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REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
DECLARATION ON THE STRENGTHENING OF
INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

SECURITY COUNCIL
Thirty-sixth year

Letter dated 26 March 1981 from the Permanent Representative of Morocco
to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to refer to the letter addressed to you on 17 March 1981 from the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania (A/36/133-S/14410), in which he presented to you what he considered to be an account of the events that took place in Mauritania on 16 March 1981, and in connexion with which I wish to make the following clarifications.

The version of the facts reported in the letter from the representative of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania contains a number of groundless and gratuitous accusations against the Kingdom of Morocco, in support of which the Mauritanian Government has not provided the slightest proof. Moreover, it has thoughtlessly attributed to my country intentions which are amply belied by the sincerity, depth and scope of the very friendly relations which Morocco and Mauritania enjoyed for many years.

Diplomatic and press reports from Mauritania concur in confirming, quite on the contrary, that the events of Monday, 16 March, brought only Mauritanian factions into conflict with each other in a quasi-insurrectional climate.

The Mauritanian letter itself refers to Mauritanian "mercenaries", led by two Mauritanian officers, acting on behalf of an organization which, as the Nouakchott régime admits, is purely Mauritanian and which moreover announced its responsibility for the action undertaken on 16 March against the Nouakchott authorities.

It should be clarified that one of the two officers in question was a former Vice-President of the Council and the other a former Minister of the Mauritanian Government, and that they used to enjoy considerable support in the Mauritanian army and among the country's political figures.

* A/36/50.

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Although some of these officers had fled their country's régime and had stayed in Morocco, where they had been granted the right to political asylum in accordance with international law and custom and on condition that they refrain from engaging in any political activity against Mauritania, the Moroccan Government challenges the Mauritanian authorities to present any proof whatsoever that the operation which occurred on 16 March was carried out from Moroccan territory.

The very specious argument that the instigators of the putsch had intended to appeal to Morocco requesting military intervention cannot in any way imply responsibility on the part of my country, which has remained totally apart from this operation.

It should be noted that for the past month international public opinion in general, and Mauritanian public opinion in particular, have been subjected to a shrill campaign orchestrated by the Mauritanian authorities to camouflage the continual deterioration of the domestic situation and the current disintegration of the Mauritanian army. The Mauritanian authorities, who were perfectly aware of this situation and who felt overwhelmed by the ever-growing tide of controversy, then tried to galvanize public opinion around the imminent possibility of imaginary foreign aggression with a view not to remedying a situation which was already beyond their control but so as to make it easier to attribute responsibility for any popular uprising or action of their armed forces, which by then seemed inevitable, to alleged foreign intervention.

Accordingly, long before the events of 16 March 1981, the Mauritanian régime, grappling with both domestic and foreign difficulties, which it had helped to create, had tried to find a scapegoat, and the Algerian and Libyan information media had gladly pointed one out: Morocco was to be crushed in the over-all destabilization operation under way in the region.

The Mauritanian Government had then met on 12 March to "examine" the situation and had issued a communiqué in which it had attempted to redeem the serious liabilities the current régime had incurred. Envoys had also been sent to Algiers, Tripoli and Bamako to request support against what was referred to as imminent aggression by Morocco against Mauritania.

However, it should be remembered in this connexion that the Kingdom of Morocco, which had kept more than 8,000 soldiers of the Royal Armed Forces on Mauritanian territory for months under a joint defence agreement and which had withdrawn them at the mere request of the Mauritanian Government, has never interfered in the internal affairs of Mauritania or tried to take advantage of that situation for dishonest purposes.

Such exemplary conduct in connexion with other situations in Africa reveals the quality of the relations which the Moroccan Government enjoyed and hopes still to enjoy with the brotherly people of Mauritania.

/...

Ever since Morocco recognized the Islamic Republic of Mauritania as an independent and sovereign State, it has never ceased to offer the Mauritanian people proof that its disinterested feelings are genuine or to provide them with tokens of its friendship and solidarity, particularly when Mauritania was faced with adversity and was in the most dire need of them.

In this light, the Moroccan Government has announced the forthcoming publication of a white paper on Moroccan-Mauritanian relations and on the extent of the co-operation existing between the two countries, co-operation which Morocco considered it important to protect despite serious lapses in commitments to observe strict neutrality, good-neighbourly relations and mutual loyalty which the Mauritanian authorities had assumed but which they were violating more and more brazenly under pressure and with the support of foreign Governments hostile to my country.

If Mauritania, since the first coup d'état, bringing down President Mokhtar Ould Daddah, has experienced a period of manifest instability during which there have been both successful and aborted putsches - sometimes with the acknowledged participation of certain countries that were too quickly exonerated - the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco cannot be held responsible for this regrettable situation of instability, which seems likely to continue.

Morocco has always wanted to be bordered by a stable, free and prosperous Mauritania which would ensure the inviolability and respect of its territorial integrity in a sovereign manner and would echo purely and sincerely Morocco's profound desire to develop and deepen the fruitful co-operation already established between our two countries, despite the hegemonic stubbornness of other neighbouring countries that are constantly sowing hatred and preaching violence, of which Mauritania is now the victim.

I would request that you kindly arrange for this letter, and the annexes thereto, to be issued as an official document of the General Assembly, under item 58 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Mehdi MRANI ZENTAR
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the
Kingdom of Morocco

ANNEX I

Statement by Mr. Maati Bouabid, Prime Minister and Minister
of Justice of Morocco

Early yesterday evening in Marrakesh, Mr. Bouabid, the Prime Minister, made a governmental statement.

His Majesty King Hassan II had instructed him to reply, on behalf of his Government, to the fallacious accusations made against Morocco by the Mauritanian leaders following the abortive coup d'état which took place in Mauritania on Monday.

Here is the full text of this statement:

"Yesterday we heard the news of an attempted coup d'état in Nouakchott, the capital of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania.

"As everyone knows, it is unfortunately, not the first time that Mauritanian senior officers have embarked on a desperate struggle to seize power, since the first coup d'état, which overthrew President Mokhtar Ould Daddah.

"Moreover, some attempts to overthrow the régime in Mauritania, where the perpetrators were arrested in flagrante delicto, were nipped in the bud and ended with the release of the culprits and the return to normal of relations with the State which was the instigator of the attempt. Those relations were even greatly improved, for reasons which are clear to all.

"The announcement of this new attempted coup d'état would have been perfectly innocuous if it had not been accompanied by an attempt to involve Morocco in this purely internal problem by making direct accusations against it and then by announcing the severance of diplomatic relations.

"I wish, first of all, to affirm and proclaim here, on the instructions of His Majesty the King and on behalf of his Government, that all the statements by the Mauritanian leaders are no more than gratuitous, mendacious allegations directed against our country, that they are devoid of any foundation and that, as such, we reject and denounce them just as we have previously had to reject and denounce other fabrications whose fallacious character was subsequently to become clear to international public opinion.

"I shall mention by way of example the story about the violation of Mauritanian airspace by the Moroccan air force and its bombardment of the town of Nouadhibou.

"Everyone knows that Moroccan policy is based, both at home and abroad, on constant principles and on an ethical code from which it never departs, whatever the circumstances, and we place at the head of our ethical rules adherence to the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of others.

"With regard to Mauritania in particular, our bilateral relations have remained normal ever since we recognized that State in 1969 on the occasion of the convening of the first Islamic summit conference, at Rabat.

"A crisis might have arisen between the two States when Mauritania revealed its territorial pretensions to the Sahara, but my country insisted on avoiding a dispute and preferred to ally itself with Mauritania against the colonial Power, and, when the Government of President Ould Daddah was overthrown, Morocco could have given a broad interpretation to the Moroccan-Mauritanian joint defence agreement, but it insisted on refraining from any intervention, in accordance with the principles of its ethical code.

"Relations between the two countries remained solid in all areas up to the signature of the 'Algiers Agreement' between the Polisario mercenaries and the Mauritanian party, which thus sought to usurp Morocco's indisputable historical rights. Since then, Mauritania has embarked on an anti-Moroccan escalation process.

"This process has passed through various stages, the first of which was Mauritania's proclamation of its withdrawal from the conflict and observance of strict neutrality with regard to it. It then underwent a steady evolution ending in the participation of high-ranking Mauritanian officials in the events staged at Tindouf and the reception of mercenaries at Nouakchott with official honours. Then came the episode of the fabrication out of thin air of the alleged Moroccan threat to Mauritania, and this episode was crowned by the serious accusations made against us yesterday and by the decision to break off diplomatic relations.

"At all events, Morocco has decided to issue a publication describing in detail the various aspects of Moroccan-Mauritanian co-operation in the past and giving all pertinent details about the tremendous sacrifices made by my country for the sake of its neighbour, inspired by its faith in the joint destiny of the two fraternal peoples.

"Going back to the recent attempted coup d'état, it should be known that Colonel Ould Abdelkader requested political asylum in Morocco, like many other dissidents of various nationalities. This right was accorded him within the framework of the international principles in force and, in particular, his commitment not to engage in any political activity hostile to the Government of his country.

"You perhaps do not know that the Mauritanian Government had asked the Moroccan authorities to extradite Colonel Abdelkader, but that request was rejected because the Colonel had in no way broken his commitment.

"Moreover, we challenge the Nouakchott rulers to cite any tract or communiqué published by Ould Abdelkader in Morocco, just as we challenge them to produce any evidence that the authors of the attempted coup d'état were operating out of Moroccan territory, and you know that even the late President Boumédiène never dared to ask us to extradite one of his opponents, whether at a time when relations with Morocco were at their peak or when they were at their lowest ebb.

"It goes without saying that the virulent campaign of denigration waged by Morocco's adversaries, whose ranks Mauritania has just joined, is increasing following the spectacular successes achieved by Morocco, both on the battlefield and in the diplomatic sphere. Now that the Royal Armed Forces have become the uncontested master of the territory, so that any operation attempted by the mercenaries would be suicidal, the representatives of Europe in their Parliament are placing the problem in its true context as a bilateral Moroccan-Algerian dispute.

"It is clear that one of the objectives of this campaign is to seek a revival of sympathy among international public opinion by representing Morocco as an aggressor, in order to refurbish our adversaries' image now that their lies have been exposed. However, the attempts will be doomed to failure, because international public opinion will not allow itself to be hoodwinked by crude manoeuvres.

"With regard to the irresponsible actions of the Mauritanian leaders and their flagrant bad faith, there is one thing which we deeply regret, namely, the negative repercussions which this ill-considered attitude will inevitably have on the fraternal Moroccan and Mauritanian peoples, who are linked by human, religious, linguistic and cultural bonds. In this regard, I can only state that the Mauritanian leaders and those who manipulate them bear the sole and entire responsibility for the deterioration of the situation in the region and for such developments as may result therefrom in the future.

"No one can deny that Morocco has shown a great deal of patience and sufficient wisdom and calmness in the face of the multiple provocations. This has been in order to preserve as far as possible the links of good-neighbourliness and to safeguard as far as possible the future of fraternal relations between the Moroccan and Mauritanian peoples."

ANNEX II

Telegram dated 25 March 1981 from Mr. Maati Bouabid,
Prime Minister and Minister of Justice of Morocco,
addressed to Mr. Sid Ahmed Ould Bnejara, Prime
Minister of Mauritania

On 25 March, Mr. Maati Bouabid, Prime Minister and Minister of Justice of the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco, sent the following telegram to Mr. Sid Ahmed Ould Bnejara, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania:

"Sir,

"Gueltat Zemmour, located near the Moroccan-Mauritanian frontier, was attacked at 6 a.m. on 24 March 1981 by a column of mercenaries totalling an estimated 3,000 men.

"From the information available to us, we can state without risk of error that the assailants crossed the Mauritanian frontier, starting out from Bir Moghreïn, situated in Mauritanian territory.

"This attack was preceded by a tendentious campaign directed from Nouakchott against the Kingdom of Morocco. The Government of His Majesty the King, at the time, denounced all those slanders and mendacious allegations and drew the attention of international opinion to the real plot being hatched in north-west Africa and having as its purpose the destabilization of the region.

"The events of 24 March corroborated my country's point of view and showed that the Mauritanian Government has departed from the position reiterated and declared by it on many occasions, both in the United Nations and in OAU, of observing strict neutrality in the north-west African conflict.

"This new situation thus created in our relations is extremely grave. Moreover, it expressly gives the lie to the statements which you made to His Majesty the King at your meeting in Ta'if in the presence of Mr. Sekou Touré, President of the Republic of Guinea.

"Morocco, which intends to exercise its natural right of self-defence, will not remain inactive. It will utilize all legal means in its possession to ensure the safeguarding of its sovereignty and its territorial integrity.

"We venture to hope that you will weigh the consequences of any collusion between Mauritania and the bands of mercenaries and that you will be able to draw conclusions from them and see the responsibilities which derive from them before it is too late.

"Accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration."