be able to come to Addis on time for the meeting of the steering committee 29 - 30 June.

10. As for the preparations for Council of Minister and the summit, we had discussed this matter before, but I would like to report to you on what the status of the situation is and what we are going from here. First we had slightly changed the dates of the council to 3 - 7 instead of 2-7 because of Eid Eladdha. I hope the Eid is 2nd of July, because we can not change it further. We have learnt from this experience, when we communicate to the Heads of State a fixed date, the date is subject to one qualification and that if the date happens to coincide with a religious holiday then adjustant should be made accordingly. The summit is therefore 9-11 July.

The agenda has already been distributed together with the new invention, the annotated agenda, which we think will be helpful since some of the documents are not ready, Member States would at least have an idea of what type of items are going to be discussed. On the agenda, let me say, since we circulated that agenda there have been two items proposed by member states, one from madagascar proposing the inclusion of an item entitled: Question of diagogacia and the chagos achpelago. The other is proposed by Nigeria: A brief on the African anti-apartheid committee, and preferably to be discussed under the agenda item on the situation in Southern Africa. Both items will be circulated.



We have also prepared a protocol manual concerning the physical arrangements of the summit. It has been translated in all languages. We had some physical difficulties with respect to translating documents into portuguese. We are trying our best and we will manage but there have been some problems. I want our Portuguese speaking colleagues to be understanding if they find the documents somewhat late. We shall continue to endeavour to ensure that Portuguese is provided. The protocol mannual has been circulated. Still there are some points that may need further edition but this is just a first attempt. In the meantime if there is any ideas before the council or summit, we should require looking into, I will be happy to ensure that the General Secretariat specially Protocol looks into them. I know of a specific problem that faced ministers in the past concerning the provision of necessary transportation. We have drawn the attention of our Ethiopian host so that they are also looked into. We are still exploring the question of getting permanent badges. We have not unfortunately yet found a solution but I insisit of having a situation where ambassadors do not have every time to go and change badges.

As far as documents are concerned, all documents with a few exceptions will be circulated in all languages, perhaps with the exception of Portuguese and perhaps with the inclusion of Portuguese, by the end of May, latest by Friday. Most of documents will be ready and the only exceptions are anything that happened in the month of May or likely to happen in the month of June. On the reports of a political nature, they may be developments since the circulation of the document, what we will do is to issue an addendum to signify the areas where there have been new developments.

There is a document which is the report of the Secretary General concerning the global changes and their impact for our continent and what Africa's response should be. The study on this document is ready. An interdepartmental task force has prepared a very elaborate study which frankly reinforced my own feeling that we can have something done in the secretariat without resorting to consultants. But this is a lengthy document, a study almost of 56-60 pages which we are in the process of condensing it, as we don't expect Ministers or Heads of State to read that lengthy report. The main salient points shall be reflected in the condensed documents such as: How do we see the changes, what the implications for our continent and what our response be. I believe the document be ready not later than the 10th of June, maximum 15th June. I sent the text to the Executive Secretary of the ECA and asked him to give his own input and we are also thinking in terms of the consultations between the two organizations, for any possible addition to that document. That is as regards the document, but the study will be published later. It will be a comprehensive study that is prepared by the staff of the secretariat with the collaboration of many people who contributed, apart from members of the task force, to the study and also with a good input from our offices in Brussels, Geneva and N.Y. It will be circulated for the benefit of Member States. The documents will be ready therefore long before the Council of Ministers and Summit, with the exception of the report of the Liberation Committee. We are still having a problem as we are hoping that the UNDP equipment will come before the summit. It has not come yet, if we are lucky it will come before the summit but certainly for the publication of the present documents we have to resort largely to same type of equipment that we have had. There was some improvement, but essentially we are still using the equipment we already have. When the new equipments are here we shall be in a much better situation.



In addition to sending documents from here, we are exploring other possibilities of sending documents to those member states that have no representation here. A number of countries have indicated the methods of sending documents to them and I see no reason why we should not follow them. We will try to devise more methods that documents reach member states early enough because it will help the secretariat and the conference if states have documents early and do their home work early, they consult departments concerned and come fully prepared with what they expect to raise. We also try to reduce a bit in the future the quantity of the documents and try to improve the quality. Another problem is that some institutions applying for observer status send us documents like an encyclopedia and they want us to translate them. I have taken the liberty, and hope to receive the support of Member States, to summarise them, in order to reduce translation cost, and have the basic documents for reference.

A report that will not be ready until 10th of June is on the root causes of refugees. At the level of the secretariat, the document is almost ready but in keeping with the best method to have it reflected, we have asked for opinions from the UN and UNHCR. Unfortunately modern communication have their own problems as we sent a message to ambassador Farah some 10 days ago, and we just received a communication from him that they did not get the whole fax. Eventually we will end up producing our own report with or without the input of the UNHCR and UN secretariat but with the possible input or at least Council of the bureau or at least the chairman and vice chairman of the committee of 15 on refugees. This is a very sensitive issue and not an easy report to prepare.

I want to share with you some views relating to the preparations of the Council and Summit in terms of the necessary ground work that has to be made. I presume you will have the documents by the end of this month, and I would like to suggest to you, what we have done with the preparations of the Ad Hoc Committee on South Africa, in other words, the secretariat working together with the ambassadors to start preparing draft resolutions, decisions and statements for the consideration by Council in respect to each and every single item on the agenda. I want to emphasize that this is not going in any way to commit any of the Member States represented since the institution is not formalized. We simply need the input of the ambassadors on some of these things. How do we propose to go about it? The secretariat, specifically the departments concerned will prepare the first draft resolutions depending on the item and also on what happened in the last session of council or Summit, and then every department will make consultations in the course of June with the ambassadors for every item. May be at some point we can have a meeting with all ambassadors in which we have all drafts ready so that any idea could be made. It seems to me this is the only rational way of preparing for meeting which is done in all other international institutions as all documents and resolutions are prepared long before the meeting takes place.

Secondly I would like to propose that we try to improve on the methodology of the work of our Heads of state. We have a session of three days 9-10-11 and in reality it is two days because the 9th is ceremonial day. What I am proposing requires real consultations with our governments, with the ministers and eventually with the Heads of State themselves. We should try to confine speeches only on the



first day of summit. Speeches should only be made by current chairman and incoming chairman, the President of the host country, the Liberation movements (Mandela will make an address) Sam Nujoma (as it is the first time for Namibia to attend as a country) and naturally the Secretary-General of the UN. On the 2nd day we have the usual report of OAU Secretary General followed by the report of the ECA executive secretary which I hope both will not be more than 30 minutes maximum. We must show example to the Heads of State.... After that the Heads of state should be encouraged to discuss issues. If in two days we can focus on the issues important to Africa i.e. the global changes, their impact on Africa and Africa's response. If the Heads of states spend 3 hours of substantive discussion talking to each other and exchanging experience, we would benefit from the wisdom of our Heads of state at that point. We can even suggest some themes, you know the issues, the changes, the economic situation, InterAfrican conflicts, Middle East and Palestine, etc... In this way the Heads of State will be able to focus on issues, make their views and we can prepare decisions accordingly on the basis of this. Finally the last item will be the discussion and the decision on the report and recommendations of the council of Ministers. These are the thoughts which I have, but I know some would not be easy if the heads of state decided to speak, there is no way we should say they couldn't speak, except a Head of State can tell another Head of State not to speak the Secretariat can't do so, and the ambassadors can't do so but if we start selling this idea, I think we will frankly reach a point where the summit will provide an important forum for our leaders to exchange views between themselves and which will benefit the organization, because as it is now, when people make speeches and they go, in most cases on very vital issues,

then you have a situation where Heads of State feel they have not contributed and sometimes the wisdom we should get from them is omitted. I thought I should raise those points for your consideration and whatever advice and whatever suggestions that you may wish to make. "Obligado" That is for the benefit of our Portuguese speaking colleague.