



**Organization of African Unity**

**STATEMENT BY  
DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM,  
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE OAU,  
AT THE RECEPTION TO MARK AFRICA DAY**

**ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

**25 MAY 2001**

**Distinguished Ambassadors,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I would like to welcome you here this evening, on this occasion to mark Africa Day. I wish to extend a special word of welcome to Canada's Secretary of State for African and Latin American Affairs, Honourable David Kilgour.

In the previous years that we have had a reception on this day, I have never found it necessary to make a statement, but today's celebration has a particular significance which justifies making brief remarks. Africa Day, today, happens to fall on the eve of the entry into force of the Constitutive Act of the African Union. In a real sense, therefore, this is a double celebration. We are not only commemorating the founding of the OAU thirty-eight years ago. With the imminent entry into force of the Constitutive Act tomorrow, the 26<sup>th</sup> of May 2001, we now stand on the threshold of the fulfillment of the legal requirements for launching the African Union.

As we mark this day, we must salute and pay homage to the foresightedness of the Founding Fathers of the OAU. They were inspired by the vision of uniting the peoples of the Continent so as to move together towards the common goals of decolonization and improving the socio-economic development and well-being of African people and nations. Their vision and leadership has inspired subsequent generations of Africans, who have fought hard not only to consolidate the political gains of the early years of independence, but to deepen and strengthen the unity, cohesion and solidarity of the Continent.

The succeeding generations have also worked hard to realize the related objective of enhancing the socio-economic development and well-being of the people of this Continent. Thus, ten years ago, the OAU Member

States adopted the Abuja Treaty with the objective of meeting the challenges of economic integration of African, through the establishment of the African Economic Community, as an integral part of the OAU.

Today, we are about to embark into another level of our Continental cooperation – a higher and deeper level of cooperation which is intended to consolidate further both the political unity and economic integration of Africa. It is also a level and type of cooperation which seeks to ensure that the unity which is being pursued and the institutions and structures to be created under the African Union are forged in such a manner as to provide a link to the ordinary citizens of this Continent.

Africa has stood as one over the past thirty-eight years of the existence of the OAU. Today, Africa is poised to forge ahead as a more united Continent and ready to confront the challenges ahead of us with a common voice. The fact that all Member States have signed the Constitutive Act, and that the greater majority of them have already ratified it bears testimony to the importance given by the African Leaders and people to this shared vision.

In this regard, I wish to inform you that one more Member State, namely the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, has earlier today communicated to me news of its ratification of the Constitutive Act, thus bringing to forty-two the number of Member States which have ratified the Act. And this afternoon, the Ambassador of the Republic of Mozambique deposited with me the instrument of Ratification of his country. Thirty-eight countries have now deposited their instruments of ratification. I have no doubt that the remaining eleven countries that have not yet ratified the Constitutive Act will do so in the coming days.

Finally, as we stand here, I wish to pay tribute to the foresight and vision of our leaders who met in Sirte, Libya, at the invitation of their Brother Leader, Muammar Ghaddafi, and adopted the Sirte Declaration of 9.9.99 in which they encapsulated their vision for a more united and

cohesive Africa and, accordingly, decided to establish the African Union. I also wish to pay particular tribute to the African leaders for subsequently adopting the Constitutive Act in Lome, Togo, in July last year, and for proclaiming the African Union in Sirte on 2<sup>nd</sup> of March this year. The challenge facing us is thus one of translating this commitment and vision into a living reality. I am confident that we will live up to it.

I thank you, and long live African unity!