



ORGANIZATION OF  
AFRICAN UNITY

Secretariat  
P. O. Box 3243

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REPORT OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY-GENERAL  
ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE AFRICAN GROUP AT  
THE UNITED NATIONS



## INTRODUCTION

The African Heads of State and Government institutionalized the African Group at the United Nations by signing the Charter in 1963 and giving it a permanent Executive Secretariat with the object of achieving closer co-operation and better co-ordination between independent African States for the harmonization of Africa's viewpoints on matters of mutual interest at international forums.

The activities of the Executive Secretariat are centered around those of the African Group at the United Nations. Executive Secretariat co-ordinates the activities of permanent African representatives who are daily faced with discussions and solutions within the African Group, to many complex problems of mutual interest.

Composed of 41 members, the African Group certainly constitutes an important force which is reckoned with by the rest of the world. The big Powers take this reality into account in making their survey of any international situation of vital interest to world peace and security.

Conscious of the role they can play in finding solutions to international problems, African States should strengthen their solidarity and unity within the framework of African co-operation in order to foil all imperialist manoeuvres and better resist the counter-offensive of colonialism, neo-colonialism and imperialism which have several ways and means of exerting pressure.

This report will give a brief account of the activities of the African Group since the last Assembly of Heads of State and Government held in Rabat in June 1972.

## I - STUDY OF FILES

Following the decisions taken by the Ninth Summit in Rabat in June 1972, the African Group set itself to the study of its files in order to adopt its strategy, establish useful contacts both at the level of delegations and the UNO Secretariat by preparing the minds of those concerned on the trend of debates at the General Assembly.

The African Group charged its Permanent Committee on Southern Africa with the task of studying ways and means of bringing into reality - at the UNO level - the historic decision of the African Heads of State to grant Observer Status to the liberation movements of African territories still under colonial and racist domination.

That Committee was also asked to prepare the Security Council's meetings on Southern Rhodesia, territories still under Portuguese domination and Namibia. The Permanent Committee's findings which were accepted by the African Group could be summarized as follows:

- (a) The African Group should refer the Southern Rhodesian question to the Security Council during the second week of September; a month in which the Permanent Representative of the People's Republic of China will, for the first time, assume the Chairmanship of the Security Council; Africa should lead the debates on the entire political file on Southern Rhodesia at the level of Ministers charged by OAU to defend the Rhodesian situation at the UNO. In the event of the British Government casting its veto to oppose this, the African Group should take up the matter directly with the General Assembly;
- (b) The same decision was taken on Namibia and the territories still under Portuguese domination;
- (c) The African Group should request that the question of decolonization be given priority at the General Assembly immediately after the traditional general discussions.

These decisions which were negotiated, received the support of the other political Groups at the General Assembly, thus enabling the African Group to forge ahead in its offensive.

## II - MAINTENANCE OF PEACE AND SECURITY

There was a heated debate in the Political Committee on the question of maintenance of peace and security as a result of the divergencies of views between the two big communist Powers. The Political Committee thus had a difficult time in its approach to the study of certain problems such as the convening of a general conference on disarmament following the re-establishment of the legitimate right of the Peoples' Republic of China at the UNO. The non-aligned Group had to intervene to get China to accept the idea of preparing that Conference. A resolution was adopted setting up a preparatory Committee of 35 members to study this important question and to submit a report.

For the moment, Africa has been allotted 8 seats and the African Group is negotiating to have them occupied.

## III - THE PROBLEM OF TERRORISM

The first days of the 27th Session of the General Assembly were dominated by the problem of "terrorism" placed on its agenda on the initiative of the Secretary-General. The problem created a division in the ranks of the African Group. Since this question of terrorism gave rise to several contradictory points of views, it was referred to the Legal Committee. Finally, the General Assembly set up an ad-hoc Committee to study this question and to prepare a convention to fight against what would be described as "international terrorism". The Committee should first define "international terrorism" before preparing any convention on it.

The African Group will be represented on that Committee by chosen States on the basis of equitable geographical representation and the interest of certain African States in the study of the question.

#### IV - DECOLONIZATION

After unanimously condemning colonialism, apartheid and racial discrimination, four important resolutions were adopted recommending concrete measures which, if applied by all States, will give the principle of self-government of countries a new force and limit to a great extent, the time for its effective achievement.

One of the resolutions adopted on the question requested the Secretary-General, acting in concert with the Organization of African Unity, to organize in Oslo in April 1973, an international conference of Experts to assist victims of colonialism and apartheid in southern Africa. This resolution, sponsored by 65 countries from all the Continents, made it possible to accentuate the political isolation of the Portuguese colonialist Government and the white racist settler regimes of southern Africa.

A report on the Oslo Conference will be submitted by the OAU General Secretariat in another document.

The other resolutions which were adopted by a very large majority, reaffirmed the principles subscribed to by independent Africa, the Asian and Latin American States as well as peace and freedom loving countries the world over. Among the UNO's political Groups, only the NATO bloc and more particularly, its powerful members, still refuse to implement resolutions calling for the immediate application of sanctions aimed at putting an end to colonialism and exploitation in southern Africa. One of the OAU's priority objectives should be constant appeals by its political authorities to the Western Powers, trading partners of the white minority regimes, until public opinion in those countries takes cognizance of and exerts the required pressure on those who establish the African policies of those countries.

It should be mentioned that following the change of Government in Australia, the Australian delegation voted for the first time in favour of the Afro-Asian draft resolution on the Rhodesian question and disassociated itself from the United Kingdom's arguments on the issue.

At the request of the African Group, the Security Council was requested three times during the General Assembly to study the Southern Rhodesian question as well as those of Namibia and the territories still under Portuguese domination. These requests followed the publication of the Secretary-General's Report on his meetings with the South African Government and the Namibian people.

As regards Rhodesia, the African Group submitted a simple file bearing on Great Britain's undertaking not to grant independence to Southern Rhodesia until a freely elected majority government is established in Salisbury. In the light of the publication of the Lord Pearce Report on the rejection of the Home/Smith Agreement by the people of Zimbabwe, the African Group requested the United Kingdom to organize as soon as possible, a constitutional conference and for all the political parties to participate in the discussions on the territory's future. As should be expected, the United Kingdom cast a negative vote to reject these two points on the grounds that Africa's requests were unrealistic. It therefore, behoves the OAU authorities - in order to foil any manoeuvres by the United Kingdom against the interests of Zimbabwe - to raise the alarm bell and mobilize world public opinion with the means at the OAU's disposal. The OAU Geneva Office should, in this regard, play a role of paramount importance.

With regard to the territories under Portuguese domination, the Security Council, under the Chairmanship of the Ambassador of Guinea, Madam Jeanne Martin Cisse, unanimously adopted a very important resolution which mentioned the granting of Observer Status by OAU to the liberation movements. The resolution asked Portugal, as an administering Power, to open negotiations with the authentic representatives of the people of Guinea Bissao, Angola and Mozambique. The adoption of that resolution constitutes a marked success for the African Group which had associated - at every stage of the discussions - the leaders of the liberation movements who had specially travelled to New York for the occasion.

During this Session, Brazil closed ranks with Portugal and refused to disassociate itself from the Lisbon Government despite the condemnation made in principle by its Minister of Foreign Affairs in Brazil before his tour of African countries.

Led by the Assistant Secretary-General in charge of Political Affairs, the Executive Secretariat played an important role of negotiator in getting the African Group to overcome the handicaps on its path.

As regards Namibia, the Report published by the Secretary-General following the visit of his Special Envoy to Namibia and South Africa, did not contribute anything new to the resolution.

The Security Council decided to give the United Nations/Pretoria contacts a last chance to obtain clarifications on the meanings of several concepts contained in the Report, particularly, the concept of self-government and independence in a united Namibia.

At the request of the African Group, the Secretary-General was requested by the Security Council to submit a report on the outcome of his meetings by 30 April 1973 at the latest. The OAU Council of Ministers and the Assembly of Heads of State and Government will rightly appreciate this new United Nations policy vis-a-vis South Africa on Namibia. The tenth OAU Summit Conference should take advantage of the meeting of Heads of State and Government to review Africa's policy towards the UN Commissioner for Namibia.

A proposal was made to the General Assembly to increase the number of members on the United Nations Council for Namibia. The re-establishment of the rights of the People's Republic of China at the UNO once again, turned to be beneficial to the cause of the countries of the Third World with China's acceptance to participate in the deliberations of the United Nations Council for Namibia. It should be recalled that no major Power had, in the past, accepted to be a member of the Council since it was established in 1967 by the General Assembly. After China had taken its stand, the Soviet Union, Poland, Rumania, Mexico, Burundi and Liberia also submitted their candidatures. The effective participation of these countries in the work of the United Nations Council for Namibia could strengthen the Council's authority and enable the Commissioner to better carry out his work.

The resolution adopted on Namibia by a comfortable majority assigned a number of specific duties to the United Nations Council for Namibia. These duties are aimed at strengthening the Council's authority to enable it serve more effectively, the interests of Namibians.

After the adoption of the resolution on the question of Namibia, the African Group started negotiations for a Chairman of the United Nations Council for Namibia to serve for one year like the Committee of 24 and the Committee on Apartheid.

The African Group drew the United Nations Secretary-General's attention to the disadvantages of appointing a Commissioner when South Africa has not clarified its position on the question of self-government and independence for the peoples of Namibia and when the African Heads of State and Government have not examined the situation in the territories in the light of recent developments following the publication of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on 21 June 1971 and the various meetings held by the UNO with the Pretoria regime.

During the debates, the degree of the Pretoria regime's isolation on the international plane was noted. Needless to say, certain important members of the NATO bloc continue to support Pretoria for monetary stability reasons despite the general reprobation.

At its First Session, the Committee on Trusteeship and Non-Self-Governing Territories this year took a historic decision by granting Observer Status to the liberation movements recognized by OAU. This decision was finally taken through the cohesion of the African Group and the clarity of its views on the question after the Rabat decision. The decision of the Committee on Trusteeship and Non-Self Governing Territories was approved by a very large majority vote at the General Assembly despite the hostility of certain NATO member countries which still firmly support Portugal and the white minority racist regimes in southern Africa. This year, the leaders of the liberation movements no longer made statements in their capacity as Petitioners but as Observers and participated in debates on questions of interest to them.

Regarding the small territories, there were conflicting interpretations in the African Group between Morocco, Algeria and Mauritania in regard to decisions taken by their Heads of State in Rabat on the question of the so-called Spanish Sahara. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Morocco explained that new developments had taken place on the question of the so-called Spanish Sahara since the Rabat meeting and with those developments in view, Morocco was of the view that the resolution on the so-called Spanish Sahara should no longer mention "... any other party concerned", in other words Algeria. After a lengthy debate, the African Group reached a consensus to maintain "any other Party concerned" in the resolution. It should be pointed out that if the taking of position at the political level has been better this year than the past two or three years, much still remains to be done to bring our position closer to that of the rich countries.

#### V - NATURAL RESOURCES

As regards the question of natural resources and the fixing of prices of raw materials, it was regrettably noted that all the proposals made by the African Group, supported by the Group of 77, were accepted with serious reservations by the developed countries which, by sheer selfishness, are doing all in their power to widen the gulf between us. It is worthwhile recalling in this context, the cohesion of the African Group which was the dynamic factor behind the negotiations of the Group of 77 on the veneer outcome of the Third UNCTAD.

The African Group and the Group of 77 however, recorded some success on the question of establishing the headquarters of the Environment Secretariat in Nairobi when the Report of that Conference was examined by the Economic Committee. Nairobi was chosen as the headquarters of the Environment Secretariat despite the pressure exerted by the developed countries.

The important question of the sea-bed unfortunately gave an unexpected opportunity to our enemies to play on the division in the ranks of the Africans. This manoeuvre has succeeded for the moment because the African Group did not have precise directives from the OAU Heads of State and Government and because Africa has not been able to take any position notwithstanding the fact that the Council

of Ministers has, on two occasions, studied the question. It should be mentioned that even within the African Group, views vary greatly between the coastal countries and the land-locked countries. The African Group has however, started studying the question and is preparing a document on it. This will be submitted to the present Session of the Council of Ministers.

As regards the Conference on the Law of the Sea scheduled to be held in 1974 in Santiago, Chile, it is rumoured that the Secretary-General intends to appoint a high United Nations official of the status of Assistant Secretary-General as his special representative with mandate to prepare the Conference. Suspicious of that official's past, the African Group has asked the Secretary-General to consult it before appointing anybody. It is not a secret that the high United Nations official in view has always defended anti-African stands whenever his views were sought on issues pertaining to colonialism and racial discrimination. Since the interests at stake are numerous, the African Group has had to take certain precautions to receive strong guarantees because it has no doubts that three quarters of the world's riches are still lying under the sea.

#### VI - MIDDLE EAST

The resolution adopted by the General Assembly on the thorny problem of the Middle East was, to a great extent, prompted by the one taken by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in Rabat requesting Israel to subscribe publicly to the principles of non-annexation by force of territories of a sovereign State. If this declaration is made, it will pave the way for the resumption of negotiations and for a just and lasting peace to be established in the region.

#### VII - OAU/UNO CO-OPERATION

The General Assembly noted with satisfaction, the Report submitted by the Secretary-General on co-operation between OAU and the United Nations. As should be expected, Portugal and South Africa stood against the Report. The resolution adopted by the General Assembly asked the UN specialized agencies, particularly the UNDP, to increase and strengthen co-operation with OAU in order to assist the liberation movements more effectively to shake off the colonial yoke.

### VIII - ELECTIONS

The cohesion of the African Group made it possible for all the African candidates to be elected to important posts. Two Africans were elected Chairmen of two Political Committees of the General Assembly (Guinea and Mauritius). Four eminent African representatives were elected Vice-Chairmen of the General Assembly (Ethiopia, Libya, Mauritania and Rwanda). Others were elected to the posts of Vice-Chairmen of the Committee on Trusteeship and Non-Self Governing Territories and to the post of Rapporteur of the Legal Committee which was entrusted with the study of the important question of terrorism (Egypt, Ghana, Sudan and Nigeria). The African Group also succeeded in getting Kenya elected to the Security Council for a term of two years in replacement of Somalia. Through the solidarity and cohesion of the African Group, Algeria, Mali and Uganda were elected to the Economic and Social Council for a term of three years.

The consideration of candidatures is becoming increasingly complex and often contains seeds of discord between the African States. It would be desirable for the Council of Ministers to give precise directives to the African Group on the representation and choice of countries to occupy various seats allotted to Africa in the important Organs of the UNO. The African Group studied the Report submitted to it by the Executive Secretariat on the criteria for distributing seats allotted to the African Group. That document, if adopted by the Council of Ministers, will serve as reference to the African Group in studying this delicate question. The discord within the African Group was felt during the selection of 16 countries to represent Africa on the Board of Directors of the Environment Secretariat; an Organ just created by the General Assembly to study ecological problems. The African Group was thus divided during the votes at the General Assembly.

States working in several important Organs of the UNO are increasingly refusing others which are not represented on any Organ, the opportunity to participate actively in the deliberations of the UNO.

At its previous meeting however, the Council of Ministers had adopted a recommendation on African candidatures to posts in the directorate of the various UN specialized agencies.

A separate note on this question is presented to the Council under Re:CM/505.



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# Report of the Administrative Secretary-General on the activities of the African Group at the United Nations

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