



Organization of African Unity

**STATEMENT BY H.E. DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM,
SECRETARY GENERAL, ON THE STRUCTURAL
REFORM OF THE GENERAL SECRETARIAT
ADDIS ABABA, JUNE 11, 1999**

**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELELNCY THE SECRETARY
GENERAL TO STAFF MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL
SECRETARIAT ON THE STRUCTURAL REFORMS
FRIDAY, JUNE 11, 1999, AT 11 A.M. AT CONGO HALL**

The purpose of our meeting today is to brief you on the structuring exercise. As you are aware, the Council of Ministers, at its last Session in March, adopted the Report of the Ad-Hoc Committee on the Structural Reforms of the General Secretariat together with all the recommendations in that Report. This was a culmination of protracted efforts, which were initiated in 1984 and aimed at providing the Organization with a more effective and efficient Secretariat.

The OAU is not the only institution, which has embarked on a restructuring exercise. As you all know, most of our Member States are going through a painful process of structural reforms and adjustment with their accompanying great sacrifices and social costs. Similarly, most of the international and regional organizations are going through the same exercise.

Within the African Region, we have witnessed the experience of the ECA, the ADB and ILRI (former ILCA), to name just a few. Other regional organizations are also going through the same exercise.

The OAU could not remain insensitive to the exigencies of the day and to the requirements of the global changes in the world. In response to these changes, our Heads of State and Government adopted the 1990 Declaration on the Fundamental Changes Taking Place in the World and Africa's response. In doing so, they set new priorities for our Continental Organization.

Furthermore, the need for change became more urgent as a result of the new responsibilities arising from the Abuja Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community, signed in 1991, and the 1993 Declaration of the assembly of Heads of State and Government establishing the Mechanism for Conflict, Prevention, Management and Resolution. It, therefore, becomes imperative that the General Secretariat be endowed with a new structure to effectively respond to these challenges.

The Restructuring of the General Secretariat resulted in the creation of five departments, six specialized/representational offices with a staff complement of 457 employees as compared to the old structure which had a staff complement of 667 employees. With respect to the Scientific Offices, the Structure proposes a new relationship which, while ensuring OAU's continued financial and political support, will provide the offices with autonomy to pursue their objectives and programmes.

I should like to emphasize that change is always painful and is in most cases resisted. But given the realities we cannot escape from this change. However, what I would like to assure you all is that we will endeavour, as much as possible, to carry out this exercise in conditions that are transparent, objective and humane.

In filling the posts for the New Structure, efforts shall be made to as much as possible match the existing staff qualifications and experiences with the job descriptions of the New Structure. Where necessary, existing staff could be trained to qualify for taking up new posts through re-deployment. It will be resorted to retrenchment as a final measure. Yet, the Secretariat is fully disposed to assist those staff members, who will leave the Organization in whatever way possible. For instance, the Secretariat will be ready to assist interested staff to organize themselves in co-operatives to compete for the services to be contracted out.

For those staff members who will have to be retrenched, the OAU, within the limits of its resources, is committed to make every effort to provide incentives as explained in the communication document to facilitate their adjustment. I urge staff members to read the document carefully and particularly the schedules for various stages of action, like for example, the period given for making a decision about early voluntary departure. They should bear in mind that voluntary departure is accompanied by the full

compensatory package and that retrenchment will bring only the statutory benefits. I have directed the Transition Team to be available to address all the questions they might be asked by staff members. I, therefore, request the interested staff to get in touch with the Director of the Transition Team, Mr. Aholou.

To ensure that this exercise is done in the most professional, transparent and humane manner, the Secretariat will seek the support of independent consultants to help with the review and assessment of staff on the basis of the job descriptions and job requirements approved by the Council for the New Structure. In addition, I have decided that the President of the Staff Association will also be associated to the work of the Transition Team, which I have appointed, when it will address the sensitive problems of recruitment and retrenchment. Furthermore, the Secretariat intends to put at the disposal of staff a counseling and advisory service to help them plan their future prospects. In sum, I am fully committed to make the departure of those who have to leave the Organization as professional, transparent, efficient and humane as possible.

To help us manage this process, we have resorted to international consultancy firms to assist us in preparing well conceived complete renewal proposals submitted to the Ad-Hoc Committee which formed the basis of the Structure adopted by the Council. We are fully committed to continue,

extend and strengthen our professional approach to the implementation of the reform and renewal of our Organization. I am fully aware of the complexity of the task, the limited timeframe, the relative sensitivity of the environment, the visibility of the exercise and the high expectations of our Member States and friends for its success. That is why the restructuring needs to be carried out in utmost professional conditions.

To this end, I have, on May 20, 1999, decided to appoint a Transition Team responsible for the study, review and co-ordination of all measures aimed at ensuring the smooth restructuring of the General Secretariat. The Transition Team will be guided by a set of principles and directives which are incorporated in its terms of reference. I have directed the Team to adhere, strictly, to the principles, as well as the organizational values and culture as enumerated in its terms of reference. It shall work under the supervision of the Assistant Secretary General in charge of Administration and Conferences and under my overall leadership and responsibility. I will personally ensure that the process is conducted in the most professional and objective manner. To this end, I shall be available through the Bureau of the Staff Association and its President to respond to whatever questions, which is of concern to the staff.

As you are aware, the reform programme has seven main features, namely:

- The Structural Re-organization of the whole Secretariat, including Specialized and Representational Offices;
- The Development of a New System to carry out OAU's responsibility in the Science and Technology Fields, and the Design of a New Relationship between the OAU and its Scientific and Technology Offices;
- Enhancement of Co-ordination between the OAU/AEC and the Regional Economic Communities;
- A new Career Development Plan which will ensure the continuous growth and development of staff;
- Improved Methods of Work and Procedures;
- Intensive use of Modern Information and Communication Technology throughout the Organization.

In carrying out this exercise, we have taken fully into account the financial situation of our Member States. While the responsibilities of our Organization continued to increase, unfortunately, the resources provided by our Member States have not increased. In fact, many of our Member States are finding it increasingly difficult to meet their obligations to the Organization. The only feasible option for the OAU was to find ways and

means to put in place a package of reforms incorporating reduction in our staff costs, through the streamlining of our activities, adoption of modern management systems and procedures, the introduction of modern technology and the renewal of the human resources of the Organization through continuous training and a new work ethics and organizational culture. You will recall that Member States have persistently called for the reduction of staff cost of our Secretariat. The New Structure will enable us respond positively to this call by reducing staff cost from the current 75% to 57% of the Secretariat budget. Through these measures, we hope to devote more resources to programmes without increasing the burden on our Member States.

It is clear, therefore, that the reform and renewal programme is a comprehensive endeavour designed to endow our continent with an efficient Organization to meet the challenges at the dawn of the 21st Century. The task before us is very daunting and will require all the support and full co-operation from the entire Secretariat.

In all our efforts, we are fully conscious that the OAU, being Africa's premier Organization, its reform and renewal will be closely watched by Africa and the world. This is another reason why we are insisting on total transparency, fairness, objectivity and efficiency in the process of the reform and the renewal of the OAU Secretariat. We will also endeavour to

involve the staff as much as possible throughout this process. By setting a good example, we would be putting in practice what we have been advocating and improve our capacity to promote values of good governance, transparency, accountability and sound management throughout the continent.

I am fully aware that this is not going to be without pain and difficulty, especially in an Organization like ours, which has not undergone serious structural changes since its establishment. On my part, I am fully committed to carry out the responsibility entrusted to me by the Council. I have already directed that a major reallocation of resources be carried out within the 1999/2000 Budget to secure the necessary resources for the reform and renewal programme, including the retrenchment plan. I would also be approaching our partners to assist in this respect.

Lastly, to ensure transparency and free circulation of information, I have directed that a document communicating the restructuring programme, in clear summary form, be prepared and distributed to all staff members in both English and French. Furthermore, the basic documents of the Structure will also be placed in the Library to enable staff members have full access to them. It is also my intention to keep the staff fully informed of the progress of this process through an open communications strategy. I have, therefore,

directed the Transition Team to give this matter its full attention. And, as I have said, I shall be personally available.

As we are embarking on this important and difficult exercise, I wish, therefore, to seek the continued cooperation and support of all. Indeed, this exercise requires the contribution of all. We are dealing with the destiny of a Secretariat, which is expected to better serve our Continental Organization at a time when the challenges facing it are daunting. But we are also dealing with the destiny of individuals. This will require objectivity and fairness. These principles should guide us in our endeavours.