

SAS/NOTES, SATURDAY, MAY 17, 1997

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

Telephone conversation with Mr. Laurent Kabila
Leader of ADFL and De facto Head of State of Zaire

Earlier today the ADFL forces entered Kinshasa signifying a culmination of the war that had raged in Zaire for the last seven months and a definite end to the Mobutu 33 years era. Mr. Kabila addressing a press conference in Lumumbashi read out a proclamation of the ADFL designating him as the President of Zaire. He is to form a government of national salvation in the next 72 hours. The present Zaire constitution has been annulled and a Commission to work on the new constitution is to be promulgated after three months. Mr. Kabila declared that as from today the country will be called the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Earlier in the afternoon around 1615 hours, I received a telephone call from a Ndugu Mshama, one of the members of the security detail of Mr. Kabila. He wanted to fax Mr. Kabila's statement and I gave him the fax number. I was in the office. But the fax did not come through. He called again at 1630 hours to check but the fax still did not come through. Up to the time I left my office at OAU Headquarters at about 1730 hours, the fax had still not come through. But by then I had followed the news of Mr. Kabila's declaration on the TV - CNN & BBC as well as on the radio. (I had also around 1930 hours issued the following statement:

" I welcome the end of the civil war in Zaire. I am particularly relieved and gratified that the entry of the ADFL forces in Kinshasa has reportedly been fairly smooth, and relative stability is beginning to return.

Mr. Kabila and the ADFL have won the civil war and the challenge before them now is to win and consolidate the peace.

I sincerely hope that when Mr. Kabila forms his Government of Transition, it will be a broadly-based one, incorporating other important elements of the Congolese/Zairean society.

We look forward to working with Mr. Kabila and his administration, as they embark on confronting the many challenges that lie ahead especially those relating to peace, stability and socio-economic transformation. The people of Zaire/Congo have great expectations. So does Africa.

I am confident that Mr. Kabila and the administration he is about to form, will in addition to meeting the immediate challenges, be laying the ground for the process of democratization to unfold in a serious and purposeful manner so that ultimately at the end of the transition, the people of Congo/Zaire can decide through the ballot their own destiny.

For the moment, we look forward to a new Congo/Zaire which can play a crucial role, not only in the affairs of the region, but the Continent as a whole.

Addis Ababa, 17 May 1997 "

Conversation with Mr. Laurent Kabila

At 2250 hours, Mr. Mshama again called from Lumumbashi. He then put me through to Mr. Kabila. I spoke with him for some seven minutes.

I congratulated him for his victory signaling the end of the civil war. I paid tribute to the behaviour of his forces as they entered Kinshasa. I particularly praised his statement which, inter alia, called for calm and warned against any vengeance and arbitrary actions. I said that now they have to confront the

battle for peace and meeting the expectations of the people of Zaire/Congo.

I recalled my discussion with President Mandela on Thursday, 15 May 1997, during which both the South African President and I had stressed on the importance of (a) avoiding further bloodshed and (b) the need for Mr. Kabila to form a broadly based government. I went on to say that while I will not make any suggestions on who should be in his government, it was important that in forming his new Administration, he should take into consideration the expectations of the people of Zaire and also sending the right message and signal to the international community. The objective should be the consolidation of peace through inter alia confidence building.

The Leader of the new Congo who spoke with me in impeccable kiswahili thanked me for my message. He thanked me for the congratulations. He also said that he will take my message and advise seriously. In Mr. Kabila's own words:

" Ahsante sana Ndugu Salim. Ahsante sana Ndugu Katibu Mkuu wa OAU. Huu ni ushindi wetu sote. Tunathamini sana ushauri wako na tutauzingatia."

I told Mr. Kabila it was important for him also to build and consolidate relations with the African countries. I particularly singled out the importance of working closely with President Mandela as there may be attempts to draw a wedge. He responded that he will continue to work closely with President Mandela and the other leaders.

Finally, I assured Mr. Kabila that we at the OAU are ready and prepared to be as helpful as possible and that he should not hesitate to contact me at any time.

We agreed to keep in touch and in the meantime, I stated that I was looking forward to seeing him at the OAU Summit in Harare.

Our conversation ended around 2258 hours.