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STATEMENT BY DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM,  
SECRETARY GENERAL OF  
THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAUNCHING  
OF THE PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN FOR  
THE 7TH OAU/AEC ALL-AFRICAN TRADE FAIR

BY URTNA

SATURDAY, MAY 11, 1996

I am delighted to invite businessmen and women throughout Africa to participate in the 7th Organization of African Unity/African Economic Community Trade Fair. The Fair is scheduled to be held at the Lagos International Trade Fair Complex, Lagos, Nigeria, from 9th to 17th November, this year. The OAU and the Government of Nigeria are working closely and making all the necessary efforts to ensure the smooth organization of the Fair and a warm welcome to all the participants.

The fair is an all-Africa International Business event aimed at promoting intra-African trade. It is the first edition to be held since the Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community came into force in May, 1994. Indeed, the Fair, which used to be known as the "OAU All Africa Trade Fair" has now become the "OAU/AEC All-Africa Trade Fair". The Treaty provides a framework for the integration of African economies. The 1996 Fair should therefore be seen as a practical demonstration of OAU's resolve and Africa's determination to create an African Common Market which will usher in an African Economic Community.

This year's Fair is being held at a time when the forces of economic globalization and liberalization have become recognized as distinct phenomena of our times. The conclusion of the Uruguay Round Agreements and the establishment of the World Trade Organization have

added momentum to this process. At the same time, the world has, in recent years, witnessed the establishment of regional trading blocs or special agreements. While many African Governments have responded to the globalization of production structures, trade, investment, and financial flows by liberalizing their economies, there is wide-spread agreement that we need to accompany these policies with a strategy of intra-African trade promotion and regional economic cooperation in order to enhance our productive capacity and ability to compete in international markets. To this extent, the upcoming Trade Fair is a unique opportunity for our entrepreneurs to establish new business ties and to deepen and expand existing ones thereby widening the business and economic connections between our countries.

That is why the Fair is open to African Businessmen and Women operating in virtually all economic sectors, including manufacturing, engineering and technology, marine resources, mining, communications and information technology, light and heavy industry, construction, consumer goods, African crafts, pharmaceuticals, agricultural products and processed food, furniture, tourism and travel, and finance and investment.

For the first time in the organization of the All-Africa Trade Fair, the tourism and travel sector has been included as an integral part of the Fair. This is in recognition of the dynamic potential of this sector in the diversification of our economies with linkages to other sectors and the creation of new jobs. I therefore wish to extend a special invitation to

African Tour and Travel Operators, Hoteliers and the Heritage, Conservation, Entertainment and Leisure Industry in all our Member states to come and extend their business contacts at the 7th OAU/AEC All-Africa Trade Fair.

In addition, at the Fair, the OAU, in collaboration with several other institutions, is organizing an Investment Forum to provide practical information and guidance to the business community in raising equity capital, promoting joint venture projects and other business partnerships. The OAU, in collaboration with the International Trade Center, is also organizing product specific buyer/seller business encounters at the fair.

All these efforts are aimed at ensuring that the fair is both a tool for stimulating the productive capacity of our economies as well as an excellent opportunity for meaningful business transactions.

Special steps are also being taken to make information available on the market potential of many African countries in several categories of products and services. The latest information technology, such as the Trade Information Networks (TINETs), will be displayed at the Fair to link specific buyers and sellers and to facilitate contact and deals between them.

In making all these facilities and opportunities available to the business community at the Fair, we, at the OAU, recognize how much the

world has changed and the need for us in Africa not only to respond to the changes but also to play our role in shaping the new global economy of the 21st Century. This is how we can become effective and competitive partners in it.

Consequently, it is my particular pleasure to invite fellow Africans and our business partners, to come in full strength and do business in Lagos at the 7th OAU/AEC All-Africa Trade Fair.