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ASSEMBLY OF THE AFRICAN UNION  
Second Ordinary Session  
10 - 12 July 2003  
Maputo, MOZAMBIQUE

**ADDRESS DELIVERED BY HIS EXCELLENCY AMARA ESSY, INTERIM CHAIRPERSON OF THE  
COMMISSION OF THE AFRICAN UNION ON THE OCCASION OF THE SECOND ORDINARY  
SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT  
MAPUTO 10 JULY 2003**

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**Your Excellency Joaquim Chissano,  
President of the Republic of Mozambique,**

**Your Excellency Thabo Mbeki, President of  
The Republic of South Africa,**

**Excellencies Heads of State and Government**

**Your Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, United Nations  
Secretary General,**

**Honourable Guests,**

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a singular honour and a great privilege for me to take the floor at the Opening of this important Session of the African Union here in Maputo, the capital of the Republic of Mozambique.

After Sirte in 1999, Lomé in 2000, Lusaka in 2001 and Durban in 2002, we are once again gathered in Maputo to witness the historic gestation and birth of the African Union.

In Maputo, we find ourselves in one of the African sanctuaries of the national liberation struggle waged not so long ago by a heroic people and determined leaders who, together, won the war against colonial occupation. Above all, I salute a valiant nation and its wise leaders who succeeded in winning peace, and who are today resolutely marching towards democratization, development and African integration.

In this respect, Mozambique is indeed a shining example much envied by our sisters and brothers of other countries of the Continent who are too familiar with the atrocities of war, crises and fratricidal conflicts.

Maputo is also one of the prestigious capitals of resplendent Africa which today plays host to our Continental Organization, a year after its birth. Needless to say that diversity as a source of richness is a concrete reality on our Continent.

It follows therefore that the Maputo meeting will make a decisive impact on the Union and the destiny of African peoples. For, it is indeed here that the Commission will take off into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century after fully harnessing human and financial resources and, above all, generating the will to finally propel the people of the Continent on the road to peace, solidarity, democracy, development and regional integration, a road trodden before us by other major entities that shape the world.

Having said that, I would like to express my profound gratitude to President Joaquim Chissano, the Government and the people of Mozambique who have so kindly offered to host this historic Session in this gracious and charming capital whose shores, like those of Durban, are lapped by the Indian Ocean.

Permit me, at this juncture, to pay special tribute to President Thabo Mbeki, the Government and the people of South Africa for their invaluable contribution to the African cause during the past year. Their responsibility is evidenced by a very busy and loaded mandate executed in a militant spirit and with determination to lay the much needed foundations of the African Union. With vigour and steadfastness, they responded to Africa's call and for this, we are most grateful.

**Mr. President,**

## **Excellencies Heads of State and Government,**

Last Sunday 6 July 2003, I presented to the Executive Council what we have been able to achieve in the intervening period between Lusaka in 2001 and Maputo in 2003. Without taking too much of Your Excellencies' time, I would like to bring to the attention of this august body the highlights of my report to the Executive Council.

In Lusaka, I was entrusted with the responsibility of developing and launching the key structures of the Union, namely, the Assembly, the Executive Council, the Commission and the Permanent Representatives' Committee. The integration in the structures of the Union, of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution in Africa was also part of the mandate entrusted to me in 2001. A year later, in Durban, Your Excellencies adopted the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly, the Executive Council and the Permanent Representatives' Committee, the Statutes of the Commission, as well as the Protocol relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council.

During the Transition Period, we also carried out activities geared to the establishment of other bodies of the Union such as the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), the African Court of Justice, and the Financial Institutions (African Monetary Fund, African Central Bank and African Investment Bank). The review of the draft Protocol between the OAU and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the OAU Treaties and the Headquarters' Agreement, as well as the criteria for granting Observer Status at the AU was also carried out.

In Durban, in 2002, I was also given the responsibility to submit a report on the structure of the Commission, the programmes and the conditions of service of the staff and the related financial implications, which was finalized and presented to Member States way back in January 2003. Proposed amendments to the Constitutive Act were also finalized and adopted by the Extraordinary Session of the Assembly held in February 2003 in Addis Ababa. The draft report on the transfer of the assets and liabilities of the OAU to the African Union as well as the report on the African Court of Justice have been submitted to the current sessions. In addition, during the Interim Period, the Rules of Procedure of the Peace and Security Council and the Draft Scale of Assessment were similarly prepared.

Other major activities undertaken during the same period include preparation of new Financial Rules and Regulations of the Union, Extrabudgetary Funding, Design of the Symbols of the Union such as the Motto, Flag, Emblem, Anthem, and Logo, as well as Popularization of the African Union.

In addition to these enormous tasks, we also carried out other activities not directly related to the establishment of the Union but which, nevertheless called for attention, sometimes with serious financial and human resource constraints. I wish to sincerely thank members of staff of the Commission for their dedication and selfabnegation and commitment to the cause of Africa.

We have now come to the end of both the Transition Period, and the Interim Period during which I had the privilege to serve our Continent as Secretary General of the OAU, and then Interim Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union. I take this opportunity to express my profound gratitude to all and sundry who afforded me the opportunity to exercise these functions during the past two years. This has indeed enabled me to gain a unique experience.

The task of building the African Union is, needless to say, far from over. The tireless work done by long generations of Africans, be they ordinary men and women or personalities, will be accomplished only if Africa's soul comes to terms with the realities of our time without losing its bearings.

You will recall that in Durban, I did affirm that we were on the way to ensuring that never again will any mind, other than that of an African, define Africa.

May I at this juncture request you to recall the antecedents and the context leading up to the creation and operationalization of the Organization of African Unity, the same antecedents and context which eventually culminated in the birth of the Africa Union.

If we are today to describe our Continental Organization, I would say that it is no longer completely the OAU; at the same time, it is yet to become the African Union for which the peoples of the Continent are yearning as their hope to overcome the numerous stakes and challenges of the Century, as well as the stakes and challenges of globalization.

Africa has wielded, and still wields, more than just relative power in major decision-making fora, particularly the United Nations Security Council, and international financial, economic and trade institutions. The Organization of African Unity was the only rallying ground, and indeed the only body in which the Continent rediscovers itself on the occasion of the Assembly of our Heads of State and Government. This clearly shows that the OAU was the embodiment of all our hopes.

Critics may have described these Assemblies as a high mass, as ridiculous rituals that serve no purpose. Forty years on, can they admit that the mere existence of these rituals could have created the conditions underlying the gestation and the advent of the African Union?

Having briefed the Executive Council and Your Excellencies on the activities during the Transition and the Interim periods, I would like at this juncture, to speak about future prospects.

The mason building a wall needs a trowel. The instrument that we have provided ourselves, through the Commission, will measure up to our experience, our talent, our expertise and our will to build. In other words, the Commission will be what we make of it. During my address to Council, I pointed out some of these objective limitations. These can be corrected as time goes on. At the same time, its obvious potential can be exploited immediately, and above all, the Commission should be driven by the political will and determination of Member States. Integration is a process, a day-to-day effort. It also entails a new mentality with new reflexes. However this does not mean that we should forget the past.

Integration requires a regular and constant flow of adequate financial resources. The intervention of President Thabo Mbeki at the Opening Ceremony of the 3<sup>d</sup> Extraordinary Session of our Executive Council in Sun City, on 22 May 2003, was eloquent proof of this. In addition, human and intellectual resources must be mobilized to establish reserves of creativity and imagination. The era of new information and communication technologies, very often in real time, is indeed a time for action. Implementation also presupposes processes, modalities and structures characterized by malleability, mobility, in other words, flexibility for constant adjustment.

Transition from OAU to AU is the transformation of a Secretariat to a Commission. The institution is no longer merely a Conference Secretariat. It has become a structure for making proposals, following-up on these proposals, synchronizing and coordinating them. The word "pillar" was used to define the role of Regional Economic Communities in the edification of the African Union. This definition should also apply to the proposed Specialized Technical Committees.

Our national policies embody the needs of our peoples. The combination of these policies does not make a common policy. This can only be achieved by harmonizing policies through rationalization, in which the Specialized Technical Committees and the Commission play a key role. It is this role and function that can determine the rhythm and pace of the African Union. This instrument should therefore be rendered and kept running, and should serve the exclusive purpose of our peoples and of peace.

Therefore, for the Commission to be at the centre of synthesis, organization, impetus, and facilitation to push forward all the integration policies for the sustainable development of the Union and its Member States, human and financial resources should be provided.

The priorities of peace, security and stability would then make it possible to lay the necessary foundation to effectively deal with issues of gender, poverty and unemployment; to address challenges such as HIV/AIDS, Malaria and all the pandemics and global threats that have spilled across the bridge of the 20<sup>th</sup> century into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In the meantime, the world is undergoing radical changes; as evidenced by high technology, globalization and the consolidation of regional blocs; it is experiencing decisive transformations under the influence of scientific, technological, information, economic and financial revolutions.

The dismantling of the blocs clearly reduced the strategic importance of the Continent. However, the more the world becomes globalized, the more the Continent is bedevilled with crisis and conflicts, with Africans desperately clinging to their closest, most obvious, well-known, familiar and intimate identities –all that they have been accustomed to for long ages. This withdrawal by Africans into their shells impedes any attempts at integration and reflects the return of ethnic or tribal propensities in politics, with its attendant massacres, genocide and unprecedented atrocities.

In the face of this unstable development and the desperation that it may cause, Africa, left to its own devices, is now ready to take ownership of its destiny. It is now in a position to turn evil into good.

Proof of this is the significant process achieved as evidenced by a real democratic revival and a reawakening of political thinking. These changes show that Africa is neither a lost continent nor a continent in distress, the seat of a society incapable of keeping pace with other peoples. Far from being a lost continent, Africa, despite its unsteady and fragile development, comes back to life with tenacity and obstinacy, thanks to its abundance of human resources and its wealth of wisdom values, creativity and inventiveness.

People are now coming out openly to say that it is time to transcend the widespread pessimism. They are calling for a vision, a dream that will give them hope. Societies and economies are not transformed solely by facts and figures which, admittedly, are useful and decisive, but also by values and ideals through which large communities and sectors can be identified and mobilized.

In the last few years several initiatives were launched and various institutions and movements came into being and are evolving in the Continent, in the Diaspora and international organizations.

With the dismantling of the blocs, it is necessary for Africa to forge ahead and try out new parameters for the interpretation and analysis of the world.

Since the end of the cold war, the major challenges have changed. They relate to demography, the environment, biotechnologies, genetics, robotics, information technologies, trade, globalization, identity claims and conflicts of civilizations.

These problems are both global and multidimensional. Several national instruments have so far failed to resolve them. However, the State remains the focus of authority and legitimacy. This is why the role of the OAU which was an offshoot of all our States was called into question.

It is for this reason that the creation of the African Union sounds inevitable. We have put it on track with its economic component – NEPAD.

These two major initiatives are based on the premise that another Africa is possible: a winner Africa in the words of one of the initiators of NEPAD.

With the African Union what is now needed is to plan the future of Africa. You, the second generation of founding fathers have clearly understood this need; for “one can only lead a people by showing them a future”. And then, when the people become involved in the action, the leaders will follow. The role of the Union will be to restore to the people their role as leader.

I am in a position to affirm, that apart from the fulfillment of the aspirations of our peoples in a climate of peace coupled with the participation of all and sundry, we are at a standstill.

The main objective of the Union is to lay a solid and lasting foundation for what Mr. Fédérico Mayor, former Director General of UNESCO once described as the “interactive triangle”; namely peace, development and democracy.

This primary objective of the Union translates into a wide range of goals which are, *inter alia*, anchored on problems relating to economic development and social well-being. They include the promotion and participation of women, the protection and welfare of the child. These goals further

integrate the mastery of science and technology in the service of development; the mastery of information and communication technologies, the development of human resources and capacities as well as the organization and consolidation of political structures and spaces and the integration of such structures and spaces. The list is not exhaustive.

The strengthening of governmental institutions to allow for greater efficiency, the amelioration of democratic process and observance of human rights, peace-building and cooperation among peoples lead us to promote an African personality capable of asserting itself in globalization and facing up to the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

It therefore becomes imperative to go beyond the routine of vague recommendations, plans, programmes and strategies, which pile up, without the agents for their implementation being particularly committed and empowered, and without formal evaluation of the results thereof.

We should also make a critical assessment of the major Pan-African and regional development and integration instruments and eventually determine their orientation, if need be, ensuring that they are relevant to the expectations of Africans and challenges of the century.

The playing field is vast as we still need to go beyond the simple establishment of peaceful relations between States to achieve a real convergence of policies and initiatives to address the major global and sectoral challenges.

It would therefore be necessary to endow the Organization with the political and material means and the capacities commensurate with our ambitions. I say again: the Commission will be what we make of it.

The Organization of Africa Unity was a beautiful ideal which excited generations of young Africans in the 1960s. Then followed disappointment and disillusion.

If the same enthusiasm must be recaptured so that the young generations of the millennium do not lose faith in the future, we must assume our responsibility.

We must also be ready at any moment to face challenges, to take up the fight and to bring home victories.

**Mr. President,**

**Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,**

**Excellency Kofi Annan  
United Nations Secretary General,**

**Distinguished Guests,**

**Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

When hope is lost, all is lost. Let us work so that Africa will never lose hope and will be able, strengthened by its traditions and youth, to carry on its struggle for justice, fraternity and peace.

Today must be ours, for tomorrow to become another day, a day which fulfills our hopes and gives a united and fraternal Africa its rightful place in the concert of nations.

Long live the African Union!

Long live Africa!

I thank you, your humble servant.