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AFRICA LEADERSHIP FORUM
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA/
ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY

First Steering Committee Meeting on
Stability, Security, Development and
Co-operation in Africa

Addis Ababa, 17 - 18 February, 1991

CONTRIBUTION OF THE AFRICAN YOUTH

I will begin by expressing sincere appreciation to the initiators of this Meeting preparatory to a Conference on Stability, Security and Co-operation, a truly noble project whose historical, political and profitable importance and scope for the continent cannot be overemphasized.

May I also express my gratitude to the personalities who have had the courage and intellectual and morale honesty in the face of the lethargy, apparent stagnation and increasing marginalization of the continent, to break the taboos and raise the overall present-day and future problems of Africa which are expressed as numerous challenges and stakes. The African youth which will constitute 60 per cent of the billions of Africans by the year 2008, is the main issue of the problems raised for discussions by our Meeting.

In fact, no one other than the youth feels, today, the need to be placed and to live in a stable and fully secured continent and to benefit from the fruits of a steady co-operation, initiated and implemented by and for Africans. I have carefully gone through the documents prepared by the consultants on various fields, namely: Stability, security and co-operation.

In the name of the African youth, I render them great homage for the quality and seriousness of the work done.

From all the analyses contained in the document, it is clear that Africa is a continent marginalized, fragile and weakened, often unstable and destabilized and in search of its path without ever finding it, in short, a continent under siege! All these are happening at a time during which new blocks and new international alliances and relations are being formed on the basis of economic and strategic interests; for instance, Europe 1993, the end of cold war the changes taking place in Eastern and Central Europe and the German

unification. The Gulf crisis and war and the strategic, political and economic rapprochement between what had been the East and West to the detriment of the North and South, are relevant indicators which should lead Africa and its leaders, in particular, to draw all the useful lessons in order to preserve the stability of our continent, re-establish its safety and institute a genuine regional co-operation based on the mobilization of its people, their contribution, talents and energy in the implementation of our various strategies in all fields.

However, since over 30 years ago when most African States became independent, a great number of mechanisms, strategies and imaginary plans have been developed and launched, but with no tangible result. The most noble and most useful project, African Unity, which ought to materialize through the Organization of African Unity, has remained at the emotional and purely sentimental stage.

In spite of its inadequacies due to the lack of genuine political will on the part of African leaders and due to lack of resources, OAU has remained the ideal framework for solving all the problems of our continent. Therefore, OAU should be reactivated and adapted to the realities of the modern world and our evolving continent, by making it operational and efficient.

The basic problem concerns the following crisis situations in Africa:

- Growth crisis
- Structural crisis
- Organizational crisis
- Economic and moral crisis
- Confidence crisis

Since the youth is the major object and victim of these series of crises, it is seriously and anxiously asking questions about its future in view of the incomprehensible inertia of the continent's leadership overtaken by the current problems of Africa, mainly: unemployment, underemployment, brain-drain, crisis in the educational systems, hunger, civil wars, border and fraternal crisis and refugees. All these are the concern of the youth! How then is it possible, under such conditions, to talk of stability, security and co-operation? How can Africa succeed in acquiring science, technical knowledge and technology, which are the only instruments capable of leading our continent to achieving self-sufficiency in all fields and thus gain credibility among the group of modern nations?

There is no confidence anywhere in the continent! Some leaders distrust their people, shut themselves off and refuse dialogue and popular participation in the taking of decisions to select projects for the society. Border conflicts erupt because each country suspects its neighbour of planning to destabilize it.

The mechanisms already in existence do not function because of a deliberate intention to leave freely agreed decisions, unimplemented. Africa lacks seriousness and creditability. It should be said that some of our leaders are greatly responsible for Africa's apparent current situation of an object of ridicule in the world. We have had the Lagos Plan of Action and its Final Act, the African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programme, the Common Market and African Economic Community project and the subregional integration projects, but the implementation of the above is stifled by inconsistencies, lack of vision and collective co-operation on the part of some of our leaders. The word democracy is taboo! In the name of compliance with certain principles, such as those of non-interference and sovereignty, which have been made fool of,

people have been taken hostage in their own countries and within the borders of the continent.

Above all these, there has been continuous interference in the internal affairs of Africa! There has even been cases of making and unmaking regimes! Some of our leaders only consider those agreements and compromises made outside Africa as worthy and secure. This is unimaginable and unacceptable!

Africa is immense and immensely rich! It has abundant land, human and natural resources in addition to its youth-the only ever-renewable energy! Yet the enthusiasm and zeal of the people, their generosity, imagination, inventive spirit and the creative talent of the youth, the availability of intellectuals have all become a big slush, for not being exploited through a greater participation of all the children of Africa in devising solutions to the overall strategic problems.

To conclude, it should be emphasized that to ensure stability and security in Africa and to promote genuine co-operation the following is unavoidable:

- Restoration of trust between people and governments;
- Giving a greater role to the true architects of general development in Africa, and the living forces namely, young people, workers, women and intellectuals;
- Establishing reliable relations and good neighbourliness between States;
- Establishing, at the subregional and continental levels, of pacts and agreements of non-aggression and of defence for the establishment of a regional individual and collective security plan;
- Accelerating the economic integration of the continent;

- Revitalizing OAU, firmly establishing the concept of unity and compliance with decisions jointly taken;
- Providing the African people with such minimum necessities of life as education, health care, food, security; and granting them all their rights through the establishment of a true democracy, including popular participation in development, stabilization and security for genuine co-operation;
- And finally, providing the elite and the leadership with adequate training.

Thank you.