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**ADDRESS BY THE OAU SECRETARY-GENERAL**

**H.E. SALIM AHMED SALIM**

**AT A DINNER IN HONOUR OF THE OAU CURRENT CHAIRMAN**

**H.E. GENERAL IBRAHIM BADAMASI BABANGIDA**

**PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA**

*Ghion Hotel, Addis Ababa, 4 February, 1992.*

YOUR EXCELLENCY GENERAL IBRAHIM BABANGIDA  
PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA  
AND CURRENT CHAIRMAN OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY,  
YOUR EXCELLENCY MR MELES ZENAWI  
PRESIDENT OF THE TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT OF ETHIOPIA,  
HONOURABLE PRIME MINISTER,  
HONOURABLE MINISTERS,  
THE DISTINGUISHED ACTING EXECUTIVE-SECRETARY OF THE ECA,  
YOUR EXCELLENCIES MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS,  
REPRESENTATIVES OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS,  
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

IT IS FOR ME A SINGULAR HONOUR AND GREAT PLEASURE TO WELCOME YOU ALL TO THIS DINNER IN HONOUR OF PRESIDENT IBRAHIM BABANGIDA, THE CURRENT CHAIRMAN OF THE OAU. MAY I, AT THE VERY OUTSET, EXPRESS MY DEEP APPRECIATION AND GRATITUDE TO YOUR EXCELLENCY, MR PRESIDENT, FOR HAVING KINDLY RESPONDED TO THE INVITATION I EXTENDED TO YOU TO VISIT THE HEADQUARTERS OF OUR CONTINENTAL ORGANIZATION. I AM MOST GRATEFUL THAT YOU HAVE FOUND TIME TO DO SO DESPITE YOUR VERY BUSY SCHEDULE AND HEAVY RESPONSIBILITIES BACK HOME IN NIGERIA. YOUR GESTURE, MR PRESIDENT, IS DEEPLY FELT BY US. IT IS TESTIMONY TO YOUR PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO AND KEEN INTEREST IN THE ACTIVITIES OF OUR ORGANIZATION. IT IS, ABOVE ALL, EVIDENCE OF THE UNWAVERING SUPPORT AND DEDICATION OF YOUR COUNTRY, THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA, TO THE PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY.

ALLOW ME TO SEIZE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO PAY SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO YOUR EXCELLENCY AND, THROUGH YOU, TO THE PEOPLE AND GOVERNMENT OF NIGERIA WHICH HAVE NEVER FAILED TO LIVE UP TO THEIR OBLIGATIONS VIS-A-VIS THE ORGANIZATION AND HAVE, IN EVERY CIRCUMSTANCE, DEMONSTRATED OUTSTANDING AND EXEMPLARY DEDICATION TO THE CAUSE OF AFRICA. THE HOSPITALITY EXTENDED TO ALL THE DELEGATIONS AT THE ABUJA SUMMIT, LAST YEAR, AND THE EFFICIENT ARRANGEMENTS MADE TO ENSURE ITS SUCCESS ARE STILL FRESH IN OUR MINDS. WE, AT THE SECRETARIAT, STILL REMEMBER, WITH DEEP GRATITUDE, HOW THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT, UNDER YOUR GUIDANCE, MR PRESIDENT, WENT OUT OF ITS WAY TO RESPOND POSITIVELY TO ALL OUR NEEDS AND ENSURING THAT THE STAFF PERFORMED THEIR DUTIES UNDER THE MOST SUITABLE WORKING CONDITIONS.

FURTHER DEMONSTRATION OF NIGERIA'S COMMITMENT, NEEDLESS TO SAY, LIES IN THE GENEROUS CONTRIBUTION OF THREE MILLION US DOLLARS IT HAS MADE TOWARDS THE CONTRUCTION OF A CONFERENCE FACILITY AND EXECUTIVE OFFICES AT THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE ORGANIZATION. WITH THE LAYING OF THE FOUNDATION STONE CEREMONY, OVER WHICH YOU, MR PRESIDENT, PRESIDED THIS MORNING, WE ARE NOW MOVING ON TO THE IMPLEMENTATION PHASE OF THE PROJECT. IT IS MY FERVENT HOPE THAT OTHER MEMBER STATES WILL FOLLOW THIS COMMENDABLE EXAMPLE AND PROVIDE THEIR VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE REALIZATION OF THIS COLLECTIVE UNDERTAKING.

IN THIS CONNECTION, I AM CONFIDENT NOT ONLY OF EHTIOPIA'S OWN CONTRIBUTION IN THIS ENDEAVOUR BUT THE PERSONAL SUPPORT OF PRESIDENT MELES ZENAWI AND THE TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT IN FACILITATING THE SMOOTH IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS UNDERTAKING. NO DOUBT, THIS PROJECT, MODEST AS IT MAY BE, IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT WE ARE, AFTER ALL, INTENDING TO BUILD A MEDIUM-SIZE FACILITY FOR USE IN THE DAY-TO-DAY ACTIVITIES OF THE ORGANIZATION, WILL ALL THE SAME HAVE TREMENDOUS IMPACT ON THE PERFORMANCE OF THE OAU AT A TIME WHEN IT IS FACING NEW CHALLENGES AND ASSUMING NEW RESPONSABILITIES.

ALLOW ME, IN THIS JUNCTURE, TO PAY A SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO THE LEADERSHIP YOU HAVE PROVIDED TO OUR ORGANIZATION SINCE YOU TOOK OVER THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF OUR CONTINENTAL BODY. WE HAVE BEEN HIGHLY IMPRESSED AND INSPIRED BY THE TIME, ENERGY, RESOURCES AND DEVOTION YOU HAVE EXPENDED IN THE SERVICE OF OUR ORGANIZATION AND OUR CONTINENT. IN YOUR QUIET BUT EFFECTIVE, MODEST BUT FIRM MANNER, YOU HAVE BEEN IN THE FOREFRONT IN CHAMPIONING AFRICA'S CAUSES. I KNOW ALSO THAT YOU HAVE DEVOTED CONSIDERABLE PART OF YOUR VALUABLE AND BUSY TIME IN PROMOTING THE RESOLUTION OF AFRICA'S MYRIAD PROBLEMS - FROM ADVOCATING THE CASE FOR RELIEF OF AFRICA'S EXCRUCIATING DEBT BURDEN TO GENUINE AND PERSISTENT EFFORTS AT CONFLICT RESOLUTION. FOR ME, AS SECRETARY-GENERAL OF OUR ORGANIZATION, IT HAS BEEN A MOST REWARDING AND PLEASANT EXPERIENCE TO WORK WITH YOU, MR CHAIRMAN, AND TO BENEFIT FROM YOUR WISE COUNSEL AND GUIDANCE. FOR ALL THIS AND MANY THINGS

MORE, I WISH, ON BEHALF OF THE GENERAL SECRETARIAT AND ON MY OWN BEHALF, TO EXPRESS TO YOU, MR PRESIDENT, OUR DEEP GRATITUDE.

MR PRESIDENT,

IT IS MY FIRM BELIEF THAT OUR CONTINENTAL ORGANIZATION CAN BE INSTRUMENTAL IN THE ATTAINMENT OF OUR COLLECTIVE OBJECTIVES IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL FIELDS AND IN REVERSING THE UNFORTUNATE TREND OF MARGINALIZATION TO WHICH OUR CONTINENT IS INCREASINGLY BEING RELEGATED. TODAY, MORE THAN EVER BEFORE, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE FUTURE AND SURVIVAL OF OUR CONTINENT LIE WITH ITS ABILITY TO MUSTER ITS OWN ENERGIES, RESOURCES AND EFFORTS. FOR AFRICA TO BE RELEVANT IN WORLD AFFAIRS, TODAY, OUR COUNTRIES MUST CLOSE THEIR RANKS AND DIRECT THEIR COLLECTIVE EFFORTS TOWARDS OUR COMMON OBJECTIVES. IN THIS RESPECT, THE PANAFRICAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY CONSTITUTES A MAJOR CHALLENGE AND A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY WHICH AFRICA SHOULD NOT MISS IF IT EVER INTENDS TO RENDEZ-VOUS WITH DEVELOPMENT AND PROGRESS. IT IS, THEREFORE, IMPORTANT THAT THE PACE OF RATIFICATION OF THE TREATY BE ACCELERATED SO THAT WE CAN EMBARK ON THE ACTUAL IMPLEMENTATION OF ITS PROVISIONS.

MR PRESIDENT,

IF OUR CONTINENT REQUIRES SOLIDARITY AMONG OUR COUNTRIES AND GREATER INTEGRATION ON ITS PATH TO ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND

DEVELOPMENT, IT ALSO, AND ABOVE ALL, NEEDS PEACE, SECURITY AND STABILITY TO COPE WITH THIS CHALLENGE. I AM REFERRING, IN THIS RESPECT, TO THE NUMEROUS AND UNFORTUNATE CONFLICTS NOW RAGING ON IN OUR CONTINENT. THESE CONFLICTS SOW DEATH AND DESTRUCTION AND DIVERT OUR MEAGRE RESOURCES FROM THEIR SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES.

I WISH, IN PARTICULAR, TO SINGLE OUT THE CONFLICT IN SOMALIA WHERE THE CARNAGE IN MOGADISHU HAS NOT ONLY BROUGHT UNIMAGINABLE SUFFERING TO THE PEOPLE THERE, BUT HAS CAUSED DEEP CONCERN IN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. I BELIEVE THAT THE CONFLICT POSES A PARTICULARLY SERIOUS CHALLENGE TO AFRICA AND TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY.

MR PRESIDENT,

YOUR VISIT TO THE OAU HEADQUARTERS COMES AT A TIME OF MIXED FEELINGS AMONGST OUR PEOPLES - A TIME OF GREAT EXPECTATIONS AND OF DEEP ANXIETY ARISING FROM THE CURRENT CHANGES TAKING PLACE THROUGHOUT THE CONTINENT. IF SUCH CHANGES ARE A PORTRAYAL OF THE DEEP ASPIRATIONS AND QUEST BY OUR PEOPLE FOR BETTER LIVING CONDITIONS AND GREATER PARTICIPATION IN THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PROCESS - AND INDEED THEY ARE - EMPHASIS SHOULD, AT THE SAME TIME, BE PLACED ON THE NEED TO ENSURE THAT PEACE, HARMONY AND NATIONAL RECONCILIATION PREVAIL. WE HAVE, IN THIS CONNECTION, BEEN FOLLOWING,

CLOSELY, THE DEVELOPMENTS IN ETHIOPIA, THE HOST COUNTRY OF OUR ORGANIZATION, WHICH IS SO DEAR TO ALL OF US. WE HAVE BEEN WITNESSES TO THE SERIOUS EFFORTS BEING MADE BY THE TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT OF ETHIOPIA, UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF PRESIDENT MELES ZENAWI, TO ESTABLISH PEACE AND STABILITY IN THE COUNTRY AND LAY DOWN THE FOUNDATIONS FOR A NEW AND DEMOCRATIC ETHIOPIA. I WOULD LIKE TO SEIZE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO COMMEND PRESIDENT MELES ZENAWI AND ENCOURAGE HIM IN ITS EFFORTS TO PROMOTE THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTRY IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF PEACE, SECURITY AND NATIONAL CONCORD.

MR PRESIDENT,

TO CONCLUDE, MAY I AVAIL MYSELF OF THIS UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE A FERVENT APPEAL TO ALL OUR AFRICAN BROTHERS AND SISTERS TO COMMIT THEMSELVES TO RESOLVE THEIR DIFFERENCES THROUGH DIALOGUE. AT A TIME WHEN DISAGREEMENTS, BASED ON IDEOLOGY AMONG OTHERS, WHICH HAVE SO OFTEN DIVIDED AFRICANS ARE A THING OF THE PAST, THERE IS THE DANGER THAT THE DIFFERENCES, IN A CONTINENT FRAUGHT WITH MULTIPLE DIVERSITIES OF A RACIAL, RELIGIOUS OR ETHNIC NATURE, ARE USED TO CREATE MORE DIVISION AMONGST OUR VARIOUS PEOPLES. IT IS, THEREFORE, IMPORTANT THAT PROPER LEADERSHIP BE EXERCISED AND A CULTURE OF TOLERANCE AND UNDERSTANDING BE CULTIVATED IN AFRICA.

THIS CULTURE OF TOLERANCE IS EQUALLY IMPERATIVE AS OUR CONTINENT MARCHES INEXORABLY TOWARDS PLURALISM. WITHOUT IT, THIS ROAD TO DEMOCRACY OR FURTHER DEMOCRATIZATION, WHICH OUR PEOPLE ARE YEARNING FOR AND TO WHICH OUR SOCIETIES ARE INCREASINGLY RECEPTIVE, WILL BE MARRED BY SERIOUS OBSTACLES. WITH TOLERANCE AND THE BUILDING OF FIRM INSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATIONS INHERENT IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY AND THE RESPECT FOR HUMAN AND PEOPLE'S RIGHTS, WE SHALL BE CREATING CONDITIONS CONDUCTIVE FOR THE FULL HARNESSING OF THE ENERGIES OF OUR PEOPLES TOWARDS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL PROGRESS.

FINALLY, I WOULD LIKE TO PROPOSE A TOAST TO THE HEALTH OF PRESIDENT IBRAHIM BABANGIDA, THE PROSPERITY OF THE PEOPLE OF NIGERIA AND THE WELL-BEING OF OUR CONTINENT.