



**ARAB INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION
AFRICAN PARLIAMENTARY UNION**



**12th AFRO-ARAB PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE
(Abuja, 21-23 April 2009)**

FINAL COMMUNIQUE

At the invitation of the House of Representatives of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the 12th Afro-Arab Parliamentary Conference was held in Abuja from 21 to 23 April 2009.

The following delegations representing the National Parliaments of African and Arab countries took part in the meeting: Algeria, Angola, Bahrain, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea, Kuwait, Liberia, Morocco, Namibia, Niger, Oman, Nigeria, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sudan, Syria, Uganda, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

Representatives of the following organizations also participated as observers: the CEMAC Inter-Parliamentary Commission, the Consultative Council of the Arab Maghreb Union, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the League of Arab States, the Parliamentary Union of member States of the Islamic Conference Organization and the Association of Senates and Councils in Africa and the Arab world.

Inaugural Session

The inaugural session took place at the Abuja International Conference Centre was presided over by His Excellency El Haji Umaru Mua Yar-Adua, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Also in attendance, apart from the participants of the conference, were the Speaker of the House of Representatives of Nigeria, Honourable Dimeji Bankole, the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the African Parliamentary Union, Honourable Edward Ssekandi, Speaker of the Parliament of Uganda, the representative of the President of the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union, Honourable Akram Abdullah Mohammed, member of the Parliament of Yemen, members of Government, members of diplomatic missions and invited guests.

In his welcome address, the **Speaker of the House of Representatives of Nigeria, the Right Honourable Dimeji Bankole**, expressed his pleasure to note that the Afro-Arab Parliamentary Conference was established in 1984 to bring together, representatives of Arab and African Parliaments aimed at strengthening political, cultural and socio-economic relations between Arab and African countries.

He further noted that the 12th Afro-Arab Parliamentary Conference was being held in Abuja, the capital of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, at a time nations the world over are plagued by all manner of problems hindering their growth, progress and development.

We are living, he said, in a troubled world constantly faced with threats to the existence of humanity occasioned by hunger, insecurity, weak economies, internecine struggles for supremacy and armed conflicts, compounded by frequent reports of acts of terrorism not mutually exclusive to Afro-Arab countries.

Recognizing the role of Parliaments in ensuring peace, stability and the security and general well-being of all the people in our various jurisdictions, the Speaker expressed the hope that African and Arab nations would be saved from wars, banditry and all forms of terrorism, and called on all to work for sustained global peace and economic prosperity.

He expressed his satisfaction that the Conference would address the socio-political and economic situation in the world and its impact on Afro-Arab cooperation, and the role of African and Arab Parliaments in protecting the economies of our respective countries from the negative impacts of the current international economic crisis. Europe, America and Asia are all faced with similar difficulties and are striving to find solutions, and Africans and Arabs must not be left behind.

The Speaker of the House of Representatives urged delegates to work towards the restoration of peace and stability in all the flashpoints in Arab and African countries, address the prolonged Arab-Israeli conflicts and support international efforts at restoring peace in that region.

Lastly, he welcomed all delegates, on behalf of the National Assembly of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Following the welcome remarks by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, **the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the African Parliamentary Union gave his address.**

He thanked the parliamentary authorities of Nigeria for hosting this conference and for the facilities accorded to ensure the success of the meeting. He said that the presence of African and Arab parliamentarians at the conference was proof of their willingness to strengthen Afro-Arab parliamentary cooperation.

Honorable Edward Ssekandi asserted that it was necessary to realize the human development, by benefiting from cultural, civilizational and economic links of our two communities, and by promoting the afro-Arab partnership particularly in the fields of education, health and agriculture.

With regard to Afro-Arab parliamentary dialogue, the Chairperson of APU said that it was necessary to strengthen parliamentary relations between the two parts in order to give popular dimension to Afro-Arab cooperation. In this regard, he proposed some steps toward the achievement of this objective.

He then reiterated the support of parliamentarians to efforts aimed at achieving peace in the Middle East and the Arab region, and the peaceful resolution of conflicts in Africa.

The international financial crisis, he added, has compounded other problems confronting the African continent, namely, the food crisis and drought, which have worsened poverty and thereby posing a serious challenge to our countries.

He however called on Africans and Arabs alike to not lose hope but rather to make the Afro-Arab partnership a reality to promote the integration of our regions with a view to facilitating the achievement of our economic and social development goals. Lastly, he expressed the hope that the recommendations made by the Arab and African parliamentarians would contribute to meeting the expectations of the peoples of our two regions.

Mr. Akram Abdullah Attia, Deputy President of the Yemeni Parliament and representative of the President of the Arab Parliamentary Union, H.E. Sheikh Ahmed Ben Mohamed Al Eissai, President of the Shura Council, expressed thanks on behalf of the Arab Parliamentarians to Nigeria, its leadership, parliament, government and people for organizing this important Afro-Arab Parliamentary Conference. He added that the Conference was particularly significant because it was convened on the occasion of the 25th year since the launching of the Afro-Arab Dialogue. Moreover, it is an indication of the Afro-Arab Parliaments' commitment and their determination to pursue and strengthen this process.

Concerning the international and regional situation, Mr. Attia said that due to the global economic crisis which endangered the economies of African and Arab countries, it was incumbent upon Afro-Arab Parliamentarians to contribute to seeking ways and means to mitigate the negative impacts of this crisis upon their countries.

Mr. Attia referred to the situation in the Middle East and the escalating Israeli aggression as witnessed in the attack on Gaza in January 2009. Furthermore, the arrival of the Israeli extreme right to powering Israel and the expansion of activities in Al Quds, all undermine any arrival to aspired peace. Regarding the decision of the International Court of Justice against H.E. Omar Hassan Al Bashir, the Sudanese President, Mr. Attia indicated that it was a politicized decision. In fact, the United Nations Charter did not mandate the Security Council to bring one of the UN members before a body which is not a member. He also recalled the resolution of the 15th Conference of Arab Interparliamentary Union that denounced the decision of the International Criminal Court and declared its total support of Sudan. Mr. Attia added that disturbing conditions prevailed in a number of African countries such as Somalia and others.

However, Mr. Attia expressed appreciation for the enhancement of Afro-Arab Parliamentary relations and that the Dialogue between Afro-Arab Parliamentarians was an important mechanism for fostering such relations in all fields. Indeed, it complemented historical and geographical links as well as the common struggle that united Africa with the Arab world.

In his opening address to the 12th Afro-Arab Parliamentary Conference, **His Excellency Umaru Yar'Adua, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria**, expressed immense joy at being involved with the event which was taking place at a time when the international community was faced with the realities of massive global economic downturn. There could be no more opportune time than now, he said, to pursue more robust integration between Africa and the Arab world. African and Arab nations share a number of cultural and socio-economic similarities, making it essential for the two blocs to work towards achieving improved strategic partnership and productive cooperation to face the challenges of globalization. It is encouraging to witness the commitment of parliamentarians from the two blocs, in seeking an effective roadmap towards collectively addressing such challenges as economic volatility, poverty, corruption, HIV/AIDS, political instability, illiteracy, and gender imbalance, among others.

He therefore added that the current level of the dialogue requires a bigger commitment and a stronger collective will so as long is that this forum must be transformed into a long-lasting functional institution.

Nigeria, for her part, is committed to engendering an inclusive transparent political process founded on the fundamental principles of democracy, good governance, rule of law, selfless service and free enterprise, in addition to adherence to the doctrine of separation of powers, which has led to the entrenchment of mutual respect, constructive engagement and productive interdependence of the three arms of government in service to the people. This is all based on the belief that strengthening governance structures and institutions is a sine qua non for meaningful development and sustained growth.

Lastly, the President of the Republic commended all those who contributed to the emergence and sustenance of this valuable Forum, and pledged his country's unwavering support for this worthy initiative and assured participants of Nigeria's readiness to work steadfastly in partnership with all members of the Conference for the realization of the collective aspiration for a safer, fairer and more prosperous world.

While wishing everyone fruitful deliberations, he declared open, the 12th Afro-Arab Parliamentary Conference.

Working Sessions – Election of the Conference Bureau

The conference, in conformity with the statutes, elected the Speaker of Parliament of the host country as President of the conference. The Speaker of the House of Representatives of Nigeria, Honourable Dimeji Bankole, chaired the proceedings of the 12th Conference.

After the chair was handed over to Honourable Dimeji Bankole, the following were elected members of the Bureau:

- Hon. Said Al Maqbali (Oman), as Vice-Chairperson of the Conference;
- Hon. Bamba Mamadou N'diaye (Senegal), as Rapporteur.

The conference agenda was adopted as follows:

1. Election of the Bureau of the Conference
2. Adoption of the agenda
3. Report of the Follow-up Committee and evaluation of the march of the Afro-Arab parliamentary Dialogue in 25 years (1984 –2009)
4. Exchange of views on :
 - a) The socio-political situation in the world and its impact on Afro-Arab cooperation,
 - b) Role of African and Arab Parliaments in protecting the economies of their countries from the negative impacts of the current international economic crisis

5. Proposal of an Afro-Arab Parliamentary Symposium on: "**Challenges of Globalization to the national cultures of the African and the Arab world.**"
6. Setting up of the new Follow-up Committee
7. Date and venue of the 13th Conference.

Report of the Follow-up Committee

The Conference took note of the report of the Follow-up Committee presented by the Committee Rapporteur. The report dealt with the committee's meeting that considered and approved the report of the General Secretariats of the African Parliamentary Union and the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union on joint activities carried out during the period between the 11th and the 12th conferences. The report of the Follow-up Committee also dealt with the preparation of the 12th Afro-Arab Parliamentary Conference.

Constitution of the new Follow-up Committee

The Conference set up the new Follow-up Committee to implement the decisions and recommendations of the conference between the 12th and 13th Conferences.

The Follow-up Committee was set up as follows:

From Africa: Benin, Equatorial Guinea, Nigeria, Sudan, Zimbabwe (and Uganda representing the Chairpersons of the African Parliamentary Union).

From the Arab world: Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Palestine and Saudi Arabia (and Sultanate of Oman representing the Chairman of the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union).

The Conference then set up a Drafting Committee responsible for preparing the Final Communiqué. The Committee comprised the representatives of the Parliaments of the following countries:

From the Arab side: Saudi Arabia, Palestine and Sudan
From the African side: Ethiopia, Liberia and Uganda

The Committee met on 22 April 2009 and formulated recommendations based on the content of the speeches made at the official opening session, the presentations by delegations participating in the conference and recommendations presented in the memoirs on the agenda items.

The Conference approved the following:

I. The situation in Africa

The 12th Afro-Arab Parliamentary Conference, reaffirming the need to promote peace on the African continent through dialogue as a mean of conflict resolution, and that peace remains the prerequisite for development to ensure the well-being of the African people:

1. Calls for respect of the sovereignty of Somalia, territorial integrity and unity among its people, and expresses its support to the Djibouti peace process for the resolution of the Somali conflict.
2. Requests all the parties to comply with the Djibouti Peace Agreement so as to ensure stability, security and the establishment of democratic institutions in that country; it also condemns the actions of piracy around the Somali coasts which threaten the peace process in the region as well as international security and stability.
3. Condemns all forms and aspects of terrorism actions, and considers that terrorism cannot be attached to any religion, nation or people.
4. Declares its solidarity with the Republic of Djibouti in safeguarding its unity and sovereignty. It calls on neighboring countries to comply with international and regional efforts and requests the withdrawal from the inalienable border areas of Djibouti and to implement United Nations Security Council resolutions on the border dispute.
5. Expresses its solidarity with Sudan in the defence of the unity of her territory and people. It further supports the efforts deployed by the Government of National Unity in implementing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and finding a speedy solution to all the problems impeding the country's progress toward stability and development, particularly the Darfur crisis and its repercussions.
6. Condemns intervention in the internal affairs of Sudan and rejects forthright the positions of the International Criminal Court and its accusations against the Sudanese President His Excellency Mr. Omar Hassan Ahmed El Bachir. It considers that these positions constitute a serious precedent, are biased and founded on political motivations aimed at interfering in the internal affairs of Sudan and exerting pressure on the country to accept all that contradicts its sovereignty and national interests. The Conference further denounces the politics of double standards practiced by the International Criminal Court.
7. Calls on the African Union to handle this issue because of its competence, by introducing appropriate mechanisms to ensure the Sovereignty of member African States against abuse, breach in the implementation of the principles of International Law, its violation or misinterpretation.

8. Reaffirms its support to the efforts exerted by brotherly and friendly countries, particularly by the State of Qatar, to achieve peace in Darfur through negotiations, as well as to the efforts deployed, in this regard, by the African Union and the League of Arab States.
9. Affirms its commitment to the respect for national sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of the Democratic Republic of Congo.
10. Calls on all countries directly or indirectly engaged in the crisis in the east of DRC to espouse dialogue in conflict resolution and urge these countries to deploy every effort to attain peace and security in this region and the Great Lakes Region.

II. The situation in the Middle-East and in Arab countries

The 12th Afro-Arab Parliamentary Conference, recalling the resolutions adopted by the Afro-Arab Parliamentary Dialogue conferences and the Arab Inter-parliamentary Union, and on the situation in the Middle East:

1. Affirms that the Palestinian issue is the core of the conflict in the Middle East and that the future of peace in the region is subject to the resolutions pertaining to the implementation of the international legitimacy of the Palestinian issue, inter alia, to establish comprehensive, just and permanent peace that guarantee the Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories in Palestine, the Syrian Golan, Sheeba farms, and Lebanese Kafr Shuba to the 4 June 1967 borders; and ensure the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people in liberating their territories and their right to return as well as the establishment of their independent States with Al Quds as its capital; and reaffirms the right of peoples whose territories are occupied to resist occupation.
2. Affirms that the Arab peace initiative is a good basis for a comprehensive and just solution of Middle East conflict, and expresses its support to the stand adopted by the latest Arab summit that the Arab peace initiative will not be maintained for ever.
3. Reaffirms its strong condemnation of the heinous aggression launched by Israel on Gaza at the beginning of this year, condemns the organized state terrorism practiced by Israel and follows with deep concern the deteriorating humanitarian conditions in the sector due to the continuation of the Israeli blockade; and urges the international community to bring pressure to bear on Israel to open the border crossings totally and ensure the freedom of movement of individuals, goods and humanitarian assistance to the sector.

4. Requests the United Nations Security Council to charge Israel with the total responsibility for the crimes of genocide, premeditated destruction perpetrated by Israeli occupation forces in Gaza; calls for the setting up of an international committee to investigate the crimes committed by the Israeli occupation forces in Gaza strip and to bring those responsible in Israel to trial for the crimes perpetrated in the sector.
5. Affirms its support to all efforts aimed at realizing the Palestinian national reconciliation and urges all Palestinian factions to end their disputes and close their ranks before their sole enemy who is targeting all the Palestinian people.
6. Expresses strong condemnation for the continued detention of the President and Members of the Palestinian Legislative Council by the Israeli authorities and supports the role of the IPU specialized committee in its endeavor to release them; and calls upon the international community and all parliaments worldwide to pressure Israel for their release; and to set free all Palestinians and detainees and prisoners in Israeli prisons.
7. Reaffirms the Arab identity of Al Quds and condemns the practices committed by the Israeli occupation authorities in terms of destroying the outskirts of the Arab city of Al Quds Al Sherif in a bid to change the characteristics of the city and to realize its judaization.
8. Considers that all actions of building settlements are illegal and illegitimate and calls for taking the necessary measures to stop all settlements' building and land confiscation in occupied Palestinian territories since 1967.
9. Calls for the support of Lebanon to help it accomplish the liberation of its territories from Israeli occupation, particularly Sheba farms, Kafr Shuba Hills and the Lebanese part of the city of Alhagar; denounces Israel's disregard for implementing United Nations Security Council resolutions 425 and 1701. It also condemns the continuous violation of Lebanese airspace and regional waters, systematic attacks on its sovereign borders and abduction of its citizens.
10. Affirms its solidarity with Syria and supports its full right to restore the occupied Syrian Golan until the borders of 4 June 1967 are restored in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions. It also considers that all measures adopted by Israel to annex the Syrian Golan are null and void and contradict international legitimacy resolutions.

11. Calls for the withdrawal of all occupation forces from Iraq, and the support of the Iraqi National Government to extend control over all Iraqi territories, provide security and put an end to all acts of violence currently taking place in Iraq.
12. Expresses its solidarity with the United Arab Emirates and supports its right in the three islands occupied by Iran: Tomb Al Kobra, Tomb Al Sughra and Abu Mussa. The Conference calls upon the Islamic Republic of Iran to answer positively to the proposals initiated by the United Arab Emirates for reaching a peaceful settlement of the UAE islands.
13. Reiterates its total support for the efforts deployed by the Kingdom of Morocco to restore the Moroccan cities of Septa and Melila occupied by Spain. It calls for the creation of a Moroccan-Spanish cell in a bid to attain a peaceful and just solution to this problem.
14. Calls for the establishment of the Middle East region and Africa as a zone free from weapons of mass destruction including nuclear weapons.

III. Role of African and Arab Parliaments with regard to the International Economic Crisis

Participants at the conference considered the following actions that African and Arab countries must implement in order to mitigate the impacts of the global crisis through adopting more ambitious economic policies, enhancing regional integration, promoting greater economic diversification and better taking into account of their interests at the international level:

A. The following measures have to be taken at the national level:

a) Conjectural measures,

- temporarily reduce corporate taxes in the sectors hit by the crisis,
- increase investments through public-private partnership,
- lower interest rate and set up guarantee funds for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs),

b) Structural measures,

- create a legislative and regulatory framework aimed at stabilising the financial and monetary system and at reinforcing cautious measures in the banking sector,
- control the monetary and budgetary policies that are key to boost the dynamic of growth,

- reassert economic revival policies worked out according to the priorities of their population,
- promote the economy of production which yields real development rather than the economy of subsistence,
- prioritize agricultural development and the promotion of education and health,
- adopt a special tax system to import production tools and agricultural inputs
- promote local demand growth to offset the loss of export revenues,
- maintain and strengthen countries efforts in terms of diversification, especially by increasing local processing of raw materials,
- create agriculture development banks,
- establish financial transparency,

c) *Measures aimed at promoting investments :*

- promote a governmental policy based on the determination and the will to help the companies who have chosen to take some risks in this difficult atmosphere of global recession,
- improve business general environment,
- focus the monetary policy on supporting private investment, namely through interest rates cut,
- support and facilitate private as well as public investment,
- develop public investment, especially in the building of infrastructures as a key post-crisis component, while promoting new development outlook.

B- Measures to be taken at inter-regional and international levels:

- develop cooperation and partnership between African and Arab countries in the economic area, particularly in the infrastructure and agriculture sectors,
- promote free movement of goods and persons and speed up regional integration,
- adopt at the level of African and Arab countries a joint policy aimed at lowering the impact of the crisis on food and fuel prices and develop trade between both regions,
- grant African and Arab companies easy terms so as to increase profitable investment,
- promote joint unilateral or multilateral projects within African and Arab regions,
- create joint ventures in African and Arab countries,
- set up support funds within African and Arab financial institutions to boost the economy

- involve parliamentarians and strengthen the presence of African and Arab countries at the international level and make their voices better heard in international meetings and forums, particularly those about reforming the international monetary system so that it better reflects the changing economic realities and better respond to the challenges to come,
- respect of the international principles in the field of good governance,
- approach developed countries to have them open their markets to African countries' products and not withdrawing themselves from the outside world by resorting to protectionism,
- ensure that the sums assigned to development public aid promised by the rich countries are not lowered as a result of the crisis,
- keep a strong pressure for a rapid ending of the Doha Round so that it benefit to African countries,

IV- Reactivating Afro-Arab Parliamentary Dialogue

The participants noted the lack of dialogue between African and Arab countries over the last 25 years, and requested that efforts should be made to address the flaws, and proposed the following measures aimed at giving new impetus and providing new prospects for the dialogue:

1. Implementation of the Resolution by the 11th Afro-Arab Parliamentary Conference (Damascus, July 2007) on Afro-Arab Dialogue and its transformation into an active institution or organization. The new Follow-up Committee could provide a comprehensive viewpoint on this at its first meeting after the 12th Conference; and this will be disseminated to all member Parliaments of the two Unions, prior to tabling it before the next conference;
2. Revision of the Statutes and Rules of Procedure of the Dialogue Conference, by introducing amendments, based on the experience of previous years;
3. Exchange of visits between the delegations of African and Arab Parliaments, and entrust the Follow-up Committee and the General Secretariats of the two Unions with drawing up a programme for an African parliamentary delegation to visit some Arab countries and for an Arab parliamentary delegation to visit some African countries once a year;
4. Improving the cooperation and coordination mechanism between the delegations of the two African and Arab Groups, at meetings of the Inter-parliamentary Union;

5. Setting up parliamentary friendship groups within African and Arab Parliaments, to strengthen bilateral relations and deepen rapprochement and exchange of experiences and expertise between the Parliaments of the two parties;
6. Organizing in 2009, the Afro-Arab Parliamentary Symposium on the challenges of globalization to national cultures in Africa and the Arab world.

V – Afro-Arabe Parliamentary Symposium on: “The challenges of globalization to national cultures in Africa and in the Arab world”

The Conference entrusted the two General Secretariats of the two Unions with contacting member Parliaments with a view to fixing the date and venue of the Afro-Arab Parliamentary Symposium on: “The challenges of globalization to national cultures in Africa and in the Arab world”

VI – Next Afro-Arab Parliamentary Conference

The Conference requested the General Secretariat of the Arab Interparliamentary Union to have consultations with the member Parliaments in order to fix the date and venue of the 13th Afro-Arab Parliamentary Conference and inform the African side.

Abuja, 23 April 2009