



**ORGANIZATION OF
AFRICAN UNITY**

Secretariat
P. O. Box 3243

منظمة الوحدة الافريقية
السكرتارية
ص. ب. ٣٢٤٣

**ORGANISATION DE L'UNITE
AFRICAINNE**

Secretariat
B. P. 3243

Addis Ababa اديس ابابا

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS
FORTY-FOURTH ORDINARY SESSION
21-25 July, 1986
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

CM/1401(XLIV)

Original: ENGLISH

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE UN SPECIAL SESSION
DEVOTED TO AFRICA'S CRITICAL ECONOMIC SITUATION

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE UN SPECIAL SESSION
DEVOTED TO AFRICA'S CRITICAL ECONOMIC SITUATION.

Council will recall that by Resolution AHG/136(XXI), the Assembly of Heads of State and Government requested for the convening of a Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on the Critical Economic Situation in Africa. By the same resolution the OAU Current Chairman was requested to initiate the necessary contacts with the view to convening the said Special Session. The Assembly of Heads of State and Government established by the same resolution a Permanent Steering Committee to which was entrusted, inter alia, the follow-up of the decisions of the 21st Assembly of Heads of State and Government on economic issues and coordination of the positions of member states in anticipation of major international negotiations.

2. In accordance with the mandate entrusted to him the OAU Current Chairman H.E. Abdou Diouf, President of Senegal addressed the 40th Session of the UN General Assembly and requested for the holding of a Special Session of the UN General Assembly to discuss the critical Economic Situation in Africa. By General Assembly Resolution 40/40 of 2nd December, 1985, the General Assembly decided to convene a Special Session to focus in a comprehensive and integrated manner, on the rehabilitation and medium and long term development problems facing African countries.

3. The preparatory work for the Special Session was done both in Addis Ababa and New York. Council will recall that it had to hold an Extraordinary Session on 30th to 31st March, 1986 to consider the work of the Permanent Steering Committee and the First Extraordinary meeting of the ECA Conference of Ministers and finally adopted "Africa's Submission to the Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Africa's Economic and Social Crisis" (OAU/ECM/2XV.Rev.2). Since the adoption of the African document, protracted negotiations have been going on in New York, while the Permanent Steering Committee also continued to map out Africa's strategy during the UN General Assembly Special Session.

4. The General Assembly at its 40th Session had established a Preparatory Committee of the Whole to assist the UN Secretary-General to prepare for the Special Session. Soon after the 15th Extraordinary Session of the OAU Council of Ministers, the Chairman of the Permanent Steering Committee, H.E. Ibrahima Fall, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Senegal presented Africa's submission to the preparatory committee of the Whole on 3rd April, 1986, and had working sessions with the African Group at New York and the chairman of the Group of 77. The preliminary reactions to Africa's submission were received on 4th April, 1986 and were on the whole positive. The second meeting of the Preparatory Committee of the Whole met on the 23rd and 24th April, 1986 and was mainly devoted to a detailed discussion of Africa's Submission. Various groups such as EEC, China, Japan and U.S.A. made various observations with regard to the contents, substance and the legal status of the African document. There were arguments to the effect that in the African document the role of women in Development and the problems of drought and desertification were glossed over. Some even wanted to cast doubt on the data that was contained in the document. Deferring views were expressed as to whether the African document should be considered as an official document, while others wanted to give it the status of a mere working document. After due negotiations the African Group proposed that the document should serve as a working document for negotiations as well as a document for the Special Session itself. In order to avoid a protracted debate, it was finally agreed that Africa's Submission will be a working document of the Preparatory Committee of the Whole.

5. The Preparatory Committee also decided that the final outcome of the UN Special Session should be a document composed of four parts namely:

- Part i Analysis of African Economic Situation;
- Part ii Plan of Action;
- Part iii Follow-up and Monitoring;
- Part iv Conclusions.

The African Group was then requested to submit a draft document on the basis of the above structure.

6. The General Assembly Special Session heard a keynote address by His Excellency Abdou Diouf, Current Chairman of the OAU and President of the Republic of Senegal who underscored the need for the International Community to contribute only 30 per cent to set in motion Africa's Five Year Priority Programme for Economic Recovery. In his words President Diouf pointed out that "the International Community must commit resources to fight the causes of Africa's ailments. We need a new resolve, collective and individual. APPER should be accepted as the framework of programme support. Measures must be taken here and now to improve understanding between donors and recipients". He further pointed out that "Africa pledges to mobilise all its energies to implement APPER, including austerity measures, tighter intra-continental cooperation and a rejection of ideological quarrels". The OAU Current Chairman pointed out that "this is International year of peace. But peace cannot be real as long as millions are victims of famine, disease and the scourge of refugees. These are not peaceful conditions". He listed the present bottlenecks as rigidity and deficiencies in the international economic structure, resulting in declining commodities prices, stagnation in flow of finances from the North to the South, and natural and political disasters leading to such spectacles as desertification, famine and a profusion of refugees.

7. The General Assembly allocated to the Ad Hoc Committee of the 13th Special Session consideration of the item dealing with the Critical Economic Situation in Africa. The Ad Hoc Committee held three meetings, on 27, 29 and 31 May, 1986.

8. While the Ad Hoc Committee continued in its effort to harmonise the various positions of different groups reacting to Africa's submission, the plenary session had numerous statements. These statements varied in many ways. Some were kind of lecture as to how Africa should run its economy, while others were concrete commitments on the part of certain countries. The later category is exemplified by countries like Canada and the Scandinavian countries. The Canadians for instance declared a moratorium on the repayment of ODA loans for an initial period of five years and indicated their willingness to consider extending this measure for five year installments until the year 2,000. The

other concrete action was by Scandinavians who expressed their willingness to write off all debts owed to them by countries listed by the UN as LDCs. A number of developing countries also made statements calling upon the international community to respond positively to Africa's submission.

9. Following a recommendation by the 4th meeting of the OAU Permanent Steering Committee, five African countries were requested to speak on behalf of Africa on five topics. The countries selected on regional basis were as follows:-

1. Algeria - Industry and other supporting sectors;
2. Cameroon - Human Resources Development;
3. Nigeria - Food and Agriculture;
4. Sudan - Drought and Desertification;
5. Zimbabwe - International Economic Environment.

10. It is worth noting that despite what the prophets of doom had been preaching, that there will be little to come out of the Special Session, no country or group of countries wanted to be identified as having been the stumbling block for the success of the Special Session. While positions were at variance at the beginning of the session, there was generally room for accommodation as the Session progressed.

11. As far as the outcome of the Special Session is concerned, it should be viewed as a success. Although no financial commitments were made by the international community, it should be remembered that this was not a pledging conference. The implementation of APPER had been costed so as to indicate to the international community the magnitude of resources required, so that their response would be based on as a realistic picture as possible. The General Assembly unanimously adopted a Resolution and Programme of Action.

12. The Resolution which adopts the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990, also commits the General Assembly "to conduct a review and appraisal of the implementation of the UN Programme of Action for African Recovery and Development 1986-1990 at its forty-third session".

13. As far as the UN Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-90 is concerned, it contains a number of elements that are positive. The two central elements are:

- (a) The determination and commitment of the African countries to launch both national and regional programmes of economic development as reflected in Africa's Priority Programme for Economic Recovery 1986-1990, adopted by the African Heads of State and Government in July 1985 and
- (b) The response and commitment of the international community to support and complement the African development efforts.

The very fact that the commitment of the international community revolves around the recognition of APPER as Africa's programme of economic development, is an achievement of great significance to Africa.

14. In recognizing that African countries are embarking upon an unparalleled action to break away from the clutches of underdevelopment, the international community also recognizes that Africa will need additional external resources and to this end commits itself to making every effort to provide sufficient resources to support and supplement the African development effort.

15. Two other elements that need to be highlighted from the UN Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-90 are:

- (a) Improvement of the quality and modality of external assistance and co-operation.
- (b) Improvement in the external environment to attain the improvement called for above, the UN Programme of Action calls for:
 - (i) Greater emphasis on programme support in the priority areas of the recipient African countries, with a view to giving an indication of medium-term support;

- (ii) Evolution of procurement policies and administrative procedures which would improve delivery of production inputs;
- (iii) Speedier disbursement of funds;
- (iv) Increase the concessionality, particularly the grant element of development assistance to African countries, with the purpose of improving the quality of aid to those countries;
- (v) In planning and implementing programmes of assistance, special consideration be given to the indigenous competence, expertise, experience, local conditions, particularly local techniques and equipment as well as to the training of qualified national personnel;
- (vi) Evolve more effective and efficient co-ordination methods in order to ensure a greater impact of aid policies;
- (vii) Improve the effectiveness of technical assistance and make it more responsive to the needs and priorities of the African countries;
- (viii) Donor countries and agencies should consider, as appropriate, measures to assist African countries, in meeting recurrent and local costs of programmes and projects;
- (ix) Donor countries, international institutions and recipients should take into account the recurrent and local costs of new programmes and projects to ensure their viability.

- (x) Evolve and implement policies conducive to sustained, equitable and non-inflationary growth, including the expansion of trade through, inter alia, the elimination of protectionism, particularly non-tariff barriers, in accordance with existing commitments, the adoption of measures which encourage African export and diversification programmes, and improved market access, especially for tropical products, within the framework of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade;
- (xi) Deal urgently with commodity issues, taking into account the special interests of the African countries, in the framework of an overall approach, embracing commodity agreements/arrangements, adequate compensatory financing, and also to increase the capacity of African countries to process, market, distribute and transport their exports; and in this context to stress the importance of sufficient ratifications of the agreement of the Common Fund for Commodities, for it quickly to become operational.

16. On the whole, it can be said that as a result of the special session, Africa and her development partners have agreed on a framework within which to tackle the pervasive and structural economic problems of the continent. But the said framework should not only raise hopes, without genuine and effective implementation. It should be in contrast to what has happened to earlier "commitments" or declarations which in many cases were followed by very austere programmes. Many international negotiations in recent years have ended in unfulfilled promises. There is need in this regard for African countries to fully utilize the follow-up and evaluation mechanism agreed upon in the Programme.

17. Council may wish in particular to pronounce itself to the follow-up action at regional level, where it is suggested that "this process, which could be facilitated by the existing mechanisms at the regional level, would assist the African Governments in evaluating and assessing the progress made in the

implementation of the Programme, at the continental and subregional levels, and take appropriate action. The role of the OAU Permanent Steering Committee could be very vital.

18. It is imperative for Council to reflect on ways and means of translating the commitment of the international community into concrete actions. While bilateral arrangements continue, continental pressure must be exerted so as to make the international economic environment responsive to the rectification of the economic situation of our continent. This will require fundamental changes in such areas as money and finance as well as trade policies. Such agreements as the importance of increasing ODA to Africa; placing greater emphasis on non-project aid including balance of payments support; speedy eighth replenishment of IDA and the fifth ADF at appropriate levels etc. should be followed up vigorously.

AFRICAN UNION UNION AFRICAINE

African Union Common Repository

<http://archives.au.int>

Specialized Technical and representational Agencies

Centre d'Etudes Linguistiques et Historiques par Tradition Orales (CELHTO)

1986-07-21

REPORT OF SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE UN SPECIAL SESSION DEVOTED TO AFRICA'S CRITICAL ECONOMIC SITUATION

OAU

OAU

<https://archives.au.int/handle/123456789/6618>

Downloaded from African Union Common Repository