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*Statement by His Excellency President Olusegun Obasanjo  
at the Consultative Meeting on CSSDCA  
Abuja, 28 August 1999*

Excellencies, dear colleagues and friends,

Let me first of all welcome you to Nigeria and to Aso Rock. I am gratified that you could accept the invitation by our Foreign Minister to come here for this one day meeting which will focus on an issue of strategic and practical implications for Africa.

**W**e gather here shortly after the energizing OAU summit meeting in Algiers, where I enjoined my fellow African Leaders to re-examine the possibility of launching a process leading to a Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA).

**B**efore we begin with our deliberations, let me share with you some of my own thoughts.

**A**frica has been marginalised, de-linked and maybe even ostracized. We all contributed our fair share to this deplorable state of affairs. True, the neglect and disregard by many rich nations for Africa and their priorities have been a significant factor in this marginalisation process. Yet, I submit that the principal blame lies at our own doorsteps.

**A**frica must unite again with a sense of purpose, vision, mission and determination. Political leadership will be at the core of our success. How can we expect our nations to succeed and prosper if quarreling persists at the highest levels, if leaders condemned to cooperation engage in and fuel conflicts, if a cacophony of arguments and recriminations drowns out the need for common goals and cooperation?

**We** can and must do better!

**A**nd so I enjoin you today to revisit a proposal which had been submitted to the OAU back in 1991. At that time the Heads of State and Government acknowledged in their final communique that there is a link between security, stability, development and cooperation in Africa. This was in response to the Kampala document, which had proposed the launching of a Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA) and which had emerged from a conference in May 1991, held in Uganda at the invitation of President Museveni and organised by the Africa Leadership Forum and the Secretariats of OAU and ECA.

**F**or a variety of reasons, no further action was ever taken by the Heads of State and Government, within or

outside of the framework of the OAU, to give practical meaning to the conclusion reached in 1991.

There is no doubt, especially given the course of events in Africa over the past decade: peace, security, stability, development and cooperation are closely linked. One cannot exist without the other. If we want to pursue one of these important goals, we automatically affect and depend upon the others. There is no escaping from this reality.

In 1991, the African Heads of State and Government had recognized that the problems of security and stability in many African countries have impaired their capacity to achieve the necessary level of intra- and inter-African cooperation which is required to attain the integration of the continent so critical to the socio-economic transformation of our societies. Today, the many crises afflicting and stifling our countries are sobering and heartrending. They should induce us to take coherent, urgent and joint action in this area, at last. Too much time has been allowed to lapse - and all our countries, indeed all our citizens have paid the price for lack of leadership, vision, courage and lack of faith in the power of cooperation. Other countries and continents have shown us the way in that regard and it is never too late to change course.

The 1991 proposal for CSSDCA is as relevant today as it was some 10 years ago. Let me add my personal experience that the peace agreement recently signed for Sierra Leone is CSSDCA applied at the sub-regional level. I believe the same holds true for Congo if the peace agreement will be implemented as signed. As neighbors and African kin, We cannot and will not stand idly when people suffer, when lawlessness spreads, when guns speak louder than reason and when development is subjugated to brute force, corruption and other evil machinations.

Furthermore, what we are doing in West Africa is to institutionalise what we have been able to operationalise, namely to create a sub-regional defense accord in the framework of ECOWAS. This will lead to an ECOMOG which is not being seen as a NIGERIAMOG, but as a truly West African undertaking.

**We** have a historic responsibility and to launch a full-fledged CSSDCA process. Nigeria is ready to assume its responsibilities in such an initiative and I invite you all - and the other African countries - to work together in the quest to create a new Africa architecture which will equip us to face the challenges of the 21 st century.

**As** one of the original initiator of the CSSDCA proposition, let me emphasize that CSSDCA is not

supposed to be an event, rather it is designed as a process with sustained and progressive engagement and commitment, leading to a true cooperation among African countries.

**CSSDCA** would provide the umbrella which would guide all our efforts in the arenas of security, stability, development and cooperation. Let the Kampala document be our starting point in crafting this new agenda for Africa into the new millennium.

International fora and discussions are replete with the magic of the millennium. As others define new vistas and ambitions to the unknown, our countries are struggling with the economic realities of marginalisation, neglect and diversion. When the Berlin Wall fell, many of us warned of a counter-productive diversion of aid flows to the countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Our fears were dismissed then as phantoms - and yet they became a sad reality. Diversion of resource flows and official assistance flows at the beginning of this decade had set the stage for a constant downward spiral in ODA to Africa to the present abysmal levels. Has this trend bottomed out? I doubt it. Indications are that in the wake of the exceedingly costly war in Kosovo - in eleven days the war effort on the part of NATO consumed a sum equivalent to the totality of annual ODA - and the

preparations for rebuilding Kosovo and the Balkans Africa once again will be paying a steep price. In the light of the first indications of reductions in development aid, the Administrator of UNDP has already characterised such action as *taxing Africa to finance Kosovo reconstruction*. Shameful as this trend is, we must face it fairly and squarely. International neglect, which can no longer be obscured by lofty declarations of good intentions, will force us all to muster our energies and strengths together. Africa is on its own - let there be no doubt. And let us take the necessary action to help ourselves. CSSDCA can be a solid start in that direction.

I look forward to a frank exchange of views on the proposition of CSSDCA among this illustrious group of participants and I hope that at the end of the day we will be able to reach consensus of the next steps ahead, coupled with commitments of what each and everyone of us will do.

Finally, I understand that some of you had to overcome some obstacles in checking in the hotel. Please accept my sincere apologies for any inconvenience that may have been caused.

Let us begin by a brief round of introductions of the participants around the table.

Let us now begin the debate with a brief introduction of the history of CSSDCA, its intent, objectives and modalities as conceived in 1991.