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QUESTION OF THE COMORIAN ISLAND OF MAYOTTE

Report of the Secretary-General

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its thirty-second session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 32/7 of 1 November 1977 concerning the question of the Comorian island of Mayotte, paragraphs 1 to 3 of which read as follows:

"The General Assembly,

...

"1. Calls upon the Government of the Comoros and the Government of France to work out a just and equitable settlement for the problem of the Comorian island of Mayotte which respects the political unity and territorial integrity of the Comoros, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly on this issue;

"2. Mandates the Secretary-General to take, in close consultation with the Government of the Comoros and the Government of France, any initiative in favour of negotiations between the two Governments;

"3. Further requests the Secretary-General of the United Nations to contact the Administrative Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity with a view to obtaining any assistance which may help him to discharge his mission."

## II. INITIATIVES TAKEN UP TO 13 MAY 1978

2. In implementation of the mandate given to him by the General Assembly, the Secretary-General held separate meetings at United Nations Headquarters with representatives of the Governments of the Comoros and of France to discuss the situation.

3. The Secretary-General held three meetings with a delegation of the Government of the Comoros, led by M. Mouzawar Abdallah, Minister for Foreign Affairs, on 3 November 1977 and 5 and 11 May 1978. At the first of these meetings Mr. Peter Onu, Assistant Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), was also present.

4. During the discussions, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Comoros reiterated the position which his delegation had taken during the debate at the thirty-second session of the General Assembly. He emphasized the readiness of his Government to enter into a dialogue with France to settle the question of Mayotte and to normalize relations between the two countries. The Minister recalled the earlier efforts of the President of the Comoros towards that end. In response to a suggestion by the Secretary-General, the Minister stated that the Government of the Comoros would be prepared to receive a representative of the Secretary-General to assist, if necessary, in the initiation of negotiations with the Government of France.

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5. The Assistant Secretary-General of OAU stressed the importance which his organization attached to the matter. He stated that its Chairman, His Excellency Omar Bongo, had discussed the question of Mayotte with the President of France.

6. The Secretary-General discussed the matter with the Permanent Representative of France on 15 December 1977 and 8 May 1978. The Permanent Representative reiterated the position of his Government as expressed in the debate on the question of Mayotte during the thirty-second session of the General Assembly. He said that France was ready to try to facilitate a dialogue between Mayotte and the rest of the Comoros. Moreover, the French Government was willing to receive a representative of the Secretary-General to discuss the situation. The Government, however, did not consider itself bound by General Assembly resolution 32/7 on the grounds that France did not participate in its adoption and had expressed objections of principle with regard to that resolution.

7. On 13 May 1978, the Government of the Comoros, under the Presidency of M. Ali Soilih, was overthrown as the result of a coup d'état. On the same day, a new Government, under the co-presidency of M. Ahmed Abdallah and M. Mohamed Ahmed, was proclaimed.

### III. INITIATIVES TAKEN SUBSEQUENT TO 13 MAY 1978

8. In view of the change in government, the Secretary-General addressed the following cable on 30 June 1978 to the new Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Comoros, M. Ali Mroudjae:

"I wish to inform you that immediately prior to the change of government in the Comoros last month, I had two meetings in New York with the former Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Mouzawar Abdallah, concerning the question of Mayotte. These meetings, which were held on 5 and 11 May, were in response to General Assembly resolution 32/7 of 1 November 1977. It will be recalled that the resolution called 'upon the Government of the Comoros and the Government of France to work out a just and equitable settlement for the problem of the Comorian island of Mayotte which respects the political unity and territorial integrity of the Comoros' and it mandated the Secretary-General 'to take, in close consultation with the Government of the Comoros and the Government of France, any initiative in favour of negotiations between the two Governments'.

"I was informed by the then Minister for Foreign Affairs that the Comorian Government would be prepared to accept my good offices in promoting such negotiations. However, in view of the changed situation, I should like to ascertain the position of your Government before proceeding further in this matter.

"I should mention that I am also in touch on this question with the Government of France through the Permanent Representative to the United Nations.

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"Since I am required to report to the General Assembly at its thirty-third session on the implementation of resolution 32/7, an early reply from your Government would be highly appreciated."

9. On 2 July 1978, the Secretary-General received the following two telegrams from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Comoros:

(a) "Further to your telegram No. 318/292 on the question of Mayotte, I have the honour to inform you that the new régime of the Comoros, under the co-presidency of His Excellency Ahmed Abdallah and His Excellency Mohamed Ahmed, will comply with resolution 32/7 adopted by the General Assembly on 1 November 1977. The former Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Comoros, Mouzawar Abdallah, with whom we maintain the best of relations, has informed us of the talks he had with you on this subject. With a view to facilitating your task, we deemed it useful to prepare the ground by establishing preliminary contacts with the French authorities, as a result of which diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level will be established with effect from 1 July between our two countries. We are sure that with this approach and with your continuing collaboration we shall now be able more easily to reach a settlement of the question of Mayotte which respects the political unity and territorial integrity of the Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros. We therefore welcome any initiative to that end."

(b) "Following the coup d'état of 13 May 1978, which overthrew the régime in the Comoros of Ali Soilih, I have the honour to inform you of the position of the new régime. The new régime of the Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros, under the co-presidency of His Excellency Ahmed Abdallah and His Excellency Mohamed Ahmed, referring to United Nations General Assembly resolution 32/7 and to the programme of action of the Committee of Seven of OAU on the Comorian Island of Mayotte meeting at Moroni on 5 and 6 September 1977, has, in the interests of efficacy, initiated, as of mid-June 1978, preliminary contacts with the French authorities with a view to creating a favourable climate which could lead to the normalization of French-Comorian relations. Following these preliminary contacts, diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level are to be established between the Comorian Government and the French Government as of 1 July 1978. We believe that with this approach, and with your continuing help and that of friendly countries, we will be able to settle more easily the question of the Comorian island of Mayotte with respect for the political unity and the integrity of the Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros. We therefore welcome any initiative in this sense."

10. At a meeting with the Secretary-General on 28 July 1978, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of France confirmed that his Government would have no objection to receiving a visit from a special representative of the Secretary-General should this be helpful.

11. On 23 August 1978, the Secretary-General received information from the Permanent Mission of France indicating the improved state of relations between France and the Comoros. This included the following developments:

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(a) A visit to France from 13 to 30 June 1978 by the two Co-Chairmen of the Political Directory of the Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros, M. Ahmed Abdallah and M. Mohamed Ahmed. Following their visit, diplomatic relations were established between the two countries.

(b) The intention of France to open an embassy at Moroni in the near future. An emissary of the Minister for Foreign Affairs had already visited Moroni to study arrangements for establishing French diplomatic representation.

(c) A request by the new Comorian authorities for French assistance in the field of economic and social development to enable them to deal with the many problems confronting them.

(d) A visit to the Comoros in July 1978 of a representative of the French Minister for Co-operation to study the needs of the Comoros and the means by which they could be met.

#### IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS

12. The Secretary-General has taken note of the information provided by the Governments of the Comoros and France relating to the changed state of relations between their two countries, including the exchange of diplomatic representatives.

13. In view of developments, and having regard to the two communications received from the Government of the Comoros, the Secretary-General has informed the parties concerned of his readiness to continue his efforts in favour of a settlement of this question.

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