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STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL  
OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY .  
DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE SIGNING OF THE AGREEMENT  
ON THE CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES BETWEEN ETHIOPIA AND  
ERITREA

PEOPLE'S PALACE, ALGIERS  
SUNDAY 18 JUNE 2000

Your Excellency Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria and Current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity;

Your Excellency Seyoum Mesfin, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia;

Your Excellency Haile Woldensae, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea;

The President of the Senate;

The President of the National Assembly;

The Honourable Prime Minister;

The Representative of the President of America, Mr. Anthony Lake;

The Representative of the European Union, Senator Reno Serri;

Honourable Ministers;

Excellencies;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today is a significant and historic day for Eritrea, Ethiopia, for Africa and our Continental Organization, the OAU. The signing of the agreement on

the cessation of hostilities between the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the State of Eritrea marks an important beginning towards ending the sad and painful chapter in the relation between the two countries. Evidently, there are still more challenges to be overcome, but the path ahead has been significantly cleared with this morning's signing ceremony. The cessation of hostilities will undoubtedly be a source of great relief to the people of both Eritrea and Ethiopia who, in the two last years had to endure the agony, suffering and destruction of an unfortunate conflict and a devastating war.

It is a matter of record that from the very beginning of the conflict, the Organization of African Unity had spared no effort in an attempt to bring it to a speedy and peaceful conclusion. These efforts were made at various levels including the close and active involvement of African Heads of State. They were consistent and painstaking efforts. Regrettably, we did not succeed in preventing the eruption of a full-scale war which has resulted in considerable loss of lives and casualties besides detracting the two countries from the path of fighting poverty and underdevelopment. There is no doubt that the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea was a severe setback, not only to the people of the two countries, but also to Africa and to all the friends of our Continent. We all, therefore, have every reason to rejoice at this occasion which signifies the formal silencing of the guns, giving a chance for a lasting and durable peace.

I wish to extend my sincere congratulations to the Governments of Eritrea and Ethiopia for the courage and foresight they have demonstrated in signing this agreement despite the bitterness that has been engendered by the conflict. I am confident that they will fully respect and implement the provisions of the agreement. The statements which have just been made by the Foreign Ministers of Ethiopia and Eritrea reinforce my confidence. I urge them, in the interest of their peoples, in the interest of peace, security and stability of the region and the larger interest of the Continent to persevere on the path towards a peaceful and lasting solution.

In July, last year, the current Chairman of our Organization, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika was mandated by the OAU Summit to pursue the OAU peace efforts which hithertofore had been undertaken by the OAU High-Level Delegation. Since then, President Bouteflika has pursued the peace process with vigour, dynamism and total commitment. He has done so personally and through this personal Envoy Minister Ahmed Ouyahia - whose important contribution to the negotiating process is to be saluted. At this juncture, I wish to recall, with particular appreciation, the timely visit last month of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika to both Addis Ababa and Asmara which was an important catalyst in the OAU's efforts towards ending the war. I wish also to put on record our profound appreciation for the sacrifices made by Algeria in the pursuit of this noble mission. For me and my collaborators in the General Secretariat, it has been rewarding and inspiring to work closely with the current Chairman and his Personal



Envoy in the pursuit of our objective at ending this unfortunate and sad conflict.

Throughout these two years of OAU's efforts, we have received the understanding, cooperation and support of the wider international community, including the United Nations. This support has been pivotal. I want to single out, for special mention, the contribution of the United States Government, which has consistently worked very closely with the Organization of African Unity from the very beginning of our efforts. In this respect, the role of our friend, Anthony Lake, and his colleagues has been invaluable. The United Nations and Secretary-General Kofi Annan have been consistently supportive of the OAU efforts. This support has been critical in enhancing the OAU's resolve and determination to pursue its efforts. I wish also to recognize the support and contribution of the European Union and its Special Envoy, Senator Reno Serri. I am confident that the United States, the European Union and the larger International Community, especially the United Nations, will continue to work and cooperate with the Organization of African Unity as we collectively forge ahead in support of the two parties in the implementation of this Agreement and the attainment of a lasting and durable peace in the region.

At the Algiers Summit last year, African Leaders resolved to make the year 2000, the year of peace, security and solidarity. The Agreement signed today constitutes a major achievement towards this objective. We are particularly gratified that this occasion has been possible, bearing in mind that this is one conflict that the OAU has clearly taken a leadership role in the effort to resolve it and has done so on a sustained and consistent basis. Considering the vital role played by President Abdelaziz Bouteflika as the current Chairman of the OAU and bearing in mind the commitment of the people of this country to the peace, security and stability of our Continent, there could have been no better venue than Algiers for such a welcome development.

Let today's positive development and the urgent requirements of peace inspire both countries in the next phase of the negotiations.

I thank you all.