



Organization of African Unity

**STATEMENT BY H.E. DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM,
SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY
ON THE OCCASION OF THE SEMINAR ON THE REPORT OF THE
SOUTH COMMISSION JOINTLY ORGANIZED BY THE OAU, ECA AND ADB**

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

15 September 1993

His Excellency Mwalimu Julius Nyerere,
Chairman of the South Commission,
His Excellency Mr. Layashi Yaker,
UN Under ^{Secy} Secretary General and
Executive Secretary of the ECA,
Your Excellencies, Distinguished Heads of
Diplomatic Missions,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to welcome you all and thank you for having responded to our invitation despite your other pressing engagements thus demonstrating the importance that each and everyone of you, your respective countries and organizations attach to South/South Cooperation. In the same vein, I would like to salute the presence amongst us of the representative of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia, the host country whose support for our organizations continues to be crucial in enabling them handle more efficiently their daily ^{and} operations.

Allow me on behalf of our three organizations, the OAU, ECA and ADB to extend our deep gratitude to the South Commission and in particular to its Chairman, Mwalium Julius Nyerere, whose presence amongst us I warmly welcome. It is essentially his own effort and support to us which has made this seminar possible. I salute the tremendous efforts he continues to expend in order to help promote and popularize the recommendations of the South Commission which he so ably chaired. I wish to especially thank him for his dedicated and wise contribution in support of the legitimate interests of the peoples of the South as well as for his eloquent advocacy of genuine international cooperation.

Distinguished Participants,

The South Commission was established to address the problems of the Economic South. That initiative by a number of political leaders from the South arose after a long period of reflection, over the fate of over three and a half billion people living in the developing countries, and who were and continue to be locked out of the mainstream of the global economy.

The South, constituting three quarters of humanity, is estimated to rise in population to about four fifths of the world's population by the year 2000. The South spanning over three continents - Latin America, Africa and Asia - is diverse in many respects. This diversity is characterized by differences in the sizes of the countries, the level of their respective socio-economic, and technological advancement as well as in their cultural and religious beliefs.

In spite of these different characteristics these countries still have distinguishing common features that serve as their bonds of unity. The fundamental bond of the South is their common desire to break the bondage of poverty and under-development both at the national level as well as at the international level, where they operate their economies in an unfavourable, unstable and hostile World Economic System. They operate on the periphery while the Economic North, constitute themselves into the Centre of the world economy. The Economic South are subjected to a global economic system whereby the North dictates the prices at which to buy the raw materials exported by the South to the North. Simultaneously

the North dictates the prices at which the South purchases both the technology and manufactured products from the North. As a result of this situation the countries of the South have accumulated massive external debts that they cannot service. That is why, the countries of the South have collectively since the 1950's, as part of their national liberation struggles, sought to change the existing international division of labour and extricate themselves from the vicious cycle of poverty.

These shared aspirations have found expression in the forging of common negotiating positions in the fora of the Group of 77 and the Non-Aligned Movement, which had its genesis in the Bandung Conference in 1955. This solidarity also culminated in the formulation of the Caracas Programme of Action for Economic Cooperation Among Developing Countries within the Group 77, in the one hand and the Economic Action Programme of the Non-Aligned Movement, on the other. Furthermore, it was part of the movement generated in the South that contributed to the convening of the United Nations' Sixth Special Session in 1974 and which culminated in the adoption of Resolution 3201, calling for the establishment of the New International Economic Order. That resolution, consequently put on the World Agenda the problems of the developing world.

Distinguished Participants,

I would like to recall that at the beginning of this movement for change in the international economy, the cohesion, solidarity and the unity of purpose, prevailing among the countries of the South were very strong. That was the time when the G77 spoke with one voice. It was in these circumstances that the South Commission was established. Its emergence, above all, was a direct response of the Economic South to the collapse in the North/South Dialogue, when the CANCUN TALKS were deadlocked over the recommendations of the BRANDT REPORT. However, over recent years there have been major fundamental changes in the world which must be taken into account, if the recommendations of the Commission are to be implemented.

Distinguished Participants,

The Report of the South came out at a time that the cohesion and solidarity that pervaded the south was undergoing severe strain. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Socialist bloc there have been fundamental changes in the configuration of economic relations within the World Economy. Within the context of a unipolar world even the very structures of the South, in the form of the Group of 77 and the Non-Aligned Movement and what they stood for at the time that the South Commission was established now need to be reviewed. In recent meetings of the UNCTAD, the G77 does not any more speak with one voice. During UNCTAD VIII in Cartagena, in Colombia, the G77 spoke through their three respective regional spokespersons.

Meanwhile, recent re-alignment of forces do not promote the solidarity and cohesion of the South. This Seminar may, therefore, wish to deliberate seriously on the impact of these fundamental changes on the Report of the South Commission and how its major recommendations can be implemented.

Distinguished Participants,

In Africa, and to give further impetus to South-South economic cooperation, the Heads of State and Government of the OAU adopted in 1980 their landmark Lagos Plan of Action which is a package of sub-regional, regional and continental programmes and policies for implementation. The Final Act of Lagos which called for the establishment of the African Economic Community, envisaged the establishment of various African regional and sub-regional economic Communities, such as the PTA, ECCAS, ECOWAS, SADCC and the Maghreb Union. The signing in June 1991 in Abuja - Nigeria of the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community is a culmination of the South-South movement in Africa, since the independence of African States, to eventually establish an African Common Market.

It is clear that the sectoral policies and integration instruments and institutional framework envisaged in the Abuja Treaty fully relate to the strategies and policies advocated by the Report of the South Commission. The central view inherent in the Abuja Treaty is that Africa needs cooperation within itself and with the rest of the world. But in order to be able to cooperate effectively, individually and severally, the African countries have to be strong. And the reality is

that Africa's strength, lies in solidarity - in unity of purpose and of action. We therefore need to see how our countries can promote self-reliance and together work towards collective self-reliance. We should cooperate to the maximum extent possible with each other. If our countries are self-reliant and manage to maximize cooperation with one another, they will be able to stand in strength and negotiate better arrangements of cooperation with the rest of the Economic South as well as with the North.

Collective self-reliance and diversified cooperation in Africa, will be an important element in promoting solidarity within the South. The recommendation of the South Commission bear directly to Africa. The particular circumstances of Africa, especially its serious economic problems dictate that we should place greater emphasis on cooperation. Africa is economically the weakest of all the regions of the South. Yet we have the potential in terms of natural and human resources which we must bring ourselves to harness. Individually, our countries can begin the process of putting into place the kind of policies which place priority on the development of the people. In the long run however, it is cooperation within the larger entity of the African Economic Community which will bring greater advantage.

**Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

To successfully implement development programmes and strategies, Africa needs peace and the maximum mobilization and participation of all its peoples. For it is self-evident

that without peace and stability, meaningful development is not possible. In this regard, the OAU is now increasingly involved in efforts at promoting a peaceful enabling environment in our continent through sustained efforts at conflict prevention and resolution. These efforts include involvement in efforts at ensuring good governance and accountability through the democratization process. To this end, the OAU has been participating in election monitoring/observation activities in several of our Member States. The decision adopted in Cairo in June this year by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government to set up within the OAU a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, testifies to Africa's recognition of the imperative need to deal with the issues of security and stability in our Continent as well as its determination to make our Organization, as far as possible, assume a central role in these issues.

The purpose of this Seminar is to come out with strategies and policy options for the implementation of the South Commission's Report, so as to deal with the common problems that plague the South. In this regard, I would like to invite participants to examine the Report's recommendations in the full light of Africa's agenda from now till the year 2024 and beyond, as envisaged in the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community.