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Organization of African Unity

**STATEMENT BY
DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM,
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE OAU,
AT THE EIGHTH SUMMIT OF THE
INTERGOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY FOR DEVELOPMENT**

KHARTOUM, SUDAN

23 NOVEMBER 2000

Your Excellency Omer Hassan Ahmed Elbashir, President of the Republic of Sudan, and Current Chairman of IGAD,

Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government;

Honourable Ministers and Heads of Delegations,

Distinguished Executive Secretary of IGAD

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour and pleasure for the OAU to participate at this Summit of the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development. I wish to express my appreciation and gratitude to His Excellency President Omer Hassan Elbashir and the Executive Secretary of IGAD, Dr. Attalla Hamad Bashir, for the invitation extended to me to join you at this occasion. We are glad to be in Khartoum, a city that is re-known for the hospitality and warmth of its people which flow like the waters of River Nile. On behalf of our Continental Organization and on my own behalf, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate President Elbashir for assuming the chairmanship of IGAD. Undoubtedly, being entrusted with this responsibility by fellow Heads of State and Government is a demonstration of their confidence in his leadership and their faith in the Sudan.

This Summit is convening amidst a background of difficult and challenging circumstances for the IGAD Member States. Difficult because we are all aware of the trauma generated by the serious conflicts that have occurred within some Member States and between them. Obviously, this situation has undermined the collective efforts of the region and eroded the confidence that was evolving. It also shattered the image of a cohesive and

promising region. Furthermore, the region has suffered from the vagaries of weather, especially drought, which has caused death and suffering to multitudes and adversely affected the developmental efforts of the people of the region.

This having been said, it is a fact also that this particular Summit is taking place amidst a background of hope and great expectations for the people of the region as well as for the Continent as a whole. The hope stems from the fact that in the last few months, we had begun to see a definite, even if slow evolution of the situation for the better. Peace is gradually returning to the region, though admittedly, there are still some difficulties in front of us. We take particular satisfaction that the guns are silent in the sad war between Ethiopia and Eritrea. We are especially encouraged that both governments remain committed to the cessation of hostilities agreement which has been spearheaded by our Continental Organization with the outstanding contribution of several Heads of State, especially President Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria. At the same time, efforts are being deployed to achieve a comprehensive peace agreement which is important for the two countries, for the region and for the Continent as a whole. While the efforts of many actors - African and non-African - in support of this process have been important, the fact remains it has been the parties to the conflict which are primarily responsible for this current situation which gives us hope. I remain confident that both will persevere in this path in the interest of their people, the region and the Continent.

We are also encouraged by the developments in Somalia where after a long period of anarchy, lawlessness and mayhem, there are now signs of hope for the people of that country. I wish, once again, to pay tribute to the persistence and determination of President Ismael Omar Guelleh of Djibouti as well as to the wisdom of the Somali people displayed in Arta which made possible the laudable achievement of establishing a transitional parliament and a transitional government of Somalia. Naturally, while the road ahead is promising, it is not without difficulties and obstacles. I remain confident that

President Abdiqassim Salad Hassan, whose presence in our midst I warmly welcome, and his colleagues will do their utmost in actively pursuing dialogue with political and faction leaders with a view to consolidating the achievement of Arta by promoting an all-inclusive agreement and thus deepening the process of reconciliation. At the same time, we expect political and faction leaders to rise to the occasion and work together with the Transitional Government of Somalia towards this objective. The OAU will leave no stone unturned in efforts aimed at promoting peace, stability and security in Somalia as well as safeguarding the cohesion, solidarity and unity of its people. We remain firm in our commitment to the unity and territorial integrity of that country.

Other promising developments that we welcome include the rapprochement that is evolving in the relationship between the various IGAD Member States. The OAU will support the region's leaders in their efforts to restore peace, understanding and cooperation among the people of the region. We shall also do our utmost in overcoming crises be they due to internal or interstate conflicts which have only served to undermine the collective efforts of the region for development.

One of the longest and catastrophic conflicts in the Continent is the civil war in southern Sudan. This internal conflict, with its grave humanitarian consequences, is a matter of gravest concern to all of us. The OAU will continue to render its full support to all efforts aimed at resolving the conflict so that the people of Sudan can make full use of their immense potentials for the development of the country and towards the strengthening of the edifice of peace, security and stability in the region.

Most specifically, the OAU will reinforce its support for the IGAD Peace Initiative on Sudan, ably led by President Daniel Arap Moi of Kenya. In this respect, we welcome with appreciation the support given by the IGAD Partners' Forum. We are also encouraged by the joint efforts of Egypt and Libya aimed

at finding a solution to this major African crisis. It is my confident hope that these efforts will be closely coordinated with those of IGAD.

Let me reiterate that on balance, while what has been happening in the region has been a source of pain to all of us, we are now beginning to see the emergence of new hopes. The challenge, however, is to provide a momentum for lasting peace and better understanding so as to enable the region to concentrate in uplifting itself from the abyss of underdevelopment.

In this connection, I would like to pay tribute to the effort being made by IGAD in promoting cooperation and integration in the region. In spite of manmade and natural disasters, the Organization has continued to make every effort in implementing the provisions of its Charter. It has also endeavoured to coordinate its programmes within the regional and Continental framework. It has also remained steadfast in its determination to revitalize its capacities so that it becomes more responsive to the requirements and expectations of its members.

For the OAU, the strengthening of regional and sub-regional organizations is a critical aspect in promoting continental cooperation and integration. This is also in keeping with the attainment of the objective of creating the African Union which has been called for by our leaders both in Sirte and in Lome.

The OAU looks forward to a time when permanent peace, security and stability will prevail in the Horn of Africa. We also look forward to the region pursuing in a dynamic manner regional cooperation, with a view to overcoming the challenges and vagaries of poverty and underdevelopment. Such challenge will only be effectively confronted when the energy and resources of the people of the Horn are utilized for the common development. Clearly this is only possible when peace and stability prevail and when the energies and great potentials of the people of the region are fully harnessed towards the objective of development. The history of the people of this region, the cultural and other

links that have reinforced their ties clearly testify to the great possibilities that lie ahead. I am confident that the leaders and people of this region have the capacity, the capability and the resolve to live up to this noble and monumental challenge. The OAU will be with you and is determined to work in close collaboration with IGAD towards the attainment of this objective – an objective which undoubtedly represents the aspirations of all the African people.

I thank you.