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BRIEFING
OF THE
AFRICAN GROUP
ON
THE EIGHTH ORDINARY SESSION OF
THE ASSEMBLY OF THE AFRICAN UNION
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 22-30 Jan. 2007

BY

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Eighth Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 29 to 30 January 2007. This was preceded by the meetings of the Permanent Representatives Committee Thirteenth Ordinary Session from 22-23 January 2007, Executive Council, Tenth Ordinary Session, 25-26 January 2007 and New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) meetings, the 6th Summit of the APRM Forum of Heads of State and Government, 27 January 2007 and the 16th Summit of the Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee 28 January 2007. This was another important session to review the performance and reorient development directions of the African Union in rapidly changing international environment. The meetings were well attended at all levels by delegates from African countries.

Theme of Session was **Science and Technology and Scientific Research for Development**. This reflects increasing importance attached to the role of science and technology and scientific research in the promotion of accelerated development in Africa and the role it had played in the current on going globalization of the world economy. The meeting was well attended at all levels and debates very fruitful as energies were directed at the critical development issues in the continent.

II. PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE, THIRTEENTH ORDINARY SESSION, 22-23 JAN. 2007

The Permanent Representatives Committee consists of the all African Ambassadors accredited to the African Union. This Committee, according to Article 21 of the Constitutive Act is charged with the responsibility of preparing the work of the Executive Council.

(a) **Agenda:** During this meeting the PRC has Agenda that addressed a number of issues in the areas of (1) administrative and financial matters, (2) implementation of report, (3) legal and institutional matters, (4) political matters, (5) economic, social and cultural matters, (6) reports on various issues including the report of the Chairperson of the Commission.

(b) **Documents:** The meeting had before it all relevant documents in all AU official languages, Arabic, English, French and Portuguese. The Reports on Ministerial meeting brought before the PRC were meant for information and not for discussion.

(c) **Debate:** The highlights of the discussions addressed, among other things, the progress in the recruitment exercise and the need to complete this as soon as possible. It discussed the budget as approved by the PRC Sub-Committee on Budget and other additional conference and seminar proposals introduced by the Commission. The approval of the budget was based on agreed increment of 5.5 per cent across the board to reflect increase rate of economic growth in the continent and the capacity to pay by member states. Also, concerns were raised on the workload imposed on the Commission following the decision of the Assembly to have two Summits a year. The additional costs to member states were also cited. For this reason there were suggestions for reverting to one Summit a year and a second only when necessary.

It discussed the status of the implementation of OAU/AU Treaties and expressed concerns of the low implementation. It discussed the report on Specialized Technical Committees but there was no agreement on the way forward in view of the number proposed, the cost of implementation and the additional burden that this would be placed on the already over-burdened Commission. It discussed the report on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons in Africa. It discussed the "Task Force" report on the strategic partnership between Africa and the emerging countries of the South (China, India and South America –

Brazil). It was stressed that the African Union Commission should play important role including coordination in these partnerships.

(d) **Conclusion:** The Outcome of the debate of the PRC was embodied in its report to the Executive Council. This contained a number of recommendations.

III. EXECUTIVE COUNCIL, TENTH ORDINARY SESSION, 25-26 JAN. 2007

The Executive Council, provided in Article 10 of the Constitutive Act, consists of all Foreign Ministers or such other Ministers or Authorities as designated by the Governments of the Member States. The Executive Council is responsible to the Assembly.

(a) **Agenda:** The Agenda consisted of items for adoption without discussions, that is reports from other Ministerial Meetings, items for discussions which, among other things, include the report of the Chairperson of the Commission, report of the PRC, the Budget for 2007, report of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, report of the Pan-African Parliament, report on the implementation of Decision EX.CL/Dec.288 (IX) on the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, and the election of the new members of Peace and Security Council. Other items on the agenda are the issues proposed by the member states.

(b) **Documents:** Documents were available in all AU languages.

(c) **Debate:** The debate at the level of the Executive Council followed almost the same pattern as in the PRC since the issues were the same and the positions of countries did not substantially change. But it was noted that there were strong comments in the debate on **Partnership with Countries and Regions**. Although the processes are generally welcomed but a number suggestions were made to guide the processes. **First** that the process must be coordinated, **second** avoid partnership with countries to eliminate neocolonialism, absorption, and exploitation, **third** relations with partners should be structured for collective benefit.

The discussion of the report on the **African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance** generated additional exchanges in ideas. Most participants welcomed its adoption to further enhance the credibility of Africa. It was in the end adopted even though a few countries expressed the need for further cleaning up of the text and proper translations into other AU languages especially, Arabic.

(d) **Decisions:** The conclusions of the Debate were calibrated into **33 Decisions**, which stipulated what the Commission and the Member States should engage on in the drive towards the consolidation of continental integration.

IV. NEPAD

(a) 6th Summit of the APRM Forum of Heads of State and Government, 28 Jan. 2007.

The 6th Summit discussed the Progress Report of the Chairperson of the African Peer Review Panel of Eminent Persons. There are currently 21 African countries under **Country Review Processes**. For Country Review Missions have been fielded in Ghana, Rwanda and Kenya. South Africa and Algeria should present report at the Summit in July 2007. The following countries are about finalization of national process to pave the way to field Country Review Mission, Benin, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Uganda, and Mauritius. The following category of countries have received Country Support Mission, but still need to finalize pre-requisites and begin their national self-assessment, Lesotho, Mozambique, and Tanzania. The following are priority countries for Support Missions, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Malawi, Mali, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Zambia. The last category of countries have minimal progress at national level, they are Angola, Cameroon, Republic of Congo and Senegal.

Members were requested to make the required voluntary contribution of \$100,000 to the Fund of APRM to enhance its capacity to fulfill its objectives and avoid undue reliance on development partners.

Ghana, Kenya and Rwanda presented report on the implementation of the recommendations in their Review presented in earlier Summit (Khartoum and Gambia). The three countries have made significant progress in the implementation of the recommendations.

(b) 16th Summit of the Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee, 28 Jan. 2007.

One important discussion at this Summit was the integration of NEPAD into the AU. It was noted that no substantial progress was made. Algeria was mandated to convene expert meeting in March 2007 to brainstorm and flesh out the modalities for integration. Algeria would report back to the next Summit in July 2007. The Summit elected the H.E. Mr. A. Zenawi, the Prime Minister of Ethiopia as the new Chairperson of the Committee.

V. ASSEMBLY OF THE AFRICAN UNION, EIGHTH ORDINARY SESSION, 29-30 JAN. 2007

(a) Launching of International Year of African Football

The Commissioner for Social Affairs, Adv. Gawanas, stressed the import of football for the social and cultural lives of African youths and the need to enhance the promotion of football in the continent and effectively support South Africa in the hosting of the World Cup in 2010.

(b) Election of the Chairperson of the Union – President J. Kufuor of Ghana was elected as the new Chairperson of the African Union.

(c) Discussion of Theme: Science and Technology and Scientific Research for Development

Prof. N. Essayed, Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology

Prof. C. Juma, Director, Science, Technology and Globalization Project, Harvard University

Mr. Koichiro Matsuura, Director General, UNESCO

H.E. Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda

These are eminent personalities in the field of Science and Technology and Scientific Research for Development. Their observations and conclusions on Science and Technology and Scientific Research for Development in Africa were identical. Africa is lagging behind other regions of the world in science and technology advancement. It is seriously deficient in indigenous technology development. African governments should encourage youths to take up studies in science, technology and engineering and there should be increased in funding for national, regional and continental programs for science and technology and support the creation of national and regional centers of excellence in science and technology.

(d) Discussion on: Climate Change in Africa

Mme Rosebud Kurwijila, Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture
Sir Nicholas Stern, Advisor to the British Government on the Economics of Climate change

Mr. Arba Diallo, Executive Secretary of the UNCCD

H.E. Olusegun Obasanjo, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

Again these are respected authorities on Climate Change in Africa. There was convergence on their observations and conclusions on Climate Change in Africa. Africa, would, more than other regions, be more adversely affected by the on-going climatic changes because of the continent's low mitigation

and response capabilities. Africa's development partners are therefore urged to support African countries and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in their efforts to integrate adaptation and mitigation measures into their development plans.

(e) **Agenda:** Besides the items above, other important items on the agenda include, the Budget for 2007, report on the proposals for the Union Government, report of the Peace and Security Council, report of the Chairperson of NEPAD Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee, report of the First Africa-South America Summit, report on the Outcome of the Africa-China Forum Summit, report of the Pan-African Parliament, and the report of the Chairperson of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights. Others are the items proposed by the member states

(f) **Documents:** Documents were available in all AU languages.

(g) **Debate:** The debate at the level of the Assembly followed almost the same pattern as in the Executive Council since the issues were the same and the positions of countries did not substantially change. It approved the 2007 Budget for the Commission for a total of **\$132,988,152** of which **\$96,711,152** would be assessed to Member States, and **\$36,277,000** earmarked for specific programs. This includes the budget for the Pan-African Parliament and the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights. But two issues consumed the attention of the Heads of State.

The **first** was the conflicts in Darfur region of Sudan and its spillover to Chad and Somalia. Generally, most member states commended the African Union Commission and its organ the Peace and Security Council on the peace efforts in the continent; however it was underscored that the situation in Darfur requires urgent attention. The spillover of the conflict to Chad had resulted in large refugee in Chad and the political stability in the country under threat. There are increasing mutual suspicions by both countries and the conflict will also spread to Central African Republic and possibly with similar consequences. The situation in Somalia is critical because of the imminent withdrawal of Ethiopian forces. The Transitional Government is weak militarily to maintain peace and security and effectively confront the future challenges posed by the dislodged Union of Islamic Court. There was call by the African Union Commission for African countries to immediately contribute peacekeeping troops sufficient to maintain peace and security and help in the training and building of the forces of the Transitional Government.

The **second** was the **Union Government for the African Union**. The enthusiasms generated on this matter were not balanced. There were those who felt that the Union has not attained the stage when action should be taken on this issue, therefore the matter should be sent back to the Executive Council for further in-debt consultations. On the other hand, there are those who were convinced that necessary actions should be taken at least in principle in order to ascertain the destination of the African Union. Should it be a Union or a Federation? A decision it was assumed would enable the member states to fashion out relevant strategies and measures. Closely tied to this was the powerlessness of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission to autonomously take decisions on the direction of the African Union. But it was agreed that this should now remain in the realm of the Heads of State. They should speak to the matter and effectively pronounce themselves. For this reason, it was further agreed that the theme on the agenda of discussion at the next Summit in July 2007 would be African Union Government and the other the elections of the Chairpersons and Commissioners of the AUC.

Elections - 5 Members of the Peace and Security Council

1. Gabon (Central)
2. Ethiopia (East)
3. Algeria (North)
4. Angola (South)
5. Nigeria (West)

Appointment – Members of the Panel of the Wise

1. Salim Ahmed Salim (East)
2. Brigalia Bam (South)
3. Ahmed Ben Bella, (North)
4. Elisabeth K. Pognon (West)
5. Miguel Trovoada (Central)

(h) Decisions and Declarations: The conclusions of the Summit were encapsulated in 31 Decisions and 6 Declarations that prescribed directives on what the Commission and the Member States must embarked upon in order to consummate the objectives of the African Union.

VI. CONCLUSION

The Eighth Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union was largely successful in terms of the high level of participation the quality of discussions on

critical issues and the decisions reached on the way forward for the continental organization.

Administration and Legal: There was agreement that the recruitment process in the Commission should be speedily completed. Also, the ongoing renewal innovative arrangements in the administrative processes of the Commission should be speedily completed. There was consensus on the need to provide sufficient funds for the running of the Commission and its organs. Member states were urged to fulfill their financial commitment by prompt payments of their assessed contributions. Those in arrears were urged to pay up the arrears in order to improve and strengthen the financial health of the Union. More efforts should be made at the national level towards the ratification of treaties and protocols and their implementation.

Political matters: The need to continue to improve the political atmosphere in the continent was acknowledged. There appears to be increasing political stability in many countries with peaceful transition from one government to the other. The process of the consolidation of peace and security in the continent must continue. More attention needs to be paid to the immediate resolution of those countries still experiencing internal conflict. The Peace and Security Council was called upon to take necessary actions to resolve and improve the situation in Darfur and to prevent Somalia from slipping back to anarchy.

Economic and Socio-cultural matters: The Summit took note of the improvements in the economic, social and cultural matters in the continent. But acknowledged the need to address certain critical issues in order to consolidate the gains made so far and advance the integration of the continent into the ongoing process of globalization in which the continent is still largely in the periphery. The keys to Africa's development would, among other things, include addressing the questions on HIV/AIDS, market access and increased foreign direct investments and technology transfer.

Venue of Next Summit: 9th Ordinary Session of the

Assembly of the African Union

Accra, Ghana

Dates:

(a) PRC

25 – 26 June 2007

(b) Executive Council

28 – 29 June 2007

(c) Assembly of the Union

1 - 3 July 2007

Agenda of Next Summit: (i) Elections

- (a) Chairperson
 - (b) Deputy Chairperson
 - (c) Commissioners (8)
- (ii) Debate on the Goal of the African Union
(Union or Federation)

RESPONSE OF AFRICAN GROUP The African Group is well placed in Lilongwe to facilitate the implementation of the **decisions and declarations** of the Summit at the national and regional levels.

2007

Briefing of the African group on The eighth ordinary session of the assembly of the african union Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 22-30 jan. 2007 by Prof. R. Omotayo Olaniyan, AU regional delegate to SADC Lilongwe, Malawi, 19 Feb. 2007

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