



Organization of African Unity

**MESSAGE BY DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM, OAU
SECRETARY GENERAL ON THE OCCASION OF
THE 36th ANNIVERSARY OF THE ORGANIZATION
OF AFRICAN UNITY**

**Addis Ababa,
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Fellow Africans,

On the 25th of May, 1999 we shall be commemorating the 36th Anniversary of our Continental Organization. This will be a special occasion as it is the last celebration of Africa Day in this century. It is an opportunity, therefore, for us, as Africans, to reflect on our past and look forward to our common future. It is also a fitting moment to remember and to pay respect and homage to the Founding Fathers of the Organization of African Unity for their wisdom and vision, and for having provided our continent with an organization which is the embodiment of the collective will and aspirations of the peoples of Africa.

As we look back, we acknowledge with a sense of satisfaction and pride the long march the African peoples have traveled together in the search for freedom, dignity, unity and progress. We also realize the long journey that our people have undertaken together, despite the difficulties encountered and against awesome obstacles.

Over the years, the Organization of African Unity proved to be an invaluable instrument for unity and solidarity of the Africans. Whenever the African peoples stood and acted together, their voice was heard and their views were taken into account.

Today, more than ever before, the unity and solidarity of Africa is needed to address the formidable challenges confronting the continent at a time when the world is experiencing rapid changes. Yet our continent is still plagued with the scourges of conflicts, poverty and diseases. Peace, security and stability remain the foremost challenge facing our continent.

Conflicts continue to afflict various parts of the continent and cause loss of precious lives, destruction and immense suffering to our people particularly women and children. Conflicts are forcing people into exile and are generating influx of refugees and displaced persons who in turn constitute a source of misunderstanding and mistrust between and among Member States. Conflicts are undermining the social fabric of our societies and are traumatizing generations of Africans. Conflicts are also diverting the meager resources of our countries from being used to fight poverty in the Continent, to address the basic needs of our people and to attain socio-economic development of our countries. Conflicts and the

climate of insecurity that they are creating are depriving our Continent from investment opportunities, both local and foreign.

Our Continent, through the O.A.U. and its Member States, has been deploying sustained efforts to promote peaceful solutions to the conflicts currently raging in the Continent.

We have no option but to continue and redouble our collective efforts to promote peace, security and stability both in our countries and in our Continent. Our primary objective of promoting the wellbeing and progress of our people cannot be achieved in an environment devoid of peace, security and stability. We need just to look around and learn from the experiences of other regions of the world to ascertain that development was only sustainable once peace is achieved. We must, therefore, invest in peace as a priority so that we can create propitious conditions for socio-economic development and progress. The promotion of peace should be, however, the business of all and not left to the Governments alone. The peace endeavour requires the involvement of both the Governments and the civil society and the contribution of all men and women of good will. Just a few days ago, a major Pan-African Women's Conference on the Culture of Peace and Non-Violence was held in Zanzibar. The deliberations of that

Conference clearly testified to the total commitment of the African women to end conflicts and achieve sustainable peace. We need to multiply such efforts. But more importantly, we need to ensure that such commitments are translated into concrete action.

I, therefore, submit that as we usher into the new millenium, our motto as Africans, should be the attainment of lasting peace, security and stability by all means. Our people are just tired of conflicts, wars and of the violence, hatred, destruction and suffering they are bringing about. Our people like any other peoples in the world, are aspiring to enjoy lasting peace. They deserve peace and we should, as leaders and as Africans, give them that chance.

The establishment of peace, security and stability in Africa, will provide our continent with an enabling environment in which the energies and resources, which are available, can be released towards improving the living conditions of our people, addressing the scourge of poverty and diseases and meeting the challenges posed to our individual countries by the liberalization and globalization of the world economy. It will allow us to focus our attention and endeavours on the building of the African Economic community, which constitutes a viable framework for responding to the aspirations of our countries and their

peoples for socio-economic development and for equipping our Continent to collectively put its weight to bear in the international arena.

The creation of such an enabling environment will also boost the creative energies of our people in their legitimate quest for progress and wellbeing. It will enhance their determination to consolidate democracy, promote Human Rights and to forge a culture of tolerance, accountability and good governance as well as to build institutions to sustain democracy and the rule of law. The consolidation of democracy and the rule of law will, in turn, contribute to the strengthening of peace, security and stability in our Continent.

In conclusion, as we prepare to enter the new millennium, I wish to appeal to our Member States and to the Africans in general, to recommit themselves to the ideals of unity, solidarity, co-operation and Pan-Africanism which are enshrined in the Charter of our continental Organization. I would also like to urge them to recommit themselves to the principles of our Organization that call for the promotion of peace and understanding between and among our countries. I call on them to close their ranks and work together in the spirit of unity and solidarity that inspired the Founding Fathers and that sustained our Continental Organization over the past 36 years.