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***STATEMENT OF
H.E. DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM,
SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE OAU,
TO THE SECOND BERLIN WORKSHOP****

BERLIN, 3-5 JULY 1997

* Delivered by Dr. Chris Bakwesegha, Head of the Conflict Management Division of the OAU.

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasant duty to read out to this August assembly the statement of H.E. Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim, Secretary General of the Organization of African Unity, on this occasion of the Second Berlin Workshop.

I QUOTE:

I wish to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to H.E. Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel for the kind invitation that was extended to me to attend this Workshop on "Improving African and International Capabilities for Preventing and Solving Conflict - the Great Lakes Region Crisis." I wish also to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the German Government for the promising working relations that have developed over the years between Germany and the OAU, as exemplified by the assistance the Government of Germany together with other European Union countries have been extending to the OAU to assist the Organization in addressing conflict situations in Africa.

It is not too long ago that the Organization of African Unity had an occasion to receive a team of German Parliamentarians who came to the OAU Headquarters, in Addis Ababa, to exchange views and information about the missions being undertaken by the OAU. This was a clear demonstration of the interest that the German people have in Africa.

I am encouraged by the commitment of the German people to support Africa in working towards peace, security, stability and development. These relations between the German Government and Africa clearly symbolize the kind of partnership we are currently promoting with all the European countries, as well as the European Union, as an institution. We, therefore, look forward to intensifying and strengthening further those relations.

I personally would have liked to be present at this important gathering if it was not for the other pressing commitments which have dictated otherwise.

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished participants,

The burdens of war, conflict and instability confronting the African continent to day are something that the world, as a community of nations, has come to recognize. The imperative need for the international community to rally behind those who are trying to prevent conflict by building coalitions of peace, security and stability in Africa is also something which has been fully acknowledged. One would like, therefore, to believe that this Workshop is being held out of the conviction that peace is not only indivisible but also a collective effort; and that the need for the countries of the world to pool together and develop sound and coordinated policies and strategies with which to foster conditions of peace, security, stability and development has never become more pressing.

Mr. Chairman,

No single factor in Africa has brought so much death and suffering to our people like the scourge of conflict. Apart from the physical and psychological misery and suffering, conflicts also constitute the major internal impediment to Africa's economic development. They have resulted in such widespread human displacement within and between nations. They have destroyed the environment and dislocated infrastructure and the economic activities in the countries affected. Furthermore, conflicts have turned the continent with the richest resources into a continent unable to feed all its people.

Yet, Mr. Chairman, however gloomy Africa's conflict situation may seem to be, Africa is not all anarchy, and certainly not all wars. For against countries where peace has remained elusive almost since independence is to be viewed countries where relative peace, security and stability have prevailed, and development has been fairly noticeable. However, despite that truism, the grim news the international community has been receiving about Africa, the tragic pictures which the world has been seeing beaming on the television screens depicting hundreds of thousands of our people fleeing zones of conflict, or crashing away in camps under difficult circumstances -- all these, unfortunately, have helped to obscure some of the positive developments achieved in some of our countries.

**Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished participants,**

I wish to submit that nothing much will be achieved in our search for durable peace unless and until the causes of crisis and instability in Africa are properly identified and addressed. Many schools of thought continue to examine the causes of conflict in Africa through the prism of ethnicity. However, a careful examination of conflict situations in Africa reveals that poverty is the bedrock of instability, conflict and wars on our continent. It follows, therefore, that in the case of Africa, Conflict and “bread and butter” issues are two sides of the same coin which need to be addressed simultaneously. In other words, just as it is true that peace cannot be durable in an atmosphere of dire economic deprivation, so too is it true that economic development cannot really take place in a climate of war, conflict and domestic tension.

It was this kind of conviction that compelled our collective leadership in Africa, in 1990, to start thinking as to how to strengthen the Organization of African Unity in the field of conflict management with a view to creating propitious conditions for economic development. This collective thinking resulted in the adoption by our Heads of State and Government, in 1990, of a Declaration on “... the Political and Socio-Economic Situation of Africa, and the Fundamental Changes...” which had begun to take place in the world by the turn of the 1980s. In that Declaration, African leaders rededicated themselves to working together towards the peaceful and speedy resolution of all conflicts, be they inter-state or internal.

Then in 1993, a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution as a permanent organ for restoring peace, security and stability on the African continent, was adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government. The Mechanism is built around a policy-making body known as the Central Organ, comprising representatives of Member States, with the Secretary General together with the General Secretariat acting as its operational arm. The Central Organ functions at three levels: that of the Heads of state and Government, that of Foreign Ministers and that of Ambassadors accredited to the OAU, or duly authorized Representatives.

Mr. Chairman,

The Mechanism has, as a primary objective, the anticipation and prevention of conflicts. However, in circumstances where conflicts have already occurred, its responsibility is that of undertaking peace making and peace building functions in order to facilitate the resolution of those conflicts. These objectives were set up against the conviction that prompt and decisive action in the sphere of emerging instability helps, in the first instance, to defuse conflicts; but when they inevitably occur, they could be stopped from degenerating into intense or generalized conflicts. It was envisaged that emphasis on anticipatory and preventive measures, and concerted action in peace making and peace building, would obviate the need to resort to the complex and resource-demanding peacekeeping operations which African countries cannot afford in terms of financing.

Along with the Mechanism, an OAU PEACE FUND has been established as a permanent organ for the purpose of providing financial resources on a regular and permanent basis to support exclusively OAU operational activities relating to conflict management and resolution. The Fund is made up of financial appropriations of 5 percent of the OAU regular budget, voluntary contributions from Member States, as well as from other sources within Africa. Voluntary contributions from sources outside Africa are also most welcome.

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished participants,

Since the establishment of the Mechanism, measures have been taken to establish an Early Warning System, in the newly created Conflict Management Centre, by which the Secretariat will be able to monitor conflict situations in Africa, collect the relevant information, analyze it and make the necessary recommendations to the Secretary General and members of the Central Organ for purposes of taking decisions to avert crises, as early as possible.

Furthermore, since 1993, the OAU has deployed a lot of efforts to address conflict situations on the continent. Examples of OAU's efforts in this regard include the Comoros when the country was invaded by a group of mercenaries a few years ago, as well as Lesotho and Gabon when in both cases internal squabbles emerged between the ruling parties and the opposition parties and

threatened internal peace and security. In all these cases, the OAU has made important contributions towards achieving peaceful solutions.

OAU's efforts in monitoring elections within Member States also augurs well for the Organization in terms of advancing and strengthening the democratization process in Africa. To date, the OAU has been able to observe in about 60 elections within Member States.

Currently, the OAU is actively involved in the mediation efforts to restore peace, security and stability in conformity with the principles of democracy in Sierra Leone, the Republic of Congo as well as the Central African Republic. The Organization is also involved in the current efforts relating to the upcoming elections in Liberia this very month.

I wish to underline the far reaching position adopted by the OAU and its Member States which unequivocally condemned the coup d'Etat in Sierra Leone and called for the restoration of the constitutional order in that country. This was an important development and a break-through in the history of our Organization. It was a clear testimony to the fact that our Organization can no longer tolerate coups against democratically elected governments. It was a strong message to all potential coup makers of Africa's determination to pursue vigorously the path of democracy and constitutional rule.

Mr. Chairman,

Although the OAU is doing its utmost in assuming its share of responsibility in the sphere of conflict prevention, management and resolution in Africa, we are still conscious that a lot remains to be done. But while Africa continues to assume its share of responsibility in addressing the scourge of conflicts, the OAU recognizes that the United Nations must, at the same time, remain the pre-eminent international authority for the maintenance of international peace and security. Moreover, Africa's disposition to play a central role in addressing conflict situations on the continent should not mean that it should be left alone to address its problem. It is our view that since conflicts on our continent are multi-layered, they naturally call for multi-layered responses and solutions. Both Africa and her external friends, therefore, need to form a partnership that will ensure a joint and timely response to Africa's scourge of conflicts.

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me conclude my statement by saying that the collective power of the African people to shape the future of their continent is now greater than ever before, given the bitter experiences they have gone through, be it in Liberia, Somalia, Angola, Sudan, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of

Congo or the Republic of Congo. The need to exercise that power is more compelling now than before. Mobilizing that power to make life in the Twenty-first Century more tolerable, more bearable, more democratic, more secure, and more sustainable is all that will make Africa meaningfully assume its rightful place in the world, as a community of nations, within the context of international solidarity and shared responsibility.

I thank you all.

END OF QUOTATION.