



Organization of African Unity

**STATEMENT BY
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AT THE SECOND MEETING OF THE
OAU/AEC COMMITTEE ON COORDINATION**

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

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Chief Executives of the Regional Economic Communities

Executive Secretary of the UNECA

President of the ADB

Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the Second Meeting of the Committee on Coordination, which was established in the Protocol on Relations between the African Economic Community and Regional Economic Communities, for the purpose of coordinating all activities and programmes for the establishment of the AEC.

As you will recall, in our first meeting in Tripoli, Libya, last February we underscored the importance of regular consultations and we outlined some priority areas of action in the various domains of our Continental agenda. I am pleased that all RECS and Continental Organizations are represented at this meeting, thus reaffirming our commitment to working together in a consultative way.

Our officials have been meeting for the past two days, following up on some of the issues that we addressed in the last meeting; and also proposing a way forward. We will have an opportunity to consider their recommendations.

You may also recall that our Tripoli meeting was followed by the 5th Extra-Ordinary Assembly of the Heads of State and Government of the OAU, in Sirte, Libya where our leaders declared the establishment of the African Union. By that time, all the 53 Member States of the OAU had signed the Constitutive Act of the African Union, and on 26th April 2001 the 36th Instruments of Ratification of the Constitutive Act was received,

thus permitting the Act to enter into force 30 days later. On 26 May 2001 the Constitutive Act entered into force thus making the African Union both a political and legal reality.

As of this moment, 42 Member States have ratified the Act, with 39 of them already having deposited their Instruments. I should also mention that 5 Member States have signed the "Protocol Relating to the African Economic Community on the Pan-African Parliament".

The establishment of the African Union has profound implications for the transformation of the OAU into the new institution, and for the role of the Regional Economic Communities and their relationship with the Continental Organization, and essentially for the overall strategy of Continental Integration, among other things.

Immediately after the Sirte Summit, we at the General Secretariat had put in place a machinery for initiating the understanding and implementation of the Summit Decisions pertaining to the Union. During this meeting, I will ask the Legal Counsel, who is the Chairman of the Working Group on the African Union to brief on some of the preliminary in-house consultations that are evolving within the General Secretariat, particularly as we prepare for the Lusaka Summit.

We intend to intensify and broaden the consultations in the coming weeks and especially after the Lusaka Summit.

Without pre-empting the briefing by the Legal Counsel, I should take opportunity to underscore a couple of points on this issue.

Both the Sirte Declaration and the Constitutive Act, underline the central focus of the Abuja Treaty and the attainment of Continental

Integration. This in essence, reinforces the role of the Regional Economic Communities in fostering cooperation and integration in our Continent. At the same time, the driving spirit of the African Union is the acceleration of the implementation of the Abuja Treaty on the African Economic Community.

Perhaps in recognizing the complexity of these tasks, the Constitutive Act did not elaborate on these matters in its articles. The challenge facing us is to articulate concisely on the role of the RECs, and their relationship with the institution of the African Union.

Furthermore, we need also to examine the implications of accelerating the implementation of the Abuja Treaty as enunciated in the Sirte Declaration.

Definitely, the process of transformation of institutions, acceleration of programmes, and consolidation of relationships will entail a number of adjustments in various areas. The Constitutive Act has provided for a Transition Period in which all these tasks have to be addressed and accomplished.

More than ever before, the demands of this exercise will require that we maintain closer consultation and coordination so that we achieve our objective. I am aware that we may not be in a position at this particular meeting to provide the answers and solutions to all the questions and problems.

The important thing is for us to have a common vision of where we are going and what we are supposed to do. I am aware that with the exception of CENSAD and COMESA, which have already organized their 2001 meetings of their policy organs, many of us are busy preparing for

the meetings of the policy organs of our respective institutions. It is my expectation that the issue of the African Union will feature prominently on the agenda of our forthcoming meetings.

On the part of the OAU, the 74th Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers and the 37th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government will take place in Lusaka, Zambia, from 2-11 July 2001. Indeed, both Council and Summit will accord high priority to the implementation of the Constitutive Act of the African Union.

Let me conclude by reemphasizing the commitment of all our leaders to the unity of the Continent and to the socio-economic well-being of the its peoples. In this regard, we have a collective responsibility to ensuring the full involvement of all the segments of the African Society in the African Union, through their effective sensitization and mobilization. Our present meeting affords us an opportunity to concretize our ideas on how to make the African dream a reality.

I thank you.