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ORGANISATION DE L'UNITE  
AFRICAINNE  
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O.A.U. AND AFRICAN NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (1)



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O.A.U. AND AFRICAN NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS 1/

At their meeting in May 1963, the Heads of State and Government expressed the belief that the coming together of youth from African countries was one way of ensuring better and mutual understanding and of contributing to the realization of African Unity. They decided on the setting up of detailed programmes with a view to raising the social standard and strengthening co-operation among African countries through, among other things, the establishment of an African Youth Organization, the organization of an African Scouts Union and an annual continental jamboree and lastly, through the organization of an annual African Olympic Games. The express desire of the founders of our Organization was to associate all the productive forces of the continent with the work of OAU, an inter-governmental organization, with a view to achieving its objectives.

2. Thus, by addressing themselves to the problem of youth from the very inception of OAU, African political leaders affirmed their conviction that it is the youth of to-day who, in the decades to come, will ultimately assume responsibility for the economic, political, cultural and social advancement of their countries. This was further proof that OAU Heads of State and Government were concerned about the grave situation created by the constantly increasing number of young people.

3. Indeed, according to estimates, the young represent between 50 and 60% of the total population in the developing countries. Traditional educational institutions and training schools cannot ensure facilities for youth because of their administrative structure and the lack of teachers and premises. A goodly number of school-age children cannot pursue their studies because of the small number of vacancies in the schools. Despite the fact that they are hardly qualified for productive posts, a large number of the young who enrol in educational institutions drop out only to seek jobs that are difficult to secure. A number of those who complete their primary education settle down to lead a rather precarious life. Furthermore, there are not enough job opportunities for those who have completed their secondary education.

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1/ Excluding trade unions which are dealt with in a separate document.

4. Such a situation can only, in the long run, create groups of social misfits among the population and thus accentuate a dangerous generation gap. The founders of OAU were therefore very much aware of the tremendous nature of the youth problem and of the need for timely action in order to give some priority to youth in national and inter-African planning.

5. Through resolution ECOS/19/Res.5(I), the OAU Economic and Social Commission expressed the wish that all African youth organizations be placed under the auspices of OAU. The Commission called for an immediate resumption of the question of a pan-African youth organization in which the youth of all Member States would take part. The participants in this First Session of the Commission felt that the Pan-African Youth Movement should be entrusted with the task of promoting an all-African students union, of harmonizing and co-ordinating the various cultural activities and open-air youth educational movements and, finally with the task of organizing inter-African and international youth work camps for voluntary work.

6. Two years later, the Commission once more took up the question and directed the OAU Secretary-General to convene, before the end of June 1965, a meeting of those in charge of national youth assistance bodies of OAU Member States. The Secretariats of the Pan-African Youth Movement and ECA were to take part in this conference. It should be noted that the preparation of a new constitution for a pan-African youth organization within the framework of the OAU Charter was among the items that were to be included in the agenda. The proposed conference, like the majority of OAU meetings, could not be held for well-known reasons.

7. First, mention should be made of the difficulties regarding the financing of the meeting and then of the lack of co-operation between Member States and the General Secretariat which characterized our relations at that time. Nevertheless, despite all the obstacles, the Secretary-General made strenuous efforts to establish relations with some African non-Governmental organizations to provide them with the opportunity of contributing to the African leaders' efforts to ensure the harmonious development of our continent. Among these are the Pan-African Youth Movement, the Supreme Council for Sports in Africa and the All-African

Women's Conference. These Organizations were granted OAU observer Status by the Council of Ministers and they now maintain excellent ties with the OAU General Secretariat. Hence the latter is in a position to follow their activities closely and, in turn, associate them with its own activities which fall within their competence.

8. It would perhaps be interesting to recall that one of the objectives of the Pan-African Youth Movement with headquarters in Algiers is to galvanize youth in order to make them more alive to their problems and responsibilities to the nation and direct them towards a social policy of development and unity for the continent. Indeed, this is clearly stated in the preamble of its programme:

"The Pan-African Youth Movement, a genuine expression of the legitimate aspirations of African youth, is basically an anti-colonialist, anti-neo-colonialist and anti-imperialist revolutionary organization."

"A vast assembly of African organizations, the Pan-African Youth Movement aims at galvanizing their efforts and fully and effectively playing their role of vanguard of the progressive forces in Africa. With this in view, the Pan-African Youth Movement must, as first priority, exert its action within the wider context of that of our people for the liberation and unity of the continent."

9. Hence, it is clear that the youth of Africa have a genuine aspiration to freedom and unity, and are ready to assume their share of responsibilities to the nation and Africa as a whole. The policy-making bodies of OAU should study the best ways and means of according young people and their problems the full attention they deserve. The student problem features among those which, by their nature and urgency, call for such consideration.

10. For under resolution ECOS/19/Res.5(I) of the OAU Economic and Social Commission, the Pan-African Youth Movement was entrusted with the task of "promotion of a pan-African students union." Indeed, according to the preamble of its programme, the Pan-African Youth Movement "represents African youth at the international level. In this respect, it reflects and defends the aspirations, and personality of African youth at international organizations." In order to accomplish the mission entrusted to

it by the OAU Economic and Social Commission, the Pan-African Youth Movement needs the financial and moral support of the policy-making bodies of OAU and of individual Governments.

11. The Secretariat feels that the time has come to consider how best to prepare African youth for the national and inter-African responsibilities of tomorrow. Indeed, to-day in Africa, there is clearly a growing tendency among Heads of State and Government to have "young technocrats" around them. If there is the felt need for youth to contribute to the building of the nation, it is absolutely necessary that these "future companions" should not be neglected all through the period when we have no need to call on them. On the contrary, they should be kept in reserve for the nation. It therefore seems necessary that the Secretary-General should be given clear directives to establish contact with the students.

12. With regard to this particular point, we fully realize that the problem is more than just a simple youth problem. Indeed, African students in general and those who are members of the Federation des Etudiants de l'Afrique Noire en France (FEANF), which is a real nursery for future African leaders, systematically shy away from OAU. In their own words, they have at many of their meetings strongly condemned the "transformation of OAU into a mere Heads of State club"<sup>2/</sup>. They feel that this institution "through its incurable heterogeneity", had dashed the great hopes its establishment had raised. Youth should be told, if it does not already know it, that like it, the leaders of our continent are faced with pressing problems. The young, especially the students, can play an important role in solving them. A youth movement leader aptly summed it up when he said that the students and youth were not, for that matter, homogeneous forces inspired by one single concept. On the contrary, the major trends in the world to-day are represented in them. However, although youth and students think differently, they are all faced with the same problems.

13. How can one fight for Man's right to independence and establish lasting peace? How ensure the liberation of the peoples under Portuguese

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<sup>2/</sup> Unofficial translation.

colonial domination, of those in Southern Africa and set up an African security system? How eliminate the scourges that devastate our continent, namely: hunger, racism, illiteracy, and endemic poverty? How can the right to a profession, education, work, leisure and culture be guaranteed for all? Throughout the world, youth and students of all schools of thought actively seek answers to all these burning questions which bring together the most diverse schools of thought and which have lately attained extraordinary proportions. Among students, a new situation, an awareness and new demands trigger off vast campaign movements. It is certainly not for one particular force or organization in Africa to claim that it alone is responsible for the contribution which young people and students can make towards the solution of current problems. This contribution will be all the more effective if youths and students are able and willing to unite and so prepare themselves for the future in order to tackle the period of restoration and development of the continent with success.

14. The All-African Women's Conference whose headquarters is also in Algiers, collaborates with OAU to an appreciable extent. The A.A.W.C. has never concealed its deep appreciation for the obvious interest that OAU has shown towards it. It has always obtained the moral and financial support of OAU. Since its inception in 1962 in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, A.A.W.C. has so far organized more than six seminars for women on various subjects (mother and child welfare, - education, leadership, training, etc..) It also organized vocational training courses. It would seem that since its 1968 Conference, owing to lack of funds it has not been able to adhere to its set programme. It is actually having some difficulty in collecting contributions. The achievement of its high aim might be jeopardized through lack of funds. It should be mentioned here that the OAU Council of Ministers allotted to the Conference, for the year 1970-1971, the sum of US\$ 35,000 out of the US\$ 100,000 it requested as a subvention. It is therefore hoped that this amount will enable it, as far as possible, to continue to implement its programme of action for the emancipation of the African woman.

15. In accordance with the Conference's praiseworthy programme of action for the years 1969-1970-71, the African woman is taking an increasingly active part in society. She is directly associated with the actual economic, social, political and cultural development of our continent. Women are becoming more and more aware of the important role they have to play in modern society. They are also aware of the wide gap between them and their brothers which is due partly to certain retrogressive traditions and customs, to illiteracy and the lack of training and professional qualifications. The Conference of African Women is making every possible effort to enable the African woman to take her place in national and international society.

16. With regard to SPORTS, the OAU Secretariat also maintains very good relations with the Supreme Council for Sports in Africa whose headquarters is in Yaounde (Cameroon). Attempts are being made here and there to study, in pursuance of the numerous OAU resolutions, the best ways and means of ensuring much closer co-operation in order to follow, in depth, the sports situation in Africa and its role in the over-all development of our society. Indeed, sports can play a major role in the development of the individual, the community, the nation and the continent. Sports can also be a powerful means of ensuring international understanding. Through sports, language barriers can be broken <sup>down,</sup> and lasting friendship, peace, understanding and the unity of our continent established.

17. . It would perhaps be worthwhile to recall how the Organization of Sports in Africa came into being and what its activities are. It was during the meeting of the Standing Committee of the African Games held in Brazzaville on 13, 14 and 15 July 1965 and attended by nearly all the African countries that the decision was taken to establish the Supreme Council for Sports in Africa. From the records of this meeting, one may indeed conclude that the setting up, at continental level, of a body to co-ordinate and promote sports in Africa was not only desired but also unanimously accepted. Some delegates to this meeting proposed that the activities of the General Secretariat of the new organization should be subsidized by OAU like other inter-African bodies. Others, however, opposed any attempt to associate the S.C.S.A. with the OAU, a political

organ. This clearly shows the divergence of views as regards collaboration between OAU and the African sports organization.

18. The Constitution of the Supreme Council for Sports in Africa was unanimously adopted in December 1966 in Bamako (Mali) and thirty-six African countries became associate members. The S.C.S.A. has the duty to train coaches and officials of international standard, supervise the organization of the second African Games which will bring together the forty thousand best athletes in the Continent in Lagos in January 1973, harmonize and co-ordinate sports activities at continental level, prepare for Africa's participation in the Olympic Games and other world competitions, and maintain sport in Africa on the path of African Unity.

19. In Chapter VII of its Constitution dealing with resources, it will be noted that Article 26 paragraph B stipulates that subventions could be granted by any international or national grouping or institution anxious to help promote sport in Africa. It would perhaps be worthwhile to recall that the Ninth Ordinary Session of the OAU Council of Ministers held from 4 to 10 September 1967 in Kinshasa adopted resolution CM/Res. 110(X) granting a subvention of £20,000 to the Supreme Council for Sports in Africa for its activities for the period from 1967 to 1969. It is nevertheless regrettable that paragraph 3 of this resolution stresses "that the subvention thus granted is understood to be non-recurrent." This implies that the organization could circumvent such OAU injunctions as the one contained in resolution CM/Res. 140(X) which earnestly requested it to express unequivocally Africa's determination to reject all measures by the I.O.C. condoning racist policies. On the one hand, OAU assigns a task to the S.C.S.A. while on the other hand it appears reticent when it comes to granting it financial aid. This situation seems somewhat paradoxical.

20. The General Secretariat of the S.C.S.A. declared, during its last conference held in Cairo in March 1970 that relations between the Organization of African Unity and the S.C.S.A. had been strengthened since the publication, on 26 January 1966 in Addis Ababa, of a final communiqué which marked the end of the first working session between the two Secretaries-General and ensured an opportunity for closer co-operation between S.C.S.A.



and OAU. Four years have passed since then and the assistance received by the S.C.S.A. from OAU is already encouraging, he added. "Though it is our imperative duty to express our deep gratitude to OAU for the understanding shown towards our Organization, the speaker continued, it is none the less necessary to stress the continued uncertain nature of the financial assistance granted. This is doubtless due to the fact that our relations with OAU are not based on any precise text. I believe that there is an urgent need to look into this problem and take a decision on the principle of signing a co-operation agreement which would be studied and negotiated by our Executive Committee together with the OAU General Secretariat, The final text of this agreement would be submitted for the approval of the OAU Council of Ministers and that of the forthcoming meeting of our Council." <sup>3/</sup>

21. This, needless to say, is also the desire of OAU, which would like to be regarded as the physical expression of African solidarity and fraternity, and considers the altruistic function of sports as a basic factor in the importance it attaches to the Supreme Council for Sports in Africa and its activities. The Council should pay the necessary attention to the S.C.S.A.'s wish and consider to what extent it could be translated into action. In any case, it is not inconsistent that an organization enjoying OAU observer status should conclude a co-operation agreement with OAU.

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3/ Unofficial translation.



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