



Organization of African Unity

**Statement by H.E. Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim,
Secretary General of the Organization
of African Unity at the
Ministerial Meeting of the United
Nations Security Council on Africa**

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Madam President,

I wish, from the outset, to express my appreciation to you Madam President and members of the Security Council, for the timely initiative to convene this Ministerial Session of the Council devoted to African issues. In meeting today in quite special circumstances, the Security Council acknowledges the concerns that have been raised on the need for the international community to be more engaged and pay more attention to the problems confronting Africa.

Over the last years, our Continent and its peoples have been confronted with a multitude of serious problems and, in the process, we have learnt a lot. Today, Africa is deeply engaged in very difficult reforms both political and socio-economic. The democratization process is gaining root and the issues of good governance, accountability, the respect of human rights and the rule of law are now at the centre of the preoccupations in the Continent.

We strongly believe that the issues of peace, security and stability and the problems of economic development should be addressed simultaneously as they are mutually reinforcing. We do recognize that, while socio-economic development is our fundamental objective, there cannot be meaningful progress in an environment devoid of peace, security

and stability. It is in that spirit that Africa is presently involved in the implementation process of the Abuja Treaty on the establishment of the African Economic Community, the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, as well as other collective undertakings in human and social development endeavours.

Madam President,

There is no doubt that conflicts which continue to rage in some parts of our Continent constitute for us a major preoccupation. Although most African States are not experiencing such outbreak of conflicts, the fact remains that the existing conflicts have far-reaching implications on the peace, security and stability of the Continent as a whole. The conflicts in Sierra Leone, the Horn of Africa, Congo (Brazzaville) and now the Comoros as were the tragedies in Rwanda and Liberia stand in sad testimony to this fact.

These conflicts have caused irreparable loss, damage and destruction to our Continent and peoples. They have also caused acute humanitarian tragedies. They have forced millions of our peoples into a life of exile as refugees. Furthermore, as a result of the unbearable burden created by the massive influx of refugees to countries of asylum, the environmental degradation generated and the frustrations and resentment

raised among local populations, there has been, a decline in the traditional African compassion and hospitality towards refugees. This has been exacerbated by the eruption of the phenomenon of armed refugees. It is important to bear these factors in mind as the international community addresses refugee problems and recurring humanitarian crisis. We must affirm the need for compassion and respect for humanitarian principles including the principles of asylum and non-refoulment. But as we do so, we must not only strive towards the elimination of the root causes of these humanitarian crisis but also address the legitimate problems and concerns of the countries of asylum.

We should, therefore, recommit ourselves to pooling our resources and energy and working closely together in order to address the scourge of conflicts afflicting the African continent and to promote a climate of peace, security, stability and understanding. In that endeavour, we should also aim at finding lasting and peaceful solutions to disputes such as the dispute between the Arab Libyan Jamahiriya and the USA and Great Britain over the Lockerbee issue. The OAU has consistently expressed its concern over the continued sanctions imposed on that country with their humanitarian consequences on the ordinary people and called for a fair trial of the suspects according to acceptable requirements of justice and

international law. The Security Council may wish to give serious consideration to the proposal jointly presented by the OAU and the League of Arab States aimed at seeking a just and equitable solution to the crisis.

As the United Nations Security Council is holding this special session, we should draw lessons from our experiences. We should learn from the failure to anticipate and effectively prevent the crime of genocide in Rwanda which resulted in the decimation of hundreds of thousands of our fellow human beings. We should learn from the inability of the Security Council to respond appropriately to the call by African leaders to deal with the crisis in the Eastern part of former Zaire. We should aim at forging ahead a new and true partnership that can enable us together to address, in a sustained manner, the acute problems facing our Continent. While Africa, like any other region, has the responsibility to address its own problems as a matter of priority, - and African States have clearly demonstrated their determination and resolve to do this, - the United Nations cannot exonerate itself from its Charter responsibilities towards the Continent.

As we meet here, I also believe that we should recommit ourselves to an enhanced co-operation and co-ordination between the United Nations and our continent's institutions. In this respect, I suggest that due consideration should be given by the United Nations to the positions of the

Continent as articulated by its continental Organization - the Organization of African Unity - and its leaders in view of the regional advantage they enjoy. For example, many people in Africa fail to understand why despite the request made by the Chairman of the International Mediation Committee on Congo, President Omar Bongo of Gabon, for the deployment of peace keeping force, the Security Council has not to-date been able to take decisive action.

With respect to the co-operation between the UN and the OAU, we should aim at building a new partnership in keeping with the provisions of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter and the "Agenda for Peace" on the role of the regional organizations in the maintenance of peace and international security.

I wish to seize this opportunity to reiterate our disposition, in the OAU, to continue working closely with the Secretary General of the United Nations towards that end. In this endeavour, we should be guided by the need to ensure complementarity and rational division of work based on comparative advantage. Such co-operation should, as a matter of

urgency, focus on addressing the current outbreaks of violence and conflicts in the Continent. But it should, increasingly, pay more attention to preventive diplomacy, preventive action and preventive deployment. We should also aim at re-orienting our co-operation towards building a joint capacity for post-conflict reconstruction and peace-building.

Finally, I wish to emphasize the importance of providing the OAU with the necessary logistic and technical assistance that is needed to enhance its capacity to respond to conflict situations. We have already initiated consultations with the United Nations in this respect and we are looking forward to establishing concrete modalities for improved co-operation. However, beyond the necessary enhancement of the OAU capacity, there is also the need to support the capacity of our individual Member States and their sub-regional mechanisms to enable them meet their responsibilities in conflict prevention, management and resolution. I wish, in this regard, to welcome the recent initiatives taken by some of our external partners to support Africa's capacity in peace-keeping. We see these initiatives as a demonstration of good disposition to enhance Africa's efforts at conflict prevention, management and resolution.

Madam President and distinguished members of the Council,

It is our sincere hope and expectation that the symbolic and political manifestation of interest and concern inherent in the holding of this special Ministerial Session of the Security Council will be followed up by a more active and committed involvement of the Security Council and the United Nations as a whole in dealing with African problems especially those relating to peace, security and stability.

I thank you.