The twenty-second annual Assembly of Heads of State of the Organization of African Unity was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from July 28 to 30. These were some of the major developments and decisions of the summit:

The Empty Chair
Morocco’s King Hassan was not among the 22 heads of state or government who gathered in Addis Ababa for the OAU’s 1986 Assembly (see page 3), nor was the North African state represented at the presummit meeting of the organization’s Council of (foreign) Ministers. Morocco resigned from the OAU in November 1984 in protest against the seating at the twentieth Assembly of a delegation representing the “Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic” — the Polisario nationalist movement with which Moroccan forces have been fighting since late 1975 for control of the 102,703-square-mile territory of the former Spanish Sahara. The SADR has claimed OAU membership since 1982 on the basis of a letter from the organization’s secretary-general at that time, Edem Kodjo of Togo. (For background, see “Where Does the OAU Go From Here?” in CSIS Africa Notes no. 3, September 1, 1982.)

The procedural legitimacy of the Polisario/SADR seating remains a controversial issue, although Zaire was the only member state to support Morocco’s 1984 walkout by “suspending” its own participation in OAU affairs for an indefinite period. After sitting out the 1985 Assembly, President Mobutu Sese Seko sent First State Commissioner Kengo wa Dondo to represent him at the 1986 Assembly. The official Zairian news agency quoted Kengo wa Dondo on July 28 as having stated that “the reasons for the suspension of Zaire’s activities within the OAU still exist.... The SADR is not a state.” He cited intercessions by OAU Secretary-General Idé Oumarou and the organization’s outgoing chairman, Senegal’s President Abdou Diouf, as having significantly influenced Zaire’s decision that it must play a role in Africa commensurate with its importance and thus “should not be absent from OAU discussions.”

Passing the Torch
The 1985-86 term of President Diouf as OAU chairman ended in an exceptional shower of praise. Summit participants paid “glowing tribute” to the Senegalese president for the “inexhaustible strength, talent, and imagination” he had placed at the service of the organization and the “most effective manner” in which he had carried out his mandate. In a resolution honoring him, the Assembly decided to adopt his report as a working document.

In a more specific accounting of Diouf’s contribution, the London weekly West Africa (July 28) concluded that he “has provided the OAU with a new unity and credibility.” During his year in office, the organization ended a long period of indecision over the selection of a new secretary-general and began a restructuring of its administration. In the course of extensive travel throughout the continent during his term of office, Chairman Diouf focused special attention on the two problems that dominated the 1986 summit - Africa’s economic malaise and southern Africa. He is widely credited with being the driving force behind the recent UN special session on Africa (see “Economic Priorities” below), and also took a special interest in promoting Afro-Arab cooperation.

Congo’s President Denis Sassou-Nguesso was elected as 1986-1987 chairman. In the course of his July 29 address to the Assembly, Sassou-Nguesso reminded his colleagues that the July 1985 summit had “reassigned the Congo, in collaboration with the OAU, to pursue the search for peace and national reconciliation in Chad.” After consultations with the rival Chadian leaders,
Hissène Habré and Goukouni Oueddei, a meeting had been arranged in Brazzaville at which the two warring parties were invited to convene reconciliation talks. The meeting, planned for March 28, 1986, was to have been attended also by Dionf, who in fact traveled to Brazzaville for this purpose. "Regrettably," Sassou-Nguesso reported, Goukouni Oueddei "declined the invitation to attend the talks at the last minute, even though he had earlier agreed to do so without preconditions. The abortive meeting meant that another opportunity had been missed to settle the conflict in the strife-torn country." "The Chadian crisis," he said, is "a long and complex one" and requires "the serious attention of Africa, Chadians, and some foreign powers."

In a resolution on Chad, the heads of state asked Chairman Sassou-Nguesso to continue his efforts to bring about reconciliation, and called upon all parties to the conflict to cooperate closely with the new OAU chairman. (For background, see "Why Chad?" by Alex Rondos in CSIS Africa Notes no. 18, August 31, 1983.)

Southern Africa
The Assembly's July 29 statement on South Africa was based on a draft prepared by the OAU's Council of Ministers in their presummit deliberations. Reuter quoted "conference sources" as saying that "the ministerial resolutions were strong enough in language to satisfy the radicals, but not specific enough in the conflict to cooperate closely with the new OAU chairman. (For background, see "Why Chad?" by Alex Rondos in CSIS Africa Notes no. 18, August 31, 1983.)

- condemned the U.S. policy of "constructive engagement" and the "infamous" U.S.-South African policy of linking "Namibia's independence with the withdrawal of Cuban forces in Angola";
- appealed to the international community "to increase its moral, political, diplomatic, and material support to the national liberation movements of South Africa";
- demanded the "unconditional and immediate release" of Nelson Mandela, Zephanta Mothopeng, and all other political prisoners and detainees;
- condemned South Africa for the reimposition of the state of emergency and other violations of human rights;
- called upon the UN Security Council to impose comprehensive and mandatory sanctions against South Africa in order to force Pretoria to end its occupation of Namibia.

While the resolution seemed to represent a generally acceptable compromise, some discomfort was reported. According to Agence France-Presse (July 27), Côte d'Ivoire had "expressed a reservation" during the foreign ministers' deliberations. A Zaire radio Assembly wrap-up noted: "During this twenty-second summit, several resolutions were adopted, among them the resolution on South Africa. On this issue, Zaire expresses its reservations on various motions of condemnation against some countries that have close relations with [South Africa]. Zaire is of the opinion that as far as these close relations are concerned..., the policy that consists of condemning the South African regime will only result in the authorities hardening their position. The present phase of the struggle of the black people of South Africa to recover their fundamental rights demands from us a realistic and constructive attitude in order to put an end to the situation prevailing in this country."

A special heads-of-state committee (chaired by incoming Chairman Sassou-Nguesso and including the leaders of the Front Line states plus Senegal, Algeria, Ethiopia, Cape Verde, Nigeria, and "the independence movements") was appointed to monitor the situation in southern Africa, to identify methods of toppling the apartheid system, and to accelerate Namibia's progress toward internationally recognized independence.

U.S. Aid to UNITA
The heads of state condemned U.S. military and financial support to Jonas Savimbi's União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA) and called on the U.S. Congress to "put to a halt without delay this act of gross interference by the present U.S. administration in the internal affairs of Angola." The "deliberate and overt involvement" of the U.S. administration in the internal affairs of Angola was described as constituting a hostile act against the OAU, and the summit warned that the Angolan people reserved the right to take any appropriate action they deemed necessary to safeguard their independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity.
Economic Priorities
The summit endorsed the resolution urging international support for a $128.1 billion “Program of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990” adopted at the special UN General Assembly session held May 27-June 1, and reaffirmed the OAU’s determination to implement it. The UN document developed from a plan (“Africa’s Priority Program for Economic Recovery 1986-1990”) approved at the 1985 OAU summit, in which Africa’s leaders pledged to strengthen incentive schemes, review public investment policies, improve economic management, and encourage domestic resource mobilization and private sector activity. The OAU guidelines call on African countries to generate $82.5 billion over the next five years and ask the international community to provide $45.6 billion in additional assistance over the same period and to take debt-relief measures. Some $57.4 billion of the money raised would be designated for agricultural development; $60.1 billion for such agricultural support sectors as agro-related industries, trade, finance, transportation, and communications; $3.4 billion for measures to fight drought and desertification; and $7 billion for human resources development, including education and training.

The continent’s $180 billion external debt was discussed at length. In an interview with Gabon radio, broadcast on August 1, Chairman Sassou-Nguesso reiterated the summit’s call for an international conference of creditors and debtors: “During the summit, we decided that...we must combine our efforts — all of us from Africa, Latin America, and Asia — [to] put pressure on our creditors, and make them understand that there is the need to negotiate with us to find an appropriate solution to this problem.”

A Council of Wise Men?
A decision was made to call upon several respected African former heads of state “to give inspiration to” a body that will be entrusted with the task of reconciling the parties to disputes in Africa.

Did the OAU Betray Uganda?
The heads of state who drew up the OAU’s charter at the founding conference at Addis Ababa in 1963 recognized that any attempt to redraw the admittedly arbitrary continental map imposed during the colonial era risked sparking an open-ended chain reaction of controversies and conflicts. Thus, Article III of the charter emphasized two key principles: (1) “respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each member state” (i.e. no tampering by the OAU or anybody else with the national borders inherited at independence); and (2) “noninterference in the internal affairs of states [and] unreserved condemnation, in all its forms, of political assassination as well as of subversive activities on the part of neighboring states or any other states.” (See Helen Kitchen, U.S. Interests in Africa, New York: Praeger, CSIS Washington Paper no. 98, 1983, pp. 71-74.) Article III, unchallenged in principle for over two decades, is one reason why no African state has lost territory to a neighbor’s irredentism since 1963 and why no separatist movement has yet achieved its goal of establishing a new political entity.

In his maiden speech at an OAU summit, Uganda’s new president, Yoweri Museveni, asked if this strict noninterventionist stance had not been carried too far in certain cases of flagrant misrule. Addressing a closed session, Museveni criticized the OAU’s membership for doing nothing while some 750,000 Ugandans were killed either directly or indirectly by a succession of regimes (including those of Idi Amin and Milton Obote) during the period since independence in 1962. “Tyranny,” he said, “is color-blind and is no less reprehensible when it is committed by one of our own...
kind. Ugandans were unhappy and felt a deep sense of betrayal that most of Africa kept silent while tyrants killed them.” He rejected the notion that condemnation of Amin or Obote would have amounted to unacceptable interference in Uganda’s internal affairs, and argued that Article III “should not be used as a cloak to shield genocide from just censure.” He warned that “African silence in the face of gross abuses undermines Africa’s moral authority to condemn the excesses of others, like the Pretoria regime.”

The U.S. Raid on Libya
The summit denounced the April 1986 U.S. air raid on Libya’s capital city (“the deliberate attempt to kill Libyan nationals, including the country’s leader, Muammar al-Qaddafi”) as “not only a dangerous precedent but...a contemptuous and condemnable act in violation of the principles of international law.” The heads of state called on the U.S. administration to “stop its provocative acts” in the southern Mediterranean and desist from any future attacks against Libya. “The principle of dialogue,” said the declaration, is “a moral as well as political imperative which must be taken to defuse the situation as it exists between the present U.S. administration and Libya, to which the OAU stands to offer its good offices toward that objective.”

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