

ORGANIZATION OF
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UNIDADE AFRICANA



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منظمة الوحدة الإفريقية

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

23 June 1992

Mr Chairman,
Honourable Ministers,
Your Excellencies Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Your Excellencies the invited Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to begin by joining the Prime Minister of Senegal, H.E. Mr Habib Thiam, in wishing you all a very warm welcome to Dakar. I wish, at the same time, to take this early opportunity to thank the Government and people of Senegal for the warm hospitality they have accorded me and the entire General Secretariat since our arrival here. I want, in particular, to convey my deep gratitude to Foreign Minister, H.E. Mr. Djibo Ka, and his associates in the Government for having placed, at the disposal of the General Secretariat, excellent facilities for the conduct of its work.

Mr Chairman,

We have come to Dakar to revisit history. As Minister Djibo Ka had opportunity to remind some of us, some four days ago, the First Session ever of the Council of Ministers of the OAU took place here, in Dakar. Of course, it was a different Africa then. It is, therefore, with pride that we reunite in Dakar as a continent free from colonialism and determined to work together for the well-being of its people. That we now reconvene in Senegal, is not an accident. It is because we all recognize the role which this country, its people and its leaders - H.E. President Sedar Senghor and now H.E. President Abdou Diouf - have played in championing the cause of Africa. I salute them for the invaluable service they have rendered to the continent. I would also like at this juncture to pay deserving tribute to H.E. Mr Amr Moussa, the Foreign Minister of Egypt, and the entire Out-going Bureau for the very able

manner in which he presided over the activities of the Council, in the course of the last six months. I would, in the same vein, wish to congratulate Minister Djibo Ka and the Bureau of this Session for their election and to pledge our fullest cooperation.

Mr Chairman,

This Council is meeting on the threshold of the thirtieth anniversary of the Organization of African Unity. It has been twenty-nine years of struggle; of achievements and of some inevitable failures. Yet on the whole, it has been three decades of important achievements for the continent. Africa has been able to decolonize itself and, with the exception of South Africa, the continent is politically free. We have been able to build nations and institutions of government from the ruins of colonialism often without adequate means or experience to go by. We have been able to forge and consolidate African unity and, today, the Organization of African Unity is alive and strong. And despite discouraging statistics about the economies of our countries, we have, over the last three decades, developed the continent. Despite criticisms and cynicism of our detractors, Africa is certainly a relatively better place today than it was at the time of independence.

Mr Chairman,

Yes, mistakes were made - some of them serious ones. Yes, our people still live in poverty and development needs are still acute. But certainly more Africans are educated today than there were twenty-nine years ago. We have more doctors, more engineers, more teachers and higher rates of literacy among our people. More have access to safe drinking water, to health facilities, to schools and to

better housing and infrastructure. Of course, these are far from being adequate. Improved sanitary and health conditions have also meant lower mortality rates, higher life expectancy rates and the resultant population increase which, in most cases, has not kept apace the development levels. To recognize and acknowledge that the development needs of Africa are astronomical and the challenge of meeting them quite daunting, considering especially the constraints of resources in the continent, is an incontestable fact. It is, however, a spurious argument if not out-right cynicism, on the part of those who want to perpetuate a flawed image of Africa as a continent condemned to backwardness, to suggest that nothing has been achieved in the decades since independence. Africa should not succumb to such dangerous notions which seek to throw self-doubt into our minds. We should instead be proud of our important achievements, even if we did, at the same time, commit some mistakes. These mistakes can and are being corrected using the very solid foundations of freedom, nationhood and continental unity which Africa has been able to erect since independence.

Mr Chairman,

Africa stands at the dawn of a new era. The frontiers of our freedom have been extended to the door of South-Africa - the last stronghold of institutionalized racism. And there too, the edifice of apartheid has been seriously dented even if its demise is yet to come. The process of change in the course of the last two years, culminating in the

negotiations within the CODESA framework, holds promise that all South Africans, as a people, can finally extricate themselves from the ignominy of racism and triumph as a nation in democracy and unity. We are encouraged that the CODESA process has been able to bring the people of South Africa - of all races - into a partnership for change through dialogue. Admittedly, CODESA is not without imperfections. It still stands to correction and modification. This inevitable shortcoming, notwithstanding, it is clearly the most significant of all frameworks and the one which epitomises the collective desire of South Africans for change through dialogue. It is, therefore, our earnest hope that this negotiating framework will be effectively used to achieve our common objective, namely the emergence of a democratic, non-racial and united South Africa. But for this objective to be realized, the unity of the antiapartheid forces, and especially among the black majority, is a condition sine qua non. For unity has been and will continue to be the key to the strength of the black majority in their struggle against apartheid.

Mr Chairman,

As we continue to urge the black majority to forge a united front in the negotiations we also must continue to give them the required support. When the Ad Hoc Committee on Southern Africa met in Arusha, in April this year, it was doing so following the decision to resume the people-to-people contacts with South Africa, in recognition of

the change which had, until then, taken place. It has always been the consensus view that the changes which have taken place so far, important as they may be, have not carried the process of ending apartheid to a point of finality. It has, in consequence, been the position of Africa that until and unless the process of dismantling apartheid has reached the point of irreversibility, pressure should continue to be exerted against South Africa, as a means of hastening the process of change. In Arusha, the Ad Hoc Committee determined that, once an interim government is set up and installed, then that state of irreversibility will have been reached. At that point, Africa will have no reason to continue isolating South Africa.

Mr Chairman,

The optimism which prevailed in April has not been sustained as CODESA II continues to be hamstrung by the inflexibility of the De Klerk Government. Violence continues as more evidence of the collusion and direct involvement of the security forces is being uncovered. Under these conditions, there is need to temper our optimism and anxiety to see an apartheid-free South Africa with realism and caution. We should continue to urge the exertion of pressure to ensure that the process of change is not halted or reversed. To do otherwise, at this time, would be detrimental to the peace process and would only strengthen the hand of the apartheid regime and weaken that of the black majority. We have come far in the struggle against apartheid. The cut-off point of the interim Government is a reasonable objective. This Council should resolve

to act together to achieve that objective before Africa begins a new relationship with the Government of South Africa.

Mr Chairman,

Caution is all the more necessary as we are now witnessing acts by the apartheid system which are inimical to the process of change. The lawlessness and callous disregard to human life, by the apartheid security forces, was demonstrated just four days ago when without provocation, they shot to death three unarmed civilians at Boepatong. This brutal act by the security forces, coming in the wake of a massacre of forty innocent people is particularly outrageous. The threat by Mr De Klerk to reimpose the state of emergency instead of taking strong measures against those who perpetrated this murderous act and to end violence is a serious development which threatens the process of change. All this is putting in jeopardy the very process of negotiations. It is in my view vital that definitive measures be taken to create conditions which are conducive to the pursuit of meaningful negotiations. To this end the international community must require of the South African government to conduct itself in a manner which makes the continuation of negotiations possible.

Mr. Chairman,

Change is coming to South Africa as it is to the other parts of the continent as well. The nature of the change may be different but the results will, in either case, involve a fundamental redefinition of our societies, of how they are organized and governed. As our countries embark on further democratization, they are confronted with the new challenge of managing transition. Our countries

are going through change as they now also have to address themselves to issues of popular participation, human rights, democratization and governance as a whole. Apart from the challenge of managing change, Africa has, in addition, to face the many criticisms from outside. Some of these criticisms are genuine and seek to assist us in the process of handling this period of transition more correctly. Some are misplaced and, at best, intended to confuse us.

Whether we are dealing with issues of democracy, human rights or otherwise, we should insist that we do so taking into account the specific needs and circumstances of our societies in which our culture, customs and traditions play a central role. But whatever we do or say, the best defence, by far, against such foreign exhortations and pressures, is for ourselves to take action to internalize this change and make it an integral part of our political processes. What is equally crucial is to ensure that such change is effected smoothly and without prejudice to social order or to peace, harmony and national unity.

Mr Chairman,

We, at the General Secretariat, are happy to have been associated in the management of the process of change. We are very much encouraged by the new disposition on the part of an increasing number of Member States to invite us to observe elections. This is a new experience and a challenge which we shall strive to meet. We are putting the experience which we are gathering more into context

and complementing it with institutional reforms within the General Secretariat so that we can more usefully attend to the requests of Member States. I wish to take this opportunity to thank the countries concerned for the confidence they have reposed in the OAU and to assure them of our determination to apply ourselves fully to the tasks at hand. I hope it will be understandable if, on account of financial constraints, it will not always be possible to respond with the required magnitude to the requests made. I strongly believe nonetheless that whatever financial cost is involved in managing the transition, the price is minimal when seen within the context of the imperative of conquering peace and bringing durable stability and tranquility to our continent.

Mr Chairman,

In the course of the last year, the continent has continued to experience serious economic difficulties. Commodity prices have continued to plummet and the burden of external indebtedness has worsened. These have combined with negative resource flows to undermine the financial resource base of the continent and seriously compromise its ability to meet the needs of a growing population. The implications of this, to the social sector, have been very severe indeed.

This, notwithstanding, our countries have begun to fight back. Bold initiatives and imaginative economic policies put in place have begun to bear the first fruits in many countries. In elaborating long term economic strategies, Africa is beginning to see beyond the current adjustment policies and striving to give priority to programme geared towards job creation, equity and poverty

alleviation so that the majority of the people - especially those in the rural based sectors - may participate and reap the benefits of growth. As a result, the steady downward trend of the economies, so evident in the 1980s, has now been stemmed. We are now seeing modest economic growth return to the continent. Of course, much more needs to be done. In so doing, realism will have to be put into play. Part of that realism is to understand fully the context within which our countries, willy nilly, have to operate.

Mr Chairman,

The present international economic system is not likely to change appreciably to the benefit of Africa or of the rest of the developing world for that matter. It is rather more likely that it will get more difficult as the developed countries of the North become increasingly insular in economic policy outlook and more protectionist in their trade practices.

But whether the international economic system is responsive or accommodating to African interests or not, we can not afford to sit back, fold our hands and wait for it to get better. The reality is that it will not. Africa has, therefore, no option but to learn how to operate and to compete within it. Africa will have to adjust and acquire the tools which will enable it to be competitive, even with our limited means, in this difficult and hostile environment. To convert this situation to its advantage, Africa will have to reach out into its own inner strength. That inner strength lies primarily in resolute determination, a clear perspective of the future based on well-defined objectives and strategies for their pursuit and, above all, Unity.

All African countries are weak, notwithstanding how strong some of them may individually seem to be. In economic terms and seen against the background of the size, scope and versatility of the economies of the other regions of the world, Africa faces formidable competition and challenge. We should, therefore, begin laying the foundations for the future.

Mr. Chairman,

Very recently, Europe announced the formation of what will be the world's largest trading zone - stretching from Greenland to the shores of the Mediterranean. The United States followed with the announcement of plans to establish a trading area encompassing the entire Western Hemisphere. What these preparations mean is the recognition that larger economic entities are more economic, more versatile. The more integrated trading areas become, with smooth flows of goods and services, the more the economies of scale play a reinvigorating role of economic activity within them. This trend, of larger economic entities and globalization, will enable the countries of Europe and America to standardize and diversify while producing at lower cost. This will in turn enable them sell cheaper and compete effectively. What then for Africa? Is it not time we draw the necessary conclusions from these developments? Do we not also need to embark in earnest on the road to integration in the continent?

Mr. Chairman,

Africa has, of course, taken the first but crucial step in the march towards this objective. The signing at Abuja, last year, of the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community was a milestone in the history of our continent. It was a firm statement of determination to make a radical departure from

the fragmented approach of the continent to development. It was a statement to the world that Africa was reseizing the initiative and entering into a partnership for development articulated within the context of a community.

Today, a year has gone by. while I am encouraged that nine countries have already ratified the Abuja Treaty, I hope that the others will expedite the process of ratifying the Treaty as well. At the level of the Secretariat, we are moving ahead with work on the various protocols, starting with those dedicated to rationalization of the work of the Regional Economic Groupings and coordination of their work including synchronizing their programs with those of the Organization. We intend to proceed and finalize work on other protocols on priority areas, placing emphasis on the most integrative sectors such as transport and communications, trade and others.

While all this is being done, I still view the most urgent task as being that of bringing in the people of Africa into the cooperative task of building the Community. Since the Community we need and must build is one which will be based on a Commonality of interests, we should ensure, in the first place, that those whose interests are supposed to be central to the enterprise are involved fully. The process of sensitization and popularization of the Community must be given impetus. In meeting this challenge of promoting public awareness, the Member States and the Secretariat should find common ground for even closer cooperation.

Mr. Chairman,

The tasks that lie before our countries, at this point in history, are enormous. The challenges of consolidating our systems of government, of democratization and management of transition as well as of economic recovery and development and resolving other associated problems, such as of refugees, drought

and famine require to be met. There is now a realization that, unless there is peace and stability in the continent, all these challenges cannot be addressed, notwithstanding the efforts we may expend.

As our countries struggle to reverse the decline of the economy and embark on the road to extricate Africa out of the oppression of poverty, many obstacles stand in the way. None of these obstacles however present the most challenge as the scourge of conflicts - both within and amongst our countries. Conflicts and the incidence of violence have not only gobbled our meagre resources, they have also divided nations, societies and even families and undermined the prospects for enduring unity among them. In addition, conflicts have held the development of the continent in check, as time, effort and resources have been redirected away from meaningful investment to meeting the exigences of prosecuting conflicts and wars. The horrendous effects of these conflicts have been brought to the living rooms of the millions across the world who watch television or follow radio newscasts. The graphic pictures of Africans, killed, mutilated or maimed; of millions more starving; or of refugees drifting across the continent in search of safety and succour; of billions of dollars worth of infrastructure, schools, hospitals, industries, plants and bridges, laid to waste by indiscriminate bombings. This image of a continent, in which conflicts seem to be endemic and in which human suffering seems to be callously taken for granted, must be effaced and done so without further delay.

Mr. Chairman,

There is now a consensus of view in the continent that our efforts at economic recovery and development and those at further democratization of our societies will be severely undermined if the issue of conflicts is not dealt with conclusively. In 1990,

in their Declaration on the Political and Socio-economic Situation in Africa and the Fundamental Changes Taking Place in the World, our leaders pledged to apply themselves more resolutely to the peaceful and speedy resolution of all the conflicts on our continent. This pledge was founded on the realization that, unless peace and stability prevail, Africa will not be able to achieve its objectives and that conversely an end to conflict will release for development, resources now locked in prosecuting conflicts.

This realization is not new in Africa. Our founding fathers saw the imperative of ending conflicts among states and, therefore, provided a mechanism for it in the Charter of the Organization. Needless to say, this mechanism has not worked and even if it had, it would not have addressed itself to internal conflicts as it was not tailored for them. In the last few years, however, there has happily been a qualitative change in how Africa views its conflicts and the response of the OAU to them. Increasingly, a view is also consolidating that, since conflicts, those within and among nations ultimately affect the continent as a whole, Africans generally, ought to cooperate in resolving them. Along with this new outlook has come also the acceptance that the OAU has a view on these conflicts and, indeed, a role to play in promoting their resolution. This disposition, I have, in the last three years, found to be invariably shared by parties to all the existing conflicts and by the general membership of this Organization.

In an attempt to respond to this disposition and to play a role in the resolution of conflicts, the OAU has found itself seriously constrained by the lack of an institutional mechanism which it could use. It is this lacuna between the great expectations of the Member States from the OAU in the field of conflict resolution and the modest achievements made, which convinced me on the need of such a mechanism.

Mr. Chairman,

Since the last summit in Abuja and recently, in Addis Ababa, during the last session of this Council, I have spoken of the need for a mechanism which can enable the Organization to respond expeditiously and effectively to conflict situations. Before this Council is my report contained in Document CM/1710 (LVI) entitled "Conflict Situations in Africa: Proposals for a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. The report is a result of consultations mainly within the General Secretariat. It discusses the various issues involved in the whole debate on conflicts and procedures for conflict prevention, management and resolution. This is an expose of the spirited debate, rich with ideas, which has been ongoing since the creation of the Organization. It is by no means exhaustive in its treatment of all the ideas which could have been advanced in the course of this debate. It could possibly have not been able to do so since this is a living and evolving debate, evoking new ideas on a continuing basis. What the report intends to do is to capture the spirit of that debate and put it in context of the need to proceed with the elaboration of a procedure which could be used to handle conflicts. The report is also intended to stimulate debate within this Council.

In the last section of the report, I am making a concrete proposal of a mechanism for conflict prevention, management and resolution. The mechanism I am proposing will be built around the Bureau of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government-itself being the political body and the Secretary-General as its operational arm. The operational details of the mechanism, including those relating to peace-making and peace-keeping as well as its funding, relationship with the United Nations and other African Regional Organizations, are set out in the report and also summarized in the introduction to my report contained in Document CM/1706 (LVI) Part I already circulated. It is, therefore, not my intention to belabour the patience of the Council with added details.

That said, I wish to underline that our overriding interest and desire is to see that this Council and Summit address themselves fully to the question of conflicts and leave Dakar with a concrete decision on how to handle them. All too often, we have faulted ourselves, at standing aside, in apparent helplessness, as foreigners have come to resolve our conflicts. We have blamed ourselves for not being able to resolve conflicts. Many times, we have looked around for the OAU in a conflict situation only to find that it is not there, and even when present, to realize that it is inadequately equipped to be decisively helpful.

This proposal I am making for a mechanism is one which, given the experience of the last three decades, is in my view the most cost effective and practical. This is the view of the General Secretariat. It is one view. There may be many more views, but by far, the overriding imperative is to have a mechanism which can enable the Organization, in co-operation with Member State to respond with speed and decisiveness to conflict situations. It is, therefore, my sincere hope that the Council will have an indepth and frank exchange of views on the report on conflict resolution with the objective of emerging with an unequivocal decision on a mechanism.

Mr. Chairman,

The responsibilities and challenges of this Organization have increased in the light of the changing situation on the continent and the global changes which have also impacted on our continent. Obviously, the new agenda before Africa will have to be addressed comprehensively. To do so will require resources - both human and financial. At the level of the Secretariat, we have taken steps to reorganize our institutional structures so as to align them to the tasks at hand. This process is not static. Modification and adjustment will continually be made as

need arises in future. As we proceed, we shall necessarily have to complement these structures with personnel to handle the tasks. This process of capacity building within the OAU will need financing. In addition to the cost which increased human capacity will entail, resources will have to be put astream to finance the programmes of the Organization. Whether in implementing the provisions of the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community, preventing, managing and resolving conflicts, assisting in the process of political transition or meeting any of the many other challenges facing our continent, the Organization will need an additionality of resources to make effective contribution.

In so saying, I am not in the least oblivious to the financial constraints and economic difficulties facing all our countries, almost without exception. If I speak of resources, it is because I realize there is no two ways about it. The Organization has to have resources to perform effectively. For I find it unacceptable that this Organization, which is the embodiment of the collective will and determination of the people of Africa, should run the risk of being paralysed for lack of resources - resources which are within the ability of the continent to marshal. This is why I am of the firm view that the issue of financial contributions to the regular budget of the Organization and of the accumulated arrears ought to be discussed seriously and earnestly beginning at your level at this session.

Mr. Chairman,

We have come to Dakar to reflect on the activities of this Organization of the last year and deliberate on how we can, together, further the cause of Africa. Much has changed in the last year in the world, political, and economic situation, and the implications of this change for Africa are bound to be significant. We are now in a world free of the cold war even if Africa is still suffering from its effects. We are now in

a world in which Africa no longer has that military strategic importance for the protagonists of the cold war. We now have to create a new strategic importance for the continent. This new strategic importance will come through determined efforts to have a true African voice in world affairs. We can do so if we are united internally within our respective countries and externally within the continent. Unity will hinge on a community of interests to seek peace and stability in our countries, to democratize them and pursue development. These are not easy challenges. Africa is one and all these problems affect our countries equally. We should, therefore, redouble our efforts to think together, work together. The people of Africa, whom we represent, expect nothing less. Let us use the opportunity of this meeting, in Dakar, to rekindle their hopes for a brighter, peaceful, united and more prosperous Africa of tomorrow.

I thank you.