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INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT BY THE OAU SECRETARY GENERAL
H.E. DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM
AT THE SIXTH SESSION OF THE OAU AD HOC COMMITTEE
OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT ON SOUTHERN AFRICA
HARARE, ZIMBABWE, 7 FEBRUARY 1991

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Mr. Chairman,

Your distinguished Committee is convening at a crucial moment for the international community. Indeed, since your meeting in Kampala in September last year, developments of grave concern have cast further gloom on the international scene. The Gulf crisis has unfortunately evolved into a full-scale war with the attendant loss of life and destruction of property and infrastructures. We are gravely concerned at the far-reaching implications of the current war on security and stability in the Region and in the world at large. It is our fervent prayer that the path of peace and the voice of reason and wisdom will prevail so that a solution is found, through peaceful means, in conformity with the universally accepted principles of international law. This, in essence, was the message in the appeal made by the Current Chairman of our Organization, President Museveni and myself to President Saddam Hussein of Iraq and President George Bush of the United States of America on 21 January 1990.

You are also convening at a moment of vital importance in the struggle of the people of South Africa against the Apartheid Regime. Since your Session in Kampala, there have been significant developments that have taken place

both within South Africa and within our Continent and beyond with respect to the struggle. Some of these developments have been positive. Others are quite discouraging. These developments have made it necessary and indeed compelling for this Ad Hoc Committee to meet, review the situation and map out appropriate course of action so that we do not run the risk of losing control over events.

Your Excellencies will recall that when your Committee met in Kampala for its Fifth Session it concentrated among other things on three areas of concern. These were the need for unity and solidarity among the anti-apartheid forces within South Africa especially among the African liberation movements; the continuing spectre of violence in black townships which was encouraged and even fanned by certain elements of the South African Security Forces, and how to encourage the process of change within South Africa. After careful analysis and discussion, the Kampala Summit called on the South African black leadership to intensify their efforts to forge a united front. It also called upon them to do their utmost to bring an end to the senseless violence. And on the fundamental issue of political changes, while encouraging the process of change, the Summit resolved that it was important to maintain pressure on the apartheid regime including the pressure of sanctions so that the process of change is not aborted.

Mr. Chairman,

Despite the appeal and urgings of the Kampala Summit, the violence in the black townships in South Africa continued causing us all serious concern. This violence which is aided and abetted by elements of the apartheid system caused

serious harm to the genuine struggle of the people of South Africa and was used to tarnish the image they had acquired at heavy cost and in the wake of a commendable struggle. The South African propaganda machine capitalized on scenes of "black-on-black" violence to mar the reputation of the leaders of the oppressed people of South Africa. It is with great relief and satisfaction that we therefore welcomed the historic meeting on 29 January 1991 of the ANC delegation led by Deputy President Nelson Mandela and the delegation of the INKATHA Movement led by its leader Chief Buthelezi which called for a halt to violence in the black townships and launched an appeal for peace and reconciliation.

Equally encouraging and significant has been the meeting on February 4 between the leaders of the ANC and the PAC - the first in many years. We have learnt with satisfaction the outcome of this meeting. Their resolve to overcome their differences and to forge a common front against apartheid and their appeal to their followers to cease violence against each other is certainly an important contribution in the struggle against apartheid.

These meetings will not only release the potential for the oppressed people of South Africa to chart a common course in respect of the substantive negotiations to be held on a new constitution, but they have also raised hopes that these organizations would henceforth be enabled to close their ranks against the forces of apartheid that are ever ready to sow seeds of dissension.

These positive developments notwithstanding, there is much that has occurred since your last session in Kampala that has given cause for concern and misgiving.

At the international level, we must note with concern that the international consensus for the isolation of the apartheid regime as one of the effective ways to exert pressure on that regime to effect change has suffered some setbacks. A growing number of countries are now establishing trade and other links with South Africa. This trend is particularly evident in Eastern Europe where there has been an almost total collapse of the isolation policy and the sanctions regime. And in Western Europe, the movement to lift sanctions, hitherto restrained by the pressure of public opinion and the anti-apartheid non-governmental organisations, has been gaining momentum. This movement towards breaking the isolation of apartheid South Africa is exemplified most eloquently by the decision of the EEC Summit on 15 December 1990 to lift the ban on new investments in South Africa.

But perhaps more disturbing is the gradual but definite erosion of Africa's own position on this issue.

Mr. Chairman, I refer specifically to the fact that in spite of the emphasis that the last session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in July 1990, as well as that of the Ad Hoc Committee, had put on the need to maintain the African common position on sanctions, there has in actual practice been in evidence a wide divergence between the solemn affirmations and concrete actions.

I have in mind, Mr. Chairman, the spate of unilateral actions taken by certain of our membership to establish a variety of contacts, including even links of cooperation with the apartheid regime in Pretoria. These actions besides

running the risk of undermining the position of the Liberation Movements and putting into question the credibility of our Organization have also been seized upon by some countries of Europe as a pretext to justify ex post facto the establishment, strengthening and indeed expansion of their relations with the apartheid regime.

It has been argued in some quarters that the required level of irreversibility has already been achieved and therefore that some untightening of sanctions and the establishment of some types of relations with South Africa should be considered. This raises the question as to the stage at which the process would be considered as irreversible. In our view, the irreversibility of the process will occur at the moment when there will be such change that the process can no longer be aborted and there can be no turning back. In this respect, no one is obviously in a better position to determine the irreversibility of the process towards the establishment of a democratic and non-racial society in South Africa than the oppressed peoples of that country and their representatives. This Committee, as in the past, should certainly be guided by their views.

Mr. Chairman,

This, in brief, was the situation prior to Mr. De Klerk's statement to the South African Parliament on February 1, 1991.

In his statement, President de Klerk announced a set of important measures aimed at dismantling the Apartheid system. The cornerstone legislation of Apartheid namely the Land Acts of 1913 and 1936, the Group Areas Act and the Population Registration Act are to be repealed.

In my view, we must duly acknowledge the breadth and dimension of such a move. Once these laws are abrogated by the South African Parliament, their effect coupled with those of earlier measures would bring about the collapse of the main legislative pillars of the apartheid system in South Africa. These are bold and courageous moves by Mr. De Klerk and we should therefore pay tribute commensurate with the significance of the measures taken. We must not however be oblivious to the fact that our final target is the total eradication of Apartheid and the establishment of a democratic and non-racial society in South Africa. As long as this objective is not achieved, we should continue to exercise vigilance and maintain the pressure on South Africa. Needless to say in this respect that major obstacles still loom on the path to negotiations leading to the establishment of a non-racial and democratic society in South Africa. I am thinking of the issue of the release of political prisoners and the return of exiles on which the South African regime has unduly procrastinated. I am also thinking of the Internal Security Act, a major instrument of repression, which has not been repealed. Above all, it is important to bear in mind that state organs are still dominated by the whites and the black people still have no vote.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me repeat that there is no doubt that when Mr. De Klerk's intention as proclaimed in Parliament are implemented, the basic legal foundations of the Apartheid system would be removed. However, the conditions that would allow for proper negotiations to be conducted on the establishment of a democratic and non-racial South Africa have yet to be met. It is therefore important for

your Committee to consider this and decide what would best serve our common cause. We know for example the position already adopted by the EEC Council of Ministers which has made it clear that as soon as action is taken to repeal the legislative pillars of apartheid as per Mr. De Klerk's pronouncement then the EEC will lift sanctions imposed on the regime. This committee must evaluate the possible implications of relaxation of pressure at this stage. Would such a course of action really encourage or obstruct the process of change in South Africa that we all desire? And we must bear in mind that the reality in the international system is that one cannot simply "switch off and switch on pressure" against the apartheid regime.

It is gratifying that Mr. Nelson Mandela, the Deputy President of the ANC, and Mr. Clement Mawketu, the President of the PAC, are here with us today. I do believe that their appraisal of the situation together with that of the Frontline States which have always effectively assisted this Committee and the OAU will provide guidance to the Committee and enable it to arrive at a position that is clear and credible in the eyes of the people of South Africa and the international community at large. I have no doubt that your Committee will perform this task in a manner equal to the responsibilities incumbent on it and commensurate with the expectations of the oppressed people of South Africa. Your Committee, Mr. Chairman is the organ with the proper authority to articulate Africa's reaction to the new situation created by the recent developments in South Africa. It will be able to send a clear signal to Africa and the rest of the world that the oppressed people of South Africa still need their active solidarity until a democratic and non-racial society is established in South Africa.

It is important that that message should above all reinforce Africa's cohesion, unity and solidarity so that collectively, as we have done in the past, Africa should continue to render its support to the struggle so that we and the world community can finally triumph over this remaining bastion of Africa's humiliation. I wish to stress the importance nay the imperative necessity of united African approach to this question. If Africa is to be divided or giving an impression of a lack of cohesion then it would be impossible to expect the international community to follow Africa's lead on this burning issue. Our message from Harare should be clear both in terms of strategy and tactics. With the cooperation and collaboration of our brothers the leaders of the liberation movements here present, this Committee must chart an appropriate course of action. The committee must decide how best Africa through the OAU can assist our oppressed brethren in the final onslaught against the obnoxious system of apartheid. We are at a crossroad. And it is my sincere conviction that this session of our Ad Hoc Committee is historic. I am confident that your discussion will be frank and indepth and your decision unanimous.

It is of auspicious coincidence, that your conclusions will be sent out from Harare, the capital of a country that had made tremendous sacrifices in pursuit of a democratic and non-racial society and which now constitutes a shining example of what African unity, backed by the collective support and pressure of the international ccommunity, has done and can do to further the cause of African freedom, independence and dignity. It is also fitting that this capital which a year and half ago gave us the historic Harare Declaration will be giving yet another historic call.