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**ASSEMBLY OF THE UNION
NINTH ORDINARY SESSION
1- 3 July 2007
ACCRA, GHANA**

Assembly/AU/Draft/Rpt(IX)

**REPORT OF THE NINTH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE
ASSEMBLY OF THE UNION ON “THE GRAND DEBATE ON
THE UNION GOVERNMENT”**

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Ninth Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union on the “Grand Debate on the Union Government” was held in Accra, Ghana, from 1 to 3 July 2007.

II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND PROGRAMME OF WORK

2. The Assembly adopted its agenda and the following working hours:

- Morning: 10:00 a.m. to 13 :00 p.m.
- Afternoon: 15:30 a.m. to 19 :00 pm

3. The Assembly set up a Drafting Committee charged with the mandate to draft the conclusions and outcome of the Grand Debate. The Committee was composed as follows:

- i) Ghana (Current Chair of the AU);
- ii) Congo (Central Africa);
- iii) Uganda (East Africa);
- iv) Libya (North Africa);
- v) Namibia (Southern Africa);
- vi) Burkina Faso (West Africa);
- vii) Representative of the Chairperson of the Commission.

III. PRESENTATION OF THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE 10TH EXTRAORDINARY SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL BY H.E NANA AKUFO-ADDO, CHAIRPERSON OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

4. The Chairperson of the Executive Council recalled that the Brainstorming on the Union Government and the 10th Extraordinary Session on “the Report of the Chairperson on Strengthening the Commission of the African Union” were held pursuant to Decision Assembly/AU/Dec.156(VIII) adopted by the Assembly in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in January 2007. He further indicated that during the session of Council, contributions were made by the Chairperson of the Commission and the Representative of the President of the Pan African Parliament as well as Representatives of the Chief of Executives of some of the Regional Economic Communities.

5. The Chairperson of the Executive Council informed the Assembly that during the debate, Council had identified points of convergence and points of divergence where two schools of thoughts had emerged on the issue of postponing election of Members of the Commission in view of the need to carry out an institutional audit of the organs of

the Union and the Regional Economic Communities as well as to take on board the outcome of the Grand Debate on the Union Government in Accra, Ghana, in July 2007.

IV. BRIEF INTRODUCTIONS ON THE THEME OF THE UNION GOVERNMENT BY THEIR EXCELLENCIES:

a) *El-Hadj Omar Bongo Odimba, President of the Republic of Gabon*

6. The President of the Republic pointed out that the dream of building an integrated Africa had become a fervent duty and a major challenge for African countries because the modern day world and the challenges of globalization necessitated the establishment of large groupings. He also observed that Africa had not remained on the sidelines with the creation of the African Union whose ultimate goal was the full political and economic integration of the Continent.

7. The President indicated that the time had come for the establishment of the United States of Africa, one of the fundamental stages of which is putting in place a real executive organ of the Union. He however observed that a wide consensus would be required and that the differences of opinion should be ironed out.

8. The President also underscored the fact that at the present stage, African States would retain their sovereignty, and their governments and ministers their national competences. The Federal Government, he added, based on the principle of subsidiarity, would be endowed with a number of federal ministries, which would have only the powers and competences delegated by the States.

b) *Mr. Mwai Kibaki, President of the Republic of Kenya*

c) *The Right Honorable Mr. Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho*

9. The Prime Minister indicated that his presentation was premised on three pillars, namely, (i) the desirability of integration, (ii) the areas of integration and (iii) the envisaged type of integration.

10. With regard to the desirability of integration, the Prime Minister indicated that there was no doubt that the ultimate objective was the political and economic integration of the continent. In this regard, he pointed out that in a globalized world, Africa could not remain as individual countries and therefore the issue of integration was no longer in doubt since the benefits would be important and constitute the reasons for the creation of the United States of Africa and the Union Government. He added that only as a collective entity, would Africa be able to face the challenges of poverty, HIV/AIDS, land degradation and resultant famines, etc. which confront it and address the challenges

and speak with one voice in major international fora, defend herself against aggression, enable African countries to exploit and share in her natural resources and enable African countries to trade within Africa. The Prime Minister stated that however, some factors militated against the total political and economic integration of the continent, and in particular the diverse cultural and religious make-up and values. He underlined the importance of the issue of democracy and the need to identify and agree upon minimum standards of compliance or benchmarks for common values.

11. With regard to the areas of cooperation, the Prime Minister indicated that the integration process would be on two fronts, both political and economic. But, at this stage, he indicated that focus should be placed on the economic front, and Member States could consider surrendering part of their responsibilities to some institutions, including the Commission in areas such as education with the elaboration of similar education systems, curricula and syllabi. He also stated that the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) should remain the building blocs of the Union and that some areas such as infrastructure, free movement of people, trade, information technology, etc. could be best achieved through RECs.

12. The Prime Minister concluded by stressing the need to define a model of integration for Africa in view of the fact that the current examples, United States of America, European Union, Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) had their own specificities and that it would be befitting to evaluate the African Union at this stage and, in this regard, the need to undertake the institutional audit would enable to develop the new arrangement.

d) Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, Leader of the Great 1 September Revolution of the Great Socialist Peoples' Libyan Arab Jamahiriya

e) Mr. Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

13. The President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria stated that one of the main objectives of the African Union was to accelerate the political and socio-economic integration of the continent, and that the challenge, at this stage, was to find ways to transmute from the present state of effective Regional Economic Communities (RECs), which are the building blocs of the Union, into a continent-wide economic and political Union. He observed that the critical issue was the question as to whether to fast-track the process of integration towards the United States of Africa or to pursue the same objective through "gradual incrementalism".

14. The President stated that it was more important for the African countries to focus on the strengthening and consolidation of internal governance and growth structures, and on a more robust regional integration. He stressed out that the focus on inter-regional collaboration was equally critical especially considering that all the five regions

of Africa faced essentially the same challenges of poor infrastructure, inadequate energy, endemic poverty, and the twin bane of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis as well as the need to present a united and common front in the global arena.

15. The President indicated that it was important for African countries to determine the degree of their commitment to the African Union and that to extra-continental bodies to which Africa seems to be more committed, at the detriment of the African Union. In this regard, he indicated that it was important that the Africa Union should develop common standards of political and economic governance, and create enabling factors that will connect the peoples of Africa, enhancing the free movement of people, goods and services with and among the African countries.

16. The President stated that it was the duty of the leaders and the peoples of Africa to determine and agree on the nature, time and modalities of the African Union that would lead to the United States of Africa. In this regard, he indicated that it was important to reflect on issues such as qualification for membership, the structure such as a Federal, Confederal or Unitary arrangement, and the nature of the relationship between the national and the continental levels as well.

17. The President concluded by indicating that with the requisite courage, vision and commitment, focus, and the political will to take decisions, abide by them, and implement such decisions diligently, the African Union would be in a position to move forward the objective of a secure, stable, strong, progressive and prosperous United States of Africa.

f) *Maitre Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal*

18. The President stressed that it was vital that the Assembly came out with a political guideline for the African Union, adding that Senegal was in favour of immediate establishment of an African Union Government as a prelude to United State of Africa. In this regard, he recalled the vision of the Founding Fathers of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) which was to build the unity of the Continent.

19. President Wade however indicated that the cooperation and progressive integration system which then predominant has continued to hold sway and that that system had shown its limitations and that the institution of the OAU, in the same vein of the African Union had also shown their limits and did not meet the objective of unifying Africa, a goal which the people of Senegal have always sought since their country's independence.

20. The President pointed out that the Regional Economic Communities have equally shown their limitations in as much as their objective was to speed up the Continent's economic integration, rather than its political integration. He emphasized, in this connection, that it was vital to establish a Union Government and to transform the structure of the Commission into that one which would add value to Member States

especially in endowing it with real powers in specific areas such as environment, foreign trade, education, health, infrastructure, agriculture and so on but which will in no way impede the sovereignty of states.

21. The President concluded by underscoring the fact that Africa could effectively defend her interests on the international scene, including a claim to a seat in the United Nations Security Council with veto powers and face up to the challenges of globalisation if African States presented a united front to the external world.

g) Mr. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda

22. The President of the Republic of Uganda recalled that Africa had a great potential but the fact that it was organized in small tribal, clan or segmentary units exposed it to looting of resources, slave trade and colonization by foreigners. He stated that the colonization by foreigners was a vote of non confidence in the traditional, tribal, clan and segmentary systems.

23. The President further recalled that the founding fathers of the Organization of African Unity had established a mechanism to combat colonialism which was made possible because of the political balkanization on too small a scale to guarantee the survival and the sovereignty of the African people.

24. The President observed that it was important to find ways for the African countries to achieve socio-economic transformation and move from the status of third World to that of developed countries. In this regard, he stressed the need for African countries to ensure that they have the ability to make independent decisions.

25. The President pointed out that, if in 1963 there were three different positions with regard to the creation of the continental government, it was encouraging to note that, to date, and only the following two positions were emerging: (i) the ones who wanted to form an all African Government and the ones who wanted to form regional federations. He added that the current debate was whether the continental government should be established now or whether there should be regional political federations where possible, in addition to continental economic integration as envisaged in the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community (Abuja Treaty). He stated that there was no difficulty with regard to accelerating the economic integration but that the political integration should be done gradually. The President concluded by indicating that it was important to determine areas that would be dealt with at the national, regional and continental levels.

V. GENERAL DEBATE

26. In the ensuing debate, it was clear that there was general agreement on the goal of creating a political union and the establishment of a Union Government as a step in that direction. It was also clear that all Member States acknowledged that the small

sizes of their individual economies (markets and resource base) were susceptible to vulnerability and external shocks in the face of globalization. It was further agreed that Africa should be able to articulate common positions in the international negotiation arena (speaking with one voice). The points of divergence were on the nature, modalities and time frame for the attainment of the Union Government. Another critical area of divergence was the question of how much sovereignty would be ceded to the Union Government, the preservation of Nation States and their identity, as well as the identification and prioritization of areas/fields that could be better handled and effectively executed at the continental level.

27. The predominant view was that African unity and the ultimate goal of a Political Union should be embedded on a strong foundation entailing a **gradual or incremental** approach to the total integration of the continent, amongst countries with similar or compatible values. This school of thought argued that in view of the fact that Africa was a vast continent, with diverse cultural, religious and linguistic values, the time was not opportune for a big jump into the idea of a Union Government. It was therefore argued that realistically, and based on practical considerations, a gradual approach should be adopted which would entail the following (in no particular order of priority):

- i) The development of a realistic, time bound road map with clear-cut milestones and concrete actions for the continent's economic and political integration endeavours;
- ii) The Rationalisation of Regional Economic Communities (to avoid duplication and overlaps) and their strengthening to become effective prime movers or building blocks of the African integration processes;
- iii) Linked to (ii) above, laying a solid foundation for sustainable integration that is embedded on the strict observance of democratic principles and respect for the rule of law and human rights;
- iv) The implementation of integration processes on the basis of adherence to the principle of **subsidiarity**. This entails the recognition of a three tier arrangement and a conscious identification and prioritization of areas/fields that could be best executed at each of these levels (i.e. national, regional, as well as continental);
- v) Undertaking an Audit (as recommended by the Executive Council) that entails an in-depth evaluation of the current state of the African Union and its organs with a view to ascertaining areas that will require particular attention in order to accelerate or fast-track the economic and political integration processes;
- vi) Paying particular attention to the Commission with a view to endowing it with more muscle to enable it to effectively coordinate and discharge the

integration agenda. In this context, it will be equally important to identify cross cutting areas that lend themselves to continental coordination (principle of subsidiarity);

- vii) Putting in place integration plans at the different levels of governance (national, regional, continental) that are in harmony with, and support (catalyse) the attainment of the ultimate goal of continental integration;
- viii) Ensuring that the African Union (the Political Union) is not only a union of the governments, but a union of the people. This would entail wider consultations and consensus mobilization at the national levels on the form and time frame for the Union Government and the consequential constitutional amendments that would need to be effected.

28. The second view which advocated for the immediate creation of a Union Government argued that the debate had been raging since the establishment of the Organisation of African Unity and that some forty three years not much had been achieved. It was therefore felt that a political decision was required to inject some impetus into the integration process and propel the continent towards a United States of Africa. It was argued that for some countries, the ceding of sovereignty to a continental entity was already provided for in the Constitutions and that this implies the awareness and support of the citizenry for the Union Government concept.

29. This view argued that the forty three years of existence of the organization (OAU later transformed to AU), provided sufficient time and lessons to enable the shifting of gears to move towards political integration as economic integration had lost steam, reached a paralysis stage, and could not be relied upon to produce any meaningful results.

30. This view also argued that the African Union project was doomed to failure right at inception as it conferred administrative as opposed to executive powers to the Commission. This, it was argued, left the Commission completely powerless and impacted negatively on its ability to effectively drive the integration process. This view also suggested that RECs were not designed for fostering the political union agenda but the economic integration one and can therefore not be asked to do more.

31. This view further emphasized the **variable geometry approach** whereby those countries that are ready would immediately group together and implement the Union Government project. Further that the creation of a Union Government would enable Africa to speak in one voice in international negotiations, expand the market and resource base and better integrate the Diaspora in the operations of the organization. It was also suggested that the speedy introduction of an African Passport would allow the free movement of citizens thus creating a sense of a single African identity.

32. This view felt that conducting any further studies/audits was counterproductive and a waste of valuable time and resources as similar studies had been undertaken by two Committees of the Assembly (chaired by Presidents Museveni and Obasanjo) and both came to the conclusion of a need for a Union Government to drive the integration prospects of the continent.

33. At the end of the debate, the Assembly concluded as follows:

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