

**NOTES BY THE OAU SECRETARY GENERAL,
DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM WELCOMING THE PRESIDENT
OF DJIBOUTI, H.E. MR. ISMAEL OMAR GUELLEH,
AT THE ECA CONFERENCE CENTER
THURSDAY, 4 NOVEMBER 1999**

Your Excellency

President Ismael Omar Guelleh.

Distinguished Ministers and Officials

accompanying the President,

Distinguished Ethiopian Ministers and Officials,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Diplomatic Corps,

I would like to thank you all for responding to our invitation to this meeting to hear an address by the President of the Republic of Djibouti.

Before making my own short remarks, I would like to invite the Under Secretary General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, Mr. K.Y. Amoako to make some welcoming remarks.

... I give the floor to Mr. Amoako.

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I thank Mr. Amoako for his remarks.

It gives me particular pleasure to join the Executive Secretary of the ECA in welcoming His Excellency Ismael Omar Guelleh, President of the Republic of Djibouti to this gathering of representatives of African and international community at large in Addis Ababa. We are particularly delighted that in his first state visit here in Ethiopia as Head of State of his country, President Guelleh has found it possible to be with us this morning in order to address this distinguished international gathering.

In welcoming the President of Djibouti in our midst, we are welcoming a Head of State of a country which is a valuable member of the OAU family, a country which, despite its own limitations, has played a very important role within the Organization of African unity and has remained steadfast in support of the collective efforts of our Continent in addressing the challenges that confront us. It is a matter of record that Djibouti has been particularly active in efforts to overcome the scourge of conflicts that continue to afflict some of our

countries. It is therefore appropriate for me to use this occasion to pay a well deserved tribute to our Guest of Honour, President Guelleh and his illustrious predecessor and one of Africa's elder Statesmen, President Hassan Gouled Aptidon, for the leadership they have provided to Djibouti and for the contribution they have made to Africa's causes.

Indeed, I wish to convey through you Mr. President, our admiration and respect for former President Aptidon who not only ably led his country into a period of freedom, stability and progress, but joined that group of distinguished African leaders who have voluntarily relinquished power and successfully organized democratic transitions. President Gouled had in this respect provided yet another example of how the change of leadership in our continent can be carried out in a democratic and peaceful manner. I salute his wisdom and vision.

To you, Mr. President, we are gratified for continuing with the exemplary work started by your distinguished predecessor, especially in keeping Djibouti peaceful and stable in this very turbulent region of the Horn of Africa. In this regard, it is particularly gratifying to note that your efforts and those of your predecessor have not been limited

to Djibouti, but extended in the region with a view to bringing about regional peace and security.

I wish to recall the most recent contribution of Djibouti to the efforts to bring about a peaceful resolution of the unfortunate dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea. As is well known, Djibouti was a member of the OAU High Level Delegation, which spearheaded the Organization's efforts to broker peace following the outbreak of the conflict. Those efforts culminated in the adoption by the OAU Heads of State and Government of the Framework Agreement and the Modalities for the Implementation. Both these documents have been accepted by the two countries and do constitute a viable way forward for a peaceful resolution of this tragic and unfortunate conflict.

I remain confident that you, Mr. President, will continue to lend the strong support of Djibouti to the continuing and ongoing efforts by the OAU led by the Current Chairman of our Organization, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, and that these efforts will soon produce the desired positive results.

I should also like to commend you for the statement that you made recently in New York at the General Assembly of the United

Nations. Having been personally present in New York during your address, I was encouraged by the clarity of your understanding and your assessment of the situation in Somalia, particularly the proposals you made on what needs to be done to end the long suffering of the Somali people.

Undoubtedly, your address at the UN General Assembly – the contents of which were also transmitted to the UN Security Council, has provided new perspectives and impetus, as well as the possibility of reassessing our approaches to finding a solution for the conflict in Somalia. It is my fervent hope that this important initiative will be followed up and that Africa and the international community at large will consider adopting practical and effective measures in support of this initiative. Such a concerted action will, I believe, crucially contribute to the realization of our common goal – that of ending the conflict in that country and achieving peace and national reconciliation as well as the re-emergence of the State of Somalia.

Beyond Somalia, it is also my confident hope that you, Mr. President, during your tenure of office as the Chairman of IGAD, will continue to exert maximum efforts within the framework of the regional peace initiative on the Sudan and other problem areas. so that

this region can be spared the tragic consequences of war and the energies of its peoples redirected towards economic and social development.

With these few remarks, it is now my singular honour and privilege to call on President Ismael Omar Guelleh, President of the Republic of Djibouti and Current Chairman of IGAD, to deliver his address.

Thank you.