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Disarmament: The African Perspective

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We shall not bother too much with the definition of the term "disarmament." It shall serve our purpose if we point out that earlier disarmament used to be defined as a term which denoted "measures as well as the elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction." [1] However, this was a narrow definition. In due course, the term "disarmament" has come to be looked at from a much broader perspective. Disarmament is now generally accepted as the "process of reduction in the size of, and expenditures on, armed forces, the destruction or dismantling of weapons, whether deployed or stockpiled, the progressive elimination of the capacity to produce new weapons and the release and integration into civilian life of military personnel." [2] To realise this objective, the nations of the world have been advocating such measures as the establishment of nuclear weapon-free zones, non-proliferation, limitation of the arms trade, reduction of military budgets, and confidence-building measures. To ensure general and complete elimination of arms, there has been widespread recognition of the need to link the disarmament process with other political as well as socio-economic problems of the world such as the need for security, good relations between states and development of a system of peaceful settlement of disputes. Other measures that have been considered to be relevant in boosting the disarmament process include the role of the general public in putting pressure on their respective governments with a view to accelerating and realising disarmament objectives. [3]

Africans have presented to the world a strong case for global disarmament. In order to appreciate their case, in the true historical perspective, we shall have to bear in mind the fact that they have always abhorred violence and have given preference to security. Unfortunately, during the colonial era, they had very little opportunity to fully articulate their views on disarmament, security and world peace in clear terms. Still, if we peruse the declarations and resolutions of various Pan–African Congresses organised between 1900 and the 1940s, we will find therein veiled assertions and commitments to disarmament values. These were expressed in tacit demands for the dismantling of the colonial occupation of Africa, and the need for security, peace and development. [4] When African territories gained their deliverance from colonial bondage and became independent, Africa's consensus on disarmament started developing and acquiring a clearer perception. The African states started demonstrating a certain assertiveness on their part by not only demanding that their voices be heard in discussions on international issues but also by advocating what they considered to be a peaceful world order in which their newly won freedom and independence would be ensured and safeguarded. In effect, the African states, by their actions, were introducing a new element in the pre-existing bipolar East/West and Cold War military alliances of the time. [5]

In 1955, the foundations of the non-aligned spirit were laid in Bandung. At that time, most of the African territories were colonies of the European powers. Africa was represented at the Bandung Conference by Egypt, Ethiopia, Liberia, the Gold Coast (now Ghana) and Sudan. These states said that they were representing Africa in demanding world disarmament. The Bandung Declaration to which the aforesaid African states were also parties, expressed alarm at the continuing exacerbation of the arms race and the Cold War, and expressed the

need for peace and security as well as the right of the so-called Third World countries to occupy the centre-stage of world politics as a balancing force in East/West conflicts.

In the post-independence period, and prior to the birth of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), Ghana, and its charismatic leader, Kwame Nkrumah, played a very significant role, at least in the initial stages, in the development of the African perspective on disarmament. The NAM and the OAU subsequently played a very important role in the development of the non-aligned, which included African, perspective on disarmament but it was Ghana that had set the tone and direction in which the African perspective was to develop later on. Therefore, we shall first consider Ghana's role, and then take up the role played by the NAM and OAU.

Ghana and Disarmament

Ghana's independence in 1957 marked the beginning of Africa's efforts to pursue the goal of disarmament and a nuclear weapon-free world. Kwame Nkrumah organised two important conferences in Accra (Ghana) in 1958—the All African People's Conference, and the First Conference of Independent African States. These conferences provided platforms to African participants to develop a consensus on the question of Africa's freedom, security and socio-economic development. The First Conference of Independent African States, held from April 15–22, 1958, called upon the Great Powers "to discontinue the production of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons and to suspend all such tests not only in the interest of world peace but as a symbol of their avowed devotion to the rights of man," strongly condemned"all atomic tests in any part of the world and in particular the intention to carry out such tests in the Sahara," appealed to the Great Powers"to use atomic, nuclear and thermo-nuclear energy exclusively for peaceful purposes," affirmed the view that "the reduction of conventional armaments is essential in the interest of international peace and security," and condemned "the policy of using the sale of arms as a means of exerting pressure on governments and interfering in the internal affairs of other countries." [6]

It was the French nuclear test that brought the realities of the arms race to the African states and influenced the evolution of a Pan–African, regional attitude to the arms race, particularly nuclear proliferation. After the French nuclear test in the Sahara, Ghana became the platform from which not only African protests but also protests from other liberal organisations throughout the world could be launched against the French experiment. [7] Nkrumah called for positive action against French nuclear tests—a mass non-violent protest movement crowding into the testing area.

In December 1959 and January 1969, an international team of representatives from Africa, as well as from Britain, the United States and even from France itself, attempted to enter the testing site at Reggan in the Sahara. Their starting point was Ghana, under the leadership of Rev. Michael Scott. From the outset it was obvious that this expedition would not be allowed to reach the testing site but Nkrumah seemed to be quite undeterred by the prospects. He said:

> "It would not matter if not a single person ever reached the site, for the effect of hundreds of people from every corner of Africa and from outside it crossing the artificial barriers that divide Africa to risk imprisonment and arrest, would be a protest that the people of France, with the exception of the De Gaulle Government...could not ignore. Let us remember that the poisonous fall-out did not, and never will, respect the arbitrary and artificial divisions forged by colonialism across our beloved continent." [8]

As expected, the team was prevented from proceeding beyond the borders of Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso) by the French armed guards. [9] Although the team was not able to reach the testing site, Africa succeeded in making its point: it was opposed to the use of any part of African territory for testing a nuclear device by any state. Nkrumah's position was that just as he believed that Ghana's freedom was incomplete as long as any part of Africa was under colonial rule, he also believed that Ghana's safety was not secure as long as any part of Africa was used for nuclear purposes, because, as he said, nuclear fall-out was no respecter of boundaries. [10]

As soon as the French test took place, Nkrumah froze French economic assets within Ghana "until the extent of

the damage to the life and health of her people become known." [11] When France exploded a second bomb, Nkrumah recalled Ghana's Ambassador to France. Nigeria also broke off diplomatic relations with France For once, Nigeria and Ghana saw eye to eye on the gravity of De Gaulle's nuclear experiments in the Sahara. Nkrumah saw the utilisation of the Sahara for nuclear tests as a violation of the sanctity of Africa's soil. He also saw it as a manifestation of the arrogance of a big power which evolved methods of mass destruction in a spirit of supreme indifference as to who might be harmed by its poisonous game. As Nkrumah put it:

> "General de Gaulle is reported to have said recently that while other countries have enough nuclear weapons to destroy the whole world, France must also have nuclear weapons with which to defend herself. I would say here...that Africa is not interested in such 'defence' which means no more than the ability to share in the honour of destroying mankind. We in Africa wish to live and develop. We are not freeing ourselves from centuries of imperialism and colonialism only to be maimed and destroyed by nuclear weapons." [12]

In April 1960, Nkrumah called a special conference in consultation with other African states, in which he discussed the question of security in so far as it affected Africa. Many of the French-speaking states were dubious, if not hostile to the idea. Through the conference, Nkrumah had hoped to urge greater exertion by African peoples themselves to proclaim their indignation at this nuclear rape of their continent. [13] However, his attempt to mobilise such protest movements were not successful.

During the UN General Assembly debates on the French nuclear test in the Sahara, Ghana stated that it was in favour of convening a special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Ghana's efforts in this regard did not succeed immediately, but it was obvious that, as early as the 1960s, Africa had become interested in the problem of disarmament being tackled at the global level. When Nkrumah failed to convince the United Nations on the need to convene a special session of the General Assembly on disarmament, he decided to convene a World Disarmament Conference under the title "World Without the Bomb Conference." [14] In articulating the need for Africa to take such an initiative, Nkrumah explained that "the influence of Africa and other uncommitted nations must be exerted to the full, to restore a proper sense of value to the world." [15] In March 1962, in the town of Zagreb (Yugoslavia), the Preparatory Committee for this Anti-Nuclear Assembly in Accra agreed that the subjects to be discussed would include means of reducing international disarmament, the transformation of existing military nuclear materials to peaceful uses, the economics of disarmament and "the examination of such fundamental problems as hunger, disease, ignorance, poverty, servitude, with a view to utilising for social purposes resources now misused as a result of the armaments race." [16]

On general disarmament, Nkrumah's position was that it was necessary not only because of the destructiveness and madness of the armaments race, but also because it reduced the world's capability to deal with the problems of poverty and under-development. According to Nkrumah, "one-tenth of the expenditure involved in armaments would be enough to raise the whole of the less developed world to the level of a self-sustaining economy." [17] Nkrumah's vision of the world included a commitment to the elimination of nuclear weaponry. Nkrumah censured both the West and the East on matters connected with the development of nuclear energy for military purposes. It must be clarified here that Nkrumah was not opposed to the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes; he was opposed to its use for military purposes. He never dreamt of building an African nuclear capability to rival that of the big powers. He certainly dreamt of developing a competence in nuclear technology effective enough to give Africa a significant status in the world. [18]

Besides Ghana, many other African states were also opposed to the arms race as well as to the development and use of nuclear power for raining death and destruction on mankind. This perspective of African states had developed prior to the birth of the NAM and OAU. The African states wanted peace and order in the world so that they could devote their time, attention and energy to the economic and social development of their peoples. They could not afford to squander their scarce economic resources over the acquisition of deadly arms and weapons. This is why the African states have been struggling hard to promote and achieve the objectives of global disarmament and a nuclear weapon-free world. The struggle of African states to achieve these objectives acquired a new dimension and a new sharpness after the founding of the NAM in 1961 in Belgrade and of the OAU in Addis Ababa in 1963.

The Non-Aligned Movement and Disarmament

With the launching of the NAM in 1961, the African states, along with other Third World states, got a very important forum from which they could carry forward their intensified struggle, on a much wider plane, for global disarmament and a nuclear weapon-free world—the struggle which till then Ghana had been spearheading almost single-handed.

The NAM does not constitute a bloc nor was it ever intended to be so by its founding fathers. It is certainly a group of those independent and sovereign states who refused to join any of the two blocs that were then existing. In fact, the NAM, right from its inception, has been opposed to the existence of blocs because it has regarded the division of the world into two antagonistic blocs as a threat to world peace and an invitation to disaster. Strengthening the forces of peace has been the prime concern of the NAM. Whatever the NAM did—whether it struggled against colonialism and racism or for the establishment of a new international economic order—its motive always was to strengthen the forces of peace and extinguish those sparks which could later develop into a big conflagration engulfing the whole world in yet another, more devastating, global war than the previous two wars. Therefore, the NAM, with its strong commitment for world peace, has been seriously concerned not only over the development, manufacturing, stockpiling and proliferation of more and more sophisticated arms, including nuclear weapons, but also by the fact that each nation was trying to outdo the other in this regard, in the post-World War II period. Such a horrifying development could hardly be conducive to peace—peace that was the crying need of all the newly independent and developing countries that comprised the non-aligned group. Therefore, from its very first session held in Belgrade from September 16, 1961, the NAM launched a historic crusade to promote global disarmament.

At the Belgrade Summit, primacy was accorded to issues of war and peace over decolonisation and economic matters, and the Declaration adopted disarmament as “the most urgent task of mankind.” The elements that constituted the NAM’s attitude to disarmament in the years to come were all present in the Belgrade Declaration. It began with one of the first and constant principles calling for general and complete disarmament under effective international control. This was followed by a call for elimination of armed forces, armaments, foreign bases, manufacture of arms as well as elimination of institutions and installations and military training, and total prohibition on the production, possession and utilisation of nuclear and thermo-nuclear arms, bacteriological and chemical weapons as well as weapons of mass destruction. It called for the use of outer space exclusively for peaceful purposes and for an immediate moratorium on nuclear weapons testing followed by an agreement on nuclear testing.

The participants in the aforesaid Belgrade Conference urged the Great Powers to sign without further delay a treaty for general and complete disarmament in order to save mankind from the scourge of war and to release energy and resources, which were being spent on armaments, for the economic and social development of all mankind. [19] The conference demanded that the non-aligned nations would be represented at all future world conferences on disarmament. [20] The conference made two important recommendations. Firstly, it desired that an agreement should be urgently concluded on the prohibition of all nuclear and thermo-nuclear tests. Secondly, it wanted that the UN General Assembly should meet in a special session on disarmament. [21]

It is important to mention here that of the 25 participants in the founding conference of the NAM, 11 were from Africa. Therefore, the NAM’s commitment to the cause of disarmament and denuclearisation was also an African position on these issues. Although Africa, since the 1900 Pan–African Conference, had been demanding a world order in which there was peace and security for all, the immediate reason for Africa’s assertiveness on the question of disarmament was the loud protest in Africa against the French nuclear tests in the Sahara. The subsequent non-aligned summits, through their resolutions, continued to exert pressure on the big powers for a general and complete disarmament and for the stoppage of all nuclear tests on African soil or outside.

The OAU and Disarmament

With the formation of the OAU in 1963, the African states had one more forum in their hands which enabled them to forge a common ground, a consensus, and an African position on the question of disarmament. The development of an "African position" was necessary because without it African states could not exercise influence for the promotion and achievement of the objective of global disarmament and a nuclear weapon-free world. Unfortunately, in the period preceding the establishment of the OAU, the African states were sharply divided on a number of issues such as the question of Mauritania as an independent state, the Congo crisis of the 1960s, the question of Algeria's independence, and the French nuclear tests in the Sahara. Most of the Francophone states were extremely pro-French and, therefore, they refrained from criticising France when it conducted its nuclear tests in the Sahara. [22] Before 1963, there was no regional organisation covering the whole of Africa. In fact, Africa was divided into a number of groupings such as the Brazzaville Group, [23] Casablanca Group and Monrovia Group. There were deep ideological differences among these groups, the study of which falls outside the scope of this article. Despite these differences, the broad identity of views among African states on the question of disarmament was amazing.

Prior to the founding of the OAU, there were a number of conferences in Africa which had taken up a position on disarmament and nuclear tests. The first Conference of Independent African States, held in Accra from April 15–20, 1958, in one of its resolutions, inter alia, had said that the conference

> "...views with grave alarm and strongly condemns all atomic tests in any part of the world and in particular the intention to carry out such tests in the Sahara;"
>
> "appeals to the great powers to use atomic, nuclear and thermo-nuclear energy exclusively for peaceful purposes;"
>
> "affirms the view that the reduction of conventional armaments is essential in the interest of international peace and security and appeals to the great powers to make every possible effort to reach a settlement of this important matter." [24]

The second Conference of Independent African States, held in Addis Ababa from June 15 to 24, 1960, strongly condemned "the policy of France to continue to use the Sahara as a testing ground for atomic devices" and appealed to the United Nations "to urge France to comply with General Assembly resolution 1379 (XIV) which requested France to refrain from such tests." [25] The Monrovia Conference of Foreign Ministers of Independent African States, held from August 4 to 8, 1959, adopted a strongly worded resolution on the nuclear tests in the Sahara. It, inter alia, stated that the conference

> "...denounces vigorously and with profound indignation the decision of any government to carry out nuclear tests in the Sahara or in any other part of Africa."
>
> "appeals to the conscience of the world to condemn this threat to the lives and security of the African people."
>
> "recommends to the governments and peoples of Africa to protest in the most energetic and formal manner to the French Government to desist from carrying out the proposed tests in the Sahara." [26]

The Casablanca Conference, held from January 3 to 7, 1961, in its resolution on nuclear tests, vigorously opposed the "carrying out of nuclear tests by France on the African continent, in spite of the outraged conscience of the world, the disapproval of African countries, and the recommendations of the United Nations," and appealed to all peoples and in particular to the peoples of Africa who were most directly threatened "to do everything in their power to prevent these tests from taking place, and oppose the use of African territories for purposes of political domination." [27] Finally, the Monrovia Conference, held from May 8 to 12, 1961, appealed to "all nuclear powers to stop the manufacture and stockpiling of nuclear weapons and all further nuclear explosions anywhere in the world." [28]

All these conferences held prior to the founding of the OAU helped in the formulation of the African position on the question of disarmament and termination of nuclear tests and manufacture of nuclear weapons. Not even the deep ideological differences of pre-OAU Africa, defined in terms of the "Monrovia" and "Casablanca"

groups, could negate such a unanimity. The founding conference of the OAU, held in Addis Ababa from May 22 to May 25, 1963, for the first time formulated an "African position" to which all African states subscribed. In its resolution on "General Disarmament," it decided on the following measures:

1. To affirm and respect the principle of declaring Africa a Denuclearised Zone; to oppose all nuclear and thermo-nuclear tests, as well as the manufacture of nuclear weapons, and to promote the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.
2. The destruction of existing nuclear weapons.
3. To undertake to bring about, by means of negotiation, the end of military occupation of the African continent and the elimination of military bases and nuclear tests, which elimination constitutes a basic element of African independence and unity.
4. To appeal to the Great Powers to:
    a. reduce conventional weapons;
    b. put an end to the arms race; and
    c. sign a general and complete disarmament agreement under strict and effective international control;
5. To appeal to the Great Powers, in particular to the Soviet Union and the United States of America, to use their best endeavours to secure the objectives stated above. [29]

The OAU thus took its first major step in the direction of disarmament. The next step followed within 16 days of the founding summit of the OAU in the form of an African Memorandum submitted to the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Committee (ENDC) created by the UN General Assembly, vide its resolution 1722 (XXVI) of December 20, 1961. [30]

The African Memorandum

On June 10, 1963, three African states—Egypt, Ethiopia and Nigeria—submitted a memorandum [31] to the ENDC on behalf of the OAU. In this memorandum, they declared the OAU's opposition to nuclear weapon tests. In the view of African states, cessation of "nuclear testing and the nuclear armaments race were essential conditions for any constructive and realistic discussion of general and complete disarmament." The substance of the African Memorandum was its proposal on three vital aspects of disarmament: (a) The number of on-site inspections; (b) the modality of inspections; and (c) the linkage between a nuclear weapon test ban and other problems of disarmament and development. In presenting the memorandum, the African spokesman, Egypt's Hassan, made it clear that a nuclear weapon test ban agreement should be linked to a "package deal of other collateral measures" such as (a) prohibition of nuclear weapons proliferation; (b) reduction of the risk of accidental war; and (c) a non-aggression agreement between the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the Warsaw Pact power blocs. [32] The memorandum spoke of general advantages that would follow the conclusion of a nuclear test ban agreement. It said:

> "The conclusion of a test ban treaty is likely to bring about a general improvement in international relations, to herald the settlement of other pending problems, to inhibit the further spread of nuclear weapons and to contribute to the slackening of the nuclear armament race. It will certainly put an end to radiation hazards and to the poisoning of man's environments. It will save humanity and posterity from untold worries and suffering. It will release the nuclear powers' much-needed energy, funds, and technical know-how and channel them to peaceful endeavours, to more profitable enterprises which are badly needed by the majority of mankind, especially by the African, Asian and Latin American peoples." [33]

According to an African spokesman, the African Memorandum was essentially a conception of the OAU and was presented independently of the non-aligned proposal. However, within the ENDC, African states saw themselves as members of the non-aligned group trying to play a "third party role" in test ban negotiations. Thus, the African Memorandum came up as an extension, not as a replacement, of the non-aligned proposals of 1962–1963. [34] While the African Memorandum received the enthusiastic endorsement of the non-aligned delegations at the ENDC, it was disregarded by the Soviet Union and the United States respectively. [35] The

African Memorandum on the nuclear weapon test ban had no effect whatsoever on the outcome of the negotiations involving the three nuclear weapon powers—the USSR, USA and UK. These powers signed the Partial Test Ban Treaty on August 5, 1963. This treaty was negotiated outside the ENDC, not inside it. Thus, the principles upon which agreement was reached were not the consequence of African perception and attitude, but those of the three nuclear weapon states. [36] The Partial Test Ban Treaty was a failure because it did not slow down the nuclear arms race among the major nuclear powers. At the most, it placed technical constraints on the underground testing of larger thermo-nuclear weapons. [37] After the signing of the treaty, the rate of testing increased rather than decreased. Of 1,221 nuclear explosions between 1945 and 1975, 488 were carried out in the 18 years preceding the conclusion of the treaty, and 733 in the 16 years after the signing of the treaty. [38]

The OAU Declaration on Denuclearisation of Africa

Africa's next major post-OAU disarmament action was in Cairo in 1964 during the second OAU Heads of States meeting. At this summit, unanimity was reached on the questions of nuclear disarmament, security and territorial integrity of African states. It was the Cairo Summit of the OAU which significantly declared Africa a nuclear weapon-free zone. It was this summit which agreed to bound Africa in an international agreement under UN auspices not "to manufacture, acquire or control nuclear weapons." With such a unilateral renunciation of the right to develop nuclear weapons, Africa became the first continent to have undertaken disarmament initiatives of such magnitude. It was only after the African initiative that the nuclear-free zone idea was eventually translated into concrete reality in Latin America with a treaty in 1967 (the Treaty of Tlatelolco). [39]

In its Declaration on the Denuclearisation of Africa, the Cairo Summit of the OAU called upon all states to respect the continent of Africa as a nuclear weapon-free zone. It pledged to undertake a legally binding commitment for the nuclear weapon-free status of the continent. The Cairo Declaration could not be implemented immediately due to several difficulties, the chief among which were the unbridled global nuclear arms race and the suspicion of African states that South Africa and the apartheid regime was developing a nuclear weapon capability. [40] Given this perception of threat to the security of African states, it became difficult to obtain a consensus on a legally binding instrument for an African nuclear weapon-free zone. Indeed, rather than proceed along the lines adopted by Latin America in 1967 in the Treaty of Tlatelolco, several groups and individuals in Africa argued that some African countries should develop nuclear weapon capabilities to serve as a counterpoise to the capability being developed by South Africa. [41]

The Cairo Declaration also requested the UN General Assembly to take "the necessary measures to convene an international conference for the purpose of concluding an agreement to give effect to the Declaration." The General Assembly, however, did not convene an international conference as requested by the OAU Declaration. Nevertheless, in Resolution 2033 (XX) of December 3, 1965, it endorsed the Declaration and expressed the hope that African states themselves would initiate studies through the OAU for its implementation. [42]

No further action was taken either at the level of the OAU or the United Nations until 1974, when the issue was again raised in the latter organisation. Annually from 1974 until 1990, the General Assembly continued to adopt resolutions (sponsored by African states), whose focus shifted from concluding a treaty on an African nuclear weapon-free zone to matters considered to be obstacles to its achievement.

The UN General Assembly in 1974 called upon all states to consider and respect the continent of Africa as a nuclear-free zone; reiterated further its call upon all states to refrain from testing, manufacturing, deploying, transporting, storing, using or threatening to use nuclear weapons on the African continent. [43] This resolution "was significant not for its substance, which was basically similar to that of previous resolutions by both the United Nations and the OAU, but for its being adopted at all....its presence, which meant a re-inscription of the subject of the denuclearisation of Africa on the agenda of the international community after an absence of nearly a decade." [44] The next resolution of the General Assembly on the subject of the denuclearisation of Africa differed from the 1974 resolution in that the continent of Africa was defined more elaborately as including "the continental African States, Madagascar and other Islands surrounding Africa" and in that the General Assembly for the first time agreed in an operative context that the implementation of the Declaration on

the Denuclearisation of Africa "will be a significant measure to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the world, conducive to general and complete disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament." [45]

Regional and international anxieties were mounting about South Africa's growing nuclear weapons development and capability. "Not only was South Africa considered a pariah state in Africa, having significant differences with the generality of the other African states, and thus constituting an ever-present source of danger to them, but it was also felt that South Africa would not have been as strong as it was had there not been a deliberate effort on the part of some states, particularly some of the Western states and Israel, to make it possible." [46] In 1977, the General Assembly condemned any attempt by South Africa to introduce nuclear weapons into the continent of Africa; demanded that South Africa refrain forthwith from conducting any nuclear explosion on the African continent or elsewhere; made an urgent request to the Security Council to take appropriate effective steps to prevent South Africa from developing and acquiring nuclear weapons, thereby endangering international peace and security; and appealed to all states to refrain from such cooperation with South Africa in the nuclear field as would enable the racist regime to acquire nuclear weapons. [47]

The question of combatting of South African nuclear capability was to dominate the African agenda on denuclearisation for the rest of the 1970s, all the 1980s, upto the 1990s. All subsequent resolutions focussed on the South African issue not only as constituting a danger in itself, but also as frustrating the objective of the denuclearisation of Africa. South Africa's nuclear capability was a stark negation of their avowed aim of keeping Africa free from nuclear weapons. Two incidents heightened African states' concern about South Africa's nuclear intentions. The first incident was disclosed by the former Soviet Union through the discovery of a nuclear weapons underground test site in the Kalahari desert in 1977. The second incident involved an explosion thought to be a South African nuclear detonation detected by an American Vela satellite. [48] Investigations of these two incidents remained inconclusive. As a result, no preparatory steps or consultations among the states of the region for drawing up a draft treaty on the denuclearisation of Africa were carried out.

However, the dramatic changes that occurred in international relations in the second half of the 1980s had a salutary effect on the implementation of the OAU Declaration on the denuclearisation of Africa. Of particular relevance in this respect was the commitment of the Government of South Africa to dismantle the apartheid system and its decision to adhere to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. [49] In April 1993, a group of experts, jointly designated by the OAU and the United Nations, started working on a draft treaty on the denuclearisation of Africa. In March 1993, President de Klerk informed the South African Parliament that South Africa not only had developed a nuclear weapons capability, but had also produced six nuclear weapons. [50] That confirmation implied that the treaty to be drafted would vary significantly from the existing nuclear-free zone treaties since, unlike the situation in other zones, there existed in Africa a state which already possessed nuclear weapons. The treaty had to be formulated to ensure not only that no zonal state would, in the future, develop nuclear weapons, but also that those already developed by South Africa would be totally destroyed, together with the facilities for their production. [51] Another important element that would distinguish the African treaty concerned the question of peaceful uses of nuclear energy. African states wanted to ensure that, in addition to its non-proliferation aspects, the treaty would fit in with Africa's multifaceted effort to strengthen its security, stability and development. Thus, it should not only provide a legally binding renunciation of the nuclear arms race, but also create an enabling environment of mutual trust and cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear energy and nuclear technology for economic and social development. [52]

The group of experts formed jointly by the OAU and the United Nations finalised the text of the proposed treaty after their sixth meeting in Pelindaba (South Africa) from May 29 to June 2, 1995. The Pelindaba text of the African Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (NWFZ) Treaty was later submitted to the OAU Council of Ministers which, in June 1995, approved it after some amendments. [53] The Pelindaba text was then approved by the thirty-first ordinary session of the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government. The treaty was then opened for signature in Cairo in February 1996. It took 31 years for the finalisation of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty. It may be recalled that the Cairo Summit of the OAU held in 1964 had called for the conclusion of such a treaty. The finalisation of this treaty had not delayed it. The African states were worried because Pretoria's refusal both to sign the NPT and to conclude a safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) had further strengthened the suspicion that South Africa seemed intent on

acquiring a nuclear weapon capability. [54] African countries could not ignore the South African factor in their effort to transform their concept of an NWFZ into that of a legally binding instrument. On the one hand, South Africa's conduct and its blatant defiance of the United Nations resolutions meant that it could not be associated with the negotiations for establishing an NWFZ in Africa, while, on the other, the Pretoria regime could not be realistically ignored in any negotiations for a credible mechanism such as an NWFZ designed to guarantee security and stability on the continent. [55] However, when South Africa's racist regime announced its decision to abolish apartheid, signed the NPT in 1991, and later destroyed its nuclear weapons, the decks were cleared for the finalisation of the Pelindaba Treaty with South Africa as one of the parties to it.

The Pelindaba Treaty

The African NWFZ Treaty, popularly known as the Pelindaba Treaty, seeks to strike a balance between non-proliferation and the encouragement of cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, both aspects being governed by strict safeguards provisions. [56] The non-proliferation provisions are all-embracing, covering as they do, in Articles 3, 4, 5 and 6, aspects of renunciation of nuclear explosive devices, prevention of stationing, prohibition of testing and, in the case of a party that had developed nuclear weapon capability before entry into force, declaration, dismantling and destruction. The non-proliferation provisions cover not just nuclear weapons, but the wider term "nuclear explosive devices."

The renunciation of nuclear devices in the treaty is all-encompassing, covering as it does every aspect from research to development, manufacture, stockpiling or control. The treaty grants permission to each party to decide for itself whether to allow visits by foreign ships or aircraft that might be suspected of carrying nuclear explosive devices. The treaty prohibits the testing of any nuclear explosive device by a state party or in the territory of a state party. It also forbids a state party from assisting or encouraging the testing of any nuclear explosive device by any state anywhere. This makes it clear that even the so-called peaceful nuclear explosion is prohibited. This is in consonance with the determination of African states not to leave any loophole for the tesing of nuclear weapons under the guise of a peaceful nuclear explosion.

The provisions in the treaty on declaration, dismantling, destruction or conversion of nuclear explosive devices are unique in the Pelindaba Treaty. The treaty requires each party to declare any capability for the manufacture of nuclear explosive devices, to dismantle and destroy any nuclear explosive device that it has manufactured prior to the coming into force of the treaty, and to destroy the facilities for production. Each party is also obliged to permit the IAEA and the African Commission on Nuclear Energy to verify the processes of dismantling and destruction of nuclear explosive devices as well as the destruction and conversion of the facilities for their peaceful uses. The dumping of radioactive wastes in Africa is also prohibited under the treaty.

Under the treaty, Africa has not abandoned its right to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. The title of the treaty, "African Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone Treaty," was specially chosen to underscore the fact that the intention was to prevent the introduction of nuclear weapons into the continent, but not to forbid nuclear technology as such. [57] In order to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, the treaty envisages that African states, individually and collectively, would promote the use of nuclear science and technology for economic and social development. The parties to the treaty also undertake to establish and strengthen the mechanisms for cooperation at the bilateral, sub-regional and regional levels. The treaty ensures that peaceful nuclear activities are to be conducted under strict safeguards arrangements. Each party, therefore, undertakes to conclude a comprehensive safeguards agreement with the IAEA. Furthermore, each party undertakes not to provide source or special fissionable material or equipment to any non-nuclear weapon state unless subject to a comprehensive safeguards agreement concluded with the IAEA.

The treaty establishes the African Commission for Nuclear Energy for the purpose of ensuring compliance with its provisions. It shall receive and collate the reports that parties are obliged to submit annually on their nuclear activities. The Commission shall review the application of IAEA safeguards to peaceful nuclear nuclear activities, and shall promote and encourage sub-regional, regional and international cooperation for the peaceful uses of nuclear technology within the zone.

The Pelindaba Treaty is the first major cooperative undertaking between post-apartheid South Africa and the rest of the continent. South Africa's participation in its elaboration commenced in 1993, and significantly, the final draft of the treaty was completed in Pelindaba situated near Johannesburg. The treaty has gone a long way in removing a major security threat in Africa by introducing transparency and confidence among African states. [58] The promotion of peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology, as envisaged in the treaty, will further enhance cooperation among African states. Significantly, South Africa, which is the most advanced state in the region in nuclear technology, has not only pledged its total commitment to regional cooperation in this field, but has also offered to host the headquarters of the African Commission for Nuclear Energy.

There are historical reasons why African states have pursued denuclearisation. The need to stop French nuclear tests in the Sahara is such a historical reason, although this is no longer relevant. Other similar reasons are the need to stop colonial powers from using their former African colonies for nuclear testing and the need to prevent Africa from being drawn into the Cold War. [59] In addition to these, there are some permanent reasons why African states have worked so hard to establish an NWFZ on their continent. One such reason is that they would like to contribute to general and complete disarmament not only in order to save Africa, but as part of an international effort to save all of humanity.

The Pelindaba Treaty will fulfil the function of preventing a nuclear arms race on the continent; it will prevent African and extra-regional states from introducing nuclear explosive devices into Africa; it will also prevent the danger of atomic radiation. In addition to its non-proliferation, disarmament, verification and environmental protection functions, the treaty will promote African cooperation in the various uses of nuclear technology for economic and social development.

At the level of the African continent and the security of each African state too, there cannot be any doubt as to the benefits that the establishment of a nuclear weapon-free zone can bring. If any African state had been allowed to become a nuclear state, it could easily become a legitimate target of attack with nuclear weapons by an extra-continental nuclear power. Moreover, if there was even a single nuclear weapon-armed state in Africa, it could trigger off a nuclear arms race among the African states themselves. Such a development would have resulted in the destabilisation of the continent not only through the proliferation of crude nuclear devices but also through the socio-economic costs of the diversion of human and material resources. This would have adversely affected the completion of development projects.

As a result of Africa having been declared a nuclear weapon-free zone under the Pelindaba Treaty, the African states could also manage to secure negative security guarantees from the nuclear powers. It may be appropriate to point out that the nuclear powers had failed to give such guarantees categorically in the context of the NPT. [60] Now, hopefully, they will have no difficulty in giving such a guarantee in the context of the Pelindaba Treaty. Above all, the Pelindaba Treaty gives African states full authority to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

While concluding this section, it must be pointed out that African states' approach to denuclearisation or the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa has been essentially negative because their actions have been motivated not by what they wanted to see happen in Africa but rather by what they did not want to see happen. [61] Africa has been a region characterised by the absence of nuclear weapons, which means that for the main part it was action, rather than the lack of it that could spell danger. In other words, if everyone just left the situation as it was, Africa would remain quite safe and free of nuclear weapons. [62] The African states were prepared to adopt the bush-fire approach, putting out the fire where they found it: combatting French nuclear tests in the Sahara when they threatened continental peace in its turn. [63] Even the reason of the mainly Southern African states that for some time resisted joining the treaty was not nuclear ambition, but the desire to protest Western nuclear collaboration with South Africa. There was no immediate threat of a nuclear arms race on the continent; in fact, most African states were, and still are, incapable of developing nuclear power for military purposes. The continent of Africa, even without the treaty, was already a nuclear weapon-free zone because the only country which had joined the nuclear club and which had the capability to produce nuclear weapons, namely South Africa, had destroyed its nuclear bombs. The treaty, however, is useful in that no African country, in future, is permitted to develop nuclear weapon capability and, secondly, no outside power can base its nuclear weapons on African soil.

Africa's Adherence to Major Multilateral Arms Control Agreements

The terms "disarmament" and "arms control" have been frequently reiterated in the political documents and discourses of African countries. Statements made by representatives of African states before the UN General Assembly, the UN Commission on Disarmament, and the Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament express very clearly a strong formal adherence to disarmament and arms control efforts. We may now make a brief survey of agreements and treaties on disarmament adhered to by African states during the last two decades. The status of the implementation of major multilateral arms control agreements open to all states indicates a significant level of adherence to those agreements on the part of the African states. [64]

Twenty-eight African states (out of a total of 115) ratified, acceded or succeeded to the 1925 Geneva Protocol for the prohibition of the use in war of asphyxiating poisonous or other gases and of bacteriological methods of warfare. [65] Compared with the Geneva Protocol 1925, African adherence to the 1963 Partial Test Ban Treaty is slightly stronger, as there are 30 African adherents to that treaty in addition to seven states which signed it but with no further action. [66]

The NPT of 1968 was conceived as a centre-piece of international non-proliferation efforts. At the time of its creation, the NPT was seen as the boldest attempt to use a multilateral approach to balance concern for international security with the desire to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. The operating Articles of the treaty clearly demonstrate the need to balance the rights, obligations and benefits of the parties. The main objective of the treaty is to provide for cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, consistent with the objective of non-proliferation. The NPT gained the highest level of adherence by African as well as non-African states. There are 40 African adherents, compared to 139 adherents worldwide. [67] The high level of adherence to the NPT may be attributed to the special importance of its objectives in protecting the international community from the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

African states hold equal commitments to both the 1971 Sea-Bed Treaty and the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention. There are 19 African adherents (and 12 African signatories) to the Sea-Bed Treaty prohibiting the emplacement of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction in the Sea-Bed and the Ocean Floor, and 18 African adherents (and 14 African signatories) to the Biological Weapons Convention on the prohibition of development, production and stockpiling of bacteriological and toxic weapons. [68]

The adherence to so many international treaties by African states shows their commitment to the process of disarmament. However, there are a number of worrying as well as inherent contradictions in Africa's approach to the whole disarmament issue which cannot but raise eye-brows and possibly open the floodgates for debate and discussion.

Contradictions in Africa's Disarmament Pursuits

The concern of African states to genuinely ensure the preservation of their sovereignty and territorial integrity through the acquisition of reasonable amounts of armaments either to deter or resist aggression or maintain internal cohesion, law and order cannot be over-emphasised. However, the question of security needs have since independence been overstretched to mean unbridled desire to acquire arms. Although Africa was the first region to take to take a position on crucial disarmament issues such as nuclear non-proliferation and the first to unilaterally renounce the right to develop nuclear weapons, the region continues to witness increasing militarisation, spending a disproportionate percentage of its Gross National Product (GNP) on arms purchase. Africa's share of world military expenditure in 1959 represented only a token 3 per cent of the expenditure by the entire Third World. By 1979, it had risen to 25 per cent of the expenditure by the entire Third World. [69] In this connection, Bariyu A. Adeyemi has rightly stated:

> "In the prevailing unfavourable international economic environment characterized by a decline in commodity prices (from which the majority of African states derive their foreign exchange),

> unfavourable terms of trade, high interest rates and volatility in exchange rates, compounded by a crushing debt burden, not to mention the perennial and aggravating haemorrhage in development resources, African States can ill-afford the prevailing huge capital outlays, all in the name of security." [70]

Africa needs to garner and manage prudently its own scarce foreign exchange in furtherance of the superior goals of economic growth and sustainable development. There is seemingly no justification for diverting scarce foreign currency into acquisition of arms whilst people go hungry.

There are two important levels at which African countries negate their own declared position on the question of disarmament. First, there has been the clarion call continually for an African High Command and, second, the widely publicised appeal by a number of eminent African scholars for the acquisition of nuclear arms. [71] Considering Africa's extreme poverty, its lack of financial and technical means to expend on costly weaponry, such presuppositions became highly unrealistic. Apart from contradicting itself in the eyes of international public opinion, Africa would be violating its own declared position on disarmament if it kept vacillating in actions for and against the arms race.

In all fairness to African states, it must be said that circumstances often forced them in the past to acquire arms in excess of their security requirement. As we know, most African states are multi-ethnic states. Most of them are facing tension and violence as a result of inter-ethnic conflicts. Such conflicts are compounded by the uneven development within various groups in the state and in some cases also by religious differences. Governments in such states are forced to resort to the use of force to contain the conflict. This involves the import of weapons and the intensification of violence. The foreign powers have often fanned the fires of these conflicts by their intervention on the side of one ethnic group or the other in furtherance of their geo-political or ideological interest. The problem is compounded by the tendency by African states to resort to conflict rather than settling, by peaceful negotiation or arbitration, their boundary disputes. [72] Such an attitude forces the states, parties to the border dispute to resort to massive acquisition of arms. Even where conflicts have not yet broken out, suspicions that because of unsettled border problems one country may be arming itself in readiness for future conflicts, often leads to an arms race between contiguous states.

In support of the above statement, we might cite the example of the Horn of Africa which was turned into a continuous ideological battlefield by the superpowers. The interference by the superpowers complicated, intensified and protracted the conflict in the Horn. In consequence, there was an unprecedented import of weapons and a high degree of militarisation of the region with adverse consequences for socio-economic development. The total value of arms imports by Ethiopia and Somalia between 1976 and 1980 was substantially larger than the total export earnings for the same period, and those imports left Ethiopia with a cumulative hard currency debt to the Soviet Union of upto US $2 billion by the end of 1982. [73] Because of the conflict, Ethiopia built up the largest military establishment in black Africa with a quarter of a million men under arms, about the same size as the Nigerian Army during the 1967–1970 civil war, but far more heavily equipped than the latter. [74] The extensive militarisation of the Horn has meant spending meagre foreign exchange earnings on arms imports. This has adversely affected the development work in both Somalia and Ethiopia.

The prevalence of apartheid in South Africa was also responsible for the high degree of militarisation in Africa. South Africa used its massive military power to destabilise all those neighbouring countries which provided support to anti-apartheid activists. South Africa's military prowess and nuclear capability led other countries of Africa to go in for a high degree of militarisation. Nigeria, for example, because of its uncompromising attitude on the question of apartheid and its strong support for the liberation movements which engendered hostility from the racist regime, took into consideration the South African factor in its defence planning.

Poverty in Africa has also led to massive acquisition of arms by African states. Poverty breeds discontent, and discontent often leads to conflict which often takes violent form. The African countries are then forced to acquire arms to deal with such conflicts.

The final reason for the large-scale militarisation in Africa has been the existence of authoritarian rulers who, in order to perpetuate themselves in power, armed themselves heavily as a bastion against insecurity and coups.

They sucked their treasuries dry to purchase costly arms from abroad, which they needed for their own survival.

In the context of the arms race in Africa, it would be instructive to remember that Africa is an integral part of the international community. When there was a Cold War between the Western and Eastern blocs, coupled with heavy military build-up, Africa also could not remain unaffected. The superpower rivalry at the global level and their efforts to carve out their respective spheres of influence in Africa dragged African states into the arms race. Africa could not take meaningful steps for disarmament when the whole world was engulfed in the arms race.

Now circumstances have changed not only in the world but within the continent of Africa also. The Cold War has come to an end. Bloc rivalries have disappeared as a result of the dissolution of the Soviet bloc. The world has become unipolar for all practical purposes. There is no competition now among the big powers for carving out their spheres of influence in Africa; in fact, Africa is now being ignored by the big powers. The noticeable easing of superpower rivalry and competition has had a positive impact in Africa.

There have been far-reaching changes in Africa. Independence of Namibia and the demise of apartheid in South Africa has transformed the security situation in Africa. The demise of apartheid and the installation of black majority rule in South Africa has brought to an end the destabilisation game that was being played by the racist regime of that country. The whole of Southern Africa has regained peace and stability after decades of turmoil and warfare. The other healthy sign in Africa is that, although intra-state conflicts continue in some countries such as Somalia, Liberia, Zaire and Rwanda, the number of inter-state conflicts has certainly gone down. Even more significant is the fact that there is now greater awareness among African states to resolve both inter-state and intra-state conflicts at regional or sub-regional levels. For this purpose, conflict management mechanisms have been created at sub-regional level, and they are playing, and will increasingly play in future, a very important role in containing and finally resolving both inter-state and intra-state disputes. At the continental level, the OAU has created a new conflict management mechanism called the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. All this shows that African leaders are now determined to put an end to the inter-state and intra-state conflicts in the continent because they seem to have realised that all such conflicts force African states to divert their scarce financial resources from development to arms purchase.

Another development that will go a long way in bringing down African states' expenditure on defence is the return of liberal democracy in several countries which were earlier ruled by one-party regimes or by men in uniform. Return of democratic rule has brought about peace and stability in these states and, therefore, they can afford to cut down their expenditure on the purchase of arms.

Thus, circumstances are now favourable for the scaling down of defence expenditure by African states. Reduced expenditure on defence will release the much needed funds for poverty alleviating programmes in Africa. Socio-economic development will strengthen the foundations of peace in Africa, which, in turn, will obviate the need to acquire or produce arms in excess of normal security requirements.

African states need to follow domestic policies which promote national cohesion and internal political stability. To this end, the need to establish a just and equitable social order through the democratisation of the political system becomes an imperative. Also there is need to establish an economic system that can ensure sustained economic growth as a means of eliminating social tensions within the society.

Endotes

***:** Reader, DAS, DU. Back.

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Note 2: For detailed exposition, see *The United Nations and Disarmament: A Short History* (New York: United Nations, 1988), pp. 1–109. Back.

Note 3: Mike Awua–Asamoa in *Africa, Disarmament and Security,* (Algiers, Algeria: March 24–25, 1990) (New York: UN Institute for Disarmament Research, 1991), p. 57. Back.

Note 4: *Ibid.,* p. 58. Back.

Note 5: *Ibid.* Back.

Note 6: See the text of the resolution in Colin Legum, *Pan–Africanism: A Short Political Guide* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963), p. 147. Back.

Note 7: Ali Mazrui, *Africa's International Relations: The Diplomacy of Dependency and Change* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, Heinemann Educational Books, 1977), p. 57. Back.

Note 8: Kwame Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom: A Statement of African Ideology* (London: Heinemann, 1962), p. 215. Back.

Note 9: Mazrui, n. 7, p. 58. Back.

Note 10: Nkrumah, n. 8, op.cit., p. 215. Back.

Note 11: Mazrui, n. 7, p. 58. Back.

Note 12: Nkrumah, n. 8, pp. 215–16. Back.

Note 13: Mazrui, n. 7, p. 58. Back.

Note 14: Awua–Azamoa, n. 3, p. 60. Back.

Note 15: Mazrui, n. 7, p. 57. Back.

Note 16: Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite* (London: Panaf, 1974), p. 199. Back.

Note 17: *Ibid.* Back.

Note 18: Mazrui, n. 7, p. 60. Back.

Note 19: Documents of the Gatherings of Non-Aligned Countries, 1961–1979 (New Delhi: Ministry of External Affairs, 1981) para 18, p. 6. Back.

Note 20: *Ibid.,* para 18(a), p. 6. Back.

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Note 22: S.C. Saxena, *Politics in Africa* (Delhi: Kalinga Publications, (1994), p. 204. Back.

Note 23: The official name of this group was The Union of African States and Madagascar. Back.

Note 24: See the text in Legum, n. 6, p. 147. Back.

Note 25: See paras 1 and 2 of resolution on "The Banning of the Nuclear and Thermo-Nuclear Tests in Africa" in *Ibid.,* p. 152. Back.

Note 26: See paras 1, 2 and 3 of "Resolution on Nuclear Tests in the Sahara," in *Ibid.,* p. 166. Back.

Note 27: See "Resolution on Nuclear Tests" in *Ibid.,* p. 190. Back.

Note 28: See disarmament section of "Resolution on Threats to Peace and Stability in Africa and the World" in *Ibid.,* p. 200. Back.

Note 29: *Organisation of African Unity: Basic Documents and Resolutions* (Addis Ababa: Provisional Secretariat of the Organisation of African Unity, n. d.), p. 21. Back.

Note 30: The General Assembly, towards the end of the 1960s, expanded it into Conference of the Committee on Disarmament (CCD). Back.

Note 31: The memorandum appears as Doc. ENDC/94 of June 10, 1963; and US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, Documents on Disarmament, 1963, pp. 203–06. Back.

Note 32: ENDC/PV.147 (Provisional), June 21, 1963, pp. 31–32 cited in G. Aforka Nweke, "African Perception of Global Disarmament and Prospects for Denuclearisation of the Continent," *Nigerian Journal of International Affairs,* vol. 8(1), 1982, p. 41. Back.

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Note 34: Nweke, n. 32, p. 42. Back.

Note 35: *Ibid.* Back.

Note 36: *Ibid.,* p. 49. Back.

Note 37: *Ibid.* Back.

Note 38: *Ibid.,* p. 50. Back.

Note 39: Awua–Asamoa, n. 3, p. 61. Back.

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Note 44: Nathan Shamuyarira, "Africa as a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone," *Disarmament,* vol. XV(1), 1992, p. 110. Back.

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Note 48: Ogunbanwo, n. 42, p. 16. Back.

Note 49: South Africa acceded to the NPT on July 10, 1991. Back.

Note 50: Adenji, n. 40, p. 3. Back.

Note 51: *Ibid.,* p. 4. Back.

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Note 53: OAU/CM/RES 1592 (LXII)/Rev.I. Back.

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Note 55: *Ibid.,* p. 105. Back.

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Note 57: *Ibid.,* p. 7. Back.

Note 58: *Ibid.,* p. 11. Back.

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Note 60: *Ibid.,* p. 118. Back.

Note 61: *Ibid.,* p. 119. Back.

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Note 66: *Ibid.* Back.

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Note 69: Adeyemi, n. 54, p. 106. Back.

Note 70: *Ibid.,* p. 107. Back.

Note 71: Awua–Asamoa, n. 3, p. 63. Back.

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