



Organization of African Unity

THIRD CO-ORDINATION MEETING ON THE
HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE FOR SOMALIA

STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL, SALIM AHMED SALIM

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

March 11, 1993

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to preface my remarks by extending a warm welcome to all the participants of this important conference being held at this capital city of Ethiopia and the Headquarters of both our Continental Organization - the OAU and the Economic Commission for Africa. We are particularly gratified and encouraged by the presence in our midst of such a large gathering of our brothers and sisters from Somalia representing a cross section of the Somali society - political leaders, community leaders, elders, representatives of NGOs and especially our sisters who have done so much amidst very difficult circumstances to keep the hope alive. Indeed I wish to pay particular tribute to the fortitude, courage and determination of the Somali women. We say to you all KARIBUNI - welcome. We are also gratified by the continued interest and concern demonstrated by the cross section of the world community whose representatives here present from UN Member States, International and Non-Governmental Organizations we recognize and salute.

I would especially like to recognize the continued active and valuable role played by the Transitional Government of Ethiopia and its President Ato Meles Zenawi in support of efforts aimed at bringing to an end the nightmare that has befallen the Somali nation. The OAU would also like to salute the United Nations Secretary, Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali for his untiring and persistent efforts both at the humanitarian and political levels on behalf of Somalia. To you Mr. Chairman Under Secretary General, Eliason we reaffirm our appreciation for your sustained efforts at mobilizing the international community in providing humanitarian assistance to our Somali brothers and sisters and for organizing this Conference.

The contribution of my colleague, friend and brother, Layashi Yaker, UN Under Secretary General and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa in the organization of this Conference is for us a matter of great satisfaction. I wish also to welcome in our midst the Deputy to the Special Representative of the Secretary General, UNOSOM Ambassador Lansana Kouyate and assure him of the OAU's fullest co-operation as he discharges his enormous, important and sensitive responsibilities.

Mr. Chairman,

Some three months ago, we gathered here in Addis Ababa to consider at the implementation of the Programme of Action for accelerated assistance to Somalia, which was adopted in Geneva in October 1992. Today, we are meeting to assess once more the effort of solidarity that we had embarked upon with respect to Somalia and to consider future course of action. The second co-ordination meeting, we do recall, commenced under extremely difficult auspices in Somalia where the prevailing insecurity had seriously hampered delivery of humanitarian assistance to those who needed it the most. The current meeting is convening in a relatively improved context. "Operation Restore Hope", initiated by the United States with the support of the International Community had contributed to a large extent to the improvement in the conditions of security and in turn facilitated the distribution of humanitarian relief in Somalia.

We are pleased to observe that assistance has gradually started to reach the affected population even though the problems of security have not yet been fully resolved.

Furthermore, the process of political settlement initiated following the successful convening of the informal preparatory meeting to the Conference on National Reconciliation happily is still on track and is expected to continue in a couple of days.

Mr. Chairman,

The collective and massive response demonstrated by the international community to the tragedy of Somalia and the noble sentiments of responsibility that were exhibited by everyone in the light of this tragedy are a sign of the times. The world is one and indivisible. Nothing can occur in one part of the world without being of concern or having implication to the rest of the international community. The Somali tragedy brings to our minds each day the poignant reality of our common belonging to humanity and the collective responsibilities incumbent upon us.

I therefore wish to seize this opportunity to commend the praise worthy and wide ranging efforts deployed by the international community as a whole in providing assistance to Somalia. I am convinced that these efforts will continue and will increase so as to retrieve Somalia fully from the tragedy and help it heal. Such an undertaking will have significance if it goes beyond the immediate task of humanitarian assistance and incorporates the reconstruction and rehabilitation of a country that has been destroyed in every respect.

Mr. Chairman,

The 57th Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers of the OAU which just convened here in Addis Ababa, reiterated its appeal to the international community, to contribute to the reconstruction and rehabilitation of this devastated country. I am pleased to observe that the efforts made by the international community culminated in the preparation of a programme of assistance and rehabilitation in Somalia for the year 1993 on which this meeting shall deliberate. I also note with satisfaction the contribution of Somali organizations to the preparation of the programme.

I would like, in addition to reiterate my appeal to the international community as a whole and more specifically to the donor countries and organizations so that, in the spirit of generosity that has always guided them, they can remain resolutely committed through their contributions to the major efforts aimed at the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Somalia that will soon be initiated. This is a major challenge that we all need to meet.

I have had the opportunity, on more than one occasion, to underscore the important role that African countries have to play in this major demonstration of solidarity that the international community has continued to show towards Somalia. I am bound to acknowledge in this regard that something had been done by the African countries which, in spite of the economic difficulties they are experiencing and the modest resources at their disposal, had been involved in the efforts to assist Somalia from the humanitarian and political stand point as well as from the military angle with their participation in the security operations. I must also say

that we can do better and our contribution to these efforts can be more significant and massive. The conflict in Somalia is taking place in Africa. It is therefore essentially an African problem. In that regard therefore, it is primarily incumbent on Africa to take a more active role to put an end to it and to assist our brothers and sisters in Somalia to restore peace normalcy and proceed with the gigantic task of national reconstruction. I would, therefore, once more appeal to the generosity and spirit of solidarity of the Africans, at all levels so that they can concretely continue to come to the assistance of Somalia.

Mr. Chairman,

The restoration of peace and security in Somalia is a fundamental prerequisite for the success of the humanitarian action undertaken by the international community in Somalia. That is why I have great hopes in the forthcoming Conference on National Reconciliation which will convene in a couple of days and which, I am convinced, will create conditions that are conducive to the return of peace and security in Somalia. But whatever we do we must strive to ensure that interest in the plight of Somali people is not allowed to diminish. At a time of so many other problems elsewhere in the world which also demand attention and resources, there is temptation to allow ourselves to fall into complacency, especially now that the efforts of the international community have appreciably enabled the provision of humanitarian assistance. Somalia deserves to be looked at with the uniqueness it has and in terms of the gravity of its situation. Somalia is still very vulnerable and needs continued international support first to consolidate the present stage of humanitarian relief and then beyond into the long term issues of national reconciliation,

rehabilitation and reconstruction. For ultimately, a united, peaceful and stable Somalia will have to be based on basic prosperity. Otherwise, the country, left alone at its present level of fragility, will simply relapse into anarchy of even more horrendous proportion.

To this end, therefore, the international community, especially the donor countries and institutions, need to sustain their assistance to Somalia beyond the present phase of humanitarian relief. We appreciate the burden it places on them especially at time of so many other competing needs around the world. But I am sure they appreciate the uniqueness of the Somali situation and why it is necessary to remain interested in it and retain assistance at levels commensurate with the needs of the people there. While we are thankful to the great work being done by others, we in Africa also must continue to demonstrate our concern and caring by increased assistance. Apart from material assistance, I hope that Africa will take on an enhanced role in UNISOM II through providing more contingents where necessary to the peace-keeping force.

Mr. Chairman,

Whether in providing humanitarian assistance or looking beyond it, into the phase of helping Somalia reconcile with itself and reconstruct, we will need co-ordination within the international community. This is necessary to ensure that the assistance we give reaches the targeted population and that we do not duplicate efforts. Only proper co-ordination will ensure the most rational utilization of the resources and with maximum benefit to the Somali people.

But we in Africa and the rest of the international community can only assist. We can only be a catalyst of peace and reconstruction in Somalia. We can not pretend to be able to impose peace and economic recovery to Somalia if the people there do not rise to the challenge. I therefore hope that the representatives of the Somali people who are here among us, recognize the heavy responsibility upon them. The people of Somalia and especially those who represent them, should seize the challenge of peace and approach the reconciliation efforts with determination to succeed. For ultimately, they and we all stand to benefit more from a peaceful, united and stable Somalia.

I wish this meeting successful deliberation.