

AFRICAN UNION

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**EXECUTIVE COUNCIL  
Eighth Ordinary Session  
16 – 21 January 2006  
Khartoum, SUDAN**

**STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE  
AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION  
19 JANUARY 2006**

**STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN  
UNION COMMISSION**

Allow me to first request this august Assembly to kindly observe one minute of silence in memory of the African soldiers who fell on the battle field, as gallant soldiers of peace.

Thank you!

**Your Excellency the Representative of the Vice President of The Sudan,  
Your Excellency the Chairperson of the Executive Council,  
The President of the Pan-African Parliament,  
The President of ECOSOCC,  
Honourable Ministers,  
The Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa,  
Your Excellencies, the Ambassadors,  
Distinguished Invited Guests,**

This 8<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Executive Council of the African Union is being held at a critical moment for the African Union Commission and the African continent as a whole, confronted with the challenges of peace and security, particularly in this region.

Allow me first and foremost to pay a glowing tribute to the Sudanese Authorities, to thank them for the welcome and considerable efforts made to host these meetings of the African Union, on the occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the independence of The Sudan, which we hail. I would also like, with the kind permission of Mr. President, to thank our many development partners and friends of Africa who as always, have answered our call. I mention this specifically because of the remarkable manner in which, throughout the year 2005, Africa featured on the global agenda, at the instigation, it must be acknowledged, of Great Britain. However, the lesson to be learnt from all this is that regardless of the assistance we receive from our friends, we must first count on ourselves. For we have learnt during the years that many promises are not actually fulfilled. Furthermore, the numerous promises made in the last six months may not be followed by concrete action unless we are more united and rely more on ourselves. I would also like to express my thanks to all components of the African Civil Society for their unrelenting support.

**Mr. President,  
Honourable Ministers,**

I wish particularly to congratulate Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, the new Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, for his auspicious appointment. We know that we can most certainly count on him. Indeed, in his former position at the UNDP he wholeheartedly supported all the activities carried out by the African Union. I would also like to congratulate Mr. Donald Kaberuka, President of the African Development Bank, who has always been on our side, and I firmly believe, will enable us to go one step further in the implementation of all our projects. I would also like to avail myself of this opportunity to congratulate many other Africans who have been appointed at the helm of the International Atomic Energy Agency, UNIDO, FAO and WTO.

**Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Before tackling the issues of education and culture which are the dominant themes of our meeting, it is most appropriate to thank the entire Executive Council which agreed to postpone its extraordinary session slated for November 2005 in Addis Ababa to enable the African Union Commission to complete the preparation of its 2006 budget. Pressing issues made it impossible for me yesterday, 19 January, to participate in your deliberations devoted to the consideration of the 2006 budget.

With the budget you have generously approved for us, we shall do our utmost to improve our working methods thanks to the institutional transformation and achieve results that measure up to the confidence reposed in us. I am gratified to note that shortly the Executive Council will discuss fundamental issues pertaining to the structure of our budget and the appropriation of our programmes. I wish to assure you that the Commission will work in close collaboration with the Permanent Representatives Committee so that the debate scheduled for next July reflects the expectations of each and all. Indeed, the Commission whose human resources will be strengthened will spare no effort to ensure the effective implementation of the programmes and projects contained in the 2006 budget, in strict compliance with the principles of good governance, equity, justice, regional and gender balance.

**Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As I said earlier, the people of Africa are fed up, I repeat fed up, with conflicts. I will not belabour the Darfur crisis which you are very much aware of. Nonetheless, I would like to invite all the protagonists of the conflict to redouble their efforts and transcend their differences so that the Abuja Talks succeed and create the conditions for a definitive political settlement of the crisis. Africa has played its part; it has mobilized its sons and daughters and enlisted the support of our partners. In this collective effort, we expect our Sudanese brothers – both from the Government and the rebel movements – to also play their part. And we are still waiting!

**Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The situation in Côte d'Ivoire has of late assumed alarming dimensions after the exquisite glimmer of hope that marked the consensual appointment of the new Prime Minister, whose main task is to succeed in organizing free and fair elections in harmony with the President of the Republic and all the other actors in the Ivorian political landscape.

Here too, I am appealing to all the parties to have confidence in ECOWAS, their regional organization, in the African Union and the International Community, whose role is to assist them to restore peace and prosperity in the country.

Generally speaking, the Commission has made decisive strides in the area of conflict resolution in Africa, judging by current affairs in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Democratic Republic of Congo and in Burundi. However, it is increasingly being realized that we should lay more emphasis on conflict prevention. To that end, we need tools and mechanisms for monitoring and political intervention whereby we could prevent conflicts or at least curb them rapidly in

the early stages through political settlement of the underlying crises. This is the sole viable channel for the African Union, considering that the cost of peace-keeping is far beyond the financial and organizational capabilities of our Member States.

It is in this context that we should possibly reconsider the Lomé Declaration on Unconstitutional Change of Government. In this regard, the Commission has embarked on extensive consultations with the civil society and partners on ways and means of addressing that issue and making relevant proposals to Member States while taking account of the historical evolution of our societies and the exigencies of the contemporary world.

Furthermore, we have made efforts to promote democracy, good governance, free and fair elections as well as respect for human rights in Africa. Two lines of action are being pursued to that effect in conjunction with other organs of the Union. The first one consists in following the letter and spirit of the Lomé Declaration on Unconstitutional Change of Government. The second aspect finds expression in the persistent efforts deployed by the Commission in an endeavour to institute a culture of democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights by promoting broad-based debates on African constitutions; partnership in implementing the Union's priority programmes on governance; administration and civil service reform; prevention and control of corruption, as well as the promotion of human rights for men and women through education, among other perspectives.

**Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Education and Culture – these are the two central themes of our Khartoum Summit. Over the course of several preparatory meetings in Algiers, in Nairobi and in Addis Ababa, the Commission has carefully worked out common African positions. We would like to thank the authorities of these countries for their special attention and their cooperation.

We must also thank in particular, the Director General of UNESCO and his team, especially his African team. We expected much from UNESCO and we were not disappointed. UNESCO, which in the past few years, has deployed extraordinary efforts for Africa through the many offices it has established and its many special African programmes. What our continental and regional structures must do now is to provide us with the means to make us credible partners. I believe this to be extremely important.

**Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I hope that the Education Decade to be announced will enable us to make considerable strides in the education, especially the Pan Africanist education of our people and our youth. On the cultural front, if 2006 is declared the Year of African Languages, the Commission will redouble its efforts to consolidate the African Academy of Languages.

2006 must see us follow up on the remarkable conclusions of the Tunis World Summit on the Information Society. If you all agree, because the documents are all before you, we should be able to make significant progress on very important integration projects such as the activities of airlines and the Pan-African radio and television project put forward by Egypt.

I also wish to stress the need to send out a strong signal to our peoples, who are looking forward to the day they can move around freely across our countries. We know that visas are not about to be abolished overnight. But we equally know that, with sure guarantees and tamper-proof documents, a Pan-African diplomatic passport could be adopted that would enable selected holders to travel freely in and around all our countries without visas.

**Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

We have a duty to remember and to be vigilant in order to counter current attempts to falsify history, to reinterpret history, especially the history of slavery and colonialism; and soon, apartheid and genocide. We must take this as an African combat. Our first act, and I repeat, our first act, if we are to reestablish the truth, is to demand recognition of the harm that was done to our people. We cannot accept the history of colonialism as it is presently being re-written. We also need to be very vigilant about immigration issues and maintain the initiative in the discussions. Such issues can be resolved only through dialogue, not by unilateral action. We must pay close attention to this issue as our youth are urging us to do, our young people who have been waiting a long time, much too long. We all should know this, for that was what they were clamouring for at the France Africa Summit in Bamako; that, indeed, has been their constant demand, to be heard and to be noticed. Hence, the need to embark seriously on the task of rebuilding our educational systems around our culture and preparing coming generations to affront the challenges of globalization, peace, security and development.

**President, Executive Council,  
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen**

I am not forgetting, lastly, that the 23<sup>rd</sup> Africa Football Cup of Nations is starting today, 20<sup>th</sup> January, in Cairo. This is an important popular event, a great youth event. It symbolizes a victorious Africa. May this example of a victorious Africa always inspire our actions in the service of our people.

So help us God!

Thank you all.