

ORGANIZATION OF  
AFRICAN UNITY

ORGANIZAÇÃO DA  
UNIDADE AFRICANA



15

ORGANISATION DE  
L'UNITE AFRICAINE

منظمة الوحدة الافريقية

Addis Ababa - Ethiopia - Box 3243 Tel. 51 77 00 Telex 21046 Fax (2511) 51 78 44

**MEETING OF THE CHIEFS OF STAFF  
OF STATE MEMBERS OF  
THE OAU CENTRAL ORGAN**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. Dr. SALIM AHMED SALIM  
SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE OAU**

**ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA  
3 - 5 JUNE 1996**

Mr. Chairman,  
Your Excellencies,  
Honourable Chiefs of Staff,  
Distinguished Senior Military Officers,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me at the outset, say how pleased I am to address this distinguished gathering of Chiefs of Staff of African Armies. The fact that so many of you have found time to come to Addis Ababa and participate in this very important and historic meeting, is a testimony of your concern over the devastating effects of conflicts, particularly, the damage and suffering they had wrought on our continent. It is also a concrete manifestation of your support to the efforts, we at the OAU, have been deploying in promoting peace, security and stability. Above all, your presence here today, is an eloquent illustration of your commitment to our common endeavour to fight the scourge of conflicts and instability in Africa and to promote peace and understanding on the continent.

It is indeed the first time in the history of our Organization that the Chiefs of Staff of our armies are meeting to discuss how they could together, contribute to the promotion of peace, security and stability on the continent. You are therefore, part of history today. While you are part of this history, it is imperative for us all to understand and appreciate the enormous and challenging task that has brought us all here.

I therefore take this opportunity to welcome you all most heartily and hope that your presence and active participation in the presentations and discussions during this meeting will facilitate the attainment of our stated goals and objectives.

adopted a land mark declaration on the '**Fundamental Changes Taking Place in the World and Africa's response**'. In that Declaration, our Leaders renewed their determination to work together towards the peaceful and speedy resolution of all the conflicts on our Continent. They recognized the fact that the resolution of conflicts will be conducive to the creation of an atmosphere of peace and stability in the Continent. They considered this to be necessary so that the resources and energies of our continent could be released for socio-economic development and progress of our peoples. With that Declaration, African Leaders launched the first step on a long and arduous journey to one of the biggest challenges ever, since our struggle for liberation and decolonization.

In a clear demonstration of their determination to translate their resolve into action, our leaders decided on the need to have a comprehensive and permanent institutional system which would address the scourge of conflicts on the continent with renewed dynamism and determination. In doing so, they reconciled themselves to the reality that Africa would only be credible in the eyes of the African peoples and of the international community when it took the lead in resolving African problems.

Against this background, our Leaders meeting in Cairo in June 1993, adopted the Cairo Declaration on the establishment of a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. In adopting the Cairo Declaration, our leaders decided to provide our continent with an Instrument for peace which could place our Organization at the centre of all efforts and aimed at addressing conflicts on the continent. They agreed that the emphasis of the Mechanism should be on anticipation and prevention of conflicts and in circumstances where these conflicts have occurred, it will be its responsibility to undertake peace-making and peace-building functions as a means of resolving them. In that regard, civilian and military missions of observation and monitoring of limited scope and duration may be mounted and deployed.



Africa cannot be blamed for not having tried to assist whenever a crisis emerged. The sentiments of solidarity and care led the OAU to take initial action in Rwanda soon after the eruption of the crisis in that country. Indeed, and through concerted efforts by the OAU and the neighbouring countries, the conflicting parties were able to sign the Arusha Agreement. Furthermore, in deploying the Neutral Military Observer Group, NMOG, we managed to monitor the Demilitarized Zone between the then Government of Rwanda and the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF). Somehow and in spite of isolated cease-fire violations, we successfully maintained some degree of stability in that country up to October 1993, when we handed over the operations to the United Nations.

I have invited to this meeting the first and second Commander of our Force in Rwanda. They are respectively Brigadier-General Hashim Mbita of Tanzania and Major General Opaleye of Nigeria. I am sure they will be able to impart their valuable experiences of the operation, its achievements and shortcomings and the lessons we can draw.

As you are aware, this was the second time that the OAU had been involved in the deployment of Military Personnel. The first experience was in 1981 when an Inter African Force was deployed in Chad, to help resolve the conflict in that country. That was indeed a learning experience for us and if we did not quite succeed in restoring peace to Chad, it was as a result of a variety of reasons. These reasons include: inadequate planning, confusion over the mandate, absence of OAU command and control, perceived partiality of some troop contributing countries, inadequate allocation of financial and logistical resources and above all lack of political will on the part of the parties in conflict.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since the adoption of the Cairo Declaration on the Establishment, within the OAU, of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, ideas have been emerging both within and outside Africa, on the place of peace-keeping in the work of the Mechanism. It is to be recalled that in 1992, when I first submitted my proposals to African leaders at their meeting in Dakar, Senegal, there were strong reservations on the role of OAU in peace-keeping. One year later, African leaders in establishing the Mechanism in Cairo in Egypt, decided that the Prevention of Conflicts, should constitute the priority activity of the OAU, and where the necessity for peace-keeping arose, recourse to the UN would be made, on the understanding of course, that African countries would participate effectively in those United Nations peace-keeping operations.

Since then, world events have demonstrated that even though the OAU may wish to focus its efforts on the prevention of conflicts, it can not exonerate itself in some circumstances from undertaking activities of a peace-keeping nature. This is exemplified by the experience in Burundi where the OAU Mission found itself engaged in some activities related to peace-keeping. This was also the case of the OAU Neutral Military Observer Group in Rwanda.

This issue of peace-keeping was discussed during the 62nd Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers which took place here in Addis Ababa last June. Council felt that even though the maintenance of peace and security in the world is the primary responsibility of the United Nations Security Council, the OAU should now seriously endeavour to develop and enhance its capacity in the field of peace-keeping.

instance, and as you must be aware, our missions were deployed on an ad-hoc basis. The modest success we were able to achieve has of course been the result of the commitment of all those who have been part of these missions. But I must emphasize that we had to actually improvise in conducting these missions and to some extent, we had to rely on good luck. Indeed, we were constrained by the lack of appropriate infrastructure and the necessary rules and procedures which are basic to such operations however small and limited they may be.

What is therefore expected from this meeting is to recommend among other things, a set of guidelines which could be used to sustain future peace support missions in Africa either under the aegis of the United Nations or in exceptional cases which may lead to the deployment of limited peace-keeping or observation missions within the OAU. I believe that this unique opportunity of a gathering of distinguished Africans with great responsibilities in your countries' defence and with considerable expertise and experience in peace-keeping, within and outside Africa, should be seized for a thorough reflection on how best such peace support missions could be organized in Africa.

I therefore place a lot of hope and expectation that your meeting will come up with concrete and practical recommendations on such issues as logistics and administrative arrangements, command and control, stand-by arrangements, training and funding as they relate to peace support missions in Africa. The set of recommendations that are to emerge from this meeting and once approved by our relevant policy organs, will help us build the necessary capacity for preparedness in peace support missions. Ultimately, the objective is to adopt a set of guidelines and arrangements which could ensure that Africa and the international community are not caught unprepared in the face of tragic developments on our continent.

meeting here in Addis Ababa last year. And it is the spirit which I am confident that this historic meeting of the Chiefs of Staff will capture and embrace it as its guideline.

Once again, I welcome you all to Addis Ababa, the Headquarters of the Organization of African Unity and wish you success in your discussions.

I thank you.