

**SPEECH BY H.E. Dr. SALIM AHMED SALIM,
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE OAU
AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE
FOURTH CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR
ANIMAL RESOURCES IN OAU MEMBER STATES,**

Addis-Ababa, 14 April, 1994

Your Excellency the Prime Minister of the Transitional
Government of Ethiopia, Ato Tamrat Layne,
Honourable Ministers,
Your Excellencies the Ambassadors,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to this Fourth
Conference of Ministers Responsible for Animal Resources in OAU
Member States.

Honourable Prime Minister, your presence and that of the
Honourable Ministers at this Conference is a clear testimony of the
interest and priority you and the Transitional Government accord
the Agriculture and in particular the Livestock sub-sector of our
continent.

As you are aware, the OAU attaches great importance to
food self-sufficiency in our continent. This is best illustrated
by the fact that the first chapter of the Lagos Plan of Action is

on Food and Agriculture. The target the Heads of State and Government set for themselves in this chapter was the attainment of food self-sufficiency by the year 2000. Within the framework of the African Economic Community, our efforts should be therefore geared to achieve such a target in the very near future.

Mister Prime Minister, we are aware that agriculture is the mainstay of the economies of our countries where approximately 70 per cent of the people live in rural areas. According to the available statistics, agriculture contributes more than 30 per cent of the gross domestic product in the continent, and livestock contributes 25 per cent of agricultural domestic product. Looking at the statistics for livestock in Africa, it is obvious that the continent should be self-sufficient in beef, milk and other animal products. The cattle population in the continent is currently estimated at 189 million and sheep and goats 374 million, not mentioning the population of pigs and poultry. By global standards, these figures are very high, but the per capita production is low compared to other regions of the world.

It is my view that the livestock sub-sector in Africa has for a long time been subjected to inappropriate policies which have slowed down the development of the production of this important sub-sector in the region. This sub-sector is always allocated inadequate budgetary provisions. Moreover, the governments in Africa have a tendency to control the prices of meat and milk, and often offering prices that are not competitive. Also, the dumping of livestock products (meat and milk powder) by the countries from the North at highly subsidised prices while benefiting the urban dwellers, disadvantages the small-scale farmer. It is our view, therefore that this practice should be discouraged and that there should be adequate budgetary provisions for livestock services in all our countries. Market forces should be left to determine the prices of meat and milk. We must, in this regard, encourage intra African livestock trade and marketing and careful planning and

marketing of our livestock and their products in order to overcome the dumping of livestock products in the Continent.

Mister Prime Minister,

Because the human population of Africa, especially in the Sub-Saharan Africa, is growing rapidly, food production has not kept pace with the increased demand caused by this growth which is estimated at 3 per cent, as compared to the agricultural growth of 2 per cent. Today, due to such a situation, Africa has shifted from the status of a net exporter of beef to the status of an importer. A recent study has shown that the region now imports approximately 140 tons of meat and 11 per cent of milk consumed annually at a cost of US \$ 700 million. Clearly these imports constitute a heavy drain on the hard currency earned by our countries. We cannot afford this. We must therefore formulate policies that would alleviate this shortcoming, and which will lead to increased food production.

I am glad to state that the OAU Pan-African Rinderpest Campaign programme is addressing the policy reforms in this important sub-sector. This programme, apart from having brought rinderpest under control, is now undertaking the restructuring and strengthening of livestock services to make them sustainable.

May I, at this juncture, take this opportunity to thank the main donor for PARC, the European Union, for their financial and policy formulation support. As you are aware, the European Union granted the OAU, through a financial agreement, some 57.5 million ECU for Phase I of PARC. The European Union has agreed to continue supporting the PARC Programme to its logical conclusion.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank other donors, the U.K., France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the USA and one of us, Nigeria, for their financial support and the FAO and

OIE, for their technical support. I would also like to thank several other institutions that have participated in the PARC programme.

It is also gratifying to note that the European Union has again agreed to support another programme in the area of tsetse and trypanosomiasis research and control - "Farming in tsetse infested areas" Project. I would like to urge the countries concerned to take up this challenge and implement this project along the lines of PARC.

Finally, I wish to draw the attention of the Honourable Ministers to the importance of maintaining African Livestock genetic biodiversity. We, in the OAU, are aware of the presence of highly productive animal genetic resources in Africa, some of which are in danger of being extinct. We must make every effort to conserve these animals for use by future generations. The OAU has identified this as a priority area and arrangements are being made to secure the necessary funding to execute this programme.

I wish you successful deliberations.

I thank you.