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STATEMENT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE OAU,  
H.E. DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM TO THE INAUGURAL MEETING  
OF THE CENTRAL ORGAN AT AMBASSADORS' LEVEL  
13 SEPTEMBER 1993, OAU HEADQUARTERS

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Mr. Chairman, Representing the OAU Current Chairman,  
Your Excellencies,  
Distinguished Ambassadors,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure, as well as with a profound sense of our collective achievement in our respective capacities either as representatives of the Member States or of the General Secretariat, that I welcome you to the inaugural meeting of the Central Organ being held at the level of the Ambassadors. Indeed, this is the first formal meeting ever at any level of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution.

The Significance is hardly lost on us that on this auspicious day when our mechanism is meeting formally for the first time ever, an event of momentous significance both to the people of the Middle East as well as to the world at large is due to take place. I refer here, Mr. Chairman, to the expected signing later today at the White House in Washington D.C., of a historic Agreement between the Israeli and Palestinian leaders.

I wish to inform the meeting that a few days ago, I received a message from the Chairman of the PLO, President Yasser Arafat informing me of the details of the Agreement reached as a result of the negotiations between the two parties. This agreement which follows dramatic and epoch-making developments of last week which, inter alia, witnessed the mutual recognition by Israel ~~and~~ the Palestine Liberation Organization, is undoubtedly a remarkable breakthrough in efforts to bring about peace and justice through

the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinians and the Israelis in that Holy Land which has seen so much suffering, pain, destruction, and injustice. The Agreement constitutes a courageous first but crucial step in the search for a just and comprehensive settlement. It ushers in hope for the beginning of a reconciliation and prospects of a genuine settlement to a conflict which has been considered as virtually "intractable".

Clearly, however, this is just a first step. A lot of difficulties and obstacles lie ahead. But all those who have made this agreement possible are to be congratulated for their courage, initiative and statesmanship. At the same time, the OAU considers it very essential that quick progress be achieved on other fronts namely, between Israel and Syria, Israel and Jordan and Israel and Lebanon, so that a comprehensive peaceful settlement of the Middle East conflict is realized. This will enable all the peoples of the region to live in peace with each other and to concentrate their efforts for development. And for us in Africa, this Agreement is yet another reminder that events in the world are clearly demonstrating the imperative need to put "swords into ploughshares". Indeed, if conflicts of the magnitude and dimension of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict with all its attendant historic antagonism and bitterness are within the realm of possible solution, we as Africans, should as we start our first formal meeting of the Central Organ draw the necessary lessons and inspiration in our collective search for peace in our continent through conflict prevention, management and resolution.

Mr. Chairman,

We are embarking today on our first historic steps to formally operationalize the Declaration of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government on the establishment of the Mechanism, containing as it does, both the raison d'être and the principles that are to guide our Organization in this new era in which it is called upon to give renewed impetus to efforts to resolve conflicts on the continent. In so doing, however, we necessarily and simultaneously move to operationalize that very Mechanism itself which is an institutional means for action beyond the mere enunciation



of these guiding principles, and which, by virtue of its inclusion in the Declaration, was itself established by the Heads of State in the same breath in which they adopted the Declaration in Cairo only last June.

Mr. Chairman,

We have observed that on not a few occasions, our Organization has failed to cross the often elusive threshold that divides, our mere inscription of noble ideals and objectives on paper, on the one hand, from the concrete transformation of these positive ideals into visible, tangible and indeed fruitful action, on the other.

Today's meeting which is being held against a background of many and varied situations of incipient and full-blown conflicts on the continent, all, in fact, deserving our urgent attention, marks our success in crossing that threshold and moving from mere ideals to concrete action. It goes without saying that the assumption which will henceforth inform all our efforts in the field of conflict management is that all action in that regard should be undertaken through the framework of the mechanism, operating as it will, as a co-operative endeavour between Member States and the Secretariat, whereby the latter benefits from both the guidance and support of the former.

Before you, therefore, and as reflected on the Agenda, is a paper prepared by the Secretariat which attempts a general survey of all such situations of potential and actual conflict, intended on the one hand to apprise members of the Central Organ of developments that have occurred in each case, and of measures taken in that regard by the Secretariat, and on the other hand, to provide some pointers for the way forward, especially in the light of the relevant resolutions and decisions of the Council of Ministers and the Summit.

Further, it is assumed that the Mechanism will now enable our Organization, through the Central Organ and the Secretary General, to play a more pro-active role in conflicts. That would, in fact, be in keeping with the motivating spirit behind the Declaration. Indeed, paragraph 12 of the Declaration states that the establishment of the Mechanism provides, and I quote, "the opportunity to bring to the processes of dealing with conflicts on our continent, a new institutional dynamism, enabling speedy action to prevent or manage and ultimately resolve conflicts when and where they occur", unquote.

If, however, Mr. Chairman, such a pro-active approach allowing for "institutional dynamism, enabling speedy action", is to be put into practice and sustained, then the Mechanism needs to be properly operationalized and dynamised from the very start. The privilege and burden of determining how best this can be achieved thus falls on our present session, for what forum could be more appropriate for the early consideration of this crucial and pressing issue.

I recall that at our informal, preparatory meeting held at the end of July, the clear perception emerged that, given that the Declaration stipulates that meetings at Heads of State level are required to be held once a year, and those of Foreign Ministers twice a year, the major burden, would fall on the Ambassadors, required as they are to meet once a month.

Mr. Chairman,

Operationalization of the Mechanism, however, means more than just convening meetings at which issues are merely skirted. We feel that we should, from the very beginning, demonstrate a seriousness of purpose and the will to grapple with substantive issues. In that regard, and indeed, in

consonance with the consensus reached at our informal, preparatory meeting of 29 July, you also have before you, and again as reflected on the Agenda, a paper on the substantive issues involved in the Mechanism's operationalization. This, we hope, will generate a useful discussion which will not only engender a clear sense of direction but also produce appropriate recommendations.

I wish to emphasize that, it is my considered view, that unless in the initial stages, we bring to the said process of operationalization, a clear perception as to how exactly we want to proceed, both in the short and long term, we shall not be able to achieve meaningful and worthwhile results in our Sessions.

In that regard, therefore, Mr. Chairman, allow me to make a few remarks on the issue of operationalization, which issue should necessarily assume a large place in our pre-occupations during our present inaugural session. My remarks are intended merely to give particular emphasis to certain issues arising out of the process of operationalization, otherwise already dealt with in the Secretariat's paper on the subject.

I wish to commence with the issue of the operationalization of the Central Organ itself. I recall that, at our informal, preparatory meeting, an understanding was more or less reached that the inaugural session of the Central Organ at Heads of State level should be convened, if possible, before the end of the year, possibly, in December, to be preceded, however, by one called at Foreign Ministers level in November. We believe that our present meeting will furnish us with the opportunity to finalize the dates of the meeting of the Foreign Ministers as well as to consult more concretely on the dates and venue of the Summit.



Further, on the specific issue of the operationalization of the Central Organ itself, allow me, Mr. Chairman, to deal with a fundamental matter which, if we ignore, could detract from our seriousness of purpose. It relates in particular to its approach to intra-State conflicts. Bearing in mind the Declaration's emphasis on conflict prevention, Members may wish to seize the opportunity afforded by the present meeting to give initial consideration, at least, to the issue of what norms or principles should be applied in any given situation. We are fortunate that already, the Declaration itself, in paragraph 14, gives us some guidance to the effect that the "Mechanism will be guided by the objectives and principles of the OAU Charter, in particular the sovereign equality of Member States, non-interference in the internal affairs of States, the respect of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Member States, their inalienable right to independent existence, the peaceful settlement of disputes as well as the inviolability of borders inherited from colonialism. It will also function on the basis of the consent and cooperation of the parties to the conflict".

In developing more explicit norms or principles, Members might wish to determine whether they want to see an identical approach to all categories of internal conflicts - those arising from the process of democratization, those that are ethnically based, or those that are religious in nature. They might, further, wish to determine what the "entry point", if at all, of any such conflict should be; and in each case they might wish to determine how such "entry" should be effected: should it be through the collective intervention of the Central Organ or through discreet action by the Current Chairman or by the Secretary-General.

Perhaps, resort can be had to the experience of the Organization in the cases of Togo, Congo and Zaire. In each of those cases, the Secretary-General was invited and he

acted either personally or through an envoy or special representative. The fact of the matter, however, is that other conflict situations might require other approaches. There are, for instance, the examples of Liberia and Somalia where non-requested intervention by Africa and the International Community was dictated by humanitarian considerations.

Mr. Chairman,

It need hardly be over-emphasized that the establishment of the Mechanism by the Heads of State implies conferring on the OAU a more pro-active role which requires the Organization to go beyond the adoption, as in the past, of mere resolutions which appeal for restraint by the parties. Taking into account the emphasis on the prevention of violent confrontation, let alone warfare, it would be true to say that if the Mechanism works properly, the awareness of its existence and of its usefulness and effectiveness will spread among potential disputants and parties at conflict who will resort to it. This would most certainly encourage the prevention of full blown conflicts as well as their settlement through peaceful means.

I wish now to make some remarks regarding the other aspects of the Mechanism, especially the operationalization of the Fund and the strengthening of the Secretariat. While making these remarks, we will seize the opportunity to indicate not only what steps the Secretariat has taken and intends to take in the future with a view to operationalizing the Mechanism, but also what possible assistance the Central Organ could bring to bear with regard to what remains to be done. On this score, allow me, to underscore and reaffirm my confidence in our Organization's choice of the Bureau of the Summit as the body with a central, steering role in conflicts, given its links with all the major organs of the Organization. In the particular context of the issues to



be dealt with, especially those of a financial, budgetary and administrative nature, it is anticipated that the Central Organ will derive full benefit from its links both with the Advisory Committee and the Council of Ministers.

On the question of funding, I refer to the Fund established by the Heads of State by virtue of the Declaration. It would be recalled that at the informal, preparatory meeting, we raised the issue, also contained in the Secretariat's paper, that we avoid giving the Fund a cumbersome name. Barring other interesting ideas on a name for the Fund, we seek the agreement of the Central Organ that we call it the "OAU Peace Fund". After agreeing on a name for the Fund, we intend to proceed, as soon as possible, with its official launching at a ceremony to be held at the Headquarters. The Secretariat proposes to back this up with the publication of a special brochure on the Fund, designed to attract contributions from both Africans and non-Africans to it. With regard to contributions from the international community, we shall proceed on the principle that resources given to the OAU to enhance its conflict management capacity ought to be regarded as an adjunct to development assistance, given that there can be no development without peace and stability.

We also draw the attention of Members to the other ideas set out in our paper on the mobilization of voluntary contributions.

Furthermore, bearing in mind, as well, the fact that the Fund was set up as a means of setting aside resources to avoid financing on an ad hoc or case by case basis, and in order to facilitate timely responses and adequate levels of resources to sustain continuous involvement, we feel that the necessary attention ought also to be given to the issue of regular contributions of Member States to the Fund.

In that connection, Mr. Chairman, we wish to formally propose that the Central Organ re-affirm the consensus that emerged in the consultations undertaken with Member States which lead to the adoption of the Declaration, that the amount of money with which the Fund should begin its operations be US\$1 million, to be paid, as stipulated by the Declaration, on an annual basis through Member States' contributions to the regular budget.

We wish to propose further that, the Central Organ look into the possibility of recovering that amount in the present financial year, which fortunately commenced only a few months ago.

We feel it pertinent, that any recommendations by the Central Organ, first, as to the initial level of the Fund, renewable on an annual basis, and second, as to obtaining the amount in question during the present budgetary year, should go to the Advisory Committee, and thence, to the Council of Ministers. We need hardly stress that the African component of the Mechanism's funding must be visible: Africa must, indeed, be seen to bear a major part of the burden, given the concern demonstrated by some of our membership on the issue of extra-African financing.

On the question of extra-African funding and assistance in general for our Mechanism, I would just mention in passing, the fact that we have already received offers from a number of potential non-African donors.

I wish to stress that negotiations pertaining to all these offers or possibilities are at an early stage and the Central Organ will most certainly be apprised when concrete agreement is reached.

I now come to the question of strengthening the Secretariat. Here again, it is hoped that the links that

the Central Organ has with the Advisory Committee and the Council of Ministers will prove to be of advantage.

In that regard, Mr. Chairman, it would be recalled that our Heads of State, while stating in paragraph 22 of the Declaration, "that the Secretary-General shall rely upon the human and material resources available at the General Secretariat", go on to "direct the Council of Ministers, in consultation with the Secretary-General, to examine ways and means in which the capacity within the General Secretariat can be built and brought to a level commensurate with the magnitude of the tasks at hand and the responsibilities expected of the Organization".

Mr. Chairman,

As is well known, the Conflict Management Division was established in March 1992, following the approval of the Council of Ministers in February, with a view to facilitating systematic activities by the Secretariat in the field of conflict management, as well as to build up in the Secretariat, crucially needed expertise in that field. The effect of paragraph 22 of the Declaration, which stipulates that the Secretary-General shall "deploy efforts and take all appropriate initiatives to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts" and that he "shall rely upon the human and material resources available at the General Secretariat", is to place a very onerous responsibility on the Division. Our short experience with the Division dictates that, to enable it carry out that responsibility, we ought to take into account, first, the issue of ensuring a minimum of numerical strength in order that it can effectively and efficiently bear the heavy burden occasioned by the numerous assignments it handles; and secondly, the issue of ensuring an adequate multi-disciplinary spread.



We are also concerned with the issue of attracting for recruitment in the Division, such persons as have the requisite experience and stature, given the delicate nature of some of the assignments the Secretariat is called upon to handle. What the Secretariat has done so far is to embark on the process of recruiting new staff, given the urgency of the situation.

Mr. Chairman,

That, in fact, is just one of the issues that arises in the context of the broader issue of restructuring the Secretariat in such a way that it carries out better its role on the question of conflicts. It was with that broader issue in mind, therefore, that, as I intimated to you at our informal meeting, I made a request to the UN Secretary General to lend us the services of a technical expert who, in the light of the UN's own experience in conflict management, would make recommendations on an appropriate conflict management structure for us. That expert, Major General T.K. Dibuama, did come in early September and submitted a report, copies of which have been circulated for your information. I commend for your attention this well-written report, notwithstanding the fact that it puts greater emphasis on structures relating to peacekeeping. While we continue to study the report, we hope to have further consultations with the UN to grant us further assistance by way of advice on structures relating to conflict anticipation, prevention and, in fact, peacemaking, in general, as well as peace-building, notwithstanding the fact that its own expertise in the latter field is still at the formative stage.

Let me just mention, also, that the Secretariat does not consider the recommendations relating to structures for peace-keeping as superfluous, for circumstances will prove

them useful in the future, albeit in a modified and less elaborate form tailored to our resources. What is important, however, is that the recommendations affirm the principle, in which we share, that you cannot have a system of proper conflict management unless you ensure a minimum degree of military input. The experience and practice of the UN and even our own recent experience in Rwanda demonstrates this. Barring peace-keeping, we need military expertise in the set-up of our Secretariat for ceasefire observation operations; and given the emphasis of the Declaration on conflict prevention, one cannot really rule out the possibility, some time in the future, that the OAU might have to mount a preventive force, in conjunction with mediation efforts, to prevent a situation of potential conflict from erupting into a full one. Our experience in Rwanda as well as with putting together an extra-ECOWAS component of the force to be established in Liberia, clearly demonstrate that the Secretariat will need to resort to military expertise within the structures to ensure a proper follow-up in all situations.

Thus, Mr. Chairman, until our resources allow for the contemplation of an elaborate structure, the Secretariat proposes the establishment of a military unit to allow for the utilization of military expertise in its work. It is hoped that where more hands are needed, it will be possible to have recourse to military attachés in the African Embassies in Addis Ababa. To begin with such a Unit should comprise at least two military officers.

The Secretariat also proposes, Mr. Chairman, the establishment of a new section on elections in the political department, given that conflicts also arise at times from the democratization process. Elections can thus be used as instruments of peace in the fields of conflict prevention and post-conflict, peace building, and the OAU would be able to approach issues in a more integrated and professional

manner. The establishment of such a Section would also promote the development of African expertise in elections within and outside the Organization.

I now come to the issue of training, Mr. Chairman. This point covers the provision of funds for training in addition to the Organization per se of training programmes. Training, after all, costs money. For the sake of convenience, however, this matter is discussed under the rubric of the strengthening of the Secretariat, it being understood that voluntary contributions to the Fund relate to financial, logistical and material assistance.

**Mr. Chairman,**

I wish to mention that the Secretariat's activities relating to training have already started. The Secretariat views it as important to train staff already engaged on the job. Apart from the NDI- and AAI-sponsored Seminar on elections last year, and the recent OAU-IPA Seminar on Conflicts, both of which were attended by personnel from the Secretariat as well as Embassy staff, staff in the Secretariat have already attended courses of short-term duration organized by the IPA and by the Swedes. There is, further, the promise of more of such courses offered by the Swedes in the future. The Norwegians have also offered to sponsor a seminar on the subject, and we have had some preliminary consultations with the UNHCR on the question of training.

It would also be pertinent to mention that I have approached the UN Secretariat on the possibility of the secondment of OAU personnel to either the UN Headquarters or UN Operations in the field, in order to enable them gain some exposure to UN methods. At the same time, we envisage to request the UN to second staff who have expertise



in certain areas of conflict management that we lack. That would enable OAU staff to benefit from understudying them. I intend to explore the matter further during my forthcoming visit to New York later this month.

Mr. Chairman,

There is one other issue that I wish to mention with respect to the operationalization of the Mechanism. It is that as regards the popularization of the Declaration, and with it, the Study, the Secretariat has proceeded with action to publish these documents, not only in the Organization's working languages, but also in the regional lingua franca of Swahili and Hausa, as discussed during our informal meeting in July.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me before concluding refer to some of the specific conflict situations which the Mechanism will have to deal with. I do not intend to dwell at length on this since I expect that in the appropriate agenda item this will be appropriately discussed. Furthermore as you are aware, the Secretariat has prepared a paper entitled "The State of conflicts in Africa in the wake of the adoption of the Declaration on the Establishment of the Mechanism". In that paper, the various conflict situations including those of Angola, Mozambique, Liberia, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, as well as developments in Zaire, Congo and Togo have been highlighted. What I propose to do however, is only to highlight a few observations as an up-date to the developments in Somalia, Liberia, Rwanda and the Congo.

## Somalia

The events in Somalia of the recent weeks and days which have seen among others, the continued killing of United Nations peace keepers, as sadly and dramatically exemplified in the killing of the seven Nigerian soldiers, as well as the killing of scores of Somali civilians including women and children, have continued to cause us grave concern. We are indeed deeply saddened by these developments. We continue to be more than ever convinced on the need for the UN to review its methods of operation as asserted in my statement of July 13, 1993. In the last few days, we have been encouraged by reports that informal contacts with General Aideed's faction have been undertaken by the UN. We wish to encourage the UN to do so because we believe that dialogue is an important, indeed, crucial element in the efforts to break the current impasse which has seen a vicious cycle of violence with its attendant repercussions including undermining the original efforts of the UN mission in Somalia. Indeed, I strongly believe that dialogue with all the Factions is the only way to ensure the implementation of the Addis Ababa Agreements.

In the meantime, I have been in touch with the Current Chairman of our Organization, President Mubarak on these developments and what the OAU can do and should do to be of assistance. I have also been in close touch with the President of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia, Ato Meles Zenawi who as you know, was given a specific mandate by the Heads of State and Government during their Cairo Summit, to follow the situation in Somalia on their behalf. In the last one month or so, I have had two extensive discussions with President Meles on what Africa can do with respect to the Somali situation. I have also received here

at Headquarters twice, the Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Somalia, Ambassador D. Kouyate with whom I had useful and constructive exchange of views.

### Liberia

Pursuant to the Cotonou Peace Agreement on Liberia on July 25, 1993, efforts have been made with a view to getting additional forces from outside the West African Sub-Region in order to support the implementation of the peace Agreement. To this end, I have had consultations with several countries with a view to getting them to contribute troops. The leaders I have consulted have not only expressed support for the Peace Agreement but also their readiness in principle for their countries to contribute troops contingent upon the availability of resources including logistic and financial support. The main issue therefore, continues to be how to get those resources. In this context, efforts are continuing with a view to obtaining such support. I have recently discussed these matters both with the Chairman of ECOWAS, President Nicephore Soglo and the President of the Interim Government of National Unity of Liberia, Dr. Amos Sawyer, among others.

### Rwanda

As of now, the OAU Neutral Military Observer Group is continuing to perform its responsibilities. Unfortunately, we lost one of our officers through a car accident. The officer concerned was the late Captain Seyni Badji belonging to the Senegalese Contingent.

In the meantime, the contingent from Tunisia of 60 officers and men have been deployed. With that deployment we now have a total of 124 officers and men belonging to NMOG. They include contingents from Senegal, Congo and Tunisia. I have also been



informed by the Egyptian Government that a contingent of 40 officers are expected to join the force soon.

We have experienced some problems of logistics especially in the field of transportation and communication. Nonetheless, the NMOG is doing its best notwithstanding the constraints.

Let me however, stress the obvious. NMOG has virtually fulfilled its mandate. In the aftermath of the Rwanda Peace Agreement, what is now awaited is the emplacement of the Neutral International Force. Pending the arrival of that force, I have extended the mandate of NMOG to 31 October 1993, in the firm belief that by then the Neutral International Force will be in place. I want at this juncture, to stress the imperative urgency of United Nations action on this.

It is my belief that the deployment of the neutral international force is a matter which requires immediate consideration and action. I have made this concern very clear to the UN Reconnaissance Team which met me here in Addis Ababa on 3 September 1993. It is my understanding also that this mission got a similar message when they earlier met with President Ali Hassan Mwinyi of Tanzania in his capacity as Facilitator. Furthermore, I wish to inform this distinguished gathering that yesterday, at a meeting held at Kinihira, Rwanda, between the high level delegation of the Government of Rwanda led by the President of the Republic, H.E. Major General Habyarimana and the delegation of the Rwandese Patriotic Front led by its Chairman Col. Alexis Kanyerengwe, it was decided to reaffirm a previous decision of sending a joint mission of the Government of Rwanda and the Rwandese Patriotic Front to the United Nations with a view to urging for a speedy action on the deployment of the Neutral International Force. I believe this meeting of the Central Organ should consider ways and means of giving concrete support to this urgent request.

I wish to make two more points. First, it relates to the conflict in Sudan. In this connection, I believe it is proper to warmly welcome the initiative taken by the Presidents of the Region during their last recently held IGADD Meeting for the setting up of a Committee which would look into ways and means of assisting in finding a solution to the conflict. This is a timely and constructive initiative which our Organization should fully support and encourage.

Secondly and lastly, I wish to report that pursuant to the efforts which we have made with respect to the situation in the Congo, I have already dispatched a senior official to the Congo to work with the Government and the other parties as well with representatives of Gabon and the EEC in implementation of the Accord which had been reached earlier. I am also sending this week, the Director of the Political Department, Ambassador Bah, to lead our team there. In addition I wish to report that we have already been able to identify the judges from Benin and Guinea who will serve in the Arbitral Tribunal.

Mr. Chairman,

I have been long, but if by so doing, I will have succeeded in generating substantive discussion in determining the way forward, I would be gratified.

I thank you for your attention.