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INTRODUCTORY NOTE OF THE OAU SECRETARY GENERAL

H.E. MR. SALIM AHMED SALIM

TO HIS REPORT TO THE 26TH ORDINARY SESSION OF
THE ASSEMBLY OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT

9 - 11 JULY 1990

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Heads of State
and Governments,
Heads of Delegations,
Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour and privilege for me to present my first report as Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity to your august Assembly.

I would like at the very outset to express my sincere congratulations to President Sam Nujoma and to welcome once again, the Republic of Namibia to this large OAU family. I would also like to salute the presence among us of a worthy son of Africa and a hero who has epitomized the long struggle and resistance of the South African people : Nelson Mandela, the Deputy President of the African National Congress.

It is a moment of great joy and a sign of hope that this historic Africa Hall is today, receiving two Leaders of the African Peoples' struggle for freedom and dignity. It is also a moment of emotion symbolising as it does the culmination of an outstanding victory for our Continent.

When Namibia became independent we hailed the Namibian People's Victory as well as the magnificent example of solidarity displayed by the International Community in assisting that country to recover its sovereignty. The sacrifices made by the people of Namibia and the efforts of men and women of good will, the world all over, have not been in vain. In wishing this newest member of our Organisation all success in its efforts to forge national unity and promote the socio-economic development of its people, it is my confident hope that Africa and the International Community will continue to give it the necessary support.

Our attention is now turned to South Africa where the long march of the South African people is about to bring an end the anachronistic system of apartheid. Africa and the International Community as a whole have welcomed the measures taken by Mr. de Klerk. But the system of apartheid is still in force.

Now that Nelson Mandela and his companions have been released, political organizations and anti-apartheid movements unbanned and the state-of-emergency partially lifted, the

struggle against the apartheid system is entering a more delicate stage, especially with the opening of negotiations between the ANC and the South African authorities.

Like any other process of negotiation process, the negotiations being undertaken by the ANC and the Pretoria Regime are fraught with uncertainties. During this delicate phase of the struggle, Africa is duty-bound to continue supporting the oppressed people of South Africa. One such vital area of support is to ensure unity and cohesion within our ranks. This is after all an imperative if we wish to maintain international consensus as well as pressure on the Pretoria Regime - two elements that are clearly pivotal for the struggle of the South African people. I am confident that your Assembly will strongly reaffirm Africa's support to the South African people's struggle and its unshakeable belief that political and economic pressure against South Africa should be maintained until the process leading to the establishment of a united democratic and non-racial society in South Africa is irreversible.

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Although Africa has achieved decisive victories in the decolonization process of our Continent, the socio-economic situation in Africa is extremely worrying. The growth trend of the 1960s was suddenly checked in the 1970s and since then the Continent's socio-economic situation has continued to deteriorate despite the constant efforts of many African countries.

Undoubtedly Africa's economic crisis is rooted in the conditions under which her economic development was carried out. The Heads of State and Government formally acknowledged this reality at the Lagos Summit at which occasion they also adopted a plan for the economic development and integration of the Continent based on the pooling of efforts and resources.

Emphasis was laid again on Africa's responsibility in the continent's socio-economic development by African Leaders at the 1985 Summit at which the Priority Programme for African Economic Recovery and Development was adopted.

In spite of those declarations of intent and the efforts made in Africa to restructure - often at very high social and political cost - and the attempts by the various regions of the Continent to achieve regional economic integration, Africa's socio-economic situation had continued to deteriorate. It has been particularly exacerbated by the adverse effects of the international economic system resulting in the deterioration in the terms of trade, the decline in commodity prices and the reversal of net resource flows to the detriment of the African countries. It was further compounded by the devastating consequences of natural calamities.

Africa's socio-economic decline, reduced participation in world trade as well as the accumulation of debt and unbearable debt servicing obligations are therefore the result of the combined effects of inadequate socio-economic policies adopted by our countries and of the unfair, hostile international economic system. The failure of Africa's development policies results in part from the failure of the relations that have linked Africa to the developed countries since independence and to the international economic system.

M. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is every reason to believe that the international order marked by competition and even confrontation between the two opposing ideological, political and socio-economic systems dominated respectively by the United States and the Soviet Union, is gradually being replaced by a new balance based more on shared objectives of cooperation and economic competition. While the rest of the world is preparing for major changes, the developing world and in particular Africa is struggling in a socio-economic and political crisis of unprecedented proportions.

The fundamental changes taking place in the world constitute a challenge to the developing World in general and to Africa in particular. Indeed, these changes may well radically transform the balance of power between the two hitherto antagonistic blocs. And with the reduction of East-West tension, the contradiction between the developed North and the developing South will become more glaring. This

evolution may well lead to a further erosion of genuine international cooperation and further marginalization of our Continent.

We must therefore underline the gravity of the situation for Africa, without however indulging in excessive dramatization. Despite the moral and sentimental expressions of concern of some of our partners in the developed world and the assurances they have given on continuing to support Africa's developmental efforts, it is becoming clear that our Continent's interests are treated with peripheral concern. The central issue of Africa's development is increasingly being subordinated to other subjective considerations. There is now for example a growing tendency among some developed countries to introduce political conditionalities to development assistance and concessionary resource flows.

Mr. Chairman,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Africa is facing a major challenge of its own survival in an increasingly difficult world. Africa must learn from

past experience. Africa must gauge the significance of the fundamental changes taking place in the world and adapt accordingly. Africa must undertake a lucid and critical appraisal of the difficult situation it faces, demonstrate the requisite political will and pool its resources together for the development and transformation of the continent.

For that purpose, the Lagos Plan of Action and Priority Programme for African Economic Recovery and Development should constitute the basis for action. In these two documents, the Heads of State and Government have mapped out the priority sectors for the development of the continent and resolutely opted for an integrated economic development of our Continent. Admittedly, there have been some efforts to implement the measures adopted, but the objectives are far from being attained. It is relevant today therefore, to ask ourselves why these important decisions and commitments have not been implemented.

In this increasingly interdependent world, it is simply inconceivable to consider the development of Africa in isolation. In other words, Africa's development has to be

undertaken in the framework of the realities of the international economic system which is dominated by the market economies of the developed countries. It has to be undertaken in the context of an inequitous system which clearly frustrates and undermines the herculean efforts made by our peoples and governments for socio-economic development. Clearly therefore our Continent in concert with the other Third World countries must not and cannot relax in our struggle for a more just world order. But while we continue to do so at the international level, we must above all make an introspective analysis to determine what Africa can do from within its own resources and potential.

For, Africa must first of all rely on its own resources. In this respect, the strengthening of the regional economic groupings in the light of the proposed establishment of an African Economic Community is an absolute prerequisite for the recovery and collective development of our continent.

The Continent's economic development also requires that all available energies be released. Africa has considerable human and natural resources which, if mastered and made use of, could lead to the reversing of the present trend of African economies towards the decline.

Such recovery undertaking calls for full participation by the people in the process of economic development and political decision-making. In this regard it is significant that more and more African countries are recommitting themselves to enhancing the democratisation process. This happy development is not accidental. It is the natural sequel to the post-independence phase of the African States, devoted to the consolidation of national unity, and the logical consequence of the struggle carried out by the African people for freedom and dignity. Aspiration for democracy and freedom knows no colour or race, it has no geographical boundaries. It is a universal aspiration. Democratic freedoms and fundamental human and people's rights are acquired rights by humanity through the struggles and the sacrifices by men and women all over the world, notably those by Africans who paid a high price to regain their freedom and dignity. These rights are a common heritage of humanity which should be protected and promoted.

Efforts deployed by African countries within the framework of the protection and promotion of human rights, at the individual level by the creation of national organs,

as well as at the collective level by the creation of an African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights are worth emphasizing. Like in other continents, there are still many cases of violations of human rights in Africa and efforts should be made to enhance the respect for and observance of fundamental human rights. This enhancement of our citizens' rights and freedoms can only do honour to our Continent and release the energies and great potential of our people for socio-economic development.

Mr. Chairman,

There is now an animated debate over the question of democracy in the world. In this global village, Africa can not remain indifferent to it nor should we shun away from it. The reality is, there is a global consensus on the good sense of democracy and its universal values. The articulation of these values is a function of factors such as culture and socio-economic conditions which exist in a given society. As such that articulation must of necessity differ from one country to another, or from one continent to another. Like revolutions which can not be exported, democracy must be home grown. It has to have its genesis

in the socio-political realities and conditions of our countries; and be firmly anchored in the foundations of our culture. To this extent, Africa must guard against notions of standard prescriptions of democratic practices. We should equally guard against the imposition on any society of a particular model of democratic practices while affirming at the same time the relevance of universal democratic principles.

Central to democracy must be the determination to work towards genuine popular participation and the creation of open and accountable governments; as well as the protection and promotion of human rights. Africa is aware of this imperative. Efforts have been and are being expended to consolidate the institutions of democracy on the Continent.

Mr. Chairman,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Development efforts which Africa should of necessity deploy, will be severely hamstrung as long as Africa is torn by conflicts. These conflicts cast a shadow all over the

continent, contribute to the increase in the number of refugees in Africa and divert a disproportionate share of the meagre resources to security and defence needs. They foster a climate of insecurity and instability within the States as well as between the Member States. This in turn places into jeopardy, any serious effort towards the consolidation of national unity, democratic institutions and socio-economic development.

I have already reported to the Council of Ministers on the efforts being made to put an end to some inter-state conflicts now raging in our Continent. With respect to the Chad/Libya and Senegal/Mauritania conflicts I expressed my satisfaction with the fact that all the parties concerned were committed to a peaceful solution under the auspices of the OAU. I also mentioned the Western Sahara conflict the resolution of which is now moving into the practical phase requiring the institutional involvement of our Organization in the implementation of the Joint OAU/UN Settlement Plan.

Apart from these and other inter-state conflicts, there are also the internal conflicts within some Member States which need to be resolved. These conflicts have

undermined not only the peace and stability of the countries concerned, they also threaten the long term security of the Continent. In this context, I continue to be concerned about the situation in Ethiopia. The hope for sustaining the dialogue, under the Chairmanship of former Presidents Carter and Nyerere seem, in the meantime to have further diminished with the decision of the EPLF to opt out of the negotiations. I hope that the EPLF will reconsider its decision and rejoin the peace process in the firm belief that, ultimately, a pacific settlement is in the supreme interest of all the parties concerned.

The situation in Sudan also continues to be worrisome; as dialogue has remained frozen. I, therefore, hope that all those concerned will summon the necessary political courage and resume dialogue with a view to restoring peace, harmony and national unity to that country.

I am equally concerned at the evolution of the situation in Somalia and its attendant human and material costs. I would like to express the hope that wisdom will prevail in order to restore national harmony and unity.

In Mozambique, the war of destabilisation continues to claim more lives and rendering millions more refugees and displaced. There is certainly urgent need to bring about this unfortunate and immensely destructive conflict to an end. It is in this context that I commend the statesmanship and vision of President Chissano in genuinely and seriously attempting to find a negotiated solution. I also commend the mediation efforts of Presidents Daniel Arap Moi of Kenya and Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe. I hope that the present difficulties will be overcome so that dialogue may resume soon.

Likewise in Angola, the situation continues to be a source of preoccupation. The prospects of peaceful settlement, within the terms of the Gbadolite Agreement, seem to have dwindled with the intensification of war. I therefore wish to express the hope that the dialogue recently started will be sustained and consolidated so as to put the peace process back on track and bring to an end this war and enable the country begin on the arduous task of national reconstruction. I wish in this connection to pay tribute to President Jose Eduardo Dos Santos for his statesmanship, perseverance and genuine efforts aimed at restoring peace,

security and stability in Angola through means of dialogue and negotiation. At the same time I wish to underscore the call repeatedly made by our Organization for the respect of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of that Member State.

With regard to the situation in Liberia, I reported to the Council of Ministers on the preoccupation of the Organization and on the efforts deployed in order to restore peace and stability in that country. Since then, the situation has unfortunately deteriorated and more innocent civilians have fallen victim.

Mr. Chairman,

The conflicts in Africa were often fostered by rivalries between external powers, which made it more difficult to maintain the efforts deployed with a view to putting an end to them. Today, as the East-West rivalry in Africa seems to be diminishing, there exist better conditions for Africa's collective wisdom to prevail and put end to all the disagreements and misunderstanding in our Continent through peaceful means.

At the dawn of the third millennium, and at the time when developed countries are embarking on a new technological era, Africa cannot afford the continuation of such disastrous conflicts. In order to concentrate on its future and its economic development, Africa must assiduously strive for the resolution of its conflicts. In this respect, it is necessary to revisit the Charter of the Organization, and to reactivate the mechanisms which have been set up for resolving conflicts. It is my confident hope that this Summit will be an opportunity for Africa to collectively express its firm determination to put an end to conflicts which undermine our efforts at economic development and peace and erode our unity without which the Continent will not be able to play any meaningful role on the international scene. I would also appeal to all parties involved in conflicts, inter-state as well as internal ones, in Africa to use their wisdom and reason and commit themselves sincerely to the process of negotiations and solutions to these conflicts.

But conflicts in Africa are not matters for the parties involved only; they are the main cause of division in Africa and therefore call for the attention of all Member States.

Any opportunities for peace should be taken and all efforts towards that objective should be encouraged. For its part, the General Secretariat will leave no stone unturned in working towards understanding, agreement and cooperation between Member States and African Peoples, in conformity with the principles and objectives of the Organization of African Unity. It is in this spirit that I have not hesitated to make whatever modest contribution within my possibilities to the improvement of relations among Member States.

Mr. Chairman,

I have referred to the conflicts in our Continent. There are other conflicts raging outside Africa but which are of serious concern to our Organization. I am referring to the Middle East conflict and particularly to the Palestinian cause which has always enjoyed the unwavering support of our Organization. I am convinced that your august Assembly will reaffirm its full support for the struggle of the Palestinian people under the leadership of the PLO and for their inalienable rights particularly the right to establish an independent and sovereign State. We should reassert our support and solidarity with the Palestinian people at this

crucial phase in the struggle in the wake of new threats created by the Israeli policy of aggression and occupation and by the settlement of Jewish immigrants in the occupied territories.

Mr. Chairman,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Africa is at the crossroads between possible greater marginalization and an opportunity for self assertion. The challenge is formidable but the task is not an impossible one. Africa should once more seize the opportunity and reassert confidence in itself. The OAU needs to summon its inner energies and potential in facing the new challenges that face our Continent. Africa has the capability, means and resources to do so.

As I said before the Council of Ministers, the Organization of African Unity is capable of playing a vital role in this undertaking of recovery and consolidation. To be able to play this role the OAU must, first of all, enjoy renewed confidence from Member States. It should then

be strengthened and adapted in such a way as to become an efficient instrument for the service of integrated economic development of the Continent.

I submitted a number of proposals aimed at improving the performance and credibility of our Organization to the Council of Ministers. I suggested, among other things, that a mechanism for conflict prevention, management and resolution be established or revitalised. Since it is my firm belief that the efficiency of our Organization is to a large extent dependent on the quality of relations between Member States and the General Secretariat, I recommended that a permanent machinery for consultations between the Permanent Representatives of Member States in Addis Ababa and the Secretariat be established. In this respect, I appealed to those Member States that are not represented in Addis Ababa to consider doing so. I wish to renew this appeal to this august Assembly.

On the rationalisation of the work of the Organisation and in order to cut down on the recurrent expenditure, I also recommended to the Council of Ministers to establish a Committee on Conferences which will be responsible for

determining the policy of the Organization with regard to conference servicing and also for preparing a schedule of meetings based on the priorities and resources of the Organization. I further suggested that the general commissions provided under the Charter of our Organisation be revived in order to fuse the plethora of sectoral ministerial conferences and arrest the proliferation of such conferences. This was accepted by Council. Finally, following the consultations that I conducted on a proposal that I made to the Fifty-first Session of the Council of Ministers on the scheduling of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government on a fixed date, I suggested the first Monday of June which Council has accepted to recommend to Your Assembly.

After the adoption of all these measures by Your distinguished Assembly, the General Secretariat will embark on their implementation. It also intends to carry out a restructuring exercise intended to adapt the Secretariat to the new missions assigned to the Organization and become increasingly action-oriented in such areas as conflict prevention, management and resolution in the political field and co-ordination in the economic field.

Mr. Chairman,

Your Assembly is now convening at a critical juncture in the history of our Continent. In 1963, the Assembly met in an atmosphere of great hope and promise as African countries gradually emerged out of colonial bondage to assert themselves as sovereign equals in the community of nations. Colonialism was then the most immediate challenge; and Africa collectively committed its energies and resources to meeting it. Today we can look back with pride at what we have achieved. Our numbers in this Assembly is living testimony to the results of our dedication and labour - from thirty two founder members to fifty one Member States today. But collectively and in our numbers, we now face a new challenge. It is that of the continued survival of our individual and collective sovereignty in the face of mounting economic difficulties, in a rapidly changing world order. Today we have to re seize the initiative and face this challenge with renewed vigour. The world is changing fast and unless we can catch up and cope with the momentum, we run the risk of continuing to operate on the fringe of the international system.

Mr. Chairman,

If victory was possible in the decolonization field, it was in large measure due to the unity and cohesion which Africa was prepared to demonstrate. Under the Liberation Committee, we identified common objectives and interests and we spoke in one voice. Unity is now the key to get Africa out of its current difficulties, restore it to sound economic footing and consolidate its institutions of government. Common interests must be the motivation and basis for our unity and joint action. In a very real sense, Africa must now sort out its priorities, elaborate a common agenda. Only if we make ourselves relevant to the world can it in turn take notice of us. This is the way to ensuring that our continent is not marginalized further.

Africa's destiny is first and foremost, in the hands of its people and their leaders even if it is also linked to the manner in which the International Community responds to its appeal for solidarity or co-operation.

It is my sincere wish that your august Assembly will discuss thoroughly the situation of our continent and the role which could be played by the Organization of African

Unity, to ensure that it recovers its rightful place on the international scene. I am convinced that you will give a new impetus to the Organization, and send out a message of hope to the people of Africa while, at the same time, appealing for the solidarity of an increasingly interdependent world.

Mr. Chairman,

I cannot conclude my report without paying special tribute to President Hosni Mubarak, the out-going Chairman of the Organization for his efforts, initiatives and actions deployed in the interest of our Continent and our Organization especially in the search for solutions to the political and economic problems of our Continent. I wish to express my deep gratitude and appreciation to him for the cooperation he has provided to the Secretariat during his mandate. I am particularly grateful to him for the personal support and encouragement he has extended to me in the performance of my mission in the service of the Organisation and our Continent.

I wish also to seize this opportunity to congratulate the new Chairman of our Organisation, President Yoweri Museveni

of Uganda. I am confident that he will provide the necessary support to the Secretariat in the performance of its mission. On my part, I would like to assure him of the full cooperation of the General Secretariat and of my personal preparedness to work closely with him.

