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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING
OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

Letter dated 12 December 1970 from the Chargé d'affaires, a.i.,
of the Permanent Mission of Portugal to the United Nations
addressed to the President of the General Assembly

In the course of the debate on agenda item 23 which took place in the General Assembly, several delegates made allegations critical of the Government of Portugal in the context of the events which are alleged to have taken place in the Republic of Guinea on 22 and 23 November 1970. With a view to setting the record straight, I wish to invite attention to the letters dated 4 and 7 December 1970 addressed to the President of the Security Council and circulated as Council documents under the symbols S/10014 and S/10024 respectively. In these letters the Portuguese Government has clearly stated its case concerning the alleged events in the Republic of Guinea, and my delegation wishes hereby to reiterate the stand then taken. For all relevant purposes, I quote below the texts of the aforementioned letters, which should be considered as forming part of the proceedings of the debate on item 23:

(a) Letter dated 4 December 1970 (S/10014)

"I have the honour, under instructions from my Government, to make reference to the report of the Security Council Special Mission to the Republic of Guinea established under resolution 289 (1970), and to invite the attention of the Security Council to the following:

The Government of the Portuguese Republic has the honour to formally declare that it did not order or authorize or consent to any military operations against the Republic of Guinea and reiterates the statement contained in its letter of 22 November 1970 (S/9989) that it is not in any manner responsible for the occurrences in that country. The Portuguese Government has repeatedly expressed its desire for peaceful collaboration with all States, and in particular with those States having frontiers contiguous with Portuguese territories. This same desire for peace and co-operation it now reiterates once again, without reservations or restrictions. The Portuguese Government cannot, however, refrain from regretting that some of these States that are its neighbours in Africa do not reciprocate these desires of Portugal, and shelter in their territories organizations that are daily attacking Portuguese localities and citizens, subsidizing, arming and equipping the military apparatus of these organizations, and retaining illegitimately prisoners taken by them in Portuguese territory. Numerous are the victims that are caused by a war thus waged from the territory of these States, and considerable the material losses that result from it, without even achieving, contrary to what these organizations affirm, any control over territory or the adherence of populations.

The Portuguese Government regrets that the United Nations have never sought to verify these acts of aggression, which have been several times communicated to the Security Council, and which were not communicated oftener because of a realization of the futility of such communications. Indeed, a jurisprudence has been evolved in the United Nations that is systematically adverse to Portugal, deaf to all reasons that we can present while at the same time being very willing to listen to any accusation that is levelled against Portugal. In the present instance, it would seem part of elementary justice that the commission of enquiry should not draw any conclusions or that the Security Council should not pronounce itself, without previously informing the Portuguese Government of the facts which it considers as proving the responsibility of any of its subjects.

Thus, in taking cognizance of the conclusions of the commission of enquiry dispatched to the Republic of Guinea, the Portuguese Government is taken by surprise and rejects any resolution which may seek to establish the culpability of Portuguese entities or individuals in circumstances that are so blatantly contrary to natural justice.

I should appreciate it if Your Excellency would be good enough to have this letter published in the usual manner as a document of the Security Council.

I avail myself, etc.

(Signed) António Patrício
Chargé d'affaires, a.i., of
Portugal to the United Nations"

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(b) Letter dated 7 December 1970 (S/10024)

"I have the honour to transmit herewith, under instructions of my Government, the text of an official communiqué issued by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, in Lisbon, on 7 December 1970, concerning the recent events in the Republic of Guinea:

'1. Only yesterday could the Portuguese Government take cognizance of the full text of the report of the Mission appointed by the United Nations Security Council to visit the Republic of Guinea and report on the events which recently took place there. Regarding the contents of this document, it is considered opportune to stress in brief the following points:

'2. The Mission stayed in the Republic of Guinea from 25 to 28 November 1970, and appears to have visited only Conakry and the prison camp at Kindia. In the course of these days, the Mission heard various statements on the occurrences made by the authorities of the Republic of Guinea, and the depositions of several diplomatic representatives and certain individuals presented to them as prisoners by the Guinean authorities. The Mission also judged that it ought to hear the representatives of a non-Guinean political group, the PAIGC, an anti-Portuguese organization which seeks to spread subversion and disorder in the territory of the Portuguese province of Guinea, which does not form part, as far as it is known, of the political and administrative structure of the Republic of Guinea.

'3. As far as the depositions given by diplomatic representatives are concerned, these are demagogic statements made by representatives of certain African countries which habitually attack Portugal in the United Nations, and of communist countries whose Governments had already expressed identical points of view even before the arrival of the Mission in Conakry. Therefore they brought nothing new to the Mission's notice. Also, various representatives of European and American countries were heard, but these limited themselves to describing what they had witnessed, without in any manner being able to explain the origin or the objectives of the occurrences.

'4. During its stay in Guinea, the Mission was informed by the Government of Guinea that the country had become the object of a new attack in another part of its territory, without any effort having apparently been made to investigate this allegation.

'5. Finally, interrogation was carried out of seven 'prisoners' which the report expressly declares as having been selected by the authorities of the Republic of Guinea from the sixty to seventy allegedly interned at Kindia, as a result of the occurrences. It is

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to be noted furthermore, that the principal deposition was given by ranking Lieutenant Januário Lopes, a native of Bissau, who had deserted from the Province of Guinea way back, being accused in a case of voluntary homicide in which the victim was a military element belonging to his unit. Thus, it is on statements made by witnesses obviously prepared, presented and under the physical and psychological control of the authorities of the Republic of Guinea, that rest the conclusions presented by the Mission appointed by the Security Council. It is also strange that these interrogations always took place in the presence of, and with the active intervention of, officials of the Republic of Guinea, a fact that did not permit the Mission to carry out independently, as it ought to, the task of investigation with which it was entrusted. The conclusions are phrased in a vague manner since it was not possible to present conclusive evidence. And thus, despite the fact that no one could definitely prove the identity of the ships said to be involved in the occurrences, the Mission ends by affirming, on the basis of presumptions, that in its 'considered opinion' these ships were Portuguese ships, having aboard elements of the Portuguese armed forces, as well as forces trained in Portuguese territory.

'6. It is thus verified that in one way or another the only source of information available to the Mission was the Government of the Republic of Guinea which had in the meantime taken all the measures to prevent the entry into the country of any foreign correspondents who could witness events while its capital was threatened by an 'invasion'.

'7. But it is unbelievable that a naval force could have been able to act freely, during almost two days, a short distance away from the shores of Conakry without the Guinean air force and navy having tried to interfere. During this period the Conakry airport was supposedly keeping its normal traffic in spite of being threatened and attacked by an invading force. The invaders would include numerous foreign mercenaries who, according to the Guinean Government, had been killed, although the Mission did not see either the bodies of such mercenaries or any other prisoners but those who had been carefully chosen in order to be heard by the Mission and to present it with the version convenient to the Guinean authorities.

'8. Owing to these and many other considerations that could be made to the present report which has been drawn up unilaterally and without possibility of contradicting the evidence shown while preparing it, the Portuguese Government is constrained to emphasize that the conclusions of this document are not acceptable in the light of the most elementary procedural principles.

'9. In spite of the weakness of the depositions gathered by the Mission, there was a preoccupation of passing rapidly on to the resolution phase within the frame of the Security Council and following the anti-Portuguese oriented line which, from the outset, tended to explore such events for a predetermined objective which the international Press has also reflected.

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'10. The Portuguese Government, which has tried during the latest years to widen all possible contacts and to intensify its co-operation with the African countries shall follow its firm orientation of establishing peaceful relations with its neighbours, based on the respect for their sovereignty without prejudice to its right of legitimate self-defense against the aggression of which it has repeatedly been and continues to be the victim.

'11. I should appreciate it if Your Excellency would be good enough to have this letter published in the usual manner as a document of the Security Council.'

"I avail myself, etc.

(Signed) António Patrício
Chargé d'affaires, a.i., of
Portugal to the United Nations"

I shall appreciate it very much if Your Excellency will direct that this letter be published as a document of the General Assembly.

(Signed) António PATRÍCIO
Chargé d'affaires, a.i., of
Portugal to the United Nations
