



CONFIDENTIAL
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Organization of African Unity

**STATEMENT BY H.E. DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM, SECRETARY
GENERAL OF THE OAU ON THE OCCASION OF THE
CELEBRATION OF THE CENTENNIAL OF THE BATTLE OF ADWA**

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

March 1, 1996

Dr. Negaso Gidada,
President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia,
Honourable Ministers,
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a singular honour for me to have been invited to participate in this auspicious occasion when the People and Government of Ethiopia are celebrating the Centennial of the Battle of Adwa. As I had the opportunity to state on other occasions, the Battle of Adwa was not the victory of the Ethiopian people only, but the collective victory of the peoples of Africa as a whole. Indeed, it symbolized Africa's tenacious resistance to colonial rule and domination. The Battle of Adwa also demonstrated the determination of Africa to resist colonialism and to bring to an end the scramble for Africa by foreign powers.

As we celebrate this historic event, we recognize that Adwa restored hope, pride and confidence in the shattered psyche of the African peoples both near and far. Therefore, our presence here today is to mark an event of significant proportion, one that made every African proud.

The story of Adwa is very well-known; an ill-equipped African army had been able to resist and defeat a better equipped European army. An African country had been able to thwart the colonial ambitions of a major European power and preserved its independence. Adwa transformed Ethiopia into a symbol of hope for all oppressed people in Africa and in the diaspora.

In this regard, as we observe the Centenary of the Battle of Adwa today, we should also bear in mind that the sacrifices made at Adwa by those gallant Ethiopian fighters, provided the rest of the Continent with the inspiration for the struggle for liberation and independence. And while we celebrate the Centenary of that epoch event, we must also remember with pride and pay tribute to all those Africans who stood firm against oppression and domination and fought for the dignity and freedom of the African peoples.

To many of us, the victory which was achieved in Ethiopia, the country which is hosting our Continental Organization, represented what is possible when all the people of a country are united to fight a common cause. It is therefore my fervent hope that the same spirit will continue to guide the Ethiopian people as they are facing the challenge of national reconstruction and democracy. It is only by so doing, that the people of Ethiopia, and indeed the people of this great Continent can justify

the sacrifices that were made by past generations to bequeath on us, succeeding generations, a Nation and a Continent unshackled by colonial domination and oppression.

As we celebrate a great African victory for which the people of Ethiopia should take pride in, it is my earnest and sincere hope that the Battle of Adwa will continue to inspire us. We, at the OAU, take a particular pride in this most heroic achievement by the Ethiopian people which enjoyed the support and solidarity of all Africans.

I wish on behalf of the Organization of African Unity and on my own behalf to reiterate to the President, the Prime Minister, the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and to the entire people of Ethiopia my warmest congratulations on the occasion of the centennial of the Victory of Adwa.

I also wish the people and Government of Ethiopia peace, progress and prosperity.