

**STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

**INTRODUCING THE ITEM CONFLICTS IN AFRICA :**

**PROPOSALS FOR THE CREATION OF A MECHANISM**

**FOR THE PREVENTION, MANAGEMENT AND RESOLUTION OF CONFLICTS**

Dakar, 26 June, 1992.

MR CHAIRMAN,

THE ISSUE OF CONFLICTS IS, IN MY VIEW, THE MOST PRESSING OF ALL CHALLENGES FACING AFRICA TODAY. CONFLICTS HAVE CAST A DARK SHADOW OVER THE PROSPECTS FOR A UNITED, SECURE AND PROSPEROUS AFRICA WHICH WE SEEK TO CREATE. CONFLICTS HAVE COST THE CONTINENT ENORMOUSLY, IN TERMS OF THE RESOURCES EXPENDED IN PROSECUTING WARS AND OF THE EXTENSIVE DESTRUCTION TO PROPERTY AND INFRASTRUCTURE. ABOVE ALL, IT IS THE HUMAN DIMENSION AND ITS LONG TERM EFFECTS ON THE PEOPLE OF AFRICA.

CONFLICTS HAVE CAUSED IMMENSE SUFFERING TO OUR PEOPLE AND, IN THE WORST CASES, DEATH. MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN HAVE BEEN UPROOTED, DISPOSSESSED, DEPRIVED OF THEIR MEANS OF LIVELIHOOD AND THROWN INTO EXILE AS REFUGEES AS A RESULT OF CONFLICTS. THIS DEHUMANIZATION OF A LARGE SEGMENT OF OUR POPULATION, IS UNACCEPTABLE AND CAN NOT BE ALLOWED TO CONTINUE. CONFLICTS HAVE ENGENDERED HATE AND DIVISION AMONG OUR PEOPLE AND UNDERMINED THE PROSPECTS FOR THE LONG TERM STABILITY AND UNITY OF OUR COUNTRIES AND AFRICA AS A WHOLE. SINCE MUCH ENERGY, TIME AND RESOURCES HAVE BEEN DEVOTED TO MEETING THE EXIGENCES OF CONFLICTS, OUR COUNTRIES HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO HARNESS THE ENERGIES OF OUR PEOPLE AND TARGET THEM TO DEVELOPMENT.

THE SOCIAL, HUMAN AND ECONOMIC COSTS OF CONFLICTS HAVE BEEN HORRENDOUS AND, UNLESS WE CAN PUT A DEFINITE END TO CONFLICTS, AFRICA WILL CONTINUE TO BE MIRED IN CONFUSION AND ITS PEOPLE CONDEMNED TO MISERY AND SUFFERING. APART FROM ENDING CONFLICTS, IN ORDER TO LIBERATE RESOURCES NOW LOCKED IN CONFLICTS AND MAKE THEM AVAILABLE FOR INVESTMENT IN SOCIETY, THERE IS THE MORE COMPELLING IMPERATIVE OF PUTTING AN END TO THE PAIN, HURT AND SUFFERING WHICH THESE CONFLICTS HAVE IMPOSED ON OUR PEOPLE. IT IS THE DUTY OF THIS ORGANIZATION TO ASSIST IN BRINGING PEACE AND TO RESTORE HOPE TO OUR PEOPLE. THE PEACE DIVIDEND MUST BE, BOTH IN TERMS OF LIBERATING RESOURCES AND LIBERATING OUR PEOPLE FROM THE OPPRESSION OF CONFLICTS.



MR CHAIRMAN,

IF I SPEAK IN THESE TERMS, IT IS NOT TO SUGGEST THAT AFRICA HAS NOT DEVOTED EFFORTS TO THE TASK OF ENDING CONFLICTS. OUR LEADERS AND COUNTRIES HAVE MADE CONSIDERABLE EFFORTS TO SEEK SOLUTIONS TO MANY CONFLICTS IN THE CONTINENT. WHETHER AT THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL, COMMITTEES OR REGIONAL GROUPINGS, OUR LEADERS HAVE INTERVENED CONSTRUCTIVELY IN CONFLICT SITUATIONS, WITH A VIEW TO PROMOTING THEIR PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT. THE CHARTER OF THIS ORGANIZATION RECOGNIZES CLEARLY THAT, IN ORDER TO PROMOTE UNDERSTANDING AMONG THE PEOPLE AND AMONG COUNTRIES OF AFRICA IN A LARGER UNITY TRANSCENDING ETHNIC AND NATIONAL DIFFERENCES, CONDITIONS FOR PEACE AND SECURITY MUST BE ESTABLISHED AND MAINTAINED. IN A VERY REAL SENSE, THEREFORE, THIS ORGANIZATION WAS ESTABLISHED PRECISELY FOR THE PURPOSE OF CONQUERING PEACE AND BRINGING SECURITY TO THE CONTINENT. IT IS AN IMPERATIVE WHICH MUST UNDERLY THE WHOLE DYNAMIC OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONTINENT.

MR CHAIRMAN,

IN THEIR DECLARATION OF 1990, ON THE POLITICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION IN AFRICA AND THE FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES TAKING PLACE IN THE WORLD, OUR LEADERS RESOLVED TO APPLY THEMSELVES MORE RESOLUTELY TO THE TASK OF ENDING CONFLICTS. THIS WAS A CLEAR AND EMPHATIC STATEMENT GROUNDED IN THE REALIZATION THAT ALL EFFORTS OF THE CONTINENT, WHETHER THEY BE AT ECONOMIC RECOVERY, PROMOTING DEMOCRACY OR INTEGRATING THE CONTINENT, WILL BE SERIOUSLY UNDERMINED IF CONFLICTS IN THE CONTINENT ARE NOT CONTAINED AND ENDED. WE CAN NOT PURSUE OR ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES OF THE ABUJA TREATY WITHOUT ENSURING PEACE AND HARMONY IN OUR COUNTRIES, AND WITHIN THE CONTINENT. IN MY OPINION, ENDING CONFLICTS IS, THEREFORE, ONE OF THE TOP PRIORITIES TODAY. WITH THE END OF DECOLONIZATION OF THE CONTINENT, THE OAU MUST NOW REDIRECT ITS FOCUS ON THE ONLY ISSUE WHICH STANDS TO UNDERMINE WHATEVER ELSE THE CONTINENT MAY WISH TO EMBARK ON OR TO DO.





MR CHAIRMAN,

DESPITE THE MANY AND REPEATED ATTEMPTS AT CONFLICT RESOLUTION MADE BY OUR LEADERS, CONFLICTS STILL RAGE ON IN THE CONTINENT. THEY ARE, IN FACT, MULTIPLYING AND, IN SOME EXISTING CASES, INCREASING IN INTENSITY AND SCOPE. THE CONTINUED PREVALENCE OF THESE CONFLICTS IS OBVIOUSLY, THEREFORE, NOT OUT LACK OF EFFORT. IT IS, IN MY VIEW, PARTLY DUE TO LACK OF AN ACCEPTABLE FRAMEWORK WITHIN WHICH COUNTRIES COULD BE BROUGHT INTO CONVERGENCE OF VIEW AND ALLOW FOR RESOLUTION OF THE CONFLICTS. ALL TOO OFTEN, EVEN WHEN COUNTRIES ARE DISPOSED TO SETTLEMENT, THEIR ABILITY TO DO SO IS SERIOUSLY CONSTRAINED BY THE LACK OF A VIABLE AND CREDIBLE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK WITHIN THE OAU, TO WHICH THEY COULD HAVE RECOURSE TO FOR AGREEMENT.

IN THE COURSE OF THE LAST THREE YEARS, DURING WHICH I HAVE BEEN ENGAGED IN ATTEMPTS TO PROMOTE SOLUTIONS TO THE CONFLICTS IN AFRICA, I HAVE COME TO APPRECIATE THE SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS INHERENT IN THE LACK OF SUCH A FRAMEWORK. MANY COUNTRIES AND PARTIES TO CONFLICTS, NOW DO BY AND LARGE, ACCEPT THAT THE OAU CAN PLAY A CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE IN THE RESOLUTION OF THE MANY CONFLICTS IN THE CONTINENT. I HAVE BEEN GREATLY ENCOURAGED BY THIS NEW DISPOSITION BOTH WITH REGARD TO THE PRINCIPLE OF PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT AND TO THE OAU'S ROLE IN FACILITATING THAT SETTLEMENT.

IN OUR EFFORTS, IN THE GENERAL SECRETARIAT, TO BUILD ON THIS DISPOSITION SO AS TO BE ABLE TO PLACE OUR SERVICES MORE EFFECTIVELY AT THE DISPOSAL OF THOSE AT CONFLICT, WE HAVE BEEN HAMSTRUNG BY THE ABSENCE OF A PROCEDURE OR MECHANISM WHICH WE COULD DEPLOY FOR THAT PURPOSE. IT IS THIS SERIOUS HANDICAP TO THE EFFORTS OF THE OAU WHICH HAS LED ME TO REPEATEDLY SPEAK OF THE NEED FOR A MECHANISM. THE UNDERLYING CONSIDERATION IN MY CONVICTION ON THE NEED OF SUCH A MECHANISM IS THREE-FOLD. FIRST, IT IS BECAUSE I STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT AFRICA HAS TO TAKE SERIOUS AND CONCRETE MEASURES AIMED AT BRINGING A DEFINITIVE END TO CONFLICTS. SECONDLY, IT IS BECAUSE I REALIZE THAT COUNTRIES NOW RECOGNIZE THE IMPERATIVE OF MEETING THAT CHALLENGE AND THIRDLY, BECAUSE IT IS CLEAR THAT THE DISPOSITION OF MEMBER STATES TO MEET THE CHALLENGE OF ENDING CONFLICTS WILL NEED THE FACILITATION AND COMPLEMENT OF A MECHANISM.



MR CHAIRMAN,

BEFORE THIS COUNCIL IS A DRAFT DECISION ON A MECHANISM FOR CONFLICT PREVENTION, MANAGEMENT AND RESOLUTION. THE DRAFT IS LARGELY A RESULT OF CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN AMONG THE OAU AMBASSADORS IN ADDIS ABABA. DURING THOSE CONSULTATIONS, MANY VIEWS AND SUGGESTIONS WERE EXPRESSED REGARDING THE PROPOSED DECISION ON THE MECHANISM. THE PRESENT TEXT INCORPORATES THE MANY AMENDMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS MADE BY MEMBER STATES. IT IS BY NO MEANS THE FINAL TEXT AS IT CAN NOT POSSIBLY HAVE ADDRESSED ALL THE QUESTIONS WHICH MEMBER STATES MAY HAVE. THE IDEA IS TO HAVE THE COUNCIL PRONOUNCE ITSELF ON THE DRAFT DECISION, WITH A VIEW TO ENRICHING OR STRENGTHENING IT.

THE MECHANISM, BEING PROPOSED IN THE DRAFT DECISION, WILL HAVE THE THREE-FOLD OBJECTIVE OF PREVENTING, MANAGING AND RESOLVING CONFLICTS. IT WILL BE BUILT AROUND THE BUREAU OF THE ASSEMBLY OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT ITSELF, AS THE POLITICAL BODY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PREVENTION, MANAGEMENT AND RESOLUTION OF CONFLICTS, AND THE SECRETARY-GENERAL AS THE OPERATIONAL ARM OF THE MECHANISM. I HAVE DEALT AT LENGTH ON THE INSTITUTIONAL AND OPERATIONAL DETAILS OF THE MECHANISM INCLUDING THE MODALITIES OF ITS FINANCING AND THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS, IN BOTH THE INTRODUCTION TO MY REPORT AND THE STATEMENT I MADE BEFORE THIS COUNCIL, THREE DAYS AGO.

I WISH, IN ADDITION, TO ADD THE OBVIOUS. THAT IS - WHATEVER THE CASE MAY BE: IN FULFILLING ITS FUNCTION, THE MECHANISM WILL BE GUIDED BY THE PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES OF THE CHARTER OF THE OAU. I STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT SUCH A FRAMEWORK WILL BE VIABLE AND FUNCTIONAL ONLY IF IT WORKS IN CONCERT WITH MEMBER STATES IN THE SEARCH FOR SOLUTIONS TO THESE CONFLICTS. THE CONCURRENCE AND COOPERATION OF THE MEMBER STATES WILL, OBVIOUSLY, BE NECESSARY IF ANY INITIATIVE, WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE MECHANISM TO RESOLVE CONFLICTS IS TO STAND ANY CHANCE OF SUCCESS. CONSULTATION AND COOPERATION, WITH THE PARTIES TO THE CONFLICT, IS A MUST.





MR CHAIRMAN,

I WISH TO RECALL WHAT I SAID, BOTH IN THE INTRODUCTION TO MY REPORT AND IN MY STATEMENT BEFORE THIS AUGUST COUNCIL. ALL TOO OFTEN, WE HAVE FAULTED OURSELVES AT FAILING TO RESOLVE OUR CONFLICTS AND AT STANDING ASIDE AS FOREIGNERS HAVE COME TO RESOLVE THEM. MANY TIMES, WE HAVE LOOKED AROUND FOR THE OAU TO INTERVENE CONSTRUCTIVELY IN A CONFLICT SITUATION ONLY TO FIND THAT IT IS NOT THERE, AND WHEN PRESENT, TO REALIZE THAT IT IS NOT ADEQUATELY EQUIPPED TO BE DECISIVELY HELPFUL. I WISH, ONCE MORE, TO STRESS THAT MY OVERRIDING CONSIDERATION IN SUBMITTING THIS PROPOSAL FOR A MECHANISM IS TO ENABLE OUR CONTINENT AND OUR ORGANIZATION TO ADDRESS THEMSELVES TO THIS BURNING ISSUE OF CONFLICTS WHICH HAVE BLED OUR PEOPLE AND SQUANDERED OUR RESOURCES. I BELIEVE, AFRICA MUST BE IN THE FOREFRONT IN FIRST ATTEMPTING TO PREVENT CONFLICTS AND, WHERE THEY HAVE ERUPTED, TO RESOLVE THEM. THIS ORGANIZATION SHOULD BE THE FIRST POINT OF CALL. THIS IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT IF WE ARE TO CONFOUND THE ADVOCATES OF THE MISPLACED NOTION OF «AFRO-PESSIMISM». ABOVE ALL, IT IS CRUCIAL, IF WE ARE TO LIVE UP TO THE ASPIRATIONS OF OUR PEOPLE, THAT AFRICAN PROBLEMS SHOULD, FIRST AND FOREMOST, BE RESOLVED BY AFRICANS THEMSELVES. I STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT, CONSIDERING OUR CONTINENT'S POTENTIAL AND EXPERIENCE, THIS IS ONE AREA WHERE THE OAU, WITH THE SUPPORT AND COOPERATION OF MEMBER STATES, CAN AND SHOULD MAKE A MAJOR CONTRIBUTION.

MR CHAIRMAN,

I WANT TO EMPHASIZE THAT IT IS NOT SO MUCH THE SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE MECHANISM I AM PROPOSING TO THE COUNCIL. WHAT IS FUNDAMENTAL IS, FOR THIS COUNCIL, TO DEVISE AN EFFECTIVE WAY IN WHICH OUR ORGANIZATION CAN ACT SWIFTLY AND EFFICIENTLY IN MATTERS OF CONFLICTS. THIS COUNCIL, IN ITS WISDOM, MAY DETERMINE ANY APPROPRIATE WAY IN WHICH IT CAN GIVE INSTITUTIONAL EXPRESSION TO THIS OBJECTIVE. AS I HAVE REPEATEDLY STATED, OUR OVERRIDING INTEREST IS TO SEE THAT THIS COUNCIL TAKES A CONCRETE DECISION TO ENABLE THE ORGANIZATION RESPOND EFFECTIVELY TO CONFLICTS.



I WISH TO NOTE THAT, IN THE CONSULTATIONS I HAVE HAD IN THE LAST FEW DAYS ON THIS QUESTION, I HAVE FOUND THAT THERE IS GENERAL AGREEMENT ON THE PRINCIPLE OF AFRICA ADDRESSING ITSELF TO THE ISSUE OF CONFLICTS, URGENTLY AND MORE RESOLUTELY. THIS IS, OF COURSE, A LOGICAL FOLLOW-UP TO THE DECLARATION OF OUR LEADERS IN ADDIS ABABA IN 1990. I NOTE ALSO THAT A CONSENSUS EXISTS ON THE NEED FOR A FRAMEWORK WHICH CAN ENABLE THIS ORGANIZATION TO ADDRESS ITSELF DIRECTLY AND EFFECTIVELY TO THE CHALLENGE OF CONFLICTS. ON THE OTHER HAND, HOWEVER, I NOTE THAT VARIOUS VIEWS EXIST WITHIN THE COUNCIL, ON THE FORM AND NATURE OF THAT FRAMEWORK.

WHAT THIS MEETING WILL AFFORD US IS THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXCHANGE VIEWS ON THIS AND ALL OTHER ASPECTS OF THE PROBLEM. BUT, IN MY VIEW, IT IS ABSOLUTELY IMPORTANT THAT THIS COUNCIL SHOULD WORK AROUND THE CONSENSUS ON THE PRINCIPLE OF ADDRESSING CONFLICTS AND THE AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE ON WHAT CONCRETE MEASURES CAN BE TAKEN. IT IS EQUALLY NECESSARY TO ENSURE THAT, WHEN THIS COUNCIL EMERGES, IT WILL HAVE REACHED A DECISION WHICH PRESERVES THIS CONSENSUS AND, AT THE SAME TIME, ENABLES IN CONCRETE TERMS OUR ORGANIZATION TO HANDLE THE ISSUE OF CONFLICTS.

MR CHAIRMAN,

THE PEOPLE OF AFRICA, WHO FOR SO LONG HAVE SUFFERED AND BEEN DEPRIVED BECAUSE OF CONFLICTS, EXPECT CONCRETE ACTION FROM OUR ORGANIZATION. THEY WANT TO SEE THE RESULTS OF THEIR SACRIFICES AND THEIR LABOUR. THEY WANT BETTER LIVING CONDITIONS. THEY WANT PEACE AND THEY WANT TO LIVE. THE LITTLE CHILDREN, WHOSE TENDER LIVES STAND PERPETUALLY THREATENED, WHOSE FUTURE STAND IN LIMBO BECAUSE OF THE SPECTRE OF CONFLICTS, NEED TO BE REASSURED, TO BE PROTECTED. IT WILL BE SAD IF WE FAIL TO LIVE UP TO THIS ENORMOUS CHALLENGE.

I THANK YOU.



