

The participants also talked about the need to use every possible avenue for conflict resolution, including traditional methods. They mentioned as well the need to strengthen institutional thinking.

It would be unrealistic to place too much hope in the OAU's ability to find solutions to the conflicts in Africa. It must first be strengthened, its structures overhauled and itself made more credible.

The OAU is seeking a place between the United Nations, whose primacy is acknowledged, and the sub-regional organizations. These organizations have considerable experience in conflict prevention. Security duties must be distributed in an orderly fashion to the various organizations. Progress is being made in establishing rules between the various organizations. A spirit of co-ordination is emerging; the sub-regional level will play a key role.

Reference was also made to the media, which are playing an increasingly important and inescapable part in conflicts. Lack of transparency can only have adverse effects and result in the manipulation of information, even though there are cases where diplomatic discretion is needed. Thus access to the conflict zones must be allowed (isolating a conflict zone reduces the likelihood of peace). The African media must be given a greater opportunity to contribute. They can play a role in prevention and can surmount the hatred that is sometimes vented, fanning the flames of conflict.

The Burundi experiment was cited as an example of intervention by the Mechanism. Some 60 officers are involved; they are neither an intervention force nor a protection force, but participate in all the efforts put forth in the country. To begin with, the focus was on logistical problems and the difficulties of making the various parties understand the mission's role. The aim was to encourage change so that discussion could take place between the various parties. The situation at present is fluid. Finding a solution to the conflict will depend not on the presence of the mission in the field but on the willingness of the protagonists.

It was pointed out that if African countries reduced their military spending as required under structural adjustment policies, they would be less able to provide the personnel needed to intervene in conflicts.

Some participants raised the problem of the OAU's credibility. That it had made considerable efforts in struggles for national liberation was pointed out. It later found itself facing three major changes: the fall of the Berlin Wall triggering, throughout Africa, democratic change that could not be ignored; economic change with the restructuring of the world economy; and structural adjustments.

Africans must be united in the fight for development. Only a community of interests can really protect against war. The political will of Africans has been expressed in funding for the OAU.