



General Assembly Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

A/43/129
S/19482
9 February 1988
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: RUSSIAN

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Forty-third session
THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN AND ITS
IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL
PEACE AND SECURITY

SECURITY COUNCIL
Forty-third year

Letter dated 9 February 1988 from the Permanent Representative of
the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the United Nations
addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit the text of a statement on Afghanistan made on 8 February 1988 by the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, M. S. Gorbachev.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the statement circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under the item entitled "The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security", and of the Security Council.

(Signed) A. BELONOGOV

ANNEX

Statement of 8 February 1988 by the General Secretary
of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of
the Soviet Union on Afghanistan

The military conflict in Afghanistan has been going on for a long time now. It is one of the most gruelling and painful regional conflicts. There is every indication that certain prerequisites for its political settlement have now emerged. The Soviet leadership considers it necessary to set forth its views in this connection, and to make its position absolutely clear.

In the near future, a new round of talks between Afghanistan and Pakistan, through the personal representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, will be held in Geneva. There are considerable chances that this round will prove to be the final one.

By now, documents covering all aspects of a settlement have been almost fully worked out at the Geneva negotiations. They include agreements between Afghanistan and Pakistan on non-interference in each other's internal affairs and on the return of Afghan refugees from Pakistan, international guarantees of non-interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs, and a document on the interrelationship between all elements of a political settlement. There is also agreement on the establishment of a verification mechanism.

So what remains to be done? To establish a time-frame for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan that would be acceptable to all. Precisely that - a time-frame, since the fundamental political decision to withdraw Soviet troops from Afghanistan was taken by us, in agreement with the Afghan leadership, some time ago, and announced at that same time.

The time-frame question has both a technical and a political aspect. Where the technical aspect is concerned, the actual withdrawal of troops will clearly take a certain amount of time. There is hardly any need to go into the details of that here.

As for the political aspect of the matter, it is that the withdrawal of Soviet troops is, quite naturally, linked with the prevention of interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs. The prerequisites for that have now been created.

With a view to facilitating the speedy and successful conclusion of the Geneva talks between Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Governments of the USSR and the Republic of Afghanistan have agreed to set a specific date for beginning the withdrawal of Soviet troops - 15 May 1988 - and to complete the withdrawal within 10 months. The date has been set on the assumption that the agreements on the settlement will be signed no later than 15 March 1988, and that they will accordingly all enter into force simultaneously two months after that. If the agreements are signed before 15 March, the withdrawal of troops will begin correspondingly earlier.

Recently, another question has been raised: whether the phasing of the Soviet troop withdrawal should be so arranged that a relatively greater portion of the Soviet contingent would be withdrawn during the first such phase. Well, that too could be done. The Afghan leadership and we agree to it.

All of this creates the necessary conditions for the settlement agreements to be signed in the very near future.

That, of course, does not mean that no one can now block the settlement, or turn back the talks. But we should not like to think that some States or political figures might want to be held accountable by the Afghan nation and other nations for scuttling a settlement. We believe that common sense will prevail.

The question of the withdrawal of our troops from Afghanistan was raised at the Twenty-seventh Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

That was a reflection of our current political thinking, of our new, modern view of the world. We wanted thereby to reaffirm our commitment to the tradition of good-neighbourliness, good will and mutual respect that began with Vladimir Lenin and the first Soviet-Afghan treaty signed in 1921. Progressive forces in Afghan society have understood and accepted our sincere desire for peace and tranquillity between our two neighbouring countries, which for decades have been setting an example of peaceful coexistence and mutually-beneficial equitable co-operation.

Any armed conflict, even an internal one, can poison the atmosphere throughout a region, and spread anxiety and alarm among a country's neighbours, to say nothing of the suffering and losses among its own people. That is why we are against any armed conflicts. We know that the Afghan leadership, too, takes the same attitude.

This, of course, is what led the Afghan leadership, President Najibullah, to engage in a profound rethinking of its political course, which has crystallized in the patriotic and realistic policy of national reconciliation. This was an act of great boldness and courage; not merely an appeal to stop the fighting, but a proposal to set up a coalition Government and share power with the opposition, including those who have taken up arms against the Government and even those who, from abroad, direct the rebels' operations and supply them with weapons and combat equipment obtained from foreign countries. And that proposal was made by a Government vested with constitutional authority and wielding real power in the country.

The national reconciliation policy is a reflection of the Afghan side's new political thinking. It is not a sign of weakness, but rather of the moral strength, wisdom and dignity of free, honest and responsible political leaders concerned for the present and the future of their country.

The success of the national reconciliation policy has already made it possible to begin withdrawing Soviet troops from part of Afghanistan's territory. At present there are no Soviet troops in 13 Afghan provinces - because armed clashes have ceased there. It can well be said that the more rapidly peace gains ground in Afghanistan, the easier it will be for Soviet troops to leave.

The policy of national reconciliation has provided a political platform for all those who want peace in Afghanistan. What kind of peace? The kind that the Afghan people choose. The proud, freedom-loving and courageous Afghan people, which has gone through many centuries of struggle for freedom and independence, has been, is and will continue to be the master of its own country, which, as President Najibullah has said, is built on a tradition of multi-party politics and a multiple-structure economy.

The Afghans themselves will decide the final status of their country among other nations. The most frequently stated view is that the future peaceful Afghanistan will be an independent, non-aligned and neutral State. Well, we would be only too happy to have such a neighbour on our southern borders.

In connection with the question of beginning the withdrawal of Soviet troops, there is a need to make clear our position on yet another aspect - whether the withdrawal is linked with the completion of efforts to set up a new, coalition Government in Afghanistan, i.e. with bringing the national reconciliation policy to fruition. We are convinced that it is not.

The withdrawal of Soviet troops, combined with other aspects of the settlement, including guarantees of non-interference, is one thing. Various States are involved in it - and, by the way, we believe that Iran, as Afghanistan's neighbour, should not stand aside from the political settlement.

National reconciliation and the establishment of a coalition Government is another thing. This is a purely internal Afghan issue. It can be resolved only by the Afghans themselves, even though they belong to different and even opposing camps. When, however, it is hinted to us that the Soviet Union should take part in talks on that issue, and even talk to third countries, our answer is clear: don't ask that of us, it is none of our business. Or yours, for that matter.

But will not the hostilities flare up even more after the Soviet troops leave? It would hardly be appropriate to prophesy, but I think that such a course of events can be prevented if those now fighting against their brothers take a responsible attitude and try indeed to get involved in peace-building. If however, they are guided not by the arguments of reason, but by emotion multiplied by fanaticism, they will inevitably be faced with the greatly increased will of the Afghan people to see their country at peace, and with the obligations of States not to interfere any more in its internal affairs. The Geneva obligations will close the channels for outside assistance to those who hope to impose their will on the whole nation by armed force.

And, if necessary, consideration could be given at that stage to using the possibilities available to the United Nations and its Security Council.

And now about our boys, our soldiers in Afghanistan. They have been doing their duty honestly, with self-sacrifice and heroism.

Our people have a deep respect for those who were called to serve in Afghanistan. The State provides them, as a matter of priority, with good educational opportunities and a chance to get interesting, worthwhile employment.

The memory of those who have died a hero's death in Afghanistan is sacred to us. It is the duty of the Party and Soviet authorities to make sure that their families and relatives, and those close to them, are surrounded with concern, attention and kindness.

One last point. When the Afghan knot is untied, it will have the most profound impact on other regional conflicts as well.

Whereas the arms race, which we are working so hard - and with some success - to stop, is mankind's mad rush to the abyss, regional conflicts are open wounds which can lead to the appearance of patches of gangrene on the body of mankind.

The earth is literally disfigured by such dangerous patches. Each of them means pain not only for the nations directly involved but for all - whether in Afghanistan, in the Middle East, in connection with the Iran-Iraq war, in southern Africa, in Kampuchea, or in Central America.

Who gains from those conflicts? No one except the arms merchants and various reactionary expansionist circles who have grown used to lining their pockets and making money out of the misfortunes and tragedies of peoples.

The full implementation of a political settlement in Afghanistan will sever an important link in the chain of regional conflicts.

Just as the agreement to eliminate intermediate- and shorter-range missiles is to be followed by a series of further major steps towards disarmament, with negotiations on them already under way or being planned, likewise behind the political settlement in Afghanistan there already looms a question: which conflict will be the next to be settled? For a next one - and others after it - there will certainly be.

States and nations have sufficient reserves of responsibility, political will and determination to put an end to all regional conflicts within a few years. This is something worth working for. The Soviet Union will spare no effort in this most important cause.
