

ORGANIZATION OF
AFRICAN UNITY

ORGANIZAÇÃO DA
UNIDADE AFRICANA



copy
ORGANISATION DE
L'UNITE AFRICAINE

منظمة الوحدة الافريقية

Addis Ababa - Ethiopia - Box 3243 Tel. 51 77 00 Tele: 20046 Fax (251-1) 51 30 36

**STATEMENT BY H.E. DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM
SECRETARY GENERAL OF OAU TO THE 70TH
ORDINARY SESSION OF THE COUNCIL
OF MINISTERS**

Algiers, Algeria

July 8, 1999

- **Your Excellency Mr. Abdelkader Bensalah,
President of the People's National Assembly of the
People's Democratic Republic of Algeria,**
- **Your Excellency Jean Ping,
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and
Francophonie of the Republic of Gabon and
Chairman of the 69th Ordinary Session of the
Council of Ministers,**
- **Honourable Ministers and Heads of Delegation,**
- **Ambassador Mohamed Sahnoun,
Representative of the Secretary General of the
United Nations,**
- **Mr. K.Y. Amoako, UN Under Secretary General and
Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa,**
- **Distinguished Executive Secretaries of the Regional
Economic Communities,**
- **Distinguished Delegates and Guests,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The history of Algeria and in particular the determination and resilience of its people in the struggle for freedom and dignity not only for itself but for the people of our continent as a whole is a matter of record. Also on record is Algeria's unwavering commitment and practical support to Africa's liberation. The clear assertion of the Algerian people and leadership through the historic statement of the first

President of free Algeria – “we must all be prepared to die a little so that Africa lives” – during the occasion of the founding session of the Organization of African unity in Addis Ababa some thirty six years ago is still fresh in our memories and serves as an ever lasting testimony in word and deed to this country’s commitment to the liberation and development of our continent.

A lot has changed since then and since the OAU held its Council and Assembly of Heads of State session here in Algiers in 1968. But one thing has remained unchanged. This is Algeria’s commitment to Africa and its militant solidarity with its fellow Africans. This historical and continuing commitment of the Algerian people and its leadership undoubtedly provides the most propitious conditions for the successful holdings of this OAU Council of Ministers as well as the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in the next few days. We pay tribute to the Algerian Government and people for continuing to keep faith with the continent. We thank them for the warm welcome and generous hospitality accorded to all of us since our arrival. May I request the President of the People’s National Assembly, to convey our heartfelt sentiments of gratitude and appreciation to President Abdel Aziz Bouteflika, the Government and people of Algeria. We are particularly delighted to do so at a time when Algeria is celebrating the Thirty-seventh Anniversary of its independence.

I wish to express my appreciation to the Minister of State and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Gabon, His Excellency Jean Ping, the outgoing Chairman of Council for the able and efficient manner in which he conducted the deliberations of the 69th Ordinary Session of Council.

We are meeting at a crucial time in the history of our continent when our people together with the rest of the world look forward to the advent of a new century. This session of Council, therefore, affords us an opportunity for reflection on the situation in the continent. We need to reflect on what we should do individually and collectively to equip the continent in order to enable it to meet the challenges that lie ahead, in particular, those relating to economic and social development and of peace, security and stability.

The challenge of development through cooperation and economic integration should be considered in the context of the challenge of peace, security and stability. Insecurity and instability effectively undermine efforts at economic and social transformation. These issues are inextricably linked. Indeed, for the objective of cooperation and integration to be promoted and sustained, there is need for a conducive climate of peace, security and stability to be established. Similarly, for the climate of peace, security and stability to be sustained, it should be

supported by socio-economic progress through economic cooperation and integration.

Evidently the most eloquent manifestation of Africa's will to forge ahead through economic cooperation and integration was the adoption in Abuja, Nigeria, in 1991, of the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community. Five years have now elapsed since the Abuja Treaty has come into force. These have been five years of great expectations but regrettably of very modest progress. It is clear that an environment of peace, security and stability is essential for economic and social development. The absence of this environment in many parts of our continent has greatly undermined our quest for the promotion of the well-being of our people and thus impeding the implementation of the objectives of the Abuja Treaty.

Since the last session of our Council, the scourge of conflicts has continued to haunt our continent. These conflicts, whether internal or inter-state, have caused considerable loss of life, imposed immense suffering on our people and destroyed valuable infrastructure. They have engendered millions of refugees and displaced persons and above all compounded the already miserable conditions of poverty which millions of our people are subjected to.

Moreover, conflicts have brought about a culture of violence and intolerance in our societies. They have traumatized generations of Africans, particularly women and children, who are the first victims of the resultant violence. Considerable parts of fertile land in some of our countries cannot be cultivated because of the millions of landmines planted in the course of these conflicts.

I believe our meeting in Algiers should provide an opportunity for a serious reflection on the challenge posed by the problem of conflicts in Africa, and chart the way forward in order to be rid of this anachronism and create conditions for durable peace, security and stability in our continent. In Angola, we need to work in a more concerted and vigorous manner for the scrupulous implementation of the Lusaka Protocols and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council so as to put an end to the war being imposed on the Angolan people. The conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) demands determined and concerted efforts. In this context, we must not only pay tribute to the efforts of African leaders coordinated by President Chiluba of Zambia resulting in the current agreement in Lusaka but more importantly, we must strive to ensure that the success of the Lusaka peace process is consolidated so as to bring about lasting peace and stability in that country.

It is our fervent hope that the Peace Agreement signed yesterday in Lome, Togo, between the Government of Sierra Leone and the Rebel Movement – under the auspices and critical contribution of the Chairman of ECOWAS, President Gnassingbe Eyadema with the full support of the leaders of ECOWAS will usher in a new era in that country. We pay tribute to President Eyadema and all those who have made this agreement possible. The OAU will lend its full support towards its implementation.

The sustained efforts deployed in search for a solution to the conflicts in the DRC and Sierra Leone should serve as a reminder that where there is determination and perseverance, it is possible to overcome obstacles towards peace however daunting. They should also serve to strengthen our determination and resolve in finding solutions to other conflicts in our continent such as those in Burundi where there is already some meaningful progress, in Somalia, Southern Sudan and the Comoros. Undoubtedly this resolve and determination is all the more urgently needed in our efforts to bring to an end the tragic conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

The challenges of cooperation and integration and of peace, security and stability, should also be situated in the larger context of the challenge posed by globalization. Indeed, the world economy and politics is being re-shaped with little or no input and contribution on the

part of our Continent. We should, as Africans, endeavour to articulate our common concerns and collective demands and to ensure that they are duly taken into account in the on-going global negotiations. Clearly however, Africa's interests and concerns can only be taken seriously into account if our countries work in cohesion, unity and solidarity and in an environment of peace, security and stability.

I hope that these sessions of our Continental Organization here in Algiers will marshal that sense of cohesion, unity and solidarity that we need to be relevant in the global arena as we prepare to enter the new millennium. This above all requires that we succeed in creating within our continent an environment of peace, security and stability and that we give priority to our Agenda of economic cooperation and integration.

Thank you.