



Organization of African Unity

STATEMENT BY H.E. DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM, SECRETARY  
GENERAL AT THE SIGNING CEREMONY OF THE TREATY OF  
THE AFRICAN NUCLEAR WEAPON FREE ZONE

Cairo, Egypt

11 April 1996

**Your Excellency, President Hosni Mubarak  
of Egypt,**

**Your Excellencies, Ministers of Foreign Affairs and  
other Heads of Delegations,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Thirty three years ago, in May 1963, representatives of the nascent African States newly emerged from colonialism, met in Addis Ababa to found the Organization of African Unity. Even at that early stage, these African countries were fully aware of the acute polarization in the international political system, and the dangerous role which weapons of mass destruction particularly nuclear weapons, played in the East-West antagonism of the Cold War era. It is this realization which inspired them, at that first African Summit meeting to affirm the principle of declaring Africa a Denuclearized Zone, to oppose all nuclear and Thermonuclear Tests as well as the manufacture of nuclear weapons, and to promote the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. In their resolution on General Disarmament, the leaders also called for the destruction of existing nuclear weapons, and a stoppage to nuclear weapons tests.

A year later in July 1964, meeting here in Cairo at the First Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, thirty-two leaders of Africa gave further impetus to their quest for security when they adopted a Resolution on the Denuclearization of Africa. In that resolution, the leaders solemnly declared their readiness to undertake in an international treaty not to manufacture or acquire control of nuclear weapons and called upon all peace loving nations to adhere to the same undertaking.

The event of the Signature of the Pelindaba Treaty today, is therefore a realization of a dream which Africa has nurtured over the last three decades. It is also a culmination of determined efforts deployed within the Continent and at the United Nations over the years, to bring about agreement on a Treaty to prohibit the development of nuclear weapons production, stockpiling, acquisition, transfer, utilization, testing, transit and disposal of nuclear wastes from the african continent for ever. I want to commend the African Governments for having the courage to defeat misplaced notions of security and agreed to forego the nuclear option. I equally thank them for the confidence they have reposed in the Organization of African Unity by making its Secretary General the depository of the Treaty. I want also to thank all the African experts who undertook the laborious task of working out the legal and technical details embodied in the Treaty. I equally wish to express our gratitude to the

United Nations for the generous material and technical support which made the preparation of the Treaty Text possible. *I wish in particular to thank the government and people of the Arab Republic of Egypt for hosting the signing ceremony. Indeed this historic event is a fitting culmination of the OAU Summit Resolution adopted here at the Egyptian capital thirty two years ago.*  
Mr. Chairman,

By agreeing on a Treaty establishing a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone in Africa, we have made an important contribution to peace in the Continent. Africa has also crossed an important psychological threshold by reaching out to collective security through the renunciation of nuclear weapons. The name of the Treaty - Pelindaba is itself a sign of the happier times we now live in. Pelindaba - long associated with the sinister program of the then Apartheid regime of South Africa to develop nuclear weapons, is now a name that signifies commitment to genuine security and an African collective endeavour to banish nuclear weapons from the Continent.

By this signature, Africa joins the other regions in Latin America and the South Pacific in declaring their respective areas as zones free from nuclear weapons. These regions, covered by the Treaty of Tlatelolco and Treaty of Rarotonga respectively have acquired sufficient experience in living, at least nominally without the threat of nuclear weapons in their backyard. As we proceed with the actual implementation of this Treaty, we hope to learn from them.



This is a first unilateral step taken by Africa to further the cause of global peace. It is by no means a panacea for the threat posed globally by the vast arsenals in the possession of the nuclear weapon States.

Nuclear weapon free zones, such as established by the Treaty we sign today, are important. They only however restrict the spread of nuclear weapons within the regions of those who do not have them. As such therefore their value is eroded if they are not complemented by firm commitments by those with nuclear weapons to move speedily and resolutely towards the dismantling of these weapons. This means therefore that an end to the development of nuclear weapon and the weapon tests should be the global priority of our present world.

Mr. Chairman,

The Security Guarantees, which non-Nuclear Weapon States have always insisted on, including those now embodied in protocol one of the present Treaty our countries have agreed to sign should not replace the ultimate guarantee inherent in the total abolition of nuclear weapons. To this extent therefore, the signature today by Africa of the Palindaba Treaty should not be an end in itself but it should constitute also, the moral and legal force which must inspire our determination to pursue and demand the total removal of the Nuclear threat. Africa does not see the signature here

as a solution to the Nuclear Arms Menace. Rather, it sees it as a morally empowering act and one which reinforces Africa's ability to speak loudly in demand of a world free of nuclear weapons.

By agreeing to this Treaty, we hope that we have expanded the frontiers of peace and that this important undertaking by the Continent will be reciprocated by clear action to check the horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons. The Nuclear Weapon States know very well that unless they show example by concrete action in actual disarmament, many countries will remain skeptical and at worst suspecting of the very philosophical basis for Nuclear Weapon Free Zones. We all know how, in spite of the many decades of trying, the Non-Proliferation Treaty has failed to achieve total universality on account in part, of the lack of progress in curbing horizontal Nuclear Weapons Proliferation.

Of course, we are encouraged by the spirit of the disarmament which took place in Geneva last month, to consider the issue of a Comprehensive Test Ban of Nuclear Weapons. We continue to urge all Nuclear Weapon States to take the challenge of a Comprehensive Test Ban of Nuclear Weapon Tests, with the urgency it commands; and to work towards the conclusion of a Treaty by the envisaged target date of the forthcoming Regular Session of the United Nations General Assembly this September.

As a key element of this Treaty, is the right of Africa to promote and benefit from the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The provision for the formation of an African Commission on Nuclear Energy which South Africa has offered to host, embodies the inherent recognition that Africa needs to harness nuclear technology for socio-economic development. There is therefore urgent need for the countries of Africa to establish and strengthen regional and international cooperation in the field of nuclear technology. In this process the role of the developed countries as well as of the International Atomic Energy Agency, to promote Nuclear-Energy-related technological development and exchange with Africa, will be pivotal. The signature of the Pelindaba Treaty today, gives Africa the moral and indeed legal right to seek the benefits of nuclear technology more vigorously.

We in the Organization of African Unity stand ready to play our part to further the cause of peace and stability as well as of technological development as provided for in this Treaty which our countries are signing today,

I thank you.