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STATEMENT BY DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE OAU
ON THE OCCASION OF THE FIFTY-NINTH ORDINARY SESSION
OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATIVE, BUDGETARY
AND FINANCIAL MATTERS

22 November 1993

Mr. Chairman,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to welcome you all to this Fifty-ninth Ordinary Session of the Advisory Committee on Administrative, Budgetary and Financial Matters. I wish in particular to extend a warm welcome to the ambassadors who are participating for the very first time in the Committee's proceedings. They are, I am certain, aware of the importance of this Committee which scrutinizes all the activities of the Organization and submits recommendations to the Council of Ministers on issues of crucial importance to our Organization. I myself attach the utmost importance to the deliberations of this Committee. I do indeed appreciate the cooperation that the Secretariat has enjoyed from the Committee and its members. Since this is the first Session of the Advisory Committee under my new mandate as Secretary-General of the OAU, I would like to put on record my profound and sincere gratitude to you all for your support, understanding and cooperation. I believe we have together been able to improve on the performance of the General Secretariat in our joint endeavour to make it more relevant to the concerns and needs of our Member States.

Mr. Chairman,

You will, in the course of your proceedings, be considering a series of reports on the activities and performance of the General Secretariat for the 1992-1993 financial year. You will, I am confident, observe that there has been improvement in the administrative and financial management of the Secretariat and a sustained effort to implement the recommendations of your

Committee and of the Board of External Auditors. This would not have been possible without close cooperation between the Secretariat and your Committee. With this same spirit of cooperation, I am convinced that we would be able to persevere on this path and improve our performance further. Between the Sessions of the Committee, I made it a point to maintain close consultations with the Bureau of the Advisory Committee on various matters of interest to our Organization. I am personally very gratified with this spirit of collaboration, cooperation and consultation that we have been able to develop. I know I can count on your continued support and understanding in our common objective to improve on the efficiency and enhance the transparency of the activities of the General Secretariat particularly in the financial and administrative areas.

Mr. Chairman,

Your Committee is also seized with the Draft Programme Budget for 1994-1996 Biennium. You would note in this connection that the proposed budget for the first year of the Biennium is \$29,628,531 and for the second year it is \$30,292,128. Indeed, in keeping with the decision of Council, adopted on your recommendation, the Secretariat ^{has} strived to prepare for the very first time, a biennial Programme-budget for your consideration. Since this is the first time we are engaging in such a new and complex exercise, I would crave your indulgence over any shortcomings. Your views on the proposals tabled before you and the methodology followed will be highly appreciated so that we can adjust our presentation in the future.

The proposals before you have already been considered by the Sub-Committee on Programmes and therefore I believe this would facilitate your deliberations so that we can expedite our work on schedule. To this end, I have directed that the Officers of the Secretariat at the highest level, be fully at the disposal of the

Committee to provide it with any and every explanation, so as to allow it perform its responsibilities smoothly. Indeed, I have always stated that in its explanations, the Secretariat should be transparent. In so doing, I am conscious of the fact that it is in the interest of the Secretariat and indeed of the Organization that the proper explanations be provided so that appropriate recommendations can be made accordingly.

Mr. Chairman,

In submitting the 1994-1996 Biennium Programme Budget, the Secretariat has endeavoured to reflect the priorities of the Organization. I must admit that this has not been an easy exercise. As you are aware, most of our resources are still absorbed by recurrent expenditures. In view of the ceiling set for the budget on the one hand and the heavy share allocated to cover recurrent expenditures on the other, only a modest amount is left for programmes. Furthermore, this amount is over-stretched to cover a wide range of activities that so far come under the mandate of the OAU. We are therefore faced with a dilemma: either we raise the budget in order to cover the new areas of activity of the Organization - and this is not a viable option for obvious reasons related to the financial implications inherent therein - or we cut down on the wide range of activities - and this again is not an easy option in view of the increasing responsibilities entrusted to the Organization in other important areas by the legislative organs. In raising this matter, my intention is to draw attention to the need to engage in serious reflection on how to reconcile the increasing demands on the Organization with the limited resources at its disposal. I believe that time has now come to engage in such reflection.

Mr. Chairman,

As your Committee will be considering the 1994-1996 Biennium Programme Budget, I would like to share with you some reflections on the challenges before us. We have, over the years, developed our priorities and mapped out our agenda. These have been clearly articulated in the decisions and Declarations of our Leaders during their recent Summits.

After intense and sustained effort, Africa has now equipped itself with an instrument for peace through the establishment of the Mechanism for the Prevention, Management and Resolution of Conflicts. As you all know, the Mechanism has started functioning with the recent convening of the first Ministerial Session of the Central Organ. This Ministerial Session was preceded by one informal and seven formal Sessions, held at Ambassadorial level - of which five were extraordinary sessions. During the Ministerial Session, the OAU Peace Fund was formally launched.

I am very encouraged by the support and enthusiasm raised by this Mechanism both within Member States and in the international community. I believe that OAU's success story in Rwanda and its genuine efforts in other areas of conflict on our Continent served as a booster to Africa's determination to find peaceful solutions to its conflicts. The World is now starting to realize that Africa and its continental organization are serious in addressing the scourge of conflicts raging in the Continent. In this connection, we are now confronted with the challenge in Burundi where the OAU is about to mount an international Mission of Protection and Observation for the restoration of the confidence in the country.

I am pleased to report that the meetings so far convened at Ambassadorial and at Ministerial levels have been conducted in

a serious, responsible, businesslike and purposeful manner. I would like to seize this opportunity to urge Member States to extend their fullest support to the activities of the Mechanism. As you are aware, the recent Ministerial Session of the Central Organ of the Mechanism recommended that 5% of the regular budget of the Organization or not less than US\$1,000,000 be appropriated to the OAU Peace Fund each year. It further recommended that an amount of US\$1,000,000 be allocated to this Fund during the current financial year to enable it start its operations.

The Ministerial Session of the Central Organ also addressed the issue of strengthening the capacity of the Secretariat to deal with conflict situations and recommended that the requisite human resources be provided. It is my confident hope therefore that your Committee will give due attention and consideration to this recommendation so that the necessary expertise, talent and dynamism can be injected to back up the activities of the Mechanism.

Mr. Chairman,

As I stated during the Ministerial Session of the Central Organ, the primary responsibility for preventing, managing and resolving conflicts in Africa lies with Africans themselves. This requires political commitment as well as financial and material contribution on the part of African countries as it calls for contribution from the peoples of this Continent. Through our collective commitment and effort, we can be able to demonstrate to the World that we can make a difference and project the image of a Continent that is assuming its responsibility. This is our challenge!

Mr. Chairman,

Another challenge facing our Continent is that of economic integration and cooperation through the establishment of the African Economic Community. As I had the opportunity to report during our last briefing session, we are expecting the thirty-fifth ratification before the entry into force of the Abuja Treaty. Pending this ratification, the Secretariat has embarked on the preparation of the process of implementation of the Treaty. Clearly, the 1994-1996 Biennium period is expected to be crucial in this regard. I therefore wish to urge your Committee to give due consideration to proposals related to the establishment of the Community in the programme budget of the Biennium. As we have now succeeded in committing the Organization on the path of conflict prevention, management and resolution, the next major challenge facing us is involving the Organization in the process of establishing the African Economic Community.

Mr. Chairman,

There are naturally other areas of concern to our Continental Organization - for instance the social and environmental sectors. They deserve your attention and serious consideration. I believe we should be able to allocate adequate resources to enable our Organization provide the leadership expected of it in promoting the vital interests of our Continent in these important sectors.

Mr. Chairman,

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I had referred earlier to the political as well as financial commitment required of Member States so that our Organization can live up to the responsibilities entrusted to it. It is in this context that the issue of arrears of contributions

should be addressed. In this respect, I am pleased to report that the status of contributions since the beginning of the current financial year has been encouraging compared to the situation in the last three financial years. This is an auspicious and welcome development. I wish to commend all those countries that have made efforts to honour their financial obligations to the Organization. In spite of these efforts, however, the situation of arrears of contributions still remains one of great concern to the Organization. As of November 15, 1993, the outstanding arrears stood at \$49,142,184.34. Clearly the situation remains serious. I therefore wish to appeal to all those Member States with outstanding contributions to honour their financial commitment to the Organization. At the risk of repeating myself let me again state that if we are to be taken seriously by our constituency and the outside World, we must live up to our financial obligations and commitments.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the need for cooperation and collaboration between the Member States and the General Secretariat as well as the crucial role that the African Ambassadors here in Addis Ababa have to play in that regard. Both the Secretariat and the Member States are guided by the same purpose and pursuing the same goals - that of making the Organization relevant to the needs and aspirations of our countries and our peoples. My final word would therefore be to stress the importance of working together. Needless to say, you are assured of the full disposition and cooperation of the Secretariat and my personal disposition in this endeavour.

I wish you successful deliberations and I thank you for your kind attention.