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Organization of African Unity

**STATEMENT BY H.E. DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM,
SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE OAU ON THE OCCASION OF
THE VISIT TO THE OAU HEADQUARTERS BY
MR. WARREN CHRISTOPHER, SECRETARY OF STATE
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

October 10, 1996

Your Excellency Mr. Warren Christopher,
Secretary of State of the United States of America,
Distinguished Members of the US Delegation,
Distinguished Ambassadors,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honour and pleasant duty to welcome our distinguished Guest Mr. Warren Christopher, Secretary of State of the United States of America to the Headquarters of the Organization of African Unity. Indeed, we are privileged by this first ever visit by an American Secretary of State to our Continental Organization. **Mr. Secretary of State**, we are particularly pleased that you have been able to undertake this visit despite your heavy schedule and your various responsibilities.

In welcoming you, we are honoured to receive the Secretary of State of a great nation which has deep rooted links with our Continent and its people and which we consider as a great friend of Africa. We are happy to receive an eminent representative of the current US Administration which has demonstrated a great deal of commitment to Africa and which has shown a lot of understanding and concern to our Continent. I recall with appreciation the important and historic initiative taken by President Clinton to convene the "**White House Conference on Africa**". I was privileged to take part in that conference which took place in Washington two years ago and which was attended by high level US officials from Government departments and personalities from various institutions. The

President, the Vice President and the Secretary of State were all involved in that Conference. I was personally able to witness the commitment and positive disposition of the present Administration towards Africa.

We are also privileged to have amongst us today a distinguished son of the United States of America, a man with impressive credentials and record in the service of his country and in promoting understanding and cooperation at the international level: A man who has discharged his responsibilities with dignity and dedication. In you, Mr. Secretary, we also welcome an accomplished diplomat, a skilled negotiator and a respected statesman.

Mr. Secretary of State, you are undertaking your present visit at a critical juncture when Africa is going through difficult and challenging times. Our countries are currently engaged in fundamental political and economic reforms aimed at releasing all the energies and resources of our people and ensuring a more propitious environment for political and economic advancement. African States have been taking bold steps to bring about rapid transformation and create enabling conditions for speedy economic growth, recovery and social progress. These efforts are being deployed against enormous difficulties and obstacles. But our Continent is determined to pursue this course of action with great determination and vigour. Our countries want the on-going reforms to succeed and succeed quickly. They want a greater participation of our people and they are striving to ensure that democracy and the rule of law prevail in our societies and

the human rights which our people have always fought for are promoted and respected. Significant progress has been so far achieved in this direction, but a lot more needs to be done.

As part of this undertaking, our Continent is now taking the issue of peace, security and stability with greater resolve. Your country and its present Administration is well aware of the tremendous efforts deployed by our countries through their continental organization and through regional arrangements in order to address the scourge of conflicts afflicting our Continent and its attendant consequences. I wish, in this respect, to pay tribute to the United States of America for its important contribution in efforts at resolving conflict situations in our Continent. I wish, in particular, to place on record our profound appreciation to the United States for the significant and consistent support it has been providing the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution since it became operational. We consider the US support as well as the support given by many of our other non-African friends a source of strength and great encouragement to move forward in our endeavor to address the problem of conflicts. We are very conscious of the fact that without peace and security, our efforts towards socio-economic development and progress will continue to be hampered. We are, therefore, determined to work assiduously towards ensuring that an atmosphere of peace, security and stability prevail in our Continent so that the energies of our people would be focussed on what constitutes the most

challenging task before our people, the task of improving the living conditions of our people and promoting economic cooperation and integration through the establishment of the African Economic Community.

Mr. Secretary of State, your present visit to the Headquarters of the OAU comes at a time when our continental organization is deeply involved in promoting the objectives of peace, development and democracy in our Continent. Apart from the efforts towards conflict prevention, management and resolution to which you are familiar, the Organization is also involved in promoting democracy and the respect and promotion of human rights in the Continent. One of the concrete examples of this involvement is the increasing role our Organization has been playing in the observation of elections in our countries. To date, the Organization has been associated in the observation and monitoring of close to 50 elections or referenda held in the Continent over the last two years. This particular role is highly appreciated by Member States and increasingly recognized by our partners in the International Community. We intend to further enhance the role our Organization plays in promoting democracy and understanding and in building a culture of democracy and tolerance in our Continent.

The Organization has also embarked on the process of the implementation of the Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community. We see the forthcoming inaugural session of the Economic and Social Commission of the African Economic Community scheduled to be held from 19 to 21 November 1996

in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire as a crucial step in this endeavor. We are expecting to exert greater efforts to enhance the process of socio-economic cooperation and integration as we manage to secure an environment of peace, security and stability in our Continent.

We, at the OAU recognize the monumental task before us at the service of the Continent. That is why we are committed to the revitalization and the renewal of the Organization through adjusting and rationalizing its structures and methods of work to be able to meet the new challenges. We want our Organization to emerge as an efficient and effective instrument in addressing the problems facing our Continent. In this regard, a process has been put in motion to introduce the changes which are necessary for our Organization to be able to discharge its responsibilities with more efficiency and effectiveness.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We live in an inter-dependent world. It has been described as a global village. But for this village to live in harmony and prosper and to meet the challenges of the new millennium, a true spirit of human solidarity, understanding and cooperation is needed. Our Continent is going through a dual transition in the political and economic fronts. African countries are determined to steer the course and in some cases pay the price. We recognize that the triumph of economic and political freedoms in our Continent can only be sustained by the will,

determination and actions of our countries and peoples. At the same time, however, international cooperation and assistance is necessary. This is true as we forge ahead towards the consolidation of democratic and economic reforms. It is equally true as we confront some of the man-made and natural disasters that afflict our Continent. They range from conflicts and the millions of refugees and displaced persons they produce to the vagaries of drought, desertification, environmental degradation, AIDS pandemic, the malaria killer disease and more recently the increasing problem of drug trafficking.

As we move ahead, we need the understanding, cooperation and support of all Africa's friends. In this, while expressing our appreciation for the important support given thus far by the United States, we call for greater understanding of your country, **Mr. Secretary of State**, on the critical issues which are undermining the development efforts of our Continent in particular, the Africa debt burden, the overall issue of transfer of resources and technology to African countries and promotion of foreign investments including the support to the private sector which is now increasingly playing an important role in Africa's economic development.

In sum, **Mr. Secretary of State**, we are looking forward to building a solid partnership with the United States of America as Africa and its Continental Organization are engaged with renewed commitment and determination in meeting the formidable challenges of peace and development. We believe that such a partnership is of mutual benefit to the American and African peoples. We see your visit as a further step towards building such a partnership.

