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ORGANISATION DE
L'UNITE AFRICAINE

ORGANISATIE VAN
AFRIKAANSE EENHEID

BUREAU PERMANENT DE L'OUA

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Bruxelles, le 11 janvier 1999.

A : **MONSIEUR JEAN MFASONI**
Directeur (Administration et Conférences) a.i.

DE : **MONSIEUR WAWA O. LEBA**
Directeur du Bureau Permanent

OBJET : **TRANSMISSION RAPPORT D'ACTIVITES DE LA**
MISSION PERMANENTE DE L'OUA A BRUXELLES
POUR LA PERIODE DE JUIN 1998 A FEVRIER 1999.

Me référant à votre lettre CD/DOC/1/136.98 du 14 décembre 1998 et à mon mémorandum OUA.BRU/HQ/ADM/4.99 du 7 janvier courant, je vous prie de trouver, **en annexe, la version anglaise** du rapport d'activités de notre Bureau en guise de contribution à celui portant sur les activités du Secrétaire Général.

Considération distinguée.

c.i. : **CHEF DE LA DIVISION DES CONFERENCES**

WOL/so

**ACTIVITY REPORT OF
THE PERMANENT OFFICE
OF THE OAU IN BRUSSELS
FROM JUNE 1998 TO FEBRUARY 1999**

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Pursuant to the mandate given by the highest bodies of the Organisation to the General Secretariat of the OAU in general and to the Brussels Office in particular, regarding implementation of priority objectives based on directives given by the Secretary General, the OAU's permanent Representation in Brussels would like to hereby submit its activity report covering June 1998 to february 1999.

2. The activities which fall under the two-year budget programme for 1998 -2000 cover a very broad area in the political , diplomatic, socio-economic, cultural , press and information arenas, as well as relations with the host country,i.e the Kingdom of Belgium, and the role played by the Sectetariat as a supportive Secretariat to the African Group , as some fifty member States of the Organisation have diplomatic representations in the Benelux.

II. OUTLINE OF ACTIVITIES

A) Activities of a political and diplomatic nature

Relations with host country, the Kingdom of Belgium

3. It must be underlined that the implementation modalities of the **Headquarters Agreement** signed in October 1985 between the OAU and the Kingdom of Belgium have been finalised on June 29th 1998 after a number of negotiation sessions focusing mainly on obstacles inherent to certain specific provisions . The exercise was brought to a final ending thanks to the assignment of full powers respectively by the Secretary General of the OAU to the Director of the Permanent OPffice in Brussels and by the King of Belgium to the Chairman of the Belgian inter-governmental Comittee in charge of for relations with international institutions based in Brussels.

The draft Agreement has been submitted to the Belgian Parliament for ratification.

4. The Permanent Representation took part in a number of activities organised by the Kingdom of Belgium, including :

4.1 International conference on sustainable disarmament for sustainable development (October 12-13 , 1198)

Pursuant to decision CM/Dec.432(LXVIII) adopted by the Ordinary Council meeting in Ouagadougou in May 1998, the Office and an officer from the political department represented the Organisation at the conference which was organised under the aegis of the Belgian Secretary of State for development cooperation. Many African countries were represented including Mali whose delegation was headed by President ALPHA OUMAR KONARE.

The main thrust of the conference was to highlight the operational link which should exist between disarmament and sustainable development. Not only did the conference demonstrate the negative impact of armed conflicts on economic and social development endeavours, but it also reaffirmed the undeniable role played by the proliferation of light weapons in the multiplication of conflicts thus jeopardising development. The conference therefore drew up a platform of ways and means to be adopted by national and international development cooperations bodies could use to meet this challenge.

During the meeting, participants exchanged views on their respective experience and initiatives to control light weapon trafficking and recover them from the populations. President KONARE informed participants about his country's initiative called the "fire of peace", lit in Timbuktu in 1996.

In conclusion, the conference adopted by acclamation a declaration called "**The Brussels call for action**" calling upon the international Community and the United Nations, in particular, to make the necessary provisions to adopt "**An international programme of action on practical disarmament**" to foster peace.

The Declaration also committed support to national, regional and international initiatives already taken to promote disarmament, such as the European Union Code of conduct on export of arms, the European Union Programme to combat and prevent conventional arms' trafficking, the inter-American Convention on the same subject as well as the OAU and other African projects on the matter.

4.2 Seminar on the implementation of the European Union's Programme for the prevention and fight against illicit trafficking of conventional arms

From November 30th to December 1st 1998, the Office participated in a meeting organised by the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the afore-mentioned topic. The seminar was organised within the framework of the principle of sustainable disarmament for sustainable development and focussed on progress made in implementing the EU's programme for the prevention and fight against conventional arms' trafficking from and through its member States, as well as ways and means of providing assistance to countries and regions affected by such a traffic by helping them combat it or recover such arms from the population.

OTHER ACTIVITIES IN THE HOST COUNTRY

4.3 Working visit in Belgium of His Excellency the President of the Democratic Republic of Congo

The Permanent Office was involved in the working visit to Belgium from November 23rd to 26th of His Excellency Mzee LAURENT DESIRE KABILA, President of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The Director of the Office took the opportunity of his presence at the meeting organised between the President and the Congolese Community of Brussels, to convey greetings to President KABILA on behalf of His Excellency the Secretary General of the OAU, as well as a message of encouragement for his efforts to seek solutions to conflicts affecting the African continent and his appeal to the international community to help African leaders find solutions to their problems, rather than imposing their own views or getting involved in the conflicts presently affecting Africa.

4.4 Private visit of His Excellency the President of the Republic of Ghana to Belgium

The Permanent Office took part in the function organised at ACP House to honour His Excellency President JERRY RAWWLINGS. In his speech, President RAWLINGS urged ACP States to invest themselves fully in the ACP-EU negotiations for a Successor Agreement to Lome IV.

- RELATIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE ACP-EU JOINT ASSEMBLY

(a) European Parliament

5. The Permanent Office made every effort to strengthen relations between the OAU and the European Parliament through an exchange of information, with a view to making it more aware of the new priorities of the Organisation regarding the building of peace and security, and the setting up of an African Economic Community deeply rooted in a democratic society.

6. In this regard, the Permanent Office would like to hail the working visit to Addis Ababa on the invitation of His Exc. the Secretary General of the OAU of His Exc. Mr MICHEL ROCARD, European M.P and chairman of the Development Commission of the EU.

7. Furthermore, through an exchange of letters with the Permanent Office, the President of the European Parliament expressed his willingness to organise a meeting between the Secretary General and certain Commissions of the Parliament, in the context of an official visit that the Secretary General could make to Brussels.

(b) ACP-EU joint assembly

8. As provided for in the regulations, the ordinary session of the Joint Assembly was held in Brussels, from the 21st to the 24th of September 1998.

9. The session was preceded by an ACP meeting held on the 19th and 20th of September 1998, to harmonise the views of ACP parliamentarians on the various items of the joint meeting 's agenda and on the motions for resolutions tabled by the European side.

10. To that effect and as customary, the OAU Office was mandated to negotiate compromise drafts with European political groupings , for resolutions subject to controversy from either side.

11. On this occasion, the motions for resolutions concerned were those on the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea, the situation in the Great Lakes region and more particularly in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the situations in Sudan, Angola, Equatorial Guinea, Nigeria, etc.

12. The ACP side also had an exchange of views on the possibility of the creation of an ACP Assembly.

13. From the detailed report submitted to headquarters on this meeting , the following points need to be highlighted :

- Twenty six resolutions were adopted on various topics relating to trade and financial cooperation, political matters, as well as on other issues related to development such as the environment, biotechnologies, the information society.
- The European MPs complained about the fact that their ACP partners had recourse to the principle of a “**vote by separate houses**” provided for in the rules of procedure of the Assembly, to avoid condemning the behaviour of some member States with regard to democracy or respect for human rights.
- ACP MPs also expressed regret regarding the fact that European political groups sometimes tabled motions for resolutions without the relevant background information to justify their grievances.

- RELATIONS BETWEEN THE OAU AND THE E.U

14. During the period considered, the OAU and the EU organised two meetings, one on June 22, 1998 in Brussels, and another one on November 27th, 1998 in Addis Ababa, in the context of their bi-annual consultations. The two meetings were co-chaired by the representatives of the Presidents in office for the two Organisations, i.e., Burkina Faso on the OAU side and Austria for the EU.

14.1 The Brussels meeting

The two parties exchanged view on the following items :

i) Political matters

- Prevention of violent conflicts in Africa
- Human rights and democracy in Africa

ii) Economic issues

- The impact of the Euro on Africa
- Africa's foreign debt
- Future ACP-EU relations (role of Africa)
- Negotiations under the WTO
- The OAU's socio-economic project.

iii) Other issues

- Project for the organisation of an OAU-EU Summit in the year 2000
- Framework for OAU-EU cooperation

In concluding the meeting, the two parties reaffirmed the need for economic matters to be on the agendas of future meetings but as clearly outlined topics. Henceforth, the issue of regional integration was referred to in relation to the African Economic Community, the creation of which will require a strengthening of already existing regional economic communities (SADC, IGAD, COMESA, ECOWAS).

As far as the external debt is concerned, the European side preferred to refer it to other bilateral and multilateral bodies.

Regarding the introduction of the Euro, both sides agreed that studies would be needed to assess its impact on African economies.

With regard to the organisation of the OAU-EU Summit, the EU welcomed Egypt's offer to host it. The two parties agreed however to pursue consultations on matters relating to participants and the various items to be part of the agenda.

The two parties exchanged documents on the instrument which should constitute a legal framework for cooperation between the two organisations .

14.2 Addis Ababa meeting

As a follow-up to their cycle of consultations, the OAU and the EU met a second time on November 27th in Addis Ababa. The following items were on the meeting's agenda :

1. Forthcoming OAU-EU Summit
2. OAU and EU 's contribution to violent conflicts' prevention and resolution : situation in the Great Lakes' Region and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, situation in Angola, the Ethiopia/Eritrea conflict, situation in Somalia and in the Comoros Islands, light weapons' traffic control.
3. Conflict prevention mechanism of the OAU and early warning system (projects to support the conflict prevention Centre).
4. Human rights and democracy.
5. OAU -EU framework for cooperation.
6. Setting up of working groups in each of the two organisations.

After their deliberations, the two parties adopted a joined communique stating the progress made in the context of this cooperation and underlining areas which need further efforts namely with regard to coordination and follow-up.

B) Economic and social cooperation related activities

15. As stipulated in its two- year programme, the OAU Office is to follow-up ACP-EU relations under the Lome Conventions, particularly from the economic standpoint, in order to make a rational assessment and assist African States draw a maximum of benefits which would lead to their economic and social development.

16. After a fair assessment of progress, obstacles and shortcomings following two decades of cooperation, the ACP and the EU agreed to launch a new round of negotiations which , at the outset, should culminate in the adoption of a new legal instrument which should provide improved opportunities for their cooperation.

17. The two parties also agreed on a timetable for separate and joint meetings in the context of the negotiations.

(a) On the ACPside

The first Summit of ACP Heads of State and Government , held in Libreville, Gabon on 6th and 7th of November 1997, had mandated the Group to hold the following meetings, all of which have already taken place :

1. ACP Ministers of Finance meeting held in Brussels from the 25th to the 26th of June 1997. The meeting was preceded by a meeting of senior officials.
2. ACP Ministers of Foreign Affairs meeting held in Brussels on September 27th 1998.
3. ACP Trade Ministers met in the framework of the same mandate on May 15th 1998 in Brussels.
4. Sixty-eighth session of the ACP Council of Ministers held in Brussels from September 28th to October 1st, 1998.

18. Ministers in charge of ACP-EU cooperation held their 68th session as scheduled and adopted a number of decisions relating to the financial sector as customary for the November meeting. However, the substantive item of the meeting was the consideration and adoption of **the ACP Group's negotiating mandate**.

19. A detailed report on the deliberations and other important decisions of the meeting has already been communicated to Headquarters.

(b) Joint ACP-EU meetings

20. At an imposing ceremony held at the headquarters of the European Union Council in Brussels on September 30th, 1998, the two parties officially opened as planned, the negotiations for a partnership agreement fostering development to succeed the present Lomé IV Convention by the year 2000.

21. The ceremony was co-chaired by Madam Billie MILLER, deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Barbados, President in office of the ACP Council of Ministers and Madam Benita FERRO-WALDNER Austria's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, President of the European Union Council.

The European side underlined the main thrust of their negotiating mandate, including :

- more in-depth and wider political dialogue
- a simplified and more flexible development cooperation
- a fair access to economic partnership, under a new format with emphasis being laid on the potential offered by regional integration.

On the ACP side, after having given a run-down of twenty-five years of ACP-EU cooperation, Mrs Miller underlined both parties' disappointment with the results with regard in particular to poverty alleviation in ACP States.

24. The President of Council then went through all the different areas of cooperation referred to in both parties' negotiating mandates and underlined those requesting further reflection for clarification.

(c) Other ACP-EU activities

25. After the official opening involving the two parties on September 30th , 1998, the different negotiating groups started to meet in order to reconcile their positions on the various negotiating subjects and areas.

26. Such meetings started in Brussels on 17th and 18th of November 1998

27. As we are drafting the present report, negotiating groups have already identified areas of convergence and divergence to be discussed on the occasion of the first ACP-EU ministerial conference on the negotiations to be held in Dakar, Senegal, from the 6th to the 8th of February 1998.

C) PRESS AND INFORMATION

28. While making a contribution to other activities of the Office (participation in negotiations' meetings, preparation for meetings of the African Group) , the press and information section has carried out its duties of dissemination of information coming from headquarters on the life of the organisation, and publication of a news bulletin called "OAU News".

29. Such information is made available to African Diplomatic Representations, to the foreign medias and to international institutions based in Brussels, to socio-economic and professional groupings, to students and to Africa's partners.

D) SUPPORT TO THE AFRICAN GROUP

The Permanent Office has organised two plenary meetings to communicate to the African Group the conclusions of the OAU meeting held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in June 1998 , to give an update of the situation in Africa and to examine strategies that would enable Africa to participate in a rational manner to future ACP-EU negotiations.

31. With respect to the last objective, the Office has organised meetings of the ACP-EU relations' follow-up Committee set up by the African Group to identify issues of vital interest to Africa.

E) OTHER ACTIVITIES

32. The Permanent Office participated in the 67th ordinary session of the Advisory Committee on budgetary, financial and administrative matters ,held in Addis Ababa from the 16th to the 26th of November 1998.

1999-01-11

Activity report of the Permanent Office of the OAU in Brussels from June 1998 to February 1999

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Bureau Permanent de l'OAU a Bruxelles

Activity Report of the Permanent Office of the OAU in Brussels

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