

Statement of H.E. Osman Saleh,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea

At The

Extraordinary Session of the Executive Council

Great Jamahiriya 25-26 January 2010

Mr. Chairman,
Your Excellencies,

Allow me at the outset to express my heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to the Brother Leader and the brotherly people and government of the Great Jamahiriya for the warm welcome and hospitality accorded to me and my delegation since our arrival. Let me also affirm our high regards to Brother Mosa Kosa and our secretary general, Al-Madani Al-Azhari.

Excellencies,

Eritrea wishes to take the floor on six issues. In the interests of time, I will be very brief on each issue.

First, the formation of the African Union Authority. The decision to transform the AU Commission to the AU authority was taken here in Libya at the last ordinary Summit. But implantation has not gotten off the ground and resistance can already be sensed. Eritrea believes that our CEN-SAD community, is best placed to spearhead this implantation, step by step and by forging common ground. We call on the upcoming CEN-SAD summit to place the matter on top of its agenda and member states to start serious consultations among themselves.

Second, the revitalization of CEN-SAD itself. CEN-SAD, with its 28 members is the biggest group within the African Union; and yet, we must admit, that currently its role and influence is not, as it can and should be, in the African Union as well as in other regional and international forums and organizations. In the last session of the meeting of the Executive Council, Eritrea had raised this issue and we had entrusted our Secretary General to study the matter and develop concrete proposals for us to consider at the next ordinary session of the Executive Council. Eritrea believes this is essential if we are going to realize the potential benefit that this important organization affords

for its member states and our continent and eagerly awaits the report of our Secretary General.

Third, the renewal of the African Peace and Security Council. We will be discussing the nomination of new members to the Council, and this is good and important. But we also need to consider how CEN-SAD members in the Peace and Security Council can also represent the common positions and priorities of our community, during their term in the Council.

Fourth, the issue of Somalia. The Extra-ordinary Summit on the Resolution of Conflicts in Africa that was held last August here in Tripoli passed an important resolution, calling for a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Somalia, through an inclusive political process. This important resolution seems to have been quietly forgotten by the AU. This meeting needs to reaffirm that crucial decision and ensure that it is reflected in the upcoming AU Summit.

Fifth, I wish to raise the issue of the unjust and unjustified sanctions imposed on Eritrea by the UN Security Council last month. This measure was inspired by the United States and adopted by the Security Council under heavy-handed US pressure, despite the reluctance of many. Eritrea wishes to applaud the Libyan Jamahiriya for its honourable and principled vote against the sanctions resolution. We also applaud CEN-SAD for its statement deploring sanctions against a member state, a position solidly based on the principle of opposing external intervention in our affairs and finding African solutions for African problems. Eritrea calls on this meeting to reaffirm this principled position.

Finally, I wish to bring to your attention, dear Excellencies, that my country's right as a member state of the African Union continues to be desecrated. In violation of the Headquarters Agreement with the AU, Ethiopia refuses to accept Eritrea's representation in the AU. We are without an ambassador to the AU for 10 years. Eritrea has also been

denied its right to participate in African Union summits and other meetings in Addis Ababa by Ethiopia's refusal to extend to the basic diplomatic and safety prerequisites accorded to all member states. Our repeated efforts with the AU Commission to resolve the matter have failed. We, therefore, urge CEN-SAD to ensure that our basic rights are respected. Until such time, we demand that any matter regarding Eritrea should not be discussed in our absence in Addis Ababa. They should be addressed in AU meetings and Summits outside of Ethiopia. Should, despite our community's efforts, Ethiopia continue to violate the AU Headquarters Agreement, we call on the AU to stop holding any Summit meetings in Addis Ababa.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you!
