



Organization of African Unity

**Introductory Statement by  
H.E. Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim, Secretary  
General of the Organization of African  
Unity on the occasion of the Address given by  
H.E. Mr. Oscar Luigi Scalfaro,  
President of the Italian Republic  
on "The Contribution of Italy to the  
Euro-African Relations on the Eve  
of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century"**

Africa Hall  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

November 26, 1997

- **Your Excellency, Oscar Luigi Scalfaro,  
President of the Italian Republic,**
- **Excellencies the Heads of Diplomatic Missions,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

We are gathered here, today, to welcome a distinguished guest and an eminent Italian political figure, H.E. Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, the President of the Italian Republic. President Scalfaro entered into politics very early, at the age of 28, when he was elected to the Italian Constituent Assembly. Since then, he continued to hold important positions within the House of Deputies. He also held various government positions such as Under Secretary of State for Labour and Social Affairs, Under Secretary of State for Interior, Minister of Transport, Minister of Education and Minister of Interior. His long and rich political career in Parliament and in Government culminated in his election, in 1992, as the Speaker of the House of Deputies and subsequently as the President of the Republic.

We are pleased, therefore, to welcome amongst us a man with a great deal of experience and a unique knowledge of public affairs and State institutions. We are proud to welcome a prominent leader of a nation which is close to Africa and its peoples. A nation which shares the problems and concerns of our Continent and which, in the light of its own experience and struggle against oppression and intolerance, has been supportive of the quest of our peoples for freedom and dignity. A nation which is bound to our Continent by geography and history and by solid ties of friendship and co-operation. A dynamic nation which is emerging as an important partner in world affairs playing a growing and positive role within the comity of nations in promoting international peace, understanding and co-operation.

**Mr. President**, we consider your present visit to the Headquarters of our continental Organization as an expression of the concern your country has been showing to our Continent and as a gesture of good-will and friendship towards the enhancement of the relations between Italy and more generally the European countries and Africa. I wish to seize this opportunity to reiterate

Africa's disposition to build solid relations of partnership with Italy and other countries in Europe. Africa which is deploying considerable efforts aimed at adapting itself to take its rightful place in the changing world through greater focus on the betterment of the socio-economic conditions of its peoples, the promotion of democracy, the rule of law and accountability and the respect for human rights is more than willing to forge a new and true partnership with all nations based on mutual respect and interest as we prepare to enter the new millennium. Africa, its peoples and leaders are showing greater determination to assume their responsibilities in addressing the various problems facing the Continent and need the understanding and support of the international community.

It is in this context that we appreciate the commitment of Italy towards Africa. We particularly appreciate and value the support being extended by countries like Italy in support of our endeavours in promoting peace, security and stability all over the

Continent. I wish, in particular, to put on record our profound gratitude for the contribution made so far by Italy to the OAU Peace Fund.

Special mention should also be made to the support of Italy to the continental and regional efforts in the search for lasting and peaceful solutions to conflicts in the Horn of Africa. This support is all the more needed now as we begin seeing the light at the end of the tunnel in Somalia with the most recent achievements made in the on-going Somali Talks in Cairo. Indeed, the encouraging news from Cairo are a source of particular gratification to all of us in the OAU, the countries of the region, including our host country Ethiopia, the international community at large and friendly countries like Italy who have been assisting in efforts at peace and reconciliation in Somalia. It is our fervent hope that, with the continued and concerted support of the international community, what has already been agreed upon in Cairo will be consolidated and that the leaders of Somalia will reach an agreement on lasting peace and reconciliation in their country.

It is with this note of hope for peace in Somalia and in our Continent, that I wish to reiterate to you, **Mr. President**, our heartfelt welcome in this historic Africa Hall and to invite you to address us on "The Contribution of Italy to the Euro-African Relations on the Eve of the 21st Century."

I thank you for your attention.