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ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY

**STATEMENT OF H.E. DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM
SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE OAU AT THE FOURTH
AFRICAN-AFRICAN AMERICAN SUMMIT**

Harare, Zimbabwe

21-26 July, 1997

- **Your Excellency Comrade Robert Gabriel Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe,**
- **Your Excellency President Abdou Diouf President of the Republic of Senegal and Chairman of the Third African-African American Summit,**
- **Your Majesty King Mswati III of Swaziland,**
- **Your Excellencies the Heads of State and Government,**
- **Your Excellencies the Vice Presidents,**
- **Rev. Dr. Leon Sullivan, Convener of the Summit,**
- **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I wish to join President Mugabe in welcoming all the participants to this Fourth African African-American Summit which brings together Africans and African-Americans who share a common concern for Africa. I wish, in particular, to welcome those of our friends, brothers and sisters from the diaspora who are touching base with Africa for the first time. I wish also to express our profound appreciation to President Mugabe, the Government and People of Zimbabwe for hosting this Summit

and for the warm welcome and hospitality extended to us all, since our arrival. This session of the Summit which is convened under the auspices of President Mugabe in his dual capacity as the Head of State of Zimbabwe and as the Current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity is being therefore held under the most propitious circumstances. I am confident that it will be crowned with success.

I would like also to pay special tribute to Rev. Sullivan for his untiring efforts and for his commitment and dedication to the cause of the African African-American friendship, solidarity and co-operation. His role is very much appreciated by us all.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Two weeks ago, I received at the Headquarters of the OAU in Addis Ababa, a world prominent businessman and investor. He came to share with us his impressions following a tour he undertook in some African countries, including this country, to explore business opportunities in Africa. He also sought my views and advise on the general situation in the Continent and on the on-going efforts towards its economic recovery and development.

He expressed to me his firm commitment to Africa and his confidence in the capacity of our Continent to carry out a meaningful development process in partnership with other economic operators both from within and outside Africa. He was impressed by the quality of leadership and the clear sense of direction he noticed in the countries he visited which are, in his view, conducive conditions for recovery, development and progress. He was emphatic that the Continent was ready for business and he undertook to personally, as well as in concert with other international partners to invest in Africa.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The impressions of this prominent international investor are not baseless. They are a reflection of a changing situation in our Continent. Indeed, the wrong perception of Africa as a hopeless continent, a continent where conflicts are endemic and diseases abound is gradually giving way to a new and correct image of a continent striving for change for the better. A continent that is determined and committed to pursue very harsh and painful political and socio-economic reforms aimed at releasing and channelling the energies and resources of its peoples towards poverty alleviation and improvement of living conditions.

Yes. Africa is still confronted with severe and serious problems of political, economic and social nature. Conflicts are still raging in some of our countries with the attendant indescribable suffering and devastation they impose on our peoples. But not all African countries are confronted with conflict situations. Indeed, the overwhelming majority of our countries are enjoying peace, security and relative stability. Furthermore, despite the difficult socio-economic conditions, we have faced and still face our countries, it is a fact that over the last three years, the Continent, as a whole, has registered a modest growth rate. This is a very encouraging development and a clear demonstration of the significant efforts deployed by our countries despite the great difficulties they are facing. One of such difficulties is the unbearable debt burden which continues to considerably undermine efforts at socio-economic development in our Continent.

African countries are seriously engaged on the path to recovery and development. In fact, for almost a decade now, Africa has been trying to put its house in order, to pull itself out of the quagmire it has found itself in. Our leaders have committed themselves to address with renewed determination the scourge of conflicts in the Continent and to forge the much needed atmosphere of peace, security and stability in the Continent. In this respect, they have also committed themselves to move forward with the process of democratization and building institutions to sustain democracy, good governance and respect for human rights in the Continent.

At the socio-economic level, Africa has provided itself with a framework for promoting socio-economic co-operation and integration through the establishment of the African Economic Community. Intensive efforts are being deployed to implement the Abuja Treaty establishing the Community with the Regional Economic Communities as its building blocks. Only last week, within the framework of the establishment of the African Economic Community, we held, in Port Louis, Mauritius, a Forum on Promotion of Financial Market and Development in Africa. The Forum which was well attended by policy makers and professionals of the finance sector from all over Africa as well as from other financial institutions in the world, made far reaching recommendations on the development and integration of financial markets in Africa. Among these recommendations, the Forum put forward a series of measures aimed at attracting, facilitating and protecting foreign investments.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is no doubt that Africa is adjusting itself to play a meaningful role in its own development and to make its contribution to the world at large. It is determined to be a full partner in political and economic international relations fully aware of the fact that its development lies on the shoulders of its nations and people who should be in the forefront

of creating an enabling and sound environment to promote its socio-economic development.

Even though collective self-reliance remains our guiding principle as we pursue our objectives, we are, at the same time aware of the need for foreign assistance to support and supplement our own efforts. I wish, therefore, that this Fourth African African-American Summit will provide us with an opportunity to renew our faith in this Continent and for a new departure in building a new partnership between African and the rest of the world. In this exalting mission, African-Americans and the other Africans in the diaspora should play a pioneer role. They should be able to also play advocacy role in promoting and defending such a partnership. Thanks to the invaluable contribution of some of our friends in the United States of America, we have seen some progress in the way Africa is viewed in that great country. I had personally attended the important and historic Conference on Africa convened by the White House in 1994 in Washington, D.C. We also welcomed the first ever visit by a US Secretary of State to Africa towards the end of 1996. We were indeed encouraged by the visit of Former Secretary of State Mr. Warren Christopher, who also paid a visit to the Headquarters of the OAU in Addis Ababa. We were also very pleased by the visit which the First Lady of the United States, Mrs. Hillary Clinton undertook this year to some African countries.

Furthermore, we recall with particular fondness and gratitude the visit to Africa and the immense contribution made by the late Secretary of Commerce, Ron Brown, towards promoting cooperation between Africa and the United States.

All this has served to help focus American attention on Africa. More recently, we welcomed the Presidential Initiative on Africa on "The Partnership for Economic Growth and Opportunity in Africa."

We encourage our African-American brothers and sisters to persevere in their efforts to improve American understanding of the new realities in Africa so that our Continent is given commensurate attention in the United States of America. We urge them to help us build bridges for a new partnership with the United States of America. Indeed, beyond the support Africa continues to expect from the USA within the context of international solidarity and global inter-dependence, our Continent is seeking to build a genuine partnership based on mutual advantage. On its part, Africa is ready and prepared to forge such a partnership - a partnership which is in the economic and other interests of both Africa and the United States.

With its immense human and natural resources, Africa is clearly the Continent of the new opportunities for business and development as we

are ushering into the new millennium. Let's work together, as sons, daughters and descendants of this Continent, bound by common values and heritage, to give Africa its chance in the years ahead. I believe this Fourth African African-American Summit would make an important contribution towards this objective. The conditions here in Harare, Zimbabwe are certainly most conducive for us to strategise accordingly.

I thank you.