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SECRETARIAT EXECUTIF DE L'ORGANISATION
DE L'UNITE AFRICAINE AUX NATIONS UNIES



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STATEMENT BY
HIS EXCELLENCY SALIM AHMED SALIM
SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY
AT THE
CONFERENCE ON ASSISTANCE TO LIBERIA
HELD ON
27 OCTOBER 1995 - TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL

Your Excellency Flt. Lt. Jerry Rawlings,
President of Ghana and Chairman of ECOWAS,

Your Excellency Mr. Wilton Sankawolo,
Chairman of the Council of State of Liberia,

Your Excellency Dr. Boutros Boutros Ghali,
Secretary-General of the United Nations,

Excellencies, Ministers of Foreign Affairs,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As Secretary General of the OAU, I was present and took part in the discussions leading to the decision to deploy ECOMOG in Liberia. Those deliberations took place in Banjul, The Gambia, a little more than five years ago - in August 1990 to be precise.

The discussions were not easy nor was the decision that was taken. But, I believed then as I do now that that decision to deploy a regional monitoring force with a view to putting an end to

the carnage and mayhem in Liberia and to assisting in ending the conflict in that country represented one of Africa's finest hours in attempting to resolve conflicts on our continent.

Prior to that decision by the ECOWAS leaders, Liberia and, especially, Monrovia, had seen death, destruction and suffering of unbelievable proportions. Africa was being villified in some quarters for inaction; and yet, the International Community was not prepared then to take any meaningful action. The decision to deploy ECOMOG was therefore not only timely but a proud moment for all Africans for, it demonstrated in the most concrete manner Africa's concern for and solidarity with the people of Liberia. From the very beginning, that decision had the full backing of the Organization of African Unity.

Our conference today, made possible as a result of the Abuja Peace Agreement, is a culmination of all the efforts and sacrifices made by the people of Liberia and the ECOWAS countries in search of peace. The success of these efforts owes a great deal to the historic decision made in Banjul.

But as we meet here to ponder over the resource support needed to sustain and augment the Liberian Peace Process, it is pertinent to bear in mind the devastating impact which the Liberian conflict has had on the people of that country.

In the past five years tens of thousands of people have been killed. Thousands of others have been injured and some maimed for life. In a country of some 2.5 million, well over half the population have been displaced from their homes. As many as 700,000 citizens reside outside Liberia as refugees, mostly in Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone while many others have settled in Ghana and Nigeria. Monrovia and its immediate vicinities accommodate more than a million people.

Successive Chairmen of ECOWAS have devoted their time, energy and resources to the Liberian question. These leaders, as well as their colleagues in the sub-region, merit our highest appreciation for reaching out to their brothers and sisters in Liberia. Our particular gratitude goes to the governments and

peoples of the countries of the region for hosting the Liberian refugees and for their generosity and compassion in sharing with them the little that they have.

The past five years have witnessed a number of initiatives aimed at bringing peace to Liberia, under the auspices of ECOWAS with the full support of the Organization of African Unity. The most important outcome of these initiatives were principally the Banjul Accord of August 1990, the Bamako Accord of November 1990, the Yamoussoukro IV Accord of October 1991, the Cotonou Accord of July 1993, and the Akosombo Agreement and its clarifications of December 1994 .

The latest initiative culminated in the signing of the Abuja Agreement on 19 August 1995. While many peace agreements have been signed and broken since 1989, the prospects for peace in Liberia are now real. We are indeed encouraged by the agreement on the composition of the Council of State and its subsequent installation, the participation of the faction leaders in it, and the timely implementation of the ceasefire.

I wish to take this opportunity to pay special tribute to the President of the Republic of Ghana, H. E. Flt. Lt. J. J. Rawlings, Chairman of ECOWAS and the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, H. E. General Sani Abacha, for their immense contribution towards bringing about a successful outcome to the Abuja Talks. We are deeply indebted to the ECOMOG contributing countries, for we all appreciate the great sacrifice that they have made in terms of both lives and resources. Our thanks also go to the Governments of Tanzania and Uganda which had contributed troops as part of an expanded ECOMOG. Similarly, the OAU extends its appreciation to the United States of America and other countries, for their financial assistance to ECOMOG and humanitarian assistance to the Liberian people.

To the Secretary General of the United Nations, I wish to register the OAU's sincere appreciation for the commitment and firm manner in which he had lend his authority in support of the peace process in Liberia.

In addition to the incalculable human suffering and population upheaval that Liberians have endured, the six-year old civil war had resulted in the break up of the country's social fabric, the destruction of its economy, infrastructure and facilities, significantly weakening the country's governmental institutions.

In such an environment, the implementation of all the provisions of the Abuja Agreement will require more than the goodwill of the Liberian people. Its successful implementation will require the full involvement and support of the International community.

The efforts of ECOMOG, in supervising the implementation of the peace agreements in Liberia, have been seriously constrained by the lack of financial and logistical resources. Over the past three years, the Chairmen of both the Organization of African Unity, Africa, the ECOWAS, the Secretary General of the United Nations and I, have repeatedly appealed to the international community to provide ECOMOG with the necessary assistance, either bilaterally or through the Trust Fund established for the purpose.

The response to-date has been disappointing. As early as February this year, ECOMOG's logistical requirements were assessed in the order of US\$90,705.000.00 . This assessment will have to be revised upwards to reflect the current needs.

Over and above what the international community at large can do to help sustain and consolidate the peace process in Liberia, I believe that the United Nations itself, through the Security Council and the General Assembly should consider ways and means in which it could concretely support this process by making available the resources to enhance ECOMOG's capacity to supervise the ceasefire and monitor the disarmament and encampment processes.

For the first time, a sub-regional organization has undertaken a major peacekeeping operation on behalf of the International Community. I say on behalf of the International Community because under normal circumstances this operation should have been undertaken by the United Nations.

Thus the success of the ECOMOG operations in Liberia is of historic significance not only to the people of Liberia and Africa but also to the United Nations itself. This is particularly so bearing in mind the United Nations Secretary General's Agenda for Peace where the role of regional and sub-regional organizations in the quest for peace is duly recognized and emphasized.

But that success will be short-lived if the United Nations and the International Community do not capitalise on the achievements thus far made and build upon them.

We therefore look forward to seeing the full deployment of UNOMIL, as soon as possible, so as to enable the Observer Mission in collaboration with ECOMOG to monitor the ceasefire and the disengagement of warring factions.

There is also the urgent need for a programme of social and economic reconstruction and development in Liberia. Indeed, failure to infuse economic life into the country could lead to a

resurgence of a state of insecurity and conflict. I therefore urge the International community to join the sub-region in ensuring the success of Liberia's transition to peace and economic reconstruction.

It will indeed be a tragic irony if, after the enormous sacrifices made by the Liberian people, the tremendous sacrifices made by the countries of the sub-region whose governments have harboured the hundreds of thousands of Liberian Refugees and used a great deal of resources in search of peace, the peace process were to be allowed to falter for lack of requisite resources. This conference therefore is crucial in sending the right message not only to the people of Liberia and the countries of ECOWAS but also to the peoples and governments of Africa, in general, that their efforts to contain and resolve conflict as in the case of Liberia would achieve the necessary understanding, support and practical assistance of the United Nations and the International Community at large.

All of us who in the last few years have been very much involved in efforts at conflict resolution in Africa consider Liberia as a classic example of a conflict situation where Africa has taken the initiative. Despite the financial and logistical constraints facing most members of the sub-region, it was possible to exert sustained efforts which have led to the present peace agreement in that country. In many ways therefore, the case of Liberia is a test case for the International Community to demonstrate its solidarity and goodwill now by contributing to the sustenance of peace in that country.

I thank you.