

INTERNATIONAL

**WORLD BRIEFS**

**WORLD BANK TO ENHANCE COOPERATION WITH O.A.U**

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (PANA) - The Organization of African Unity and the World Bank have agreed to enhance mutual cooperation in support of Africa's development efforts, it was disclosed on Jan. 26. The agreement was reached during talks between the visiting president of the World Bank, James D. Wolfensohn, and Secretary-General Salim Ahmed Salim. covered a broad range of subjects "encompassing the political and socio-economic development in Africa and the role of the two organizations," the O.A.U. said in statements released to the press. Salim briefed the World Bank president on the current agenda of the O.A.U, which gives priority to the economic and social development of the continent. The O.A.U. chief informed Wolfensohn about the efforts being made to deal with conflict situations, and "on issues of governance, democracy and human and peoples' rights." He emphasized "the need to take prompt measures to assist post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction." Salim commended the World Bank for the support it has provided to the O.A.U. through the Africa Capacity Building Foundation and the Policy Analysis Support Unit and in the implementation of the 1991 Abuja treaty establishing the African Economic Community.

**AFRICAN TRADE AND INVESTMENT CONFERENCE SLATED FOR MARCH**

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (PANA) - An international trade and investment conference is to be held in Addis Ababa in March 1998, as part of efforts to attract foreign capital to Africa, organizers said on Jan. 26. The Addis Forum said 11 African heads of state and some 200 leading investors and investment promoters worldwide have been invited to the conference. It is being planned to coincide with the opening of the \$400 million luxury Sheraton Addis hotel in the Ethiopian capital. At the launch of the Addis Forum at the opulent hotel, where workers are busy with finishing touches for its grand opening on Feb. 28, it was announced that the forum was created to attract "global capital to Africa and to promote and encourage business and other productive activities in Africa." Irvin Hickes, the former U.S. ambassador to Ethiopia and adviser to Midroc (Ethiopia), one of the 15 international co-sponsors of the conference, said the gathering will bring together Africans and investors from North America, Europe, the Middle East and South-East Asia and Japan, "to discuss mutual interests about investment and investment opportunities in Africa."

**Is Zimbabwean culture on its death bed?**

By Lovemore Chikova  
Special to Sentinel-Voice  
HARARE, Zimbabwe

(PANA)—Despite a Western-style cultural climate staking claim to the country, particularly the youth, Zimbabweans maintain their optimism for their culture is likely to prevail in the long term.

The optimism is based on the revival of music, dance and drama festivals and the establishment of youth-themed cultural centers.

Cultural purists have long condemned young people who wear slacks, patched and baggy trousers, overhanging shirts, militia style outfits and outrageous haircuts — things they identify as Western.

During the 1997 University of Zimbabwe arts festival, Vice President Simon Muzenda attacked "disgraceful" youth for shunning their culture.

"It is a terrible shame that some of our young people seem to be bent on throwing away anything that is African, including our language, preferring to imitate Western

values which can never be ours, even in a million years," he said.

Mudenza encouraged young people to glorify local music and dance.

"It assures us that our culture, our tradition and our music are not going to die," said Muzenda, who is known for his traditional/cultural affinity.

The vice president's purist stance has stirred up a hornet's nest.

Many teens criticize Zimbabwean culture as stagnant, backward and hypocritical.

But all is not lost, cultural activists say. Zimbabwean culture is making a comeback.

Cuthbert Maziwa, acting director of the National Arts Council of Zimbabwe, said negative attitudes by a section of the youth is not indicative of how they all feel.

He pointed to the post-independence increase in the number of traditional

performing groups which have risen by more than 500 percent. In Harare alone there are about 43 professional traditional groups. The capital and nearby Chitungwiza town have an additional 300 musical bands.

"A common feature of some of the high profile groups is that they use traditional instruments, compose traditional songs and specialize in traditional dance," said a Bulawayo-based artist.

Godfrey Mahachi, National Museums and Monuments deputy executive director, said many aspects of traditional life were discouraged by colonialism, the education system and Christianity which labeled them as primitive and barbaric.

"What we need is to have more cultural groups to constantly remind the people of what is their own," he said.

Stephen Chifunyise, the secretary for the ministry of education, sport and culture, said soon after independence

the government created an environment conducive to allowing cultural groups to flourish. A 32-member national dance group was set up to represent the country at international festivals.

"Zimbabwean culture will never die," he said. "Even in the face of the threatening Western culture our people continue to hold on to their culture in moral attitudes, marriage and even burial."

The government now plans to construct a National Arts Centre in Harare to provide professional courses to students and also serve as a documentation and research center for the southern Africa region. Bulawayo's Amakhosi Theatre Productions has already established one.

The government also plans to introduce presidential awards for arts and culture to encourage, recognize and honor individuals and organizations' contributions to arts and culture. Also planned is the introduction of a visual and performing arts curriculum in schools.

**Liberians give Ecomog peacekeepers farewell salute**

Special to Sentinel-Voice

MONROVIA, Liberia (PANA) - Thousands of Liberians staged a mammoth parade on Jan. 24 to bid farewell to Ecomog African peacekeepers who helped to end the seven-year civil war in the West African country.

More than 10,000 students from schools in Monrovia and its suburbs joined civic groups and units of Ecomog in the

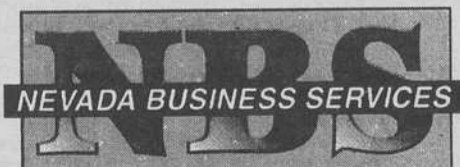
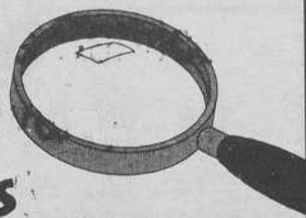
parade. The students carried banners that read: Ecomog, we love you Ecomog, we are proud of you.

The students also chanted "We miss you, Ecomog we miss you." The 16-nation Economic Community of West African States (Ecomog) sent the peace monitoring force (Ecomog) here on Aug. 24, 1990 to stop the carnage and mayhem by fractional fighters, and restore peace to Liberia.

That peace was finally restored after Ecomog disarmed fractional fighters, paving the way for Liberians to hold multiparty general and presidential elections on July 19, 1997.

Under a regional peace pact brokered by Ecomog leaders in Abuja in August 1996, Ecomog troops were expected to officially end their peacekeeping sojourn in Liberia on February 2.

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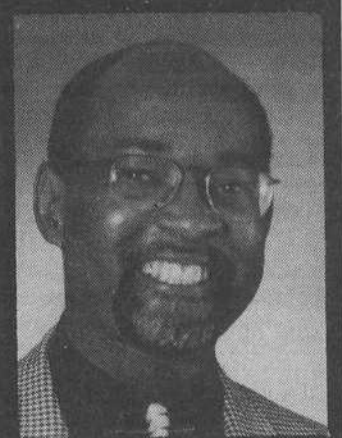
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