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REPORT OF THE CHAIRPERSON ON THE 2ND
CONFERENCE OF INTELLECTUALS FROM
AFRICA AND THE DIASPORA – CIAD II

Report of the Chairperson on the 2nd Conference of Intellectuals from Africa and the Diaspora – CIAD II

Council will recall its decision at the Eight Ordinary Session, held in Khartoum, Sudan, from 16-21 January 2006 on the Africa-Diaspora Process (EX.CL/269 (VIII)) which *inter-alia* called “upon Member States and the Communities in the Diaspora to participate in the 2nd Conference of Intellectuals of Africa and the Diaspora scheduled in Brazil, in July 2006.” The decision also “commended the initiative and efforts of the Commission and Member States to advance and promote relations between the continent and the Africa Diaspora” and “reaffirmed the need for continued and sustained efforts in this direction”.

Following this decision, I took appropriate measures to commence preparations for this meeting. The measures were in four parts. One was to establish the organising framework for African Union’s participation in this conference. In this regard, I set up an African Union Organising Committee under the aegis of the Commissioner for Social Affairs with the collaboration of the Chief of Staff of my Bureau. CIDO, as the Directorate in charge of Africa-Diaspora relations, served as the focal point for the meeting. Second was to liaise with the Brazilian authorities to set up an International Organising Committee comprising representatives of the African Union, Brazil, Intellectuals and the Diaspora etc. to establish a process of coordination and planning for the meeting, its composition, format and structure. Third, was to sensitize both the African and South American Communities and intellectuals within the continent and Diaspora. Fourth was to follow-up on the planning and preparations to ensure a hitch-free and productive conference.

The efforts bore fruits. Member States, the South American Community, Intellectuals and Diaspora communities were effectively mobilized. The agenda and timetable were set and the meeting took place in the Convention Centre of the City of Salvador, the Capital of the state of Bahia in Brazil from 12-14 July 2006.

The broad objective of the meeting which brought together about 700 intellectuals and political leaders from Africa and the Diaspora was to revive, situate and harness the contributions of African intellectuals and the Diaspora as a vehicle for innovative ideas, development and social transformation. It also sought to promote continuous, sustained and constructive dialogue among intellectuals and policy makers with a focus on priority questions and concerns confronting Africa and to ensure their effective involvement in execution of programmes for development on the continent in particular and the African Renaissance in general. The engagement broadened mutual understanding and knowledge, enabled the cross-fertilization of ideas and laid the basis for fostering greater cooperation for development between Africa and its Diaspora.

The conference was attended by various dignitaries including the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, the President of Botswana, HE Mr Festus Mogae, HE Mr Pedro Pires, President of the Cape Verde, HE Mr John

A. Kuffor, President of Ghana, HE Mr Obiang Nguema, President of Equatorial Guinea, HE Mr Abdoulaye Wade, President of Senegal, HE Ms Portia Simpson-Mitter, Prime Minister of Jamaica, HE Mr Ali Mohammad Sein, Vice President of Tanzania. Also in attendance were African Nobel prize-winners and eminent singer, Steve Wonder, among others.

The general theme of CIAD II was “the Diaspora and African Renaissance” which was chosen to build upon and further consolidate on the outcome of CIAD I, held in Senegal, in 2004. The conference began with an opening ceremony that included presentations by the President of Brazil, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and invited Heads of State. It was organized into three plenary sessions and 12 thematic groups. A series of cultural events including film screening and photo-exhibits were also held on the margins of the event.

The conference concluded with the Salvador Declaration, which contained several important recommendations for moving the process forward. These included proposals for the institutionalisation of the CIAD process through a mechanism that would facilitate the implementation and promotion of ideas adopted by the conference and a methodology for the organisation of follow-up meetings and conferences. CIAD II stressed the imperative of Africa’s engagement with its Diaspora and proposed concrete strategies and modalities for forging strategic cooperation among intellectuals and policy makers through organised and sustainable mechanisms. It reiterated the call of the CIAD I in Dakar on the prospects for establishing a permanent secretariat and a steering committee of intellectuals to assist the African Union in this process. It also requested the African Union to strengthen and support the existing Directorate of Civil Society and Diaspora Relations (CIDO) in the African Union that deals with contacts with the communities of African origin in other countries.

Conclusion

CIAD II was a great success, which laid the basis for continued cooperation between the African Union and communities and countries of the Diaspora as well as greater solidarity between African countries and the states of South and Central America on a South-South axis. It stressed growing consciousness of the need for a renewed pan-Africanism with its political, economic, social and cultural dimensions, and the solidarity among African states assembled in the African Union, as essential elements of the African Renaissance. It further recognised the African Diaspora that is spread across the entire globe, as a significant component of the wider cultural heritage. It also cemented the process of dialogue among intellectuals and policy makers as a mechanism for growth and enrichment of the continent in the interest of creating a people-driven society in the African Community of the African Union. This Summit should consider its recommendations seriously with a view to implementing what is strategically feasible in order to advance the African Renaissance agenda.

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