

FIFTEENTH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF
HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT OF ECOWAS
(DAKAR, 27 - 29 JULY 1992)

STATEMENT OF H.E. SALIM A. SALIM
SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE ORGANIZATION
OF AFRICAN UNITY

OAU General Secretariat
P.O. Box 3243
Addis Ababa
ETHIOPIA

Your Excellency President Abdou Diouf,
Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government,
Honourable Ministers,
Mr. Executive Secretary,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mr. Chairman,

The Heads of State and Government and the Ministers who spoke before me did congratulate you and the people of Senegal for the warm reception and hospitality of the Senegalese people. It is, therefore, difficult for me to find something else to add. I would, nonetheless, like to humbly submit, Mr. President, that your leadership and commitment to the African cause has been a record in Africa. The recent Summit meetings which have been held successfully in this very Conference Hall are testimony to the confidence the world leaders have placed in Your Excellency and the trust they have rested in the Senegalese people.

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to pay fitting tribute to the Heads of State and Government and to the leaders of delegations attending this Conference. Your presence here, the valuable time which you have spared for this Summit Conference, in spite of other important national issues which are on your respective agenda at home, constitute a clear demonstration of your commitment to the continued success of ECOWAS. It is a concrete expression of Your Excellencies' collective desire for the search of peace, stability and development of the entire African continent in general, and for the ECOWAS region in particular.

I would also like to express my gratitude to your Council of Ministers and especially, H.E. Mr. Jean-Paul DIAS who chaired the deliberations of the Council for the past one week. They did a commendable job in preparing the reports which you will be considering during the Conference.

May I also take this opportunity to thank my friend, Dr. Abbas Bundu, the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS and the entire Secretariat for their dedication to the ECOWAS cause. The quality and content of the reports which they prepared for the Council of Ministers and for your Summit Conference are commendable.

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Early this month, H.E. President Abdou Diouf chaired the 28th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the OAU. The Assembly discussed a number of issues similar to the ones that you will be considering. The question of conflict prevention, management and resolution was debated extensively and in a very positive manner. The Assembly also discussed the need for strengthening and enhancing closer economic co-operation and integration among African countries. Permit me therefore to repeat the relevance of these extremely important questions to your Session here.

During the last Session of the OAU Summit and, in this same Conference Hall, there was a constructive and serious debate on the question of conflicts which are raging on our continent and the need to put in place an African mechanism for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts in Africa. Somalia, Rwanda and Liberia were discussed and the Summit expressed concern over the devastating effects of the conflict in these countries. The loss of human life, the destruction of the economic infrastructure, the disruption of normal life and the despair which has been inflicted on the victims of these fratricidal conflicts continue to be cause of serious concern to all of us.

Mr. Chairman,

The course which was undertaken by ECOWAS Member States regarding the Liberian conflict and especially within the Group

of Five and other concerned countries under the chairmanship of **H.E. President Houphouet-Boigny**, is highly commendable. The tremendous efforts which were deployed by ECOWAS Member States in order to bring peace in Liberia and to reduce the loss of human life, destruction of infrastructure and to restore the dignity of the people of Liberia must be supported. Such support must come first and foremost from other African countries because the Liberian crisis is an African crisis that requires an African solution.

Your Excellencies will recall that during the 28th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the OAU early this month, I was requested to work under the guidance of the Bureau of the Assembly to study all aspects relating to "a mechanism for preventing, managing and resolving conflicts in Africa." In this regard, the experience of ECOWAS will be extremely invaluable. The guidance that you will provide for resolving the Liberian crisis will constitute vital elements for the study the Secretariat is currently carrying out.

It is the resolution of conflicts and the restoration of peace and stability in Africa which will lay a firm foundation for our collective initiatives towards closer economic co-operation and integration. Whether it is at national level, or within the framework of ECOWAS or that of the African Economic Community, conflicts must first be resolved and peace restored. This will permit the application of Africa's creative innovation, the use of Africa's immense human and natural resources for purposes of the collective good, welfare and development and prosperity of the continent.

Mr. Chairman,

Another most important aspect which has been addressed here and which I would like to emphasize as well relates to the pressing need to forge a stronger partnership in intra-Africa's economic relations. ECOWAS Member States have made significant

progress in this regard. Your continued support to ECOWAS efforts towards promoting closer economic integration and co-operation in this region is consistent with what is being done in other regions of the continent. In the East and Southern African region, the PTA continues to deepen the process of economic co-operation. The same process is underway in North Africa under the Arab Mahgreb Union (AMU), and in the Central African region under the Central African Economic Community (ECCAS).

These regional economic communities, Mr. Chairman, do constitute the foundation and they are the cornerstones on which the African Economic Community shall stand. I am therefore pleased to note that the studies which are currently underway for the revision of some of the provisions of the ECOWAS Treaty have taken into consideration the wider continental framework of economic co-operation under the African Economic Community.

In this connection allow me, Mr. Chairman, to mention briefly the progress being made towards the ratification of the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community (AEC) in general and as regards ECOWAS Member States in particular. Since the signing of the Treaty in June last year, only fourteen (14) OAU Member States have ratified and deposited their instruments of ratification. Of these, six (6) are ECOWAS Member States namely; **Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Guinea Bissau and Niger.** Two other ECOWAS Member States did indicate during the recent OAU Summit early this month that they had ratified the AEC Treaty but their instruments of ratification have not yet been deposited with the OAU General Secretariat, namely; **Guinea and Sierra Leone.**

In view of the need to enhance the rapid implementation of the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community which all OAU Member States have signed, I would like, through you Mr. Chairman, to take this opportunity to thank the countries

which have so far ratified this extremely important instrument of economic cooperation among African States. I would also like to appeal to those countries which have not yet ratified and deposited their instruments of ratification of the AEC Treaty to do so as expeditiously as possible.

Meanwhile, I would like to inform Your Excellencies that a lot of groundwork is being carried out by the OAU Secretariat especially in the preparation of draft protocols which will be instrumental for the operationalization of the Treaty. Some of the protocols on which we have managed to finalize the drafts, and for which negotiations are envisaged to be conducted during the course of this year and next year, include those on : the relations between the African Economic Community and the Regional Economic Communities, the Protocol on Pan-African Parliament, the Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons, Rights of Residence and Establishment, the Protocol on Transport and Communications and eight other Protocols on Trade, Customs Cooperation and related issues.

Mr Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

Before concluding my brief remarks, I would like, once again, to commend the collective work and direction which ECOWAS Member States have embarked on especially as regards the search for peace and in the resolution of conflicts in this region. The efforts and sacrifices in human and material terms which have been made by ECOWAS Member States to underpin Your Excellencies' Political resolve and determination to pave the way for a sound social economic development of this region.

It is on the basis of an unshakable bedrock of peace and stability that the entire continent shall be able to tackle the many development problems and challenges in the area of monetary and financial cooperation, industry and infrastructural development, rural development and agriculture, environment and desertification. These and other related issues which are being dealt with both at the level of ECOWAS and by the OAU Secretariat within the framework of the African Economic Community, must be addressed within the context of a continent that is free from conflicts. A continent that is poised to mobilize and utilize fully its human and natural resources for Africa's socio-economic transformation and development in tandem with peace, stability and harmony.

I thank you for your attention.