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**STATEMENT BY H.E. DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM
TO THE SECOND ORDINARY SESSION OF THE
CENTRAL ORGAN OF THE OAU MECHANISM FOR
CONFLICT PREVENTION, MANAGEMENT AND
RESOLUTION AT THE LEVEL OF HEADS
OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT**

Your Excellency Mr. ZINE EL ABIDINE BEN ALI,
President of the Republic of Tunisia and
Current Chairman of the OAU,
Your Excellencies, Heads of State
and Government,
Distinguished Heads of Delegations,
Honourable Foreign Ministers,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is almost two years now since the establishment of the Mechanism for Conflict Management in Africa. Between Cairo and Tunis, we have been engaged in the process of laying the foundation for the operationalization of the Mechanism, to enable it respond more effectively to the challenges before us.

This Second Session of the Summit of the Central Organ is taking place against the backdrop of mounting expectations by our people and also of the International Community, to see a greater involvement by Africa in the search for durable solutions to the many problems that beset the Continent, following the establishment of the Mechanism.

This rise in expectations comes at a time when we are witnessing continuing changes in the nature of the international political environment, characterised by an increasing reluctance on the part of Africa's partners, to shoulder their responsibility particularly in areas relating to our collective security, peace and stability.

This development has grave consequences for Africa's future security, stability and development. For at a time when we are having to contend with the acquisition and allocation of already scarce resources on preventive action, we now face the daunting task of managing and resolving the many conflicts that continue to plague different parts of our Continent.

In reconciling ourselves to this objective reality, we must therefore take our point of departure from the fact that Africa will be credible in the eyes of the International Community only when it is seen to be taking the lead in efforts to resolve African problems. This is why in Tunis, we must engage in a great deal of reflection with respect to formulating specific action oriented programmes for each of the conflict situations. Additionally, we should also have to give consideration to the fact that resolving conflicts on our Continent, is not a task for governments alone. It requires the active involvement and participation of the people of Africa, which is why we must devise modalities for the sensitization and mobilization at national levels, of the business communities, Trade Unions, our women, intellectuals and the student population.

At the International level, we must continue to secure the understanding and support of our partners at governmental, Organizational and individual levels for our efforts in dealing with the many challenges that confront us. And they are many.

In Somalia, we welcome the relative peace following the withdrawal of UNOSOM II and encourage the leaders of Somalia to continue to pursue the goal of peace and national reconciliation. However, we remain concerned over reports of the outbreak of fighting in some areas of the country especially in the North West. We are also concerned over pillaging of Somalia's marine resources.

It is my understanding that there are a number of initiatives that are taking place within Somalia that the OAU should support and nurture, in order to ensure the attainment of peace and ultimately, the establishment of an Interim National Authority for that country. Lastly, while reiterating the centrality of the Somali people in the search for a lasting solution to the problem in their country, the OAU must play a leading role to support and complement the efforts of the Somalis. In this connection, the efforts of President Meles

Zenawi of Ethiopia on behalf of our Continental Organization merit special recognition and our collective appreciation.

The evolution of the Burundi crisis presents Africa with its greatest challenge. Indeed after the tragic events in Rwanda in 1994 which remains an indictment on all of us, the challenge today is how to ensure OAU's effectiveness in helping not only to defuse the tension in Burundi, but working in tandem with the International Community to prevent a repetition of the sordid events in Rwanda. While Africa must support the government and other moderate forces who are working to bring about a peaceful solution of the crisis in that country, we must take a firm stand against the concept and culture of impunity and the forces of extremism which seek to further polarize and destabilize the Burundi society.

After the genocide in Rwanda which the International Community could not prevent, the main focus of our involvement in that country should be directed at the creation of conditions which are conducive to the process of national reconciliation based on justice. This I believe, would contribute most effectively to the process of healing the wounds left by the tragic and monstrous events of April to July, 1994.

Furthermore, in calling for justice and rejecting vengeance, Africa will be sending a very strong message, that it will no longer tolerate impunity in any part of the Continent now or in the future.

This leads me to the phenomenon of refugees in the sub-region. We are alarmed at the increasing number of refugees and displaced persons in the Region which creates problems of instability not just for the countries of origin, but also for the countries of asylum. I wish to appeal to African countries and in particular to the International Community, to continue to provide the necessary support to the countries of asylum to lighten their burden in coping with the situation.

Similarly, I wish to appeal for assistance to the countries of origin to facilitate the return and resettlement of these refugees. I wish at this juncture to pay special tribute to the African troops who are currently serving in UNAMIR II for their contribution to the peace process in Rwanda. Africa and the International Community at large should also extend assistance in concrete terms, to Rwanda in support of its efforts towards national reconciliation and reconstruction.

On Liberia, I regret to have to state that despite the many efforts and sacrifices by ECOWAS countries, as well as the most recent efforts deployed by the Current Chairman of ECOWAS H.E. President Jerry Rawlings of Ghana, peace continues to elude that country. In spite of these frustrations, we must continue to work with the countries of the Region to resolve the problem and also deal with the situation in Sierra Leone which seems to be a by-product of the conflict in Liberia.

Regarding Angola, since your last meeting in Cairo in 1994, there have been some significant developments in that country, including the signing of the Lusaka Protocol on 20 November, 1994 after protracted negotiations lasting almost one year and hosted by the government of Zambia. Since then, apart from minor violations, the ceasefire has generally held. While calling on the signatories to the Protocol, to scrupulously honour their commitments, I wish to once again appeal to the United Nations to expedite action on the deployment of UNAVEM III, to assist the people of Angola in restoring peace and achieving national reconciliation,

Mr. Chairman,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

These are in sum, the issues which you will be discussing in the course of your meeting. Africa looks up to you, to

provide the way forward and I have every confidence that you will be able to meet this challenge.

Finally, I wish to join His Excellency President Mobutu Sese Seko to place on record our appreciation and gratitude to you Mr. President, your government and the kind people of Tunisia for receiving us again in this hospitable city of Tunis. I also wish to pay tribute to you for the sustained interest which you have personally shown in the affairs of our Continent and for the dynamic leadership you have provided to our Organization.

I thank you.