



ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY

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**STATEMENT BY H.E. Dr SALIM AHMED SALIM,
SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE OAU AT THE OPENING
OF THE 18th ORDINARY SESSION OF THE AD HOC
COMMITTEE OF FOURTEEN ON STRUCTURAL REFORM
ADDIS ABABA, 23rd JUNE 1997**

Your Excellency Ambassador Simataa Akapelwa
Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee of Fourteen
on Structural Reform

Your Excellencies Ambassadors,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. You are meeting today to consider important issues aimed at reshaping the Organization. You will recall that the first phase of the restructuring exercise started in 1992 with the adjustment of the General Secretariat to the new area of focus of the Organization, namely its involvement in addressing the conflict situations in Africa, thus the creation of the Division of Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution within the Political Department. The second phase of the restructuring is more profound and fundamental, and indeed most challenging. It is to establish a single Secretariat for the OAU and the African Economic Community. This phase should however be the opportunity to review our working methods and to streamline the human and financial resources of the General Secretariat. You have already started this challenging task. In this respect, I firmly believe that bold reforms need to be effected to modernize our Organization and adjust its structures and human resource base to its new objectives as well as to the current managerial requirements, while bearing in mind the available resources from our Member States. Indeed, we need an Organization which would create an enabling environment for a sustainable development, peace, security and stability for all our peoples in Africa.

2. At this juncture, allow me, Mr. Chairman, to most sincerely thank you all, members of the Ad Hoc Committee of Fourteen for the tireless efforts deployed over the last few years in order to put forward proposals on the restructuring of our Organization. I would like in this respect to pay a special tribute to H.E. Ambassador Simataa Akapelwa of Zambia, Chairman of your Committee, and his predecessor, H.E. Ambassador Boniface Atepor of Ghana for the great commitment they have demonstrated in the restructuring exercise. Indeed, under their able leadership and vision, Your Committee has already produced some commendable work, such as the establishment of the new Staff Rules and Regulations and the Career Development Plan for Technical and General Services Staff categories whilst efforts to put in place a comprehensive Career Development Plan for all categories of staff are being actively pursued. The draft Plan is now tabled for your final consideration and it is to tally with the job evaluation exercise also on your agenda. I wish to emphasize the active role played by Ambassador Akapelwa with whom we have held regular consultations throughout the proceedings of your Committee and whose determination has enabled you to make steady progress in the consideration of the structures of the General Secretariat as can be witnessed by the agenda of today.

3. Indeed, you have so far completed the consideration of the structures for the Headquarters of the General Secretariat for which you are going to examine the job evaluation performed by the Hay Management Consultants, a South African firm, as well as the requirements of General Services Staff in support of such structures. I wish to seize this

opportunity to thank most sincerely the Government of South Africa for its financial contribution to this important study and also the Ad Hoc Committee and the Advisory Committee which provided the necessary additional funds to undertake it.

4. You will also examine during this session the structures to be proposed for the Regional/Specialized Offices which could not be considered during your January Session. In accordance with your recommendation, we have revised the report of the Management Inspection Team and have sent a questionnaire to the 10 Regional Offices and to the 2 projects (SAFGRAD and CARFOP) who came up with responses which may be informative to the Committee.

5. However, your Committee has a major responsibility to ensure that the structures to be proposed correspond fully to the present challenges and priorities of our Organization, with a close eye on the available resources and the economic situation obtaining in our Member States. It should be borne in mind that restructuring does not mean necessarily expansion of existing structures; it rather should focus on rationalization of the structures to ensure efficiency and maximum use of available resources. This however does not mean that we should shy away from making proposals for new structures when necessary. In all this exercise, we should be guided by the fact that restructuring is an on-going process. We should also bear in mind that whatever structure which will eventually emerge would be implemented in phases. In the same vein, the Committee would ensure that our Organization gets closer to the ordinary African.

6. This session will in the end consider the financial implications of the entire exercise and ensure that the scarce resources available in our continent are allocated to a sound global structure matching the demands of the day. The provisional figures for the structure you proposed for Headquarters and an estimate of the staff cost for the Regional Offices as they exist now call for an additional US\$3.2 million in staff costs only. It is envisaged that this amount may increase as a result of the new structure for the existing Regional Offices as well as the proposed five (5) Regional Offices to the Regional Economic Communities (REC's).

**Mr Chairman,
Excellencies,**

7. In a rapidly changing world at the time of globalization of the world economy and its accompanying reforms, our Organization has, on the eve of the 21st century, to adopt stringent reforms in order to adjust to the changing circumstances of our continent and the world as a whole. Consequently, although your Committee has done already a commendable job so far, especially for the structures of the Headquarters, it is still relevant to address some questions and queries which are emerging now.

8. Reforms are now being carried out throughout the world in all major International Organizations such as the UN System, the ADB and other Regional and Sub-Regional Organizations as well as in our respective countries. Our Organization should not be left behind. Restructuring being a major activity in any Organization or Country, it needs to be looked at in the most objective manner. Furthermore, there is a need for a critical assessment of the results achieved, in order to adopt the required reforms, bearing in mind the challenges ahead.
9. You will recall that during the last session of the Council of Ministers and the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in Harare, I stressed on the importance of a programme for Reform and Renewal of the OAU aiming at ushering our Organization into the next century. I addressed among others the issues of adjusting and streamlining the structures of the General Secretariat by improving the image of the OAU and ensuring its continuing relevance to the ordinary African.
10. It is for this reason I firmly believe that we should take full advantage of the on-going restructuring exercise to ensure that the end result of our efforts is an efficient, effective and relevant Organization to our peoples. It is obvious that our Member States cannot afford a very large bureaucracy. There is need therefore for objectivity, imagination, creativity and courage in choosing our priorities and in determining the structures of our new Organization.
11. It is my considered view that we have to look at the restructuring exercise in the light of our vision and our priorities. I am therefore proposing that the excellent work that you have so far done be reviewed by independent specialists in this field. This is the general practice in all International and Regional Organizations. The objective of this proposal is to ensure that Member States get the maximum returns for their contribution to the budget of the Organization and to allow for maximum flexibility in the use of resources to address the many demands on our Secretariat.
12. The independent Specialists would carry out their work on the basis of detailed Terms of Reference prepared jointly by the Secretariat and the Bureau of your Committee. They should also be guided by our vision and our priorities. Full account should be taken in this study of the economic situation of our Member States and the need to endow the Organization with a flexible and efficient structure that could be adjusted and added to over time. It is our intention to work closely with you in preparing these requirements to guide the Consultants and work closely with them throughout the exercise. The work of the Specialists together with the Secretariat's comments on it would be submitted to your Committee for consideration.

13. Following the work of the Experts and in the light of their Report, the Committee may wish to re-assess the relevance of the existing structures or positions proposed both at Headquarters and Regional Offices and recommend to regroup and/or expand certain activities performed by such structures as a way of rationalization, in line with the real needs of the Organization.

Mr. Chairman,

14. In our efforts, we may wish also to explore other approaches to ensure cost effectiveness of our Organization while maintaining its efficiency through rationalization in the use of available resources. For example, the OAU may opt for a modest but flexible structures made of a minimum number of core staff. Rather than attempting to include on its complement the widest possible range of skills and expertise, the Organization could consider using African Experts in the relevant fields of specialization to undertake specific assignments and studies on short-term contract basis rather than recruiting on permanent basis Specialist staff who may not be fully utilized throughout the whole year. Such an approach would ensure maximum flexibility in the utilization of the Organization's limited resources to address its priorities and challenges.

15. In order to underpin the programme of reform and renewal, accompanying measures should also be considered in order to promote professionalism in the Organization through the improvement in the overall human resources management in relation with recruitment, remuneration, training and retraining, Career Development and proper placement and utilization of staff. The modernization of management practices, equipment, premises and the overall work environment is another critical element to the operationalization of a small, effective, efficient and cost effective structure. The introduction and effective utilization of modern communication and electronic equipment and methods should assist in rationalizing and speeding up work and more importantly in making it possible for the OAU to operate with a core professional and support staff without sacrificing efficiency. In this effort, retrenchment programmes may be made necessary with the coming into force of the new structure. In that case, it will be advisable to provide for a package of benefits for the staff who would be concerned by the retrenchment exercise.

16. On my part, I undertake to pursue vigorously the internal reforms required in the relevant fields of administrative and financial management. Rejuvenation of the General Secretariat is required to bring in young and competent people. Performance appraisal of staff will be made systematic in a more objective manner in order to ensure that only performing and disciplined staff remain with the Organization while awarding those deserving staff in order to sustain motivation, efficiency and effectiveness in the whole system at the Headquarters and Regional Offices.

17. I wish to your deliberations every success.