

ORGANIZATION OF
AFRICAN UNITY

ORGANIZAÇÃO DA
UNIDADE AFRICANA



ORGANISATION DE
L'UNITÉ AFRICAINE

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STATEMENT OF HIS EXCELLENCY MR SALIM AHMED SALIM
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY
TO THE OPENING SESSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON ASSISTANCE TO AFRICAN CHILDREN

25 - 27 NOVEMBER, 1992

DAKAR, SENEGAL

STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY DR.SALIM AHMED SALIM, SECRETARY
GENERAL OF THE ORGANISATION OF AFRICAN UNITY (OAU) AT THE
OPENING OF THE OAU INTERNTIONAL CONFERENCE ON ASSISTANCE TO
AFRICAN CHILDREN (ICAAC)

IT IS A SINGULAR HONOUR AND PRIVILEGE AS WELL AS A PLEASANT DUTY TO ADDRESS THIS AUGUST GATHERING IN THIS BEAUTIFUL CAPITAL OF SENEGAL. ALLOW ME, MR. PRESIDENT, TO THANK YOU, THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF SENEGAL FOR THE WARM WELCOME AND RECEPTION AS WELL AS FRATERNAL AND TRADITIONAL AFRICAN HOSPITALITY THAT HAVE BEEN EXTENDED TO ALL OF US. BUT ABOVE ALL I WISH TO EXPRESS OUR PROFOUND APPRECIATION FOR THE CONCRETE POLITICAL AND MATERIAL SUPPORT GIVEN BY SENEGAL TO ENSURE THE SUCCESS OF THIS CONFERENCE.

THE HOLDING OF THIS CONFERENCE IS QUITE TIMELY AND AUSPICIOUS IN THAT THE PROBLEMS THAT MOST OF AFRICA'S CHILDREN FACE TODAY ARE SERIOUSLY ENDANGERING THEIR WELL-BEING AND SURVIVAL. THESE PROBLEMS DEMAND IMMEDIATE GLOBAL ATTENTION AND ARE A CHALLENGE TO ALL OF US. IGNORING THEM IS, NOT ONLY MORALLY REPUGNANT, BUT ALSO THREATENS PEACE AND STABILITY IN OUR COUNTRIES WITH ITS ATTENDANT REPURCUSSIONS INTERNATIONALLY.

WE ARE THEREFORE ALL THE MORE GRATIFIED TO WELCOME, IN OUR MIDST, YOUR EXCELLENCIES, THE AFRICAN LEADERS HERE PRESENT AS WELL AS ALL THOSE WHO HAVE FOUND TIME IN SPITE OF THEIR ONEROUS DUTIES TO COME TO THIS CONFERENCE TO SHARE WITH US VIEWS ON HOW TO EVOLVE CONCRETE AND MEANINGFUL PROGRAMMES, STRATEGIES AND

APPROACHES FOR THE WELFARE, RIGHTS, SURVIVAL, PROTECTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN IN AFRICA. IN A SIMILAR VEIN I WISH TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO PAY TRIBUTE TO THE UNICEF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MR JAMES GRANT AND HIS DEDICATED STAFF FOR THEIR CONTINUED CONCERN AND COMMITMENT TO THE CAUSE OF OUR CHILDREN. I WISH IN PARTICULAR TO THANK THEM FOR THE EXCELLENT COOPERATION THEY HAVE EXTENDED TO THE OAU GENERAL SECRETARIAT AND TO OUR HOSTS - THE SENEGALESE GOVERNMENT - IN PREPARING FOR AND ORGANIZING THIS CONFERENCE.

THIS OAU CONFERENCE IS A FOLLOW-UP TO THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR CHILDREN HELD AT NEW YORK IN 1990. IT IS A RESPONSE TO THE DECISION OF THE OAU SUMMIT OF LAST YEAR ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AFRICAN DECADE FOR CHILD SURVIVAL, PROTECTION AND DEVELOPMENT. A LARGE NUMBER OF AFRICAN COUNTRIES ARE NOW INITIATING CONTEXT-SPECIFIC FOLLOW-UP ACTION BY ALLOCATING MORE RESOURCES BENEFITTING CHILDREN THROUGH THE FORMULATION OF NATIONAL PROGRAMMES OF ACTION DESIGNED TO PROMOTE THE SURVIVAL, PROTECTION AND MOBILIZE WORLD-WIDE ATTENTION, COMMITMENT AND SUPPORT FOR AFRICA'S CHILDREN TO ENSURE THAT A STRONG FOUNDATION FOR HEALTH, HYGIENE, SANITATION, ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, EDUCATION AND NUTRITION IS LAID DOWN IN THE 1990S THAT IS ADEQUATE FOR SUSTAINING DYNAMIC DEVELOPMENT INTO THE NEXT CENTURY. THERE IS ALSO A NEED TO GIVE SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THE PROBLEMS OF CHILDREN IN ESPECIALLY DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES, PARTICULARLY THOSE IN SITUATIONS OF CONFLICT.

THIS MEETING IS BEING HELD AT A CRITICAL JUNCTURE IN AFRICA'S

SOCIO-ECONOMIC HISTORY. THE CONTINENT IS STILL IN ECONOMIC RECESSION WITHOUT ANY CLEAR SIGNAL THAT THE RECESSION AND INDEED THE DEPRESSION IS ABATING. AS OF NOW, THE AVERAGE PER CAPITA INCOME IN AFRICA IS 20% LESS THAN ITS LEVEL IN 1980. REAL WAGES HAVE SHARPLY DROPPED IN MOST COUNTRIES. THE PRODUCTIVITY OF LABOUR HAS CONTINUED TO DECLINE ON THE AVERAGE BY 1.5% PER YEAR IN AFRICA COMPARED TO AN AVERAGE INCREASE OF 1.2% AND 2.5% IN THE WESTERN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES AND ASIA, RESPECTIVELY. THE COMBINATION OF SUCH UNFAVOURABLE TRENDS HAS LED TO A GROWING IMPROVERISHMENT IN THE CONTINENT TO THE POINT THAT IT IS CURRENTLY ESTIMATED THAT OVER HALF OF THE POPULATION IN THE CONTINENT LIVES UNDER THE POVERTY DATUM LINE. ALTHOUGH IN THE PERIOD UP TO 1980, THE CONTINENT RECORDED SOME SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS IN MEETING BASIC NEEDS OF THE POPULATION, THE SITUATION HAS WORSENERED IN THE AREAS OF SOCIAL INVESTMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT ESPECIALLY IN EDUCATION, NUTRITION, HEALTH AND HOUSING.

DEBT, DROUGHT, WARS AND THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROBLEMS HAVE HAD THE MOST SERIOUS COMBINED IMPACT ON THE SURVIVAL, PROTECTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN IN AFRICA. TO GIVE BUT A FEW EXAMPLES: AT A TIME WHEN THE STAGGERING CURRENT UNDER-FIVE INFANT MORTALITY RATE OF 180 PER 1000 LIVE BIRTHS IS HALF THAT OF 1960, CHILDREN IN AFRICA STILL DIE AT 10 TIMES THE RATE OF THOSE IN INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES. FURTHERMORE, THE AVERAGE AFRICAN IS POORER TODAY THAN HE OR SHE WAS IN 1981; THE MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION ARE TRAPPED IN THE POVERTY OF A DETERIORATING SUBSISTENCE AGRICULTURE. THERE IS LESS FOOD PER PERSON TODAY THAN A DECADE AGO. SIXTY-FIVE PER CENT OF ADULTS (PARTICULARLY WOMEN)

CAN NEITHER READ NOR WRITE. NET SCHOOL ENROLMENT IS HARDLY OVER 65% WHICH IS ALSO REDUCED BY DROP OUT RATES ESPECIALLY AMONG GIRLS. THIS MEANS THAT UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION IN THE MAJORITY OF AFRICAN COUNTRIES WILL BE FAR FROM BEING ATTAINED BY THE TURN OF THE CENTURY.

FURTHERMORE, A MERE 23% OF AFRICANS HAVE ACCESS TO CLEAN AND SAFE DRINKING WATER. AFRICA HAS ONE DOCTOR FOR EVERY 24,000 PEOPLE. UNEMPLOYMENT IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY ENDEMIC, AND IN MANY OF THE TOWNS, 50 TO 60 PER CENT OF THE YOUTH IS OUT OF WORK. ALL THESE TRANSLATE INTO DECREASED ABILITY OF AFRICA TO PROVIDE ADEQUATELY FOR THE NEEDS OF ITS CHILDREN AND THE YOUNG.

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CRISIS FACING FACING OUR CONTINENT HAS BEEN MADE WORSE BY NATURAL AND MAN-MADE DISASTERS. FAMINE AND DROUGHT HAVE AFFLICTED OUR POPULATIONS WITH DEVASTATING CONSEQUENCES. BUT PERHAPS MORE POIGNANT AND INEXCUSABLE HAVE BEEN THE CALAMITIES OF CONFLICT AND ESPECIALLY INTERNAL CONFLICTS WHICH IN SOME CASES HAVE BROUGHT ABOUT TRAGEDIES AND DEVASTATION OF UNIMAGINABLE PROPORTIONS. THE MAYHEM AND CARNAGE IN SOMALIA IS A CASE IN POINT. EQUALLY DISTURBING IS THE CONFLICT IN LIBERIA. ONE COMMON CHARACTERISTIC OF ALL THESE CONFLICTS-FROM LIBERIA TO SOMALIA, FROM ANGOLA TO SUDAN AND FROM RWANDA TO MOZAMBIQUE AND SOUTH AFRICA, IS THAT IT IS THE MOST VULNERABLE GROUPS WHICH ARE MOST AFFECTED. AND THE MOST VULNERABLE OF THEM ALL ARE THE INNOCENT CHILDREN WHO GET CAUGHT IN CROSSFIRE.

THE COMBINATION OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC CRISIS, NATURAL AND MAN

MADE DISASTERS COUPLED IN SOME CASES WITH INADEQUATE DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND PROCESSES, HAVE RESULTED IN MANY REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS IN THE CONTINENT. IN FACT, ONE MIGRANT OUT OF FIVE IS AN AFRICAN AND ALMOST ONE REFUGEE OUT OF EVERY TWO IN THE WORLD IS AN AFRICAN. THE FIGURES ARE STAGGERING IN THAT THE AFRICAN REFUGEES NOW NUMBER 6 MILLION WHILE THE DISPLACED PERSONS NUMBER ABOUT 12 MILLION! THE MAJORITY OF AFRICAN REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS ARE CHILDREN AND WOMEN. THE NUMBER SUFFERING FROM SEVERE HUNGER AND INADEQUATE NOURISHMENT HAS RISEN FROM CLOSE TO 60 MILLION IN 1981 TO OVER 80 MILLION IN 1992.

YET, DESPITE THIS UNFORTUNATE PICTURE AND PERHAPS BECAUSE OF IT, IT IS ENCOURAGING TO NOTE THAT THINGS ARE CHANGING IN OUR CONTINENT AND THE CHANGES ARE POSITIVE AND IN SOME CASES NOTHING SHORT OF REVOLUTIONARY. NOTWITHSTANDING SHORTCOMINGS HERE AND THERE THE PROCESS OF DEMOCRATISATION IS ON COURSE AND IRRESISTIBLE. THERE IS NOW AN INCREASINGLY ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR THE PROMOTION OF POPULAR PARTICIPATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS, RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND OBSERVANCE OF THE RULE OF LAW. OUR PEOPLE WANT NOTHING LESS THAN THE MAINTENANCE OF HIGH STANDARDS OF PROBITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF THOSE IN PUBLIC OFFICE. ALL THESE AUGUR WELL IN TERMS OF CREATING DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS IN RESPONSE TO THE YEARNINGS OF OUR POPULATIONS AND THIS WILL IMPACT POSITIVELY IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF OUR COUNTRIES.

OUR COUNTRIES ALSO ACCEPT AND REAFFIRM THAT THEY HAVE PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR RESOLVING CONFLICTS IN AFRICA AND TO

WORK TOGETHER TOWARDS THE PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF ALL CONFLICTS IN OUR CONTINENT - BE THEY INTER STATE OR INTERNAL. THIS COMMITMENT WAS SOLEMNLY LAUNCHED BY OUR LEADERS IN THEIR SUMMIT IN ADDIS ABABA IN 1990. IT WAS REITERATED IN ABUJA, NIGERIA IN 1991. HERE IN DAKAR, IN JULY THIS YEAR, AFRICAN LEADERS ALSO COMMITTED THEMSELVES TO A NEW EFFORT OF UNDERTAKING POLITICAL INITIATIVES TOWARDS THE PREVENTION, MANAGEMENT AND RESOLUTION OF CONFLICTS IN AFRICA. ABOVE ALL AS A PRACTICAL MANIFESTATION OF THEIR COMMITMENT THE COUNTRIES OF ECOWAS, WITH GREAT SACRIFICE, ARE THROUGH ECOMOG PLAYING A CRUCIAL ROLE IN EFFORTS TO END THE CONFLICT IN LIBERIA. AT THE SAME TIME THE OAU IS ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN EFFORTS TO END THE CONFLICT AND RESTORE PEACE IN RWANDA.

AT THE SAME TIME, AFRICAN STATES ARE TAKING SERIOUSLY THE CHALLENGE OF SUB-REGIONAL AND REGIONAL ECONOMIC INTEGRATION. THERE IS NOW A GROWING REALISATION BY OUR COUNTRIES ON THE FUTILITY OF TRYING TO ATTAIN LONG TERM DEVELOPMENTAL GOALS THROUGH EXCLUSIVELY INDIVIDUAL APPROACHES. THE IMPERATIVE NECESSITY OF THE AFRICAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY IS RECOGNIZED BY ALL.

MR. CHAIRMAN,

IN MAKING REFERENCE TO AFRICA'S EFFORTS AT FURTHER DEMOCRATISATION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THROUGH REGIONAL COOPERATION AND INTEGRATION AND A DETERMINED RESOLVE TO CONFRONT THE SCOURGE OF CONFLICTS WHICH BLEED OUR PEOPLE AND DEVASTATE OUR RESOURCES, I WISH TO MAKE ONE OBVIOUS POINT. THIS IS THAT AFRICA REALIZES THAT

OUR SALVATION LIES FIRST AND FOREMOST ON OUR HANDS AND THAT OUR COUNTRIES ARE SERIOUSLY ADDRESSING THEMSELVES TO THE BURNING ISSUES OF THE MOMENT DESPITE THE MANY CONSTRAINTS FACING THEM.

BUT AFRICA IS NOT ISLAND UNTO ITSELF. FOR OUR EFFORTS TO BE CROWNED WITH SUCCESS AND ENABLING INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT IS CRUCIAL. INDEED GIVEN THE PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE STATE IN WHICH THE CONTINENT IS SUBMERGED, INTERNATIONAL UNDERTAKING AND SOLIDARITY IS IMPERATIVE. IT IS IN THE SAME SPIRIT THAT WE ATTACH GREAT IMPORTANCE TO THIS CONFERENCE SINCE IT PROVIDES A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY FOR INITIATING A PROCESS OF DIALOGUE WITH THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY ON WAYS AND MEANS OF ADDRESSING THE PRESSING NEEDS OF THE AFRICAN CHILDREN.

WE THEREFORE EXPECT THIS CONFERENCE TO BE A COMPACT FOR A HUMAN DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY ON THE PART OF AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS AND THEIR DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS WITH THE EMPHASIS ON FIRST CALL FOR CHILDREN. ALTHOUGH FOLLOW-UP TO THE CONFERENCE WILL BASICALLY BE DONE ON A COUNTRY-BY-COUNTRY BASIS, IT IS APPROPRIATE THAT A MECHANISM BE DEvised FOR MONITORING KEY INDICATORS THROUGHOUT THE CONTINENT AND MAJOR FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS. I AM CONVINCED THAT THERE IS URGENT NEED TO DEVELOP NEW MODALITIES OR MECHANISMS FOR COOPERATION ON AN EXPANDED BASIS AT THE NATIONAL, SUB-REGIONAL, REGIONAL, CONTINENTAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS.

AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL, I WISH TO DRAW THE ATTENTION OF THIS CONFERENCE TO THE INTERDEPENDENT NATURE OF THE WORLD WHERE WE LIVE. IT IS A GLOBAL VILLAGE WITH GLOBAL CONCERNS AND HENCE

SHOULD RECOGNIZE THAT THE SOLUTION OF AFRICA'S CUMULATIVE UNDER-DEVELOPMENT AND SPECIFIC MESURES FOR ADDRESSING AFRICA'S CHILDREN'S PROBLEMS, IN PARTICULAR, WILL REQUIRE FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES AND RENEWED COMMITMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. AS HUMAN BEINGS, IN SPITE OF OUR VARIED FORTUNES, WE ALL INHABIT A COMMON WORLD AND ENVIRONMENT. OUR DESTINY IS TIED UP WITH EACH OTHER. COMMON SENSE, THEREFORE, SHOULD DICTATE THAT WE NEED CO-OPERATION AND CONSULTATION INSTEAD OF CONFRONTATION.

THIS CONFERENCE AND THE CONCERNS THAT HAVE OCCASIONED IT, ARE OF GREAT SIGNIFICANCE. THE BREATHTAKING PACE OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CHANGES AROUND US ARE CLEAR SIGNALS OF THE SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE 1990S AND BEYOND. IT IS TO BE HOPED THAT WITH THE END OF THE COLD WAR, THE REDUCED DEFENCE SPENDING IN INDUSTRIALIZED AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES WILL RELEASE SIGNIFICANT RESOURCES - THE GAINS FROM THE PEACE DIVIDEND - WHICH SHOULD BE CHANNELLED TO AFRICA COUNTRIES FOR USE IN THEIR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND INVESTMENT PROGRAMMES WITH PRIORITY BEING GIVEN TO AFRICAN CHILDREN AND WOMEN. ON OUR PART, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT AFRICAN COUNTRIES ENDEAVOUR, AS FAR AS POSSIBLE, TO DIVERT RESOURCES FROM DEFENCE AND SECURITY-RELATED EXPENSES TO SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON MEETING THE NEEDS OF OUR CHILDREN.

MR CHAIRMAN,

DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES,

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

AS WE END THE YEAR 1992, IT BEHOVES US ALL TO REALISE THAT WE OWE IT TO POSTERITY TO WORK ASSIDUOUSLY AND CONSCIENTIOUSLY FOR THE SOCIAL ECONOMIC RECOVERY OF OUR CONTINENT. IT IS ONLY BY SO DOING THAT AFRICA CAN MEANINGFULLY ADDRESS THE PLIGHT OF HER CHILDREN AND WOMEN AND PROVIDE THE BASIC NEEDS TO HER PEOPLE. THESE OBJECTIVES WILL ONLY BE ACHIEVED THROUGH THE PROGRESSIVE REALISATION OF THE AFRICAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY. IT MUST ALSO BE EMPHASIZED THAT IN ORDER TO ATTAIN REGIONAL COHESION, COOPERATION AND INTEGRATION AND EVENTUALLY THE LEVEL OF AN AFRICAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY, MANAGERIAL SKILLS AND OTHER SPECIALISED MANPOWER RESOURCES ARE INDISPENSABLE. THAT IS WHY THE AFRICAN CHILDREN WHO ARE LEADERS OF TOMORROW IN EVERY ASPECT SHOULD GROW UP IN A CONDUCIVE ENVIRONMENT AND BE GIVEN THE NECESSARY TOOLS TODAY.

WE ARE ACUTELY AWARE THAT FOR THIS COOPERATION AND INTEGRATION TO BE MEANINGFUL, A MORE FUNDAMENTAL COMMITMENT TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF OUR SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS SHOULD BE THE PRIME IMPERATIVE OF OUR TIMES. IF WE CANNOT FEED THE HUNGRY, IF WE CANNOT HEAL THE SICK, AND IF WE CANNOT AVAIL KNOWLEDGE TO THE IGNORANT AND THE ILLITERATE - THE DEMOCRACY AND FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS WE ALL CHERISH, IMPORTANT THOUGH THEY ARE, MAY WELL BE MEANINGLESS AND IRRELEVANT TO THOSE MILLIONS TORTURED FROM BIRTH BY HUNGER, DISEASE AND IGNORANCE. IN OTHER WORDS, MR CHAIRMAN, IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO GUARANTEE THE HUMAN DIGNITY OF A PEOPLE IN A STATE OF POVERTY, IGNORANCE, DISEASE AND ECONOMIC BACKWARDNESS.

ALTHOUGH AFRICA'S IMMEDIATE SOCIO-ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE MAY LOOK BLEAK, WE MUST CONFOUND THE PROPHETS OF DOOM AND AFRO-PESSIMISM.

WE MUST CAST OUR EYES TO THE PROSPECTS IN THE DISTANT HORIZON. THE PAST SHOULD BE A LESSON AND THE FUTURE A CHALLENGE AND WE SHOULD DRAW INSPIRATION FROM OUR FAITH IN THE DESTINY OF AFRICA AND SET OUR CONTINENT ON THE RIGHT PATH TO RECOVERY, PROGRESS AND DEVELOPMENT. THAT IS THE ONLY PATH WHICH CAN MAKE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE FOR THE FUTURE OF THE AFRICAN CHILDREN.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION