



Organization of African Unity

**TALKING POINTS
FOR DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM,
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE OAU,
ON THE OCCASION OF
THE PRESENTATION OF IPEP REPORT**

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Lome, Togo

TALKING POINTS FOR THE OAU SECRETARY GENERAL ON THE OCCASION OF THE PRESENTATION OF IPEP'S REPORT

1. Recall the objective of setting up the Panel

The establishment of the Panel was first proposed by H.E. Mr. Meles Zenawi, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, in his keynote address to the Seventh Ordinary Session of the Central Organ, held from 20 to 21 November 1997, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Essentially, the Prime Minister's proposal was based on the realization that it is only through learning the appropriate lessons from the unfortunate experiences in the past, especially after such tragedies like the genocide in Rwanda, that a sound foundation for moving Africa forward could be laid.

2. This proposal was endorsed by the Central Organ. In doing so, we all recognized the need to anticipate conflicts and prevent them before they occur and drawing lessons from what went wrong or what was not done to prevent the genocide in Rwanda.

3. During the 68th Ordinary Session of the OAU Council of Ministers held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in 1998,

I formally submitted this proposal to Council. In so doing, I was guided by the serious concerns that have been raised in Africa both within our continental Organization and by concerned Africans on the need for our continent to take the lead in addressing what happened in Rwanda, how could it happen and what should be done to ensure that such terrible and, indeed, nightmarish development are not allowed to recur. Consequently, the Council, in a decision that was endorsed by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, meeting in Burkina Faso, established the International Panel of Eminent Personalities to investigate the genocide in Rwanda and the surrounding events.

4. I wish to express my appreciation to Sir Ketumile Masire, for accepting to chair the Panel. Similarly, I wish to thank General Amadou Toumani Toure, Ms. Lisbet Palme, Ms. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Justice P.N. Bhagwati, Senator Hocine Djoudi and Ambassador Stephen Lewis for their participation as members of the Panel and for the useful insights all of the Panelists have brought to this major undertaking.

5. The 1994 genocide in Rwanda was an indictment to human kind for allowing close to one million people to perish at the hands of their fellow citizens. The finalization and publication of this report is, therefore, an event of major significance for the Organization of African Unity and its Member States. It reflects the resolve of our leaders and peoples to undertake this soul-searching commitment, in order to establish what went wrong and what could have been responsible for such a tragedy to take place on our continent.

6. The establishment of the Panel and its work was never intended to be an exercise in blame apportionment. Our objective was to follow the truth concerning the genocide in Rwanda, wherever the truth leads, in order to establish the underlying causes of that genocide and the other surrounding tragic events in the Region. We are gratified that the Panel has now completed its work.

7. The work of the Panel has been very much facilitated by the support and cooperation extended by many - governments, NGOs as well as individuals - both within the Continent and outside. I wish to express my thanks and gratitude to all of them.

8. I also wish to express our appreciation to the many governments around the world which provided financial resources in support of the work of the Panel.

9. I am aware that this Report is being awaited with great expectations by the people and government of Rwanda, African governments and peoples and by the international community at large. It is therefore with a sense of great appreciation that I look forward to receiving from Sir Ketumile Masire the Report of the Panel.