

**SECOND AFRO-ARAB TRADE FAIR
JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA,
9 - 14 OCTOBER 1995**

**STATEMENT OF H.E. MR. SALIM AHMED SALIM,
SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE ORGANISATION OF AFRICAN UNITY,
ON THE OCCASION OF THE INAUGURATION OF THE
2ND AFRO-ARAB TRADE FAIR,
9 OCTOBER 1995**

**Your Excellency Mr. President of the Republic,
Honourable Ministers,
Mr. Director General of UNIDO,
Distinguished Ambassadors,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a signal honour and privilege for me to welcome you all this morning on the occasion of the solemn inauguration of the Second Afro-Arab Trade Fair, by His Excellency Mr. Nelson MANDELA, President of the Republic of South Africa.

I would like to thank all the African and Arab Ministers, the economic operators including businessmen and women, and their Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the African and Arab specialised agencies and the agencies of the United Nations system participating in this major event.

I would like in particular to congratulate and thank the Government and people of South Africa for hosting this fair and for making an important contribution towards its success.

As we stand here on the soil of a free and democratic South Africa I would like to stress, the significance and symbolic importance of this occasion. For decades the African and Arab peoples have totally identified

themselves with the struggle for freedom in South Africa. You Mr. President have become for us in Africa and the Arab world and indeed the whole world the symbol of the indomitable Spirit of the people of this country in their fight against apartheid and for freedom every where. Today we stand here to celebrate our collective achievements and to build on the long standing relations between our two peoples for our common future. Our unity in the long struggle against colonialism and apartheid should now be invigorated and directed to meet the challenge of Economic and Social Development of our African and Arab Communities.

The world today is characterized by a fast movement towards globalization and liberalization of Markets. In Africa we are endeavouring to capitalize on the new opportunities and meet the new challenge of the highly competitive international environment. Afro-Arab Cooperation based on our common heritage, historic and cultural links, solidarity, and common interest should be now exploited to its full potential for the upliftment of the living conditions of our peoples.

The presence and active engagement of a free and democratic South Africa in our family can and will make an important contribution and serve as catalyst to strengthen our resolve to translate our long standing commitment for co-operation into concrete results for our peoples.

This Second Afro-Arab Trade Fair organized two years after we held our first fair in TUNIS provides a unique opportunity for our African and Arab business communities to explore the tremendous opportunities and potential of engaging in mutually beneficial business for both sides. Experience ^{HAS} ~~and~~ demonstrated that lack of information about business opportunities on the part of the economic operators between Arab and African partners has undermined the exploitation of the potential either in trade or investment. In an effort to close this information gap we in the OAU, decided in co-operation with our Arab-League colleagues to organize this fair every two years to enable our economic operators to get to know what each side can offer. Here in South Africa and indeed in the great majority of African States our arab brothers and sisters can see the many opportunities for trade and investment and endeavour to capitalize on these opportunities.

Africa, for example, is rich in its agriculture and could provide opportunities for Arab business people and investors to meet the requirements of the Arab world and open new export markets in the rest of the world. Such opportunities exist in the development of new exports such as horticulture and flowers and in processing African commodities such as cocoa, cotton, and oil seeds to name a few. Substantial opportunities also exist in exploring and processing Africa's Mineral resources to meet the need

of African and Arab countries as well as other fast growing economies in Asia. The combination of the Arab world market savvy, financial resources and Africa natural resources should create a great economic force of our two regions.

To achieve ~~to~~ this we have to develop and operationalize our co-operation and fully involve the private sector in both regions. These are our . economic operators without whose participation our hopes for concrete results from our co-operation will remain unfulfilled. I therefore call on all the business men and women and their institutions particularly the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in both the African and Arab countries to capitalize on these opportunities offered by this fair to get to business.

On our part we are committed to help them in their efforts. Our governments have realized the importance of the private sector and measures are being taken to facilitate private sector development both for nationals and foreign investors. We are also endeavouring with our partners to close the information gap and to let both African and Arab business men and women and indeed the world know that Africa is changing; that enabling environment for private capital both national and foreign are in place in many countries; and that many African countries have established capital markets. We are also addressing the issue of

trade barriers through the establishment of regional economic communities, the African Economic Community and through the efforts of our individual states to liberalize their economies.

Africa is the new land of opportunities in every field from production to services. It is rich with its people, its culture and natural beauty for Tourism which is yet to be fully developed. With peace and security returning to the great majority of our countries these opportunities should be exploited. At the same time we are intensifying our efforts to bring an end to the conflicts which have plagued some parts of our continent.

The presence of many ministers and policy makers from the African and Arab world in this auspicious occasion provides a unique opportunity for both sides to exchange information and establish contacts and discuss among them specific projects and programmes. I therefore, urge governments representative present here to work towards following up these contacts with trade missions and exchange of visits by businessmen and women from both sides, so that our economic operators can strengthen their personal contacts and do business. The experience of South East Asia should be a motivation for all of us.

With the determination and will we can and should transform our two regions into an economic power we ought to be. Let our presence here in this 2nd Afro-Arab Trade Fair serve to strengthen South-South

co-operation between the African and Arab people. Taking inspiration from this great country I am convinced that we can do it.

Your Excellency Mr. President,
Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Ambassadors,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Finally, I would like to reiterate on behalf of the OAU and all the Member States of Africa our thanks to the government and people of South Africa for the efforts they have undertaken to make this important event a success. Once again, thank you, Mr. President, for the great honour you have conferred on us by personally opening this Second Afro-Arab Trade Fair.

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Arab Trade Fair. AND NOW, ON BEHALF OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY AND THE LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES I HAVE THE GREAT HONOUR TO PRESENT TO YOU, MR. PRESIDENT A SMALL

I thank you. ADDRENTO TO COMMEMORATE THIS SECOND AFRO - ARAB TRADE FAIR .