

REMARKS BY H.E. DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM,
SECRETARY GENERAL OF OAU DURING THE
INAUGURATION CEREMONY OF AFRICA HOUSE,
OFFICIAL RESIDENCE OF THE
SECRETARY GENERAL OF OAU
JANUARY 26, 1999

- Your Excellency, Ato Meles Zenawi,
Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia,
- Your Excellency, K.Y. Amoako, UN Under Secretary General and
Executive Secretary of the ECA,
- Honourable Ministers,
- Distinguished Assistant Secretaries General of the OAU
- Distinguished Heads of Diplomatic Missions and Representatives
of International Organizations,
- Dear Colleagues,
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to welcome you all to Africa House, the new official residence of the Secretary General of OAU. I wish, in particular, to express my appreciation to H.E. Ato Meles Zenawi, the Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia for having, once again, found the time to be with us for this ceremony.

The decision to construct an official residence for the Secretary General of the OAU was taken by OAU Member States in the mid seventies. Following that decision, the Advisory Committee on Administrative, Financial and Budgetary Matters approved a 1 million US Dollars budget to be provided, by installment, over five financial years. Once the amount was secured, the Ethiopian Government was approached in 1989 which allocated a 10,000 square meters plot of land for the construction of the building. Due to some problems, this plot has to be changed in 1992 and in the process, and thanks to the generous disposition of the new Ethiopian Government, the General Secretariat was offered this better placed plot of 15,000 square meters.

Since then, the General Secretariat embarked on the construction of the project. Despite the fact that all required procedures have been followed strictly and that the General Secretariat has benefited from the advise of a team of experts, we faced some problems with the original contractor. This led to undue delay in the construction work. Finally, the problem was overcome when MIDROC won the bid submitted by the OAU for the completion of the work. I wish here to express our profound appreciation to MIDROC Ethiopia and particularly to Cheik Al Amoudi, who had to meet considerable additional cost in the process of completing the construction. In fact, MIDROC had previously made a significant contribution during the initial stage of the construction by offering to provide gratis all the marble including its installation work.

For this generous contribution, I wish, once again, to express to Cheik Al Amoudi and MIDROC Ethiopia our sincere gratitude. I am pleased to recognize the highly professional work done by MIDROC in the construction of the residence. I wish also to express our appreciation to all those, from within and outside the Organization who have made contribution, in one way or another, to the construction of this project. I wish also to reiterate our profound gratitude and appreciation to the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia for its contribution and its support without which this project would not have been implemented. Last but not least, I wish to put on record my appreciation to our Member States for their decision to build an official residence of the Secretary General and for having provided the necessary resources.

- **Your Excellency, Prime Minister Meles,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen.**

We are gathered here today to inaugurate this house which is the Africa House in Addis Ababa and which is the result of collective efforts. Like in an individual's life, the construction of a house is a major achievement. For the Organization of African Unity, the inauguration of this house is a momentous event. It is not just a house but a house which symbolizes the unity and solidarity of our Continent and its Member States.

With the construction of the Conflict Management Centre and the on-going building of the Conference facility and Office Block at the Headquarters, this house is also testimony to our collective determination to equip the General Secretariat with the necessary tools to enable it efficiently discharge its responsibilities. This construction is part and parcel of the overall efforts being made to strengthen the capacity of our Organization to serve its Member States better and to meet the challenges ahead.

On this note, the Prime Minister and I shall proceed to the formal inauguration of the house.