Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution in Africa

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2000
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1. Background

Since its inception in 1963, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), has always been conscious of the need to be grounded on a foundation that would provide a regional framework for collective regional action and strategic planning in the areas of regional security, peace and stability, as well as the promotion of economic development through economic cooperation and integration. It is to the eternal credit of the visionary founding fathers of the OAU, that such a framework, or principles were firmly entrenched in the Charter of the OAU, signifying the inspired and common determination of our leaders to promote understanding among the African people and cooperation among African States.

The adoption of the OAU Charter was a celebration of the ideals of what has popularly become known as African brotherhood and solidarity. Against a backdrop of the divisions that challenged the Statesmen and leaders of the early sixties, the coming together of different countries to establish the OAU, was symbolic of the desire to bring about a larger unity of the African peoples, one that transcended ethnic and national loyalties.

As has often been stated by Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim, the OAU was conceived as a framework for collective regional security in the wider sense, and in a more specific sense, as a strategic plan for promoting regional cooperation in the political and diplomatic fields thereby providing the necessary institutional dynamism to promote security, stability and development in Africa.

It was, therefore, within this context, that African leaders expressed, in the OAU Charter, their determination to coordinate and intensify their cooperation and efforts, for the sole purpose of achieving better life for the peoples of Africa. Moreover, the leaders were also cognizant of the fact that in order to effectively address the issue of how to sustain better living conditions for the Continent's population, there was an imperative need to defend their sovereignty and territorial integrity and to promote international cooperation, in a manner that is consistent with the Charter of the United Nations.

It also seems clearly plausible with the benefit of hand sight, that the ultimate objective of the founding fathers of the OAU, in establishing the Organization, was to provide the then fragile Africans States, emerging from colonial rule into a better organized international political and economic environment, some degree of a sense of collective security through the minimization of individual vulnerability in their relations with their erstwhile colonial powers. In a sense therefore, the OAU Charter could be described as some have done, as "a covenant for regional security and mutual survival".

OAU’s experiences in promoting regional stability and mitigating the negative impacts of conflicts in Africa have been as varied as the membership of the Organization itself. During the first decade of its existence, the OAU was more preoccupied with ensuring a reduction of conflicts and the defusing of tension between its Member States, particularly, tension arising from boundary disputes, territorial claims and ideological confrontations. Undoubtedly, and although its many critics refuse to concede this, the Organization achieved some degree of success in dealing with such problems.

By far the greatest achievement of the OAU was in the area of decolonization. Whereas at its inception, the OAU could only boast of about half of its present membership, by 1994, the liberation struggle had brought in fruitful dividends, which culminated in the ending of
apartheid and institutionalized racism and bigotry in South Africa. The successful realization of the mandate of the OAU Liberation Committee, was a victory for the collective and united resolve of the African countries supported by friends outside the Continent, under the umbrella of the OAU.

I have dealt extensively on this background, in order to underscore the fact that the OAU, has in the past, been involved in the resolution of conflicts (especially, inter-State conflicts) even if it had done so on an ad-hoc basis. It is a well-known fact that the Charter of the Organization provides for a Mechanism for Mediation, Arbitration and Conciliation. Notwithstanding the fact that this Commission has remained largely dormant, its inclusion in the Charter, was by itself a fundamental recognition of the need for such a facility. Reasons revolving essentially around perceptions and the narrow interpretation of sovereignty, have of course, created difficulties during past efforts to formulate procedures for the resolution of conflicts between OAU Member States. These difficulties notwithstanding, there were innovations to the procedures and mechanisms for conflict resolution introduced by the OAU. Such innovations have included the creation of Ad-Hoc Committees of wise men to handle specific problems, as was the case in Western Sahara, Chad/Libya and the Senegal/Mauritania conflicts. The Institution and Office of the Current Chairman, as well as individual Heads of State, with insights into specific problems, were mandated to intervene in conflict situations on behalf of the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government. Additionally, subregional organizations, as is the case of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Liberia, the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in Sudan and Somalia and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in Lesotho, have also been used to promote the settlement of specific and localized conflicts. In addition, the quiet but effective role of the Secretary - General of the OAU, has undergone a qualitative change thereby proving him with a framework to take initiatives to intervene personally or, through Special Envoys, to promote the pacific settlement of conflicts.

2. Defining the African Challenge

If the sixties and the seventies, marked the opening of the frontiers of freedom in Africa and the strengthening of the membership of the OAU, the eighties and the nineties, brought to the fore, the contradictions and complications from an unfair and unequal international economic system, which along with the disappointment of Africa's performance in the crucial area of good governance and political emancipation combined with a level of economic development and Human Rights abuses, created crises of governance, that impacted negatively, on the hopes for peace, security and stability in Africa.

It is a well known fact, that the post colonial African State and the period of the late seventies and the early eighties, coincided with the early beginnings of political, economic and social decadence, a period in which the environment of many African States became characterized by political and economic stagnation. It was a period in which many post-colonial African States began to lose the confidence of the populations that many of the leaders and nationalists had fought so much for. This was the period in which the politics of poverty was manipulated in the newly independent African States, by the leaders that later, and inadvertently laid the early foundations for the poverty of politics which has become the bane in much of Africa today. Given the contradictions that were produced in this process of nation-building and as a direct consequence, internal and external forces began to pressurize the African political elites for more accountability, economically as well as politically.
At about the same time as these events were unraveling in Africa, changes in the political landscape of the Soviet Union and the Eastern European Socialist States, which were long time Cold War allies of many African States, began to be evident. Unexpectedly, a stunned world followed the dramatic developments in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989. As the Soviet Empire began to disintegrate, the East/West rivalry of the past decades simultaneously began to dissolve in Africa, making way for long anticipated, but frustrated transitions like the Independence of Namibia, and other contradictions, including changes in the nature and manifestations of intra-ethnic conflict and civil strife.

The rapprochement between Washington and Moscow and the end of the Cold War, meant that Africa had to expect dramatic changes in the international and even the national environment of its politics - and changes did come. As is now well known, the demise of the Cold War, brought in its wake, seemingly contradictory trends that reflected the tension between the desire by many African countries to jealously safeguard their independence together with the imperative need for economic integration on the one hand, and the reality of a displaced drive towards fragmentation on the other.

The truth of the matter, is that the breakdown of the ideological mind set and structures of the Cold War global alliances, had also unfortunately, unleashed hitherto suppressed ethnic and political tensions, as well as a process of disintegration of some African countries, into conflicting ethnic, cultural or religious units. In effect therefore, the ebbing of the Cold War, contributed to new or continuing instability. Simply put, the end of the Cold War brought to the fore and exposed conflicts, which were formally overshadowed by strong nationalist governments and superpower rivalries. This re-emergence of age-old hatreds effectively challenged both African and the wider International Community's ability to devise principled and effective means of response.

Earlier on, I highlighted attempts by the OAU to innovate and improvise mechanisms for resolving inter-State conflicts, in the absence of an acceptable framework for such undertakings. But these were attempts directed specifically at conflicts among States and not within States. Traditionally, a strong view pervaded the OAU that conflicts within States fell within the exclusive competence of the States concerned. Arising from that basic assertion, was the equally strong view that it was not the business of the OAU, to pronounce itself on those conflicts and that the Organization certainly had no mandate to involve itself in the resolution of problems of that nature.

It was against this backdrop, that the OAU Assembly of heads of State and Government, adopted in 1990, the Declaration on the Political and Socio-Economic Situation in Africa and the Fundamental Changes taking place in the World. In that Declaration, the leaders of Africa, committed to work towards the peaceful and speedy resolution of all conflicts in Africa for the creation of an enabling environment for development, democratization, greater respect for Human Rights, and resolving other critical challenges that confronted the Continent, would remain constrained, as long as conflicts continued to ravage the Continent.

Additionally, and some would add critically, the 1990 Declaration marked a decisive turning point for us in Africa because for the first time in its history, the OAU recognized the changing nature of conflicts from inter-State, for which serious even if ad-hoc efforts had been deployed in the past to resolve, to intra-State (internal) which called for a more dynamic approach, given the African pre-occupations with concepts such as sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of Member States, as enshrined in the OAU Charter. The
crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo then Zaire, provided sufficient justification, if any was needed, for proactively establishing mechanisms for working around these concepts and principles.

That Declaration of 1990, and the qualitative debate it provoked among African leaders on the precarious socio-economic and political situation on the Continent, brought about a recognition, that in order to achieve socio-economic transformation and integration, a conscious effort must be made by our Governments to promote popular participation in governance and development, guarantee human rights and the observance of the rule of law, as well as ensuring high standards of probity and accountability by public office holders. It was the expectation that addressing these concerns would help to prevent the outbreak of internal conflicts in Africa.

It hardly needs to be recalled that the horrendous effects of the internal conflicts, their implications for the economic and security of many African States and their neighbors, as well as the graphic images and pictures of brutality and mass starvation, hitherto alien to Africa, began to be flashed around the world media, with negative reaction and consequences, which touched the conscience of many African leaders and people. Increasingly, many African countries and leaders became uncomfortable and started questioning the logic that suggested that Africa and Africans should stand aside and watch, while a part of the Continent, tore itself apart, simply on account of arguable technicalities of sovereignty.

Increasingly also, it became less fashionable and unacceptable, that Africa should continue to be perceived and treated as a Continent prone to conflicts and a place where suffering is endemic - one where peace, security and stability are only but distant possibilities. A continent made up of “atomistic societies perpetually at war with themselves”, to borrow the words of one Nigerian Professor.

Such perspectives began to have profound effects on the thinking of policy makers in Africa. There emerged a new realization that if Africa was to tackle the monumental task of economic recovery and development, it would have to resolve the many internal conflicts (potential or real) that confronted the Continent. Integral to such forward looking thinking, was also a recognition, that where national and subregional means of conflict resolution proved unsuitable or inadequate to cope with the contending interests of parties to a conflict, there was need for such efforts to be supplemented by African and wider International action, provided that such efforts were anchored within the context and framework of the mandate of the OAU.

In committing themselves to the further democratization of their societies and the consolidation of democratic institutions in Africa, our leaders made an important breakthrough for the OAU, because that Declaration ushered in a more dynamic approach to concepts of sovereignty and the principle of non-interference. It was as if they were saying that non-interference should not mean indifference.

Again, in pointing the way forward, that landmark Declaration, set the stage for a review of past OAU approaches to conflict resolution (notably, through the moribund OAU Commission for Mediation, Conciliation and Arbitration) with the ultimate and overriding objective of bringing about a new political approach, an enhanced Institutional capacity and dynamism into the ways Africa dealt with the many conflicts that had caused so much human
misery in several parts of the Continent and in some instances, opened the doors for maneuvering and the testing of new weapons, by non-African powers.

In practical terms, the Declaration sought to put Africa at the center of attempts to deal with conflicts, by emphasizing that the Continent bore primary responsibility for resolving its problems, even if it was to expect international solidarity and assistance. In a way therefore, that Declaration of 1990, by emphasizing the centrality of the role of Africans in advancing conflict resolution initiatives, squarely placed primary responsibility for action in this realm on the Continent and its Organization, the OAU. All these, marked significant shifts in the thinking of OAU Member States - from a position of total opposition to the involvement of the OAU in internal disputes, to accepting that the Organization had a view and indeed a role in assisting in their resolution. In fact, they went as far as providing financial as well as the Institutional means to deal with conflicts, including those within States.

That was the improved environment, which no doubt, facilitated the extensive consultations that the Secretary General of the OAU, initiated between the General Secretariat and Member States, in order to clearly define the essential elements, that would give the 1990 Declaration, an operational context. Those consultations primarily focused on the need to establish within the OAU, a permanent Mechanism for the Prevention, Management and Resolution of Conflicts in Africa. At the end of the consultations, Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim submitted to the fifty-sixth Assembly of Heads of State and Government in Dakar, Senegal in 1992, a Report which contained various Institutional options and specific recommendations regarding the Mechanism. That report, which was adopted in Dakar in principle, was itself subject to another round of in-depth study and comprehensive consultations with Member States for the purpose of fine-tuning the proposals.

At the end of that exhaustive but necessary process, the Assembly of OAU Heads of State and Government, meeting in their twenty-ninth Ordinary Session in Cairo, Egypt, adopted the Declaration on Establishing within the OAU, of a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution.

Essentially, the Mechanism is built around the Bureau of the Assembly of OAU Heads of State and Government, with a decision-making body known as the Central Organ, which in itself, has three levels of authority - the Ambassadorial level, meeting every month, the Ministerial level which meets twice a year and the level of Heads of State and Government which is supposed to meet once a year. Recently, in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, it was decided that the Central Organ at Ministerial or Summit levels, could meet whenever the need arose. The operational arm of the Mechanism on the other hand, revolves around the General Secretariat and especially, the office of the Secretary General and the Conflict Management Center. At the same time and conscious of the importance of resources mobilization in the operationalization of the Mechanism, the Heads of State and Government also set up an OAU Peace Fund to be financed from a 6 per cent OAU Regular Budgetary appropriation, as well as voluntary contributions from African and non-African sources.

As can be seen from the foregoing details, the processes and efforts that went into the establishment of the Conflict Management Mechanism, was a very well thought out process. That decision was informed by among other things, the mounting expectations of our people and also those 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. Indeed, that rise in expectations came at a time when many changes were taking place in the international
political environment. The world was in transition - the Cold War that motivated the superpowers' involvement in Africa, had come to a dramatic end. Africa seemed to have lost its strategic relevance. The behavior of the International Community towards conflicts in Africa, also began to undergo profound changes, with a sharp decline in the possibility of direct external intervention, and/or limitations in the staying power of outsiders, as events in Rwanda, Somalia, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo (then Zaire), were to clearly illustrate.

The reluctance on the part of Africa's partners to shoulder new responsibilities, particularly, in areas relating to Africa's collective security, peace and stability, had grave consequences for the Continent's future economic development and security. Where as on the one hand, many African countries remain constrained by the lack of resources, they became faced with the daunting task of managing and trying to resolve the many conflicts that had been raging in many parts of the Continent.

In reconciling themselves to the reality of their situation in Africa, the Continent's leaders had determined that they would only be credible in the eyes of the International Community when they are seen to be taking the lead in finding solutions to the problems in the countries. They therefore underscored the rationale for a new approach, which would essentially move beyond military responses to conflict or potential conflict situations. It was thus, that the Mechanism envisaged the utilization of a wide range of preventive action and non-military means of resolving conflicts, including the promotion of confidence building measures, such as the one put in place by the SADC and to some extent ECOWAS countries. Other measures would include, establishing trust through cooperation on shared development problems and identifying specific mechanism for sustaining peace initiatives, as well as the fortification of the bonds between peace, democracy and development. The emerging experience in Southern Africa is one that holds great potentials not just for the Region, but also for the rest of the Continent.

Within the framework of the mandate for Preventive Diplomacy, the OAU, has in the course of the last six years, attempted to operationalize the concept, while dealing with potential or incipient and full-blown conflicts, which actions include: the establishment of supportive structures and institutional capacity building, outlining guidelines; networking with national, subregional and International Organizations for preventive diplomacy and creating a positive and cooperative attitude among all the actors to the different conflicts on the Continent.

Cognizant of the crucial role that an Early Warning Network matched by an Early Political Action could play in Conflict Prevention, the OAU is in the process of establishing such a network, based on a modest coordinating facility located in the Conflict Management Center, which has been equipped with a Crisis Management Room, at the headquarters of the Organization.

In January 1996, a Seminar was held in Addis Ababa, which brought together distinguished academicians, eminent statesmen and other resource persons to brainstorm on the modalities for establishing such a network so that it could take care of the need for timely information on potential conflict situations. As envisaged, the Early Warning Network, would have OAU Member States as key focal points, including, of course subregional organizations like ECOWAS, SADC, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA) and IGAD among others, the United Nations and its specialized agencies, academic institutions, research centers, the media and NGOs. It is the expectation
of the OAU that the information which will be sourced from such a Network would be appropriately analyzed, so that accurate information, data, policy options and recommendations, could be provided to the Secretary General and the Central Organ, for early political action.

Clearly, it is self-evident that OAU’s preference for preventive diplomatic action reflects the serious constraints that the OAU operates under, including the fact that funds constraints continue to hamper the activities of the Organization. Of course, the point must also be made that many OAU Member States are experiencing severe economic difficulties and even though they continue to extend commendable moral and sometimes, political and financial support to the Organization's efforts to deal with conflicts, the fact remains that in the face of competing demands, the allocation of scarce resources remains a most complicated and daunting exercise.

This leads one to the very positive attention, and support extended to the Mechanism during the six years of its operationalization. Increasingly, Member States are conceding a role to their Organization within the framework of the Conflict Mechanism, in resolving conflicts. Indeed, this improved environment for action has meant that our Member States no longer instinctively cling to the concepts of non-interference and sovereignty. On the contrary, there has been a growing acceptance of the fact that the OAU can constructively, get involved in promoting political dialogue and helping resolve conflicts. The readiness of Member States to call upon the OAU to facilitate negotiations, observe and sometimes even conduct and monitor elections, is a manifestation of this growing positive disposition towards the Continental Organization.

3. Review of OAU’s Involvement in Some Conflict Situations in Africa

Contrary to ill-motivated distortions and often outright attempt to mislead and therefore create a misguided impression that the OAU has been absent from many conflict situations in Africa, it is true even if less publicized, that the OAU has done a lot within the context of the Mechanism in Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. Indeed, even in those cases where the OAU has not played a direct role, it had been instrumental in galvanizing opinion and support, as well as sensitizing the rest of the International Community to act. Unfortunately, the Secretary General of the OAU apart from his justifiable preference for quiet diplomacy and personal contacts, does not have the luxury of travelling around with CNN cameras to dramatize his many and consistent involvement in efforts to either prevent or contain conflicts in many parts of Africa. It is however, appropriate in a paper of this nature, to examine some of the efforts that have been deployed by the OAU to facilitate the maintenance of peace, security and stability on the Continent.

Burundi

In Burundi, the OAU for over two years deployed a multi-disciplinary team of military and civilian personnel, which worked with the people of that country to facilitate the process of dialogue, peace and national reconciliation. After the very tragic events in Rwanda in 1994, the challenge to the OAU in Burundi, was how to effectively help, not only to defuse the tension there, but working in tandem with the rest of the International Community, to prevent a repetition of the sordid events that we witnessed in Rwanda.
As is now well known, the coup d'etat of 25 July 1996, among other factors, complicated all the efforts to bring about a quick end to the conflict in that country. Indeed, it is true to state that the coup temporarily reversed the little progress that was achieved in that country. Today, the situation inside Burundi is characterized by the deliberate destruction of the country's infrastructure, a low intensity guerilla warfare by rebels and opponents of the Government, a slow motion genocide which claims hundreds of lives every month, major population displacements and worst of all, the unfortunate absence of political consensus on the part of the military and political elite, in a country where there is a clear ethnic division and intense mutual fear, suspicion, acrimony and conflict along ethnic lines.

The problem in Burundi, though mainly political, should be viewed from a multi-dimensional perspective. Clearly, the crisis being experienced by that country, has everything to do with lack of recognition for the democratic process, intense competition for the allocation of wealth and scarce resources, dislocation of the population, as well as inadequate or non-existent social services like education and employment for a great majority of people. Naturally, in this setting, economic problems have tended to exacerbate political conflict. Burundi remains a divided country. Mutual suspicions and recriminations (where the Hutus fear and distrust the predominantly Tutsi military establishment and the Tutsis in turn, fear the prospects of genocide of the kind that took place in Rwanda), have fed on the fears of both sides of the political divide. The consequence has been the emergence and strengthening of the forces of extremism, while the voices of moderation have all but been drowned. The twin principles of democracy and security for all Barundis, must remain the foundation for a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Burundi.

Additionally, in the environment of conflict and instability, very little attention is paid to the urgent need for a real and sustainable program of socio-economic reconstruction and development. In the prevailing climate of the politics and economics of exclusion, insecurity feeds on the distrust and fears of a majority of the population and provides a recruitment ground for the extremists on both sides of the political divide.

The lack of security in many parts of the country makes it difficult to track down the population even for humanitarian assistance, because a majority of that population is constantly on the move, except for the occasional recourse to the policy of regroupment by the Government of Burundi, which the International Community continues to frown upon. This situation is increasingly endemic and acute in the north and central areas of the country, as well as in Bujumbura and some previously stable areas in the south of the country. Border areas in Tanzania, have also been affected. Access to many of the worst affected parts of the country has become increasingly difficult. Regrettably, apart from Barundis, international aid workers and OAU personnel have been victims of the instability in Burundi.

Due to the problems in Burundi and the DRC, the fate of the Great Lakes Region as a whole, had become inextricably tied with the fate of the Barundis and of course the Rwandese, who live outside their countries of origin, at least until the recent developments that unraveled the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Traditionally, the region has been a generous host to refugee populations. However, 1995 saw a growing frustration on the part of asylum countries and the rights of refugees in the region challenged as never before.
The OAU continues to maintain its Mission in Burundi (OMIB) under the overall responsibility of a Special Representative of the Secretary General. OMIB currently has only its civilian component in the country, after the withdrawal of the military component.

As part of efforts to promote national reconciliation in Burundi, the Secretary-General remains in active consultation with the leaders of the Region while the OAU fully supports the efforts of these leaders and the Arusha Peace Process which was facilitated by the late former Tanzanian President, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere. As this paper was being finalized, intensive consultations were underway to choose a new facilitator for the peace process.

The complex and myriad challenges facing Burundi will require the sustained and full support of the OAU and the rest of the International Community. There is a need to continue to support the efforts of the countries of the Region aimed at bringing about an enduring peace, stability and national reconciliation in that country.

**Sudan**

The OAU has continued to support the mediation efforts of IGAD, over the internal conflict in Sudan. It is unfortunate that the process remains intractable in spite of recent efforts by the government of the Sudan, the SPLA and its NDA partners, countries like Libya, Egypt and the OAU to name but a few. The protracted conflict in Sudan remains a major course of concern, particularly, in terms of its humanitarian and socio-economic implications for that country. The OAU is also concerned not just over the increasing number of Sudanese refugees and displaced populations, but also, over the problems between that country and its neighbors. This is most worrisome, when there are so many allegations and counter allegations of destabilization and support for terrorist activities directed at some neighboring countries, and vice versa.

The OAU continues to appeal to the leaders and people of Sudan to work towards finding a lasting solution to the conflict inside that country, as well as problems with its neighbors. The OAU believes that the solution to all of these problems could be found if there is political will on the part of the leaders. Ultimately, only the Sudanese people can act to end the conflict in their country. But, the support of the OAU and the International Community is imperative, to bring about reconciliation, peace and security in that great African country. In this regard, the IGAD Declaration of Principles remains a viable framework for dealing with the problem in the Sudan in a definitive manner.

**Angola**

The OAU has, over the years, expressed its support to the United Nations in its efforts aimed at implementing the Lusaka Peace Protocol. Recently, the OAU has been seriously concerned about the collapse of the Lusaka Peace Process leading to a renewed outbreak of war between the two Parties. The OAU, in keeping with the declarations made by SADC, has clearly apportioned blame on the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) for its failure to live up to the commitments it entered into with respect to the Lusaka Protocol. It is within this context that the OAU has consistently urged UNITA to comply with the provisions of the Protocol and to ensure the full demobilization of its forces and the demilitarization of territories under its control. The OAU also supports UN Security Council measures aimed at compelling UNITA to comply with its commitments.
But the truth of the matter is that the Organization has only been symbolically and peripherally involved in efforts to end the war in Angola. This factor has led to a lot of criticism by the countries of the region.

In order to address this problem, the OAU is moving to ensure a more sustained involvement of the Organization in efforts to bring peace to Angola. In that regard, and as a matter of priority, the OAU intends to implement the Algiers Decision on the reactivation of the OAU Contact Group on Angola, made up of the Presidents of Zimbabwe and Cape Verde, as well as the Secretary - General; and considering ways and means of an effective implementation of the UN measures against UNITA by Member States - in that regard, the OAU intends to work with the UN Committee on Sanctions.

The OAU will also continue to monitor developments in that country and make further proposals to its Policy Organs on the role that the Organization could play in the efforts aimed at ending the conflict.

The Comoros

The Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros has been engulfed in turmoil since August 1997, following a so-called declaration of independence by a separatist Movement in Anjouan. Since the eruption of the crisis, the OAU has been fully engaged in efforts aimed at finding a peaceful and negotiated solution that respects the unity and territorial integrity of the country and takes into account the legitimate aspirations of the Islands and their inhabitants. These efforts have culminated with the conclusion of the Antananarivo Agreement of April 23, 1999. It is, however, a matter of regret that today, the process of returning Comoros to security, stability and peaceful coexistence is in a total stalemate: on the one hand, the Anjouanese Party, despite the formal commitment it made in Antananarivo, still refuses to sign the Agreement and persists in its usual delaying tactics; on the other hand, the coup d'Etat of April 30, 1999, has undermined the political consensus in Grande Comore and further complicated the situation. Col. Azali has so far shown no inclination to respond positively to the demands by the OAU to bring about a speedy return to constitutional order. The countries of the Region, which have been mandated to follow-up the matter and implement the relevant OAU decisions, have, so far, also failed to respond to the crisis in a cohesive and pro-active manner, and herein lies the reason of the OAU failure to achieve its objectives. The Organization has lost most of its credibility vis-à-vis the Comorian Parties, and, as long as these problems are not addressed, there is little hope to make headway in the search for a solution.

In view of this situation, the OAU intends to devise strategies on how best to engage the region for it to take the appropriate measures to put an end to the crisis. Within this framework, the Central Organ at its meeting of 19 November 1999, recommended that a ministerial meeting of countries of the Region could be convened to map out a strategy, that is clear and action-oriented, and set up deadlines for the attainment of OAU’s objectives. Such meeting could also define the terms of reference of the delegation that the countries of the region are expected to dispatch to the Archipelago, pursuant to the decision of the Council of Ministers in Algiers in July 1999.
The Central African Republic

Thanks to the presence of MISAB and, later on MINURCA, peace and stability have been restored in the Central African Republic. The legislative elections of 22 November and 13 December 1998 and presidential elections of 19 September 1999 went rather smoothly. However, many issues pertaining to the implementation of the Bangui Accords remain unresolved, in particular with regard to the restructuring of the Army. The OAU continues to follow closely the situation in that country.

The Democratic Republic of Congo

After months of efforts by African leaders, particularly those in the region, to find a peaceful solution to the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo, a cease-fire agreement has been finally signed in Lusaka on 10 July 1999 by the States Parties, on 1 August by the MLC and on 31 August by the DRC. That means that the cease-fire agreement is in effect since 1 September 1999.

The involvement of the OAU in the implementation of the cease-fire Agreement in the DRC is as follows:

• a general responsibility, along with the United Nations, in the implementation of the Agreement;
• a specific responsibility consisting of:
  • facilitating the establishment of the Joint Military Commission (JMC), and
  • assisting the DRC Parties in choosing a Neutral Facilitator for the inter-Congolese political negotiations.

The OAU has taken the lead in the installation and operationalization of the JMC, whose Chairman was appointed by the Secretary General and is supporting it financially and providing the required human resources. As this paper was being finalized, the OAU deployed the first contingent of neutral investigators in Kabinda, to monitor compliance with the Ceasefire Agreements. These regional JMCs and neutral investigators from Nigeria, Malawi, Senegal and Algeria will be deployed subsequently in the other areas.

Ethiopia and Eritrea

The dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea, which erupted in May 1998, is one of the major challenges and preoccupation of the OAU. The efforts deployed by the Organization resulted in the Framework Agreement (accepted by Ethiopia in November 1998 and by Eritrea in February 1999), the modalities for the implementation of the Framework Agreement (accepted by both sides in Algiers in July 1999) and, finally, the Technical Arrangements for the implementation of the Framework Agreement and the Modalities. While Eritrea accepted the latter document, Ethiopia requested for clarifications. These clarifications were forwarded to Ethiopia in August. Consultations are ongoing.

Guinea-Bissau

It is to be recalled that the Algiers ministerial decision on Guinea-Bissau “called on the OAU Secretary - General to initiate consultation with the United Nations Secretary-General with a view to embarking on joint action aimed at the consolidation of peace and national
reconciliation in Guinea-Bissau.” In addition, the Summit's decision on unconstitutional changes of Government “… requested the Secretary-General to be actively involved in developments in those countries and assist in programmes intended to re-establish constitutional and democratic governments in the countries concerned”. Since the Summit, the Secretary General has been engaging the authorities in Guinea-Bissau. Additionally, he dispatched a Special Envoy to the country to explore how best the OAU can support and facilitate the transition process in Guinea-Bissau.

The OAU is in the process of fielding an Observer Team to monitor the conduct of the forthcoming elections. Earlier, the Organization had made a financial contribution to the Government in support of the transition process.

**Liberia**

The major preoccupation for the OAU in Liberia is to support the country's post-conflict reconstruction, reconciliation and development efforts. In this regard, the OAU continues to monitor developments in Liberia with a view to preventing the possible relapse of the country into conflict. In addition, the OAU will work closely with the ECA, UNDP, ECOWAS and other actors within the framework of the proposed integrated programme for post-conflict reconstruction in the Mano River Union.

**Niger**

Like in Guinea-Bissau, Niger is making efforts to return to constitutional order. Recently, the Secretary - General; dispatched H.E. Amb. Mamadi Diawara, the Ambassador of Guinea to Ethiopia and Permanent Representative to the OAU to Niamey, to consult with the leaders of Niger and offer the assistance of the OAU to the transitional process as requested by the Algiers Summit. The first round of the presidential race went smoothly on 17 October 1999, with the presence of OAU Observers. The OAU action will continue to focus on two aspects: first, to make the necessary preparations to monitor the electoral process - the second round of the presidential race and the legislative elections are both scheduled on November 1999; second, the OAU is elaborating concrete proposals on how best it could contribute to the stability of the situation in the country to prevent a recurrence of the crisis, as was the case following the Presidential elections of 1993.

**Sierra Leone**

The conflict in Sierra Leone commenced in March 1991. However, the International Community did not become seriously involved in efforts to resolve it until December 1994, when the United Nations sent a preliminary fact-finding mission to the country. The OAU's own efforts began in February 1995 and since then it has worked closely with individual countries of the region and ECOWAS, as well as with the United Nations and the International Community at large, to find a lasting solution to the conflict. In July 1999, a third peace Agreement on Sierra Leone, the Lome Agreement, was signed following negotiations between the parties in which the OAU participated. Like the Abidjan Agreement, the OAU has been designated as one of the Moral Guarantors in the implementation of the Lome Agreement. The main focus of the OAU at this time remains how to facilitate the implementation of the Lome Agreement, in conjunction with the other Moral Guarantors.
Accordingly, the OAU continues to:

1. Monitor, on a daily basis, the ongoing developments in Sierra Leone, especially as they impact on the implementation of the Lome Agreement, through maintaining contacts and liaising with leaders of the parties to the conflict and with key countries of the West African Region, the ECOWAS Secretariat, the United Nations and the Commonwealth; and undertaking fact-finding and/or mediation missions to Freetown, Abuja, Lome, Abidjan, Accra, Monrovia, where appropriate.

2. Attend regularly, the statutory meetings of the Joint Implementation Committee and the ECOWAS Ministerial Committee of Seven, to both of which the OAU is a key member and both of which are the lead international borders in the implementation of the Lome Agreement.

3. Advise, on the basis of the programme to be developed together with the ECA/UNDP/ECOWAS on integrated post-conflict peace building in the three Mano River Basin countries of Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea. The OAU envisages that this programme will build on its own initiative to dispatch an OAU/ECA Needs Assessment Mission to Sierra Leone.

4. Work closely with the OAU Commission for Human and Peoples' Rights on human rights issues arising from the implementation of the Lome Agreement, including in particular the establishment of an internal inquiry by the RUF on atrocities committed during the war, as well as the establishment of a new Sierra Leone Human Rights Commission and a Truth and Reconciliation Commission as prescribed by the Lome Agreement.

5. Focus on the organization of the forthcoming elections in Sierra Leone, which could lead to a consolidation of the peace process.

6. Mobilize international donors to provide funds for the post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation of Sierra Leone.

Somalia

The issue for immediate action on the agenda of the OAU Programme for Somalia is dispatch of the Fact-Finding Mission requested by several OAU Council of Ministers sessions. In preparing for the fielding of this mission preferably before the end of 1999, considerable information collection and planning are being undertaken to ensure its success.

Such information collection and planning will be achieved through:

i) continuing to monitor developments in Somalia and consulting in Addis Ababa with key Member States and organizations of the Standing Committee represented in Addis Ababa;

ii) Consulting with Somali leaders resident/represented in Kenya, the United Nations Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS) and other members of the Standing Committee;
iii) maintaining contacts with the IGAD Secretariat and, as part of the above-mentioned preliminary mission, visit the IGAD Secretariat in Djibouti as well as the Djiboutian authorities (Djibouti is Current chairman of IGAD);

iv) maintaining contacts with the League of Arab States.

It is expected that the OAU Fact-Finding Mission to Somalia will be undertaken sometime in December 1999, after which the results of the Mission will be analyzed and recommendations submitted to the Secretary - General and through him, to the Policy Organs of the Organization, for action.

Western Sahara

The OAU has deployed observers to work with the UN Mission (MINURSO) for the organization of a referendum in Western Sahara. The resolution of this crisis is important, not only for the people of Western Sahara, but also in the general interest of stability, security and cooperation of the Maghreb region, with clear ramifications for the continent as the deliberations of the Ouagadougou Summit on this issue clearly indicated. The OAU will continue to monitor and report regularly on the progress made with regard to the implementation of the UN Peace Plan for Western Sahara.

4. Problems and Prospects of Achieving Lasting Internal Peace in Africa

It is to be recalled, that the political systems that were created after independence in most African countries, tended to be strong centralized States dominated either by single parties or military Governments. The serious task of nation building fell on the shoulders of elites, some of whom preserved intact, colonial institutions, as well as some of their divide and rule tactics.

This situation was not helped by the then prevailing mentality, which assumed that the State knew better what the people wanted and the accompanying contradictions, which provided the context within which tensions and conflicts were generated. In justifying the need to preserve national unity, many of the new States of Africa, equated unity with the preservation of ethnic hegemony rather than national pre-eminence, which foundations were laid by the departing colonialists.

It is also true that, some African States experienced social conflict, because of lack of democratic institutions, which allow for full participation and through which consensus on the way forward could be reached. Apart from limitations in representation and effective participation in the political process, in many African States, there was a lack of accountability, which encouraged corruption and favouritism, which in turn bred resentments and political grievances without any proper means of redress.

Unfortunately, economic problems also impacted negatively on the progress made by African States, especially, after 1980, when most of our countries were adversely affected by the world recession, which in Africa, became an economic crisis.

The political implications of the economic and social stagnation were far-reaching. In many countries economic malaise and social dislocations, generated social tensions and political discontent against government, thereby aggravating political conflicts. This combination of
economic difficulties, social unrest and political violence, had implications, which extended outside the borders of many African States.

In the international market place, it became obvious that while the prices of imported goods were increasing by leaps and bounds, the demand for African primary products had been shrinking with declining prices at the international market place. Factories in many African countries began operating at extremely low capacity utilization, due to the inability, to import the necessary spare parts and other inputs resulting in the local manufacture of goods reaching a trickle. Agriculture was not spared either as output declined in absolute terms and relative to the rate of population growth or was ignored by decision makers. The severe contraction that African States experienced, affected all segments of the Continent's population, specially the youth, whose enthusiasm and creative aspirations were gradually replaced by hopelessness, apathy despair and the tragedy brought about by the phenomenon of child soldiers and the trafficking in illicit drugs.

Coupled with this, is the external debt burden, which today, represents a massive haemorrhage affecting Africa’s economic health and sovereignty. To make matters worse, the creditor nations and the international financial institutions, have insisted that African States rigorously implement Adjustment Programmes, which entail cutting back on public sector expenditure, eliminating subsidies on essential commodities, and reducing the number of government employees among other conditionalities.

In most African States, the implementation of these conditionalities have brought about disastrous social unrest and upheavals, often culminating in conflicts and violent change of Governments.

In spite of the constraints and dilemma, which confront many African States, it is commendable that a large majority of our countries have been engaging in internally generated and unique changes to reverse the negative trends and developments referred to earlier. It is important, not only to acknowledge the bona fides of these changes, but to support and encourage them.

In this connection, it is also critically important to acknowledge the increasing acceptance by many Member States of the OAU, to ensure popular participation and responsive governance on the Continent, at a time when the tasks of balancing political liberties and maintaining law and order, as well as the integrity of the State are proving difficult. Increasingly, factors of religion, ethnicity, race, regionalism and even clanism, are emerging as critical factors in the escalation of conflicts in Africa.

The challenge is how to maintain the balance between upholding these factors that identify individuals and people, and safeguarding peace and unity within the States. This determination is increasingly also assuming critical importance, as the emerging African democracies have to cope with the engaging tasks of economic reform, alongside political liberalization.

It is well known fact, that economic reforms which entail cuts in public spending, have brought much social strain, as governments have had to pay less attention to such key areas as education and health in terms of funding. This State retreat from the social sector, which has taken place in tandem with job cuts, has polarized society, and at times, tested to the limit, the States’ ability to maintain law and order.
5. **Conclusion**

It is true that many African States have opted for home-grown democratization processes. These processes, have all the elements of universally accepted democratic values such as: the creation of a political climate that tolerates the right of dissent, accountability to the public, transparency of Government activities, independent and honest judiciary, enforcement of rules and regulations, provision of social and economic services, press freedom, curbing militarism, nurturing a culture of tolerance, safeguarding human rights, ensuring peace, stability and economic development. Governments need to be encouraged to persevere along this path.

There is also an increasing awareness, as the Secretary-General has consistently maintained, that economic development cannot take place in an environment of conflicts. Increasingly, it is being accepted that good governance must imply that African Governments should facilitate conflict resolution between national, ethnic and regional groupings.

On the concept of sovereignty, which many have expressed concerns over, there is currently at the OAU, a very dynamic interpretation of this principle currently taking place. Indeed, the commitment African leaders entered into during the adoption of the 1990 Declaration and the 1993 Declaration establishing the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, are clear indications that our leaders are willing to allow for a greater involvement of the Organization in issues which were hitherto regarded as the sole preserve of States. Additionally, the fact that they adopted the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community and working for the integration of their economies, and the recent development in Sirte, Libya, where the leaders decided to establish an African Union and an African Parliament among other things, means that some degree of the sovereignty of our States would of necessity, be conceded to the larger Continental setting. Taken together, these political and economic arrangements should provide a sound basis for working around the concept of sovereignty in a way that will take cognizance of and respect the concerns of sovereign African States like other States elsewhere in the world, but at the same time, allow progress to be made in the important areas of conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution.

Finally, it is fair to point out that the process of democratization is gaining momentum. New and dynamic leaders are emerging in the Continent. The politics of rigidity is giving way to greater flexibility and all-inclusiveness, even if economic problems have tended to compound and have inhibitive effects on the democratic process. We need to consolidate the gains of the newly democratizing countries, by building institutions that will ensure that democracy endures and thrives in Africa. If there must be a peace dividend in Africa, we must pay more attention to post-conflict peace building. We have to find a way to ensure that the revolution of rising expectations that is sweeping through the new democracies of Africa does not turn into a revolution of rising frustration and conflict.

The experiences at the OAU, especially in the last two to three years, give us reasons to be hopeful about the future of Africa. As more and more Member States seek OAU’s assistance in preventing, managing and resolving their internal conflicts, as well as the Organization’s involvement in election observation and other related activities, there are prospects for overcoming current difficulties. Given the preference of many African States, for popular participation in developmental efforts, the democratization of our societies, the abandoning of monolithic models of development, and the reform of the State, an enabling environment will
be created, in which Africans will have the power to plan and make rational choices about their political and economic well-being and thereby bequeath to future generations of Africans, the legacy of a continent free from catastrophic conflicts and instability - a prosperous and united Africa.