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LETTER DATED 19 DECEMBER 1980 FROM THE CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I.  
OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF BENIN TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to forward herewith, for circulation as a General Assembly document, certain clarifications with regard to the note verbale from the Permanent Mission of the Togolese Republic (Security Council document S/14287 of 5 December 1980).

(Signed) Patrice HOUNGAVOU  
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

Annex

In having two articles from a special issue of the periodical Historia (No. 406 bis) concerning mercenaries circulated as a Security Council document (S/14211 dated 8 October 1980), the Permanent Mission of Benin sought to carry out its duty to the international community in accordance with the appeal made to all States Members of the United Nations in Security Council resolution 419 (1977) of 24 November 1977. According to the following provisions of paragraph 3 of that resolution, it may again be recalled, the Security Council called upon "all States to work in close co-operation in order to gather all useful information concerning ... the events of 16 January 1977, in compliance with paragraph 10 of resolution 405 (1977)".

Our Togolese brothers and friends should understand, moreover, that the People's Republic of Benin and the Beninese people are in a peculiar and unique historical situation with respect to that resolution: it is the situation of victims who, from 16 January 1977 until this very day, have paid the onerous and agonizing price of that aggression.

The Permanent Mission of Benin is of the opinion that all States - particularly those which, like Togo, for many centuries have had deeply entwined historical, geographical and cultural relations with Benin - should consider this argument, based on simple common sense and reason.

Under these circumstances the Permanent Mission of Benin considers that Togo should use all the legal and political means at its disposal to refute or deny the accusations and claims appearing in articles in a historical periodical which is freely published in France and which, moreover, contains on page 117 another text entitled "How to kill President Eyadema" by Véronique Vucher-Bondet!

The National Executive Council of the People's Republic of Benin and the Beninese people have always considered their fraternal relations with Togo as a necessity dictated by history and the continued growth of co-operation between the two countries as a sacred duty! In view of the tragedy and the injustice of the attack of 16 January 1977, perpetrated by the forces of imperialism and their mercenaries, an attack that inflicted untold suffering and damage which it is still remedying with dignity and courage, Benin could not engage in a debate with a fraternal country and people in which polemics and harsh invective would replace the constructive dialogue needed to achieve the unity and total liberation of our continent and the development of our countries.

The Permanent Mission of Benin considers that the unanimous adoption by the General Assembly at its thirty-fifth session of draft resolution A/C.2/35/L.71 on "Special economic assistance to Benin" reaffirmed the solemn and concrete support of the international community, which thus clearly indicated that it had not been Benin's intention, as the Permanent Mission of Togo rather imprudently claims, to take "advantage of the criminal operation of 16 January 1977, the true facts of which are incontestable, in order capriciously to discredit sister countries on the basis of 'found documents'" (sic).

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The legitimate intention and concern of Benin are, in fact, the following, as Comrade Simon Ifèdè Ogouma, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Co-operation, observed in his statement to the General Assembly on 10 October 1980:

"Our country, the People's Republic of Benin, has, since 26 October 1972, decisively resumed the long history of its people's dignified struggle. Having embarked upon the revolutionary course of the anti-imperialist national liberation struggle, a few months ago it passed a new basic law and set up new institutions, thus entering the stage of constitutional revolutionary legitimacy, under the enlightened leadership of its vanguard Party, the People's Revolutionary Party of Benin. As a result of its courageous and bold policies and its determination for liberation, it has given rise to hatred, plots and subversion on the part of those former masters and new colonialists that have been unable to tolerate the sight of certain of their loyal chief agents being expelled from the centres of State power and from economic decision-making posts. That explains the military aggression committed by mercenaries against the People's Republic of Benin on Sunday, 16 January 1977. Their defeat is well known and their paymasters have been denounced and clearly exposed. We cannot remain silent about their crimes and their misdeeds, because their shameful failure must give birth to increased vigilance against the historical phenomenon of the use of imperialist and neo-colonial mercenaries. Thus, pursuant to Security Council resolution 419 (1977) relating to the aggression against the People's Republic of Benin, we have just submitted new proof, published recently by a French historical review. It is our most sincere wish that all States should do likewise whenever information or new material proof of the reality of aggression and the crimes of mercenaries comes into their possession. Such action is in keeping with the recommendations of the Security Council. Our country, a distressed witness and victim of those criminal endeavours at colonial reconquest, through its live testimony and its victorious resistance to aggression, wishes to make its modest contribution to the eradication of a scourge which has ceaselessly threatened our independence and jeopardized peace in the world. Our reference to the affair of armed imperialist aggression of Sunday, 16 January 1977, remains legitimate; it is entirely in keeping with the principles and requirements of the Charter, which binds us and justifies our common endeavours for peace, friendship and co-operation. Our great comrade in arms, President Mathieu Kerekou, stated the following in his 'appeal to all the fighting peoples in the world', at the International Conference on Mercenaries, held in Cotonou in January 1978:

'International imperialism, after having enriched itself through black slavery, the slave trade in blacks, the wars of plunder and the colonial wars, is surviving and feeding itself today thanks to its cannon and other sophisticated military equipment, with the shameful design of restoring or installing in the countries of the third world colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism, fascism and the plundering of our immense natural resources. That is why we must view mercenaries not only as an international scourge which curbs and impedes the liberation of people still under foreign domination, but also and above all as a real threat to the independence and sovereignty of our young States. In a word, mercenaries constitute a veritable threat to the security of States, to democracy and peace in the world.'

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Thus, it is these mercenaries, dedicated by imperialism to the destabilization of our countries and to aggression against our peoples, who should be denounced and opposed by all African States devoted to freedom, justice and dignity. All the diplomatic steps undertaken by Benin since 16 January 1977 have therefore been inspired by that political will and focused on this essential concern, even though this rejection of conventional silence has sometimes disappointed those who are seeking to confer on the attack of 16 January 1977 the convenient status of a commonplace occurrence, an unimportant incident or, what is worse, a romantic escapade.

Lastly, the Permanent Mission wishes to reaffirm the constancy and sincerity of the fraternal attitude of Benin to the brother people and leaders of Togo. This is the consistent position of Benin, based on its desire for free, equal and fruitful co-operation with all the States of our great continent, and especially with those States with which it shares a frontier.

New York, 19 December 1980

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