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**Statement by the Secretary General of the OAU,  
Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim,  
to the United Nations Security Council Meeting  
on the Situation in Africa**

**New York, 29 September 1999**

**Mr. President,**

I wish to, first of all, congratulate you on your assumption of the Presidency of the Security Council for the month of September, and to express how honoured I am to address the Security Council, once again, on behalf of the Organization of African Unity. The initiative you have taken to convene this Ministerial session on “The Situation in Africa”, on the eve of the year 2000, is a welcome initiative and a clear testimony of the Netherlands’ continuing interest in Africa. I would also like to express the appreciation of the Organization of African Unity for the support that your country, the Netherlands, has been extending and continue to extend to Africa, particularly in the areas of economic development and in our efforts at promoting peace, security and stability in our continent.

The initiative happily coincides with the momentous decisions taken by African leaders themselves at both Algiers Summit, in July this year, and subsequently the Summit in Sirte, Libya, in September, aimed at strengthening Africa’s capacity to deal with continental and global challenges. These decisions, inter alia, relate to Africa’s resolve and determined effort to make the year 2000 a year of peace and stability in Africa.

Our objective and determination is to move from an era of conflict resolution to an era of security and stability; and from an era of economic stagnation to greater integration of African economies and economic development. In so doing, we shall start the process of putting an end to the current plethora of conflicts, which continues to frustrate Africa's aspirations and expectations, and create better conditions for the well-being of the African peoples.

I see the present session as a follow-up first, to the Ministerial Session of the Security Council of September 1997 which discussed the Situation in Africa and, second, to the 1998 discussion of the Secretary-General's Report on the "Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa". This present initiative, therefore, constitutes a manifestation of the continuing interest of the international community in Africa, and its concern over the conflicts which continue to cause immense suffering for our people and bring about destruction of life and property, apart from having serious negative impact on the socio-economic development of our continent.

Mr. President,

Two years ago, when I addressed the Ministerial meeting of the Council on Africa, I drew the attention of this distinguished body to the many problems facing the African Continent and the challenges these posed and continue to pose for our peoples and leaders. The issues of democratization, good governance, accountability, respect of human rights,

as well as the rule of law continue to preoccupy the African governments and peoples. The very healthy and frank discussions that took place in Algiers on these issues and in particular the decision not to accept, in the OAU, effective from the next Summit, those who usurp power through the overthrow of constitutionally elected governments, bears testimony to Africa's resolve and seriousness on these issues.

As we revisit the Situation in Africa since our last debate, I should like to pay deserving tribute to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his insightful Progress Report before us today. We note, in that regard, the important role of the Security Council, the General Assembly and the ECOSOC particularly for their holistic approach in the implementation of the important recommendations in the Secretary-General's Report.

We, at the OAU, also attach great importance to the enhanced cooperation between the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations, convinced, as we are, that the partnership which exists between the two institutions is mutually reinforcing.

Since the last Ministerial session on the Situation in Africa, there have been significant developments in our continued and collective efforts for the peaceful resolution of the conflicts on the continent. The signing of a Ceasefire Agreement in the DRC and the Lome Agreement on the Peace Process on Sierra Leone are especially noteworthy. In this regard, we welcome the recent proposal of the UN Secretary-General for the



deployment of a 6,000-strong UN force for Sierra Leone, and the positive reaction of the Security Council as contained in the resolution currently under consideration. We believe that sending such a force will help to stabilize the situation and assist in the implementation of the Lome Agreement. It is also proper to emphasize here the urgent need to provide the Government and People of Sierra Leone with the much required humanitarian assistance, as well as assistance for rehabilitation and reconstruction.

As we meet today, a number of conflicts remain a source of grave concern to us: the conflicts in Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea, the crisis in the Comoros, the fragile and fluid situation in the Republic of the Congo, as well as the situation in Burundi. In almost all these conflicts, it is significant to note that it has been mainly Africans themselves who have been in the forefront in finding solutions.

On the tragic and unfortunate conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea Africa through its continental organization, has been seriously and deeply engaged in finding a peaceful settlement. These efforts were carried out by the High Level Delegation of Heads of State and Government comprising of the then Chairman of the OAU, President Blaise Compaore of Burkina Faso, President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe and former President Gouled Aptidon of Djibouti as well as the new Head of State of that country President Ismael Omar Guelleh together with the OAU Secretary-General.

These efforts continue to be pursued by the OAU, more particularly by the Current Chairman of the OAU, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria working closely with the Secretary-General of the OAU. Since the Algiers Summit in July this year, intensive consultations have been pursued vigorously, with a view to seeking an early solution to the conflict. The OAU has continued its efforts in close cooperation with the United Nations and the Government of the United States.

In the case of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau, it has again been Africa, more particularly the Heads of State and Government of the ECOWAS region, which has worked assiduously towards the restoration of peace and the restoration of Constitutional order. Currently, Africa is engaged in yet another effort to advance further the cause of peace in Burundi, under the auspices of Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, the former President of the United Republic of Tanzania. Within the context of the content and spirit of the Algiers Summit, we are determined to do our utmost to promote efforts aimed at putting an end to the bleeding and destruction that is taking place in Angola, essentially due to the intransigence of the UNITA leadership. We also hope to intensify efforts aimed at resolving the conflicts in Somalia and Southern Sudan.

The situation in the Comoros also continues to be of serious concern. We have spared no effort in our common resolve to restore peace, security and constitutional order to the Archipelago. The OAU and the countries of the region have explored all peaceful avenues for seeking a lasting solution to

the crisis in that country. It was under the auspices of the OAU that the Addis Ababa and Antananarivo Agreements were fostered. Regrettably, the Antananarivo Agreement which was welcomed by all people of goodwill as a serious attempt to address the concerns of all the inhabitants of the Comoros and its Islands, particularly Anjouan, while maintaining the unity and territorial integrity of the country and the cohesion of its people, was undermined by the intransigence of the hard-lined elements within the Anjouanese party. Furthermore, the military take over in the Islands has further complicated the situation.

Mr. President,

I wish to stress, at this point that in all its peace endeavours, the OAU has never found the United Nations unwilling to help. Indeed, the United Nations has proved to be the main partner for peace of the OAU. I wish, therefore, to seize this opportunity to pay tribute to the United Nations, its Security Council and Secretary-General for their support and cooperation. Our appreciation also goes to individual members of the UN who are accompanying and supporting the OAU in its efforts at promoting peace, security and stability in the continent. I wish also to emphasize the fact that the OAU has endeavoured to work closely and to support the regional economic communities in their collective efforts to resolve conflicts in the continent.

The OAU takes particular pride in the partnership we have been able to build with the United Nations and the regional economic communities in



**Africa and we definitely look forward to the strengthening and consolidation of this partnership for peace, particularly as we prepare to enter the new century**

**I wish also to seize the opportunity of this meeting to stress the importance of timely action and support by the international community, and particularly by the United Nations and its Security Council, in support of Peace Agreements promoted by the OAU or the regional economic communities in cooperation with the OAU. In saying so, I have in mind our experience in the past when critical time and opportunities for peace were lost because of the lack of timely action by the United Nations Security Council. The sad experience of the UN inaction with respect to the situation in Congo Brazzaville is still fresh in our mind.**

**There is no doubt that the signing of a Peace Agreement, even though significant by itself, is but the beginning of a long and arduous path to peace strewn with danger and potential for the renewal of conflict if the necessary components for a successful peacemaking and peacekeeping process are not adequate, timely and appropriate.**

**As we meet today, I must point out that serious difficulties have been faced by the OAU and the concerned regional economic communities namely - ECOWAS and SADC - in the implementation of the Agreements for Sierra Leone and the DRC. These Agreements have been duly signed by the concerned parties and what is required is speedy action for their**



implementation; and yet the required determination and resources are not forthcoming. It is a fact that we lack the necessary and adequate resources to ensure the full and successful implementation of these agreements so far signed as well as those yet to be agreed upon by the parties to the conflict.

I have already expressed our full support to some of the proposals made by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in his recent report on the situation in Sierra Leone aimed at enhancing UN support for the implementation of the Lome Peace Agreement. I would like to urge the Security Council to also take speedy action with regard to the implementation of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement through the deployment of a Peacekeeping Force. I wish to reiterate the call made by President Chiluba of Zambia in his briefing on the DRC on 21 September to this Council and to appeal, once again, to this body to ensure that Africa is provided with the much needed financial and logistical assistance for the successful implementation of the Agreement signed. Such early action by the Security Council is vital in view of the fragile peace prevailing in the DRC. I believe that such determined action by the Security Council is also consistent with its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

In pleading for speedy action by the Security Council, I am emphasizing the partnership for peace that I mentioned earlier and that we aim at consolidating between our universal body, our continental organization and our regional economic communities based on a rational

division of work and fair sharing of the burden, bearing in mind the global responsibility entrusted to the United Nations and its Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security.

**Mr. President,**

**As Council deliberates on the situation in Africa, I am confident that you will take into account the realities and the steadfast efforts of African countries in dealing with their problems as well as events that impinge themselves on the continent from outside.**

**The Abuja Treaty broke new grounds in Africa's strategies for the greater integration of the economies of its states. But for Africa to embark on this vital course of integration, it should be given a chance to assert itself in this direction. As indicated by the numerous appeals made by African leaders, not only at this 54th General Assembly, the eve of the new Millennium, but also at other fora, the cancellation of debt in respect of African countries has become all the more urgent. Likewise, in the very progress report before us today, the Secretary-General has argued that despite the many pitfalls and impediments on the continent, African countries have already embarked on the much required economic reforms.**

**Recently in Sirte, African leaders, amongst other things, also decided to establish an African Union in conformity with the ultimate objectives of the Charter of our continental organization and the provisions of the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community; accelerate the process of**

implementing the Treaty; and strengthen and consolidate the Regional Economic Communities as the pillars for achieving the objectives of the African Economic Community to realize the envisaged Union.

In your assessment, I am sure you now realize that African countries are clearly not shying away from their responsibilities. While we recognize that some of our problems are part of colonial legacies and injustices done to our people, at the same time we remain mindful that many of our problems are of our own making.

We believe that these serious and imaginative efforts deployed by our people and leaders in confronting many of our problems and challenges deserve international understanding and solidarity. We need an element of fairness and objectivity in reviewing African problems.

Africa for example has the misfortune of having some 7 million refugees and more than double that number of internally displaced persons. In their generosity, African countries have provided shelter and support. Yet for Africa to be able to assist effectively their brethren who have been forced to vote with their feet, international support and solidarity which unfortunately has been diminishing is vital.

I need not remind Council that in dealing with African refugees, as compared to some others in other parts of the world, the element of proportionality is hardly there.



**Mr. President,**

**As I end my statement, I would like to reiterate that Africa is undertaking a process of reform and renewal. The process is all embracing - political, economic and social - and in my view, is irreversible. But for the process to remain meaningful and sustainable, Africa needs the active support of the international community. As we prepare to enter a new century, and believing as I believe you all do in our collective humanity, I trust that Council and the international community at large will respond positively and constructively to Africa's own quiet revolution.**

**I thank you.**