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COUNCIL OF MINISTERS  
Seventeenth Ordinary Session  
June 1971.

EXPLANATORY NOTE ON THE TENTH SESSION OF THE  
CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN LABOUR MINISTERS

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It is the practice that each year, the Secretariat submit to this session, a report on the work of the African Labour Ministers who usually meet in March in Africa and in June in Geneva. Contrary to this practice, the Secretariat is unable to submit this year to the present session, a detailed report on the tenth session of the Conference of African Labour Ministers for the following reasons:

2. First of all, there is need to state precisely for the benefit of the Council, the role of the OAU General Secretariat as regards preparations for the Conference of African Labour Ministers. In conformity with resolution CM/Res.129(IX) and other provisions of Rules 14 and 15 of the Rules of Procedure of the Conference of African Labour Ministers, the role of the General Secretariat is confined to the organization and supervision of the secretariat of the Conference, sending out invitations to Member States and observers to attend the Conference, the preparations and distribution of documents relating to the agenda of the Conference, receiving the credentials of delegations, publishing the final report of the session and transmitting it to Member States, preserving conference documents and maintaining the archives of the Conference, co-ordinating the activities of the Conference with those of OAU Rule 16 of the Rules of Procedure further provides for consultation between the host Government and the Administrative Secretary-General of OAU to determine the budget needed for the preparation and holding of a session of the conference.

3. With regard to the venue of subsequent sessions of the conference, by virtue of Rule 8 of its Rules of Procedure, it is the responsibility of the conference to decide. Thus, the Conference used this prerogative to decide, during its Ninth Session held in Lusaka from 9 to 13 March 1970, that its tenth session would be held in Kampala, Uganda in March 1971. In accordance with the current practice in the various institutions of the Organization of African Unity, the OAU General Secretariat consulted with the Government of the Republic of Uganda starting

from 12 August 1970 with a view to fixing the date of the meeting. The period from 15 to 20 March was then chosen for the proceedings of the tenth session of the African Labour Ministers. Member States were informed accordingly in November 1970.

4. Preparations for this meeting were seriously embarked upon by both the host Government and the OAU General Secretariat. The former spared no efforts to finalise arrangements for the holding of the Conference itself, its smooth running and the material comfort of the delegations. For its part, the General Secretariat of OAU did everything within its power to carry out, without delay, the mission entrusted to it by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government from the time of its Fourth Ordinary Session in Kinshasa in 1967 and reaffirmed in the Rules of Procedure of the Conference of African Labour Ministers.

5. Invitations to attend the meeting were sent out to Member States and observers since November 1970 and the working documents relating to the agenda items were practically ready before 31 December of the same year. From the first week of January 1971 the OAU General Secretariat started to receive positive replies from Member States.

6. On 5 March 1971, only twelve Governments had officially informed the General Secretariat of their decision to attend the Kampala meeting. Despite this state of affairs, the Secretariat firmly believed that African countries would not allow themselves to be taken in by imperialist manoeuvres designed to divide them at a time when their unity was most desirable. This conviction led the Secretariat to wait until ten days before the scheduled opening of the meeting to seize all opportunities of obtaining the quorum required in accordance with the first paragraph of Rule 20 of the Rules of Procedure of the Conference in order to validate the meeting of the African Labour Ministers in Kampala.

However, 5 March 1971 was the date limit set for obtaining a quorum. In the face of this situation, and in accordance with the current practice of notifying Member States in good time should there be no quorum for a meeting so as to avoid unnecessary expenditure and travel, the General Secretariat carried out the instructions of the current Chairman of the Conference, namely, that the Kampala meeting be postponed and that it convene in Geneva just before the 56th session of the International Labour Conference.

7. Having failed to obtain the quorum and, in conformity with the decision of the current Chairman, the OAU General Secretariat announced, ten days before the date initially fixed for the opening of the meeting in Kampala, that the latter would be held in Geneva from 27 May 1971. Indeed, the meeting of the African Labour Ministers opened on that date and ended on 1st June 1971, ten days before the opening of the present sessions of our Organization. In the circumstances, it will be understood that it is not possible for the General Secretariat to submit to this session, as in the past, a report on the Geneva deliberations.

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# Explanatory note on the Tenth Session of the Conference of African Labour Ministers

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