

STATEMENT

BY H. E. DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM,

SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE OAU ON THE OCCASION
OF THE SIGNING OF THE PEACE AGREEMENT BETWEEN
THE GOVERNMENT OF RWANDA AND THE RWANDESE PATRIOTIC
FRONT.

Arusha, Tanzania August 4, 1993

Your Excellency President Ali Hassan Mwinyi,
Your Excellency President Juvenal Habyarimana,
Distinguished Chairman of the Rwandese Patriotic Front, Colonel Alexis
Kanyarengwe,
Your Excellency President Yoweri Museveni,
Your Excellency President Melchior Ndadaye
Your Excellency Prime Minister Birindwa of Zaire,
Your Excellency Prime Minister John Malecela,
Your Excellency Pime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana,
Distinguished Representative of the Current Chairman of the OAU
Distinguished Representative of the President Abdou Diouf of Senegal
Distinguished Representative of the UN Secretary General
Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

We are gathered here today to mark a major event in the history of Rwanda. We are also meeting here to celebrate peace and to be witnesses to the reconciliation among the sons and daughters of Rwanda. On this historic occasion, I should like, on behalf of the General Secretariat, on my own behalf and indeed on behalf of the entire Organisation, to extend my warm congratulations to President Habyarimana and the Government of Rwanda as well as to Colonel Kanyarengwe and the leadership of the Rwandese Patriotic Front. I should further like to commend them most sincerely for the high sense of responsibility, patriotism and compromise that they have

demonstrated in the course of the protracted negotiations that culminated in the Peace Agreement they are signing today. This welcome and happy development has been realised primarily as a result of the co-operation of, and commitment to peace by the Parties during the negotiations. Indeed, the successful conclusion of the negotiations has been and would always remain the victory of the people of Rwanda whom I wish most sincerely to salute and congratulate.

Mr. Chairman, it is significant to note that the achievement of this Peace Agreement has, in part, been made possible by the commitment, cooperation and solidarity of Africa, in particular, the neighbouring countries of the region. Ever since the outbreak of hostilities in Rwanda in October 1990, the leaders of the region have spared no effort in order to bring about an immediate cessation of hostilities and to find lasting solutions to the conflict.

Today's Peace Agreement is therefore a result of the efforts deployed in Mwanza, Tanzania, Gbadolite, Goma and N'sele in Zaire, Zanzibar, Dar es Salaam and Arusha in Tanzania and most recently in Kinyinya in Rwanda culminating today in Arusha. The leaders of the region and their people have no doubt left footprints on the path to peace in Rwanda and, therefore deserve, Mr. Chairman, our profound thanks and gratitude for their unflinching support to the peace process in Rwanda. My special thanks go to H. E. President Mobutu Sese Seko, the official Mediator whose earlier efforts, no doubt, contributed to understanding between the two Parties and paved the way for the subsequent negotiations between them. Also deserving special gratitude are Presidents Abdou Diouf of Senegal, and Ibrahim Babangida of Nigeria, who, in their capacity as Chairmen of the OAU deployed considerable efforts in promoting the peace process. Allow me therefore to request their respective Representatives to convey our sincere appreciation and thanks to them. I wish in addition to express my gratitude to the Current Chairman of the OAU, President Hosni Mubarak who, on assumption of his new office, has spared no effort in promoting the peace process in Rwanda. I know of his personal commitment and dedication to the cause of peace in Rwanda as demonstrated by readily making available an Egyptian contingent to join the OAU Neutral Military Group in Rwanda. I request the Deputy Foreign Minister of Egypt here present to kindly transmit our appreciation to President Mubarak. I wish also to recall with gratitude the support which President Yoweri Museveni gave me in his capacity as

Chairman of the OAU in this Organisation's effort to find a solution to the conflict.

Throughout these negotiations which seemed at times on the verge of collapse, African statesmanship saved the day. In our search for peace in Rwanda, African mediation within the African family was backed and supported by our continental Organisation, the OAU, and assisted by the interest and understanding of the International Community. I, therefore, wish to take this opportunity to thank most sincerely the governments of Belgium, France, Germany and the United States of America for their invaluable assistance, both material and financial, in support of the peace process in Rwanda. I would equally like to express our gratitude to the UN Secretary General, Dr. Boutros Boutros Ghali, for the personal efforts he expended and for the support and technical assistance his organisation has extended to the OAU during the entire process of negotiations.

In the same vein, I would wish to express our sincere appreciation to the OAU Member States, namely Mali, Senegal, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe, who, apart from contributions to the OAU regular budget, provided military observers as well as material assistance to the OAU in order to support the work of the Neutral Military Observer Group in Rwanda.

As I speak, an expanded Neutral Military Observer Group is taking shape in Rwanda. Contingents from Senegal and Congo have just arrived in Rwanda, while those from Egypt, Tunisia and Zimbabwe are expected in Rwanda not too long from now. We thank these OAU Member States for the singular act of Solidarity with, and support for an African cause – the cause of peace in Rwanda and stability to the region.

The Commander and other members of the Neutral Military Observer Group did a very commendable job in difficult circumstances and conditions and I wish to thank them sincerely for their dedication to duty.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish at this juncture to place on record our sincere and profound gratitude to President Ali Hassan Mwinyi, the government and people of the United Republic of Tanzania, for the tremendous and sustained efforts they have deployed in order to ensure the successful conclusion of the

negotiations, the result of which we are marking today. I am aware, and indeed appreciative, of the considerable sacrifices made by Tanzania, as Facilitator, in pursuit of peace in Rwanda. This required a lot of patience determination and commitment on the part of the Government of Tanzania, its President, Prime Minister, Ministers and officials as well as the sustained support and interest of her people. Mr. President, as Secretary General of the Organisation of African Unity, I am particularly and sincerely grateful to you, and to the government and People of the United Republic of Tanzania for this gesture of solidarity towards Rwanda, a neighbour and sister country of Tanzania. Arusha and Tanzania as a whole would go down the annals of African history as a place where the torch of peace was lit to bring light and hope to the conflict situations in Africa.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen

We at the OAU derive particular pride from the achievement of this Peace Agreement. The OAU is particularly proud of its involvement throughout the peace process in Rwanda. It is honoured by the confidence reposed in it by the Parties and the countries of the Region.

This confidence and the achievements strengthen our determination to do whatever is within our means and to spare no effort in the service of peace, security and stability on our continent. We are encouraged by the fact that where there is the political will and the co-operation of the Parties, the neighbouring Countries and the Member States with support of the International Community, as in the case of Rwanda, peace has been achieved through dialogue and negotiations within the African context. What is most significant about the Peace Agreement we have today is that it is the result of sustained efforts by Africans. It proves that we can make a difference in terms of dealing with our own problems if we have the political resolve and apply ourselves resolutely to the challenge of finding lasting solutions to them. Our achievement today demonstrates that with goodwill, determination and perseverance it is possible to resolve our conflicts. It also shows that where we manage to forge unity of purpose and action, where we demonstrate resolve and take on the mantle of leadership in an effort to resolve our conflicts, it is possible to garner International solidarity and support.

The case of Rwanda is, therefore, a landmark in our learning process, particularly in the field of conflict prevention, management and resolution. This time around, despite resource limitations and the absence of an effective institutional framework, the OAU took up the challenge and strived to maintain the confidence reposed in it by the Parties and to live up to expectations of the Member States. In spite of the difficulties encountered, I must say, it was indeed a very rewarding experience and above all, our involvement at the different levels of participation, and today's results of the Rwanda peace process, serve as vindication of the decision taken recently during the 29th Summit of Africa's Heads of State and Government in Cairo, to create a mechanism within the OAU to deal with Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution.

Mr. Chairman,

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Mechanism will enable Africa to be at the core and play a key and central role in all efforts towards achieving peace, security and stability on the Continent. This new institutional framework for collective security through conflict prevention, management and resolution requires the full support and commitment of all Member States so that it can be transformed into a permanent and effective instrument for peace on the Continent.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we celebrate the restoration of peace in Rwanda, the challenge that lies ahead is to ensure that the peace momentum is sustained through the scrupulous observation and implementation of the Agreement and the creation of a propitious environment in Rwanda. In this respect, the setting up of the proposed Neutral International Force in Kigali will be a crucial step in order to sustain and maintain peace, security and stability in Rwanda. The International Community has, therefore, an important role to play to keep the peace momentum in Rwanda. As we move towards the elaboration of the practical modalities of setting up and deploying that International Force, the OAU's expanded Neutral Military Observer Group will continue to function as an interim measure. I, therefore hope that it will be possible for the

International Community and, in particular, the United Nations Security Council, to finalise consultations on all aspects of the proposed International Force as soon as possible so that the implementation of this Peace Agreement can commence in earnest.

At the same time, I call on the International Community to provide the necessary assistance to the displaced persons in Rwanda numbering no less than one million and who are living under miserable conditions. The situation of Rwandese refugees also calls for urgent and comprehensive action on the part of the International Community. To this end, it is imperative that conducive conditions be created in Rwanda to facilitate the resettlement of the displaced persons and the return of refugees.

As called for by the Dar es Salaam Declaration, the OAU together with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees would resume soon our continuing consultation with Rwanda and the neighbouring countries as well as in consultation with the International Community for the early realization of the Plan of Action for Rwandese Refugees. Appropriate consultations would also be held with regard to the convening of the Donors Conference, the organisation of which has been entrusted to the OAU and the UNHCR by the Dar es Salaam Summit and most recently reaffirmed by the two Parties here in Arusha.

Mr. Chairman,

Beyond today's signature of the Peace Agreement lie those more difficult and resource-demanding tasks of healing the wounds of war and dealing with the legacies of history. This is why all efforts must be deployed to support and assist Rwanda in its efforts towards reconstruction and forging unity, understanding and solidarity among its people so that they can transcend the agonies of the past and begin a new era of peace and national harmony. But the International Community can only assist. The onus of meeting this multi-faceted challenge lies with the Rwandese people themselves.

In conclusion, I would like once again, on behalf of the OAU, to welcome the signing of the Peace Agreement and to salute the people of Rwanda on this historic occasion. I would like also to reiterate the commitment and determination of the OAU to continue to assist in the peace building process in Rwanda and in its efforts towards reconciliation and

reconstruction. At the same time, I would like to express my confident hope that Peace in Rwanda will galvanize our commitment and dedication to peace and stability on the Continent. The OAU, on its part, remains committed and determined to deploy all efforts aimed at promoting peace, security, stability, reconciliation and harmony on our Continent. This is our commitment; it is our agenda, it is our faith. We shall persevere. We shall withstand the challenge.

I thank you.

