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NOTE

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2001st MEETING

Held in New York on Thursday, 7 April 1977, at 10.30 a.m.

President: Mr. Simón Alberto CONSALVI (Venezuela).

Present: The representatives of the following States: Benin, Canada, China, France, Germany, Federal Republic of India, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mauritius, Pakistan, Panama, Romania, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Venezuela.

Provisional agenda (S/Agenda/2001)

1. Adoption of the agenda
2. Complaint by Benin:
Report of the Security Council Special Mission to the People's Republic of Benin established under resolution 404 (1977) (S/12294 and Add.1)

The meeting was called to order at 11.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Complaint by Benin

Report of the Security Council Special Mission to the People's Republic of Benin established under resolution 404 (1977) (S/12294 and Add.1)*

1. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): In accordance with the decisions taken by the Council at its 2000th meeting, I invite the representatives of Botswana, Gabon, Guinea, Morocco, Niger and Saudi Arabia to take the places reserved for them at the side of the Council chamber.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. M. Modisi (Botswana), Mr. L. N'Dong (Gabon), Mr. M. S. Camara (Guinea), Mr. A. Bengelloun (Morocco), Mr. J. Poisson (Niger) and Mr. J. M. Baroody (Saudi Arabia) took the places reserved for them at the side of the Council chamber.

2. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): In addition, I should like to inform members of the Council that letters have been received from the representatives of Algeria, the Ivory Coast, Senegal and Togo in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the

question on the agenda. Consequently, I propose, in accordance with the usual practice and with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, under the provisions of Article 31 of the Charter and rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure.

3. In view of the limited number of places available at the Council table, I invite the representatives mentioned above to take the places reserved for them at the side of the Council chamber, on the understanding that they will be invited to take a place at the Council table whenever they wish to address the Council.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. F. K. Bouayad-Agha (Algeria), Mr. S. Aké (Ivory Coast), Mr. M. Fall (Senegal) and Mr. A. A. Kodjovi (Togo) took the places reserved for them at the side of the Council chamber.

4. Mr. TROYANOVSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (*interpretation from Russian*): Mr. President, I should like, on behalf of the Soviet delegation and on my own behalf, to congratulate you most cordially and sincerely on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. The relations of friendship and mutually advantageous co-operation which have been established between our two countries and consolidated by the memorable visit to our country by the President of Venezuela, Mr. Pérez, last year, give us ground for hoping that, in the Council too, our delegations will be guided in their relations by the spirit of co-operation and mutual understanding.

5. I should like to take this opportunity also to express our gratitude to your predecessor as President, the representative of the United States, Ambassador Young, on his extremely skilful guidance of the work of the Council last month. We shall be very pleased to see Mr. Young once again in the presidential chair in 15 months' time.

6. Finally, before turning to the substance of the question on the agenda, I should like to express my sincere condolences to the delegation of the People's Republic of the Congo in connexion with the death at the hands of hired killers of the President of the Republic, Marien Ngouabi. In the Soviet Union, President Ngouabi was known as an outstanding fighter against imperialism, colonialism and racism and as a man he had made a considerable contribution to the progress of the People's Republic of the Congo towards national and social development and to the strengthening of friendly relations between the People's Republic of the Congo and the Soviet Union.

* Subsequently issued as *Official Records of the Security Council, Thirty-second Year, Special Supplement No. 3 (S/12294/Rev.1)*.

7. The Soviet delegation has studied attentively the report of the Council Special Mission which went to Benin pursuant to resolution 404 (1977) to investigate the events which occurred at Cotonou on 16 January this year. This thorough and detailed document contains a great deal of factual material and evidence which sheds additional light on the nature of the events of January in Benin. As emerges from the report, the Special Mission heard testimony from many persons belonging to different nationalities, inspected relevant sites and studied all the evidence submitted to it. It also heard statements from certain members of the diplomatic corps and discussed the matter with the Benin authorities. In our view, the considerable amount of work done by the Mission and the conscientious and diligent manner in which it discharged the task entrusted to it are worthy of commendation by the Council.

8. In our view, the report of the Special Mission leaves no doubt about the main point, namely that, on 16 January this year, the People's Republic of Benin became the victim of an armed attack by a band of mercenaries recruited, trained and armed outside that country. The main purpose of that attack was the overthrow of the Government of Benin. Since the attackers infringed the territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty of the State of Benin, it is quite obvious that the acts committed against that State constitute a clear-cut case of armed aggression.

9. We also concur in another important conclusion drawn in the Mission's report. As the Mission pointed out, to judge by the way in which that operation was planned and executed, such acts could also be carried out with similar purposes against other countries, and this constitutes the very serious danger that is inherent in the situation which arose in Benin.

10. The attack of 16 January was successfully repulsed by the armed forces of Benin, with the support of the entire Beninese people. However, the threat of aggressive intervention in the normal process of the development of independent countries of Africa—and, indeed, not only of the African continent—still exists, and will continue to exist as long as there persists in the world the shameful phenomenon of mercenary activity, and as long as certain imperialist circles are unwilling to refrain from attempts to halt, by force of arms, the advance of African countries towards genuine independence, freedom and social progress.

11. It is no accident, therefore, that the just demands of the People's Republic of Benin, in its attempts to protect its sovereignty and independence from such criminal infringement, have met with the unreserved support of broad sectors of world public opinion. I would remind you that, in the letter dated 8 February this year from the Chairman of the Group of African States at the United Nations to the President of the Security Council [S/12285], it was pointed out that:

“This aggression by mercenaries in the pay of international imperialism is regarded by the African Group as a very serious act of aggression against all the African States.”

Serious concern over the events which occurred at Cotonou and their dangerous consequences was expressed by the Group of Arab States [S/12284]. The participants in the session of the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity, which was held at Lomé at the end of February, also severely condemned the aggression against the People's Republic of Benin. In a message of solidarity addressed by the Council of Ministers to the President of Benin, it was stated that that imperialist intrusion with the use of foreign mercenaries constituted a challenge to free Africa and the whole of progressive mankind.

12. The armed attack on Benin was just one more link in the chain of criminal acts of the international imperialists and neo-colonialists on African soil in their attempts to eliminate Governments which do not suit them, and this was made abundantly clear by the report of the Special Mission.

13. We listened with great interest yesterday [2000th meeting] to the convincing speech made by the representative of Benin, Ambassador Boya. That statement did a great deal to supplement the report of the Mission.

14. The Soviet Union is profoundly indignant at the armed aggression against the People's Republic of Benin: an attempt to deal a blow to that progressive régime which has carried out economic, political and social reforms in the interests of the people of Benin. The Soviet people has a great deal of sympathy and understanding for the efforts made by Benin over the last four years under the leadership of the party of the people's revolution. Those efforts are proof of the firm determination of Benin to carry through its fight against all forms of exploitation and to build a genuinely democratic society. Of course, the creative work of the people of Benin will only yield results if that country is reliably protected from outside interference and against any attempts at intervention in its internal affairs and violation of its territorial integrity. Indeed, this goes for all countries of the African continent.

15. To that end, the international community must, in particular, severely condemn the use of mercenaries for the suppression of national liberation movements and the restoration of colonial and neo-colonial domination. An end must be put to the use of mercenaries—a phenomenon which has been quite rightly described in the letter I have already mentioned, sent by the African countries, as “this scourge of the twentieth century” and which is one of the weapons used in the struggle against the forces of national and social liberation.

16. The peoples of the world, including those of the liberated countries, have often had occasion to understand and appreciate the fraternal nature of the relations of the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries with the African States. This was further confirmed by the results of the recent visit of the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, Mr. Podgorny, to four African countries. The documents signed in the course of that visit are compelling testimony to the fact that the Soviet Union still remains the natural ally of young States in their arduous path towards genuine national and social liberation. In the joint Soviet-Tanzanian statement pub-

lished on 27 March this year, the parties welcomed the historic success won by the peoples of Africa in the struggle for their freedom and independence, and the growing role which the sovereign States of Africa are playing in international affairs. At the same time, they pointed out that on the African continent there still remained vestiges of colonialism and racism which represented a serious threat to international peace and security. The existence of such a threat was once again confirmed by recent events in Benin, the report on which is being considered today by the Council.

17. On the basis of our consistent position of principle on African matters, the Soviet Union will support a decision on the part of the Council designed to put an end to this threat and to call a halt to aggressive interference against the People's Republic of Benin and other African States, a decision which would condemn those who bore responsibility for the attack which was carried out and which would also eliminate the shameful practice of hiring mercenaries. Such a decision of the Council, in our view, would be a worthy outcome of the discussion of the complaint of Benin, which was the victim of armed aggression, would promote the creation of conditions that would lead to the elimination of the threat to peace and security on the African continent and would be a contribution to the process of the final liberation of the African countries.

18. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the representative of the Soviet Union for his cordial personal references. I sincerely believe that the visit of President Pérez to the Soviet Union and the agreements reached during that time will open up a phase of fruitful co-operation between our two countries.

19. The next speaker is the representative of Botswana, whom I invite to take a place at the Council table and to make his statement.

20. Mr. MODISI (Botswana): Like those before me, I should like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on the assumption of your office and to express my admiration for the diligence with which you have arranged the meetings and handled the delicate issues now before us.

21. I have read with concern the report on the question now before us. The Special Mission has done an excellent job in the presentation of the report, which is lucid and clear and makes an assessment of grave implications. It is evident from all accounts that Benin has suffered a wanton act of aggression perpetrated by foreign elements. More disturbing is the assessment that the band of invaders seemed to have no other purpose in mind than to create havoc, cause misery and sow fear among the people of Benin. It was a senseless act of destabilization which should not be allowed to establish a haunting precedent.

22. My delegation is disturbed also by the implications of the mercenary invasion of Benin. Any group of adventurers could hatch a scheme to overthrow a Government that it did not like anywhere in the world, and would do it for the love of money only. It was bad enough to imagine this

situation when it was illustrated in Frederick Forsyth's book, *Dogs of War*.¹ Now it is here before us.

23. We in Africa have seen this sort of thing before, in the 1960s. We have now experienced it for the second time, in this decade. In each case it was committed with impunity as far as legal action was concerned against the culprits once they had left the country and scene of the crime. I submit that States Members of this Organization cannot afford this state of affairs.

24. Botswana knows the pain that countries suffer as a result of malicious foreign elements committing crimes such as we have heard of today. We have recently brought to the Council's attention the criminal acts against my country by the illegal régime in Southern Rhodesia. Earlier, we brought to the attention of the Council the involvement of mercenaries from other countries now clubbing together with the rebel régime in Rhodesia. This year alone, we have had to deal with five mercenaries from that troubled country who were on the side of the rebel régime. My Government is appreciative of the support that it received from the Council on those two occasions.

25. However, it is unrealistic for individual countries, especially those of us that are still developing, to combat mercenarism alone. It is even more expensive when the countries from which those mercenaries emanate exhibit, at best, only lip-service concern about the menace we are talking about. One regrets to state that such an attitude will not assist in discouraging adventurers who are obviously misguided, for we in the developing countries at whom those crimes are directed, as indicated by recent history, will suffer even more should the current ambivalence prevail.

26. The time has now come for us to address ourselves fully, in a co-operative and humane spirit, to the problem of mercenaries and the implications thereof. It is our contention that the problem we face is an evil for all of us as nation States. Those who appear to condone it have to understand that they are playing with fire. It is common knowledge that mercenary forces owe allegiance to no one.

27. A comprehensive approach must now be adopted with the aim of stopping the mercenary menace. In that regard, it would be necessary to aim also at the root of the process of mercenarism. We must, as countries, make it more difficult for recruiting agents to operate within our borders. More explicit and more meaningful legal frameworks must be established internationally, permitting punitive action by a State that has reason to believe that individuals and/or groups are engaged in mercenary activities. A legal framework would be possible with a more affirmative political will on the part of all of us who are resolved, so far as it is humanely possible, to stop mercenarism. There is need for a unanimous resolution on this issue.

28. I should like to applaud the valiant people of Benin who, on that fateful day of 16 January, successfully repelled the foreign marauders who had invaded their

¹ New York, Viking Press, Inc., 1974.

country. The demand by the people and Government of Benin for retribution is, to my delegation, justified. We urge the Council to support them in their efforts to repair the damage inflicted on their country.

29. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Mauritania in which he requests to be invited to participate in our debate without the right to vote. I therefore propose, in accordance with the usual practice and with the consent of the Security Council, to invite that representative to participate in the debate without the right to vote, in conformity with the provisions of Article 31 of the Charter and rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure.

30. In view of the limited number of places available at the Council table, I invite the representative of Mauritania to take the place reserved for him at the side of the Council chamber on the understanding that he will be invited to take a seat at the Council table whenever he wishes to address the Council.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. M. Kane (Mauritania) took the place reserved for him at the side of the Council chamber.

31. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): The next speaker is the representative of Senegal. I invite him to be seated at the Council table and to make his statement.

32. Mr. FALL (Senegal) (*interpretation from French*): Mr. President, first of all I should like to associate myself with preceding speakers in welcoming you, on behalf of my delegation. I am happy to see you presiding over the proceedings of the Council during this month, the more so since your country, Venezuela, and my own have always maintained and still maintain excellent relations. I am sure that your understanding, your tact and your long and abundant experience will enable you to discharge your delicate and onerous duties with the utmost competence.

33. The events which occurred on 16 January 1977 at Cotonou illustrate once again the sad fact that Africa has become the chosen land of the international mercenary. Once again, an African State has had its sovereignty and territorial integrity violated by a band of marauders in the service of Powers hostile to Africa.

34. The aggression of which the Republic of Benin has been the victim is part of a long chain of other acts of aggression committed by mercenaries against independent African States. Adventurers, men beyond the pale of the law, scorning every rule of universally recognized and accepted international law, strike against sovereign States Members of the United Nations. They have attempted to overthrow legitimate Governments by force, to kindle local conflicts and to aggravate civil wars. Likewise, they have caused tremendous material damage to the victims and enormous losses of human life. After Zaire there were the Sudan, Nigeria, Angola, Uganda and Zimbabwe, to mention only the best known cases which are beyond dispute. Now it is the turn of the Republic of Benin to be the victim of this international brigandage.

35. It goes without saying that this return to the law of the jungle in international relations could only take place with the support of Powers with a nostalgia for gun-boat diplomacy. Indeed, the mercenaries, the residue of the defeated colonial armies, would have disappeared a long time ago had not foreign Powers hostile to Africa salvaged them for use in the pursuit of their sordid interests. The international community and particularly the permanent members of the Security Council are in duty bound to consider adequate measures for halting this scourge.

36. My country, since its accession to independence, has had relations of friendship and co-operation with Benin, both bilaterally and in multilateral organizations such as the Organization of African Unity, the African, Malagasy and Mauritian Common Organization and the West African Economic Community. Those relations have always been based on respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity and on non-interference in the internal affairs of other States. Accordingly my delegation wishes to affirm here its solidarity with the Government and people of Benin whenever they are attacked from abroad from whatever source.

37. My delegation regrets that this painful circumstance has been seized upon by certain irresponsible individuals so as to establish in world public opinion and display before it the minor disputes which sometimes divide African countries.

38. In the report of the Mission established by the Council under resolution 404 (1977), reference is made to a statement by a certain Ba Alpha Oumarou, member of a commando which invaded Benin on 16 January, a Guinean born at Dakar in 1948. In this regard, there are certain items of information I must give you.

39. At present, more than 500,000 Guineans, approximately 15 percent of the population of Guinea, live in Senegal. Some of those persons settled there before the country's accession to independence while others arrived later. So there is nothing strange in the fact that persons in either of these two categories should have had children born in Senegal. This seems to be the case with parents of the person called Bâ Alpha Oumarou. Those Guineans, like the nationals of all other countries of Africa, are authorized to live in Senegal and enjoy the hospitality of our country. They are neither prisoners nor under surveillance. However, it is strictly forbidden for them to undertake any political or other activity which might be detrimental to another African State or indeed to any State of the international community. I would add that, on the basis of the inquiry carried out by the authorities of my country, the Senegalese immigration police were unable to identify Bâ Alpha Oumarou.

40. Having made that point clear, I wish to declare solemnly on behalf of my Government that Senegal is not implicated, either directly or indirectly, in the activities of Bâ Alpha Oumarou or his accomplices in the affair the Council is considering. In matters such as these there is always a great danger that those who fish in troubled waters will try to sow confusion in peoples' minds. Thus, immediately after the events of 16 January, the Guinean

newspaper *Horoya* accused "neighbouring African States" of having been the inventors and instigators of the plot and even published photographs of several white mercenaries who were allegedly arrested at the time of the aggression of which Benin was the victim.

41. In the statement made yesterday afternoon in the Council by the representative of the Republic of Guinea, the following was stated:

"The white mercenaries captured in Benin... as indicated in the documents of the mercenary Gilbert Bourgeaud, were to Africanize their murderous activities by using emotionally sick blacks of the Bâ Alpha Oumarou kind." [2000th meeting, para. 172.]

42. The representative of Guinea thus showed us that he has done his homework carefully. But at the same time he gave us to understand that the report submitted by the Council Mission was of no importance in his opinion and that he had not even turned its pages, although the discussion of that report is an item on today's agenda. Now everyone knows that one does not have to study this report in detail to realize that the essential elements it contains are to be found in the statements of the only prisoner who was captured after the withdrawal of the mercenaries and that that prisoner is an African and, what is more, a citizen of Guinea.

43. As members will have noticed, I asked to be allowed to speak at the very beginning of the Council's deliberations on the complaint by Benin so as to give the support of my country and my Government to that friendly African State. But I also wished to avail myself of the opportunity to indicate the feelings of my delegation in regard to the slanderous accusations of the Conakry authorities. That is why I deemed it preferable to leave it to the Mission appointed by the Council to confound the authors of those slanderous assertions. That has now been done.

44. Those who are obsessed with plots in Conakry hastened to exploit this affair for their own ends so as to find, at little expense, new explanations for their own internal difficulties. As usual, they have used the hollow vaunting rhetoric familiar to everyone in order to disguise the economic ruin into which they have plunged the country. Once again they have sought to pit one African State against another in the hope that thereby they would find a good opportunity to justify to their people the disastrous consequences of their political shortcomings, their crimes and their manifest incapacity to govern. Their hysterical high-sounding verbiage would have caused only a feeling of amused pity, had the consequences not been so harmful to African unity, for, by seeking openly and systematically to divide Africa, they facilitate the task of the enemies of our continent and this invite them to intervene in our internal affairs. Thus they actually become the allies of those they pretend to be fighting. We may even wonder whether they are aware of the dimensions of the problem, just as we may wonder what their ulterior motives are when they unceasingly rekindle dissension whenever Africa needs to be united to face foreign aggression. Unless they have a hidden motive, such behaviour is to say the

least irresponsible, infantile and dangerously harmful to the interests of the peoples and Governments of Africa. I think it would be particularly aberrant for Africa to have to pay the price for the shortcomings of a Government which is incapable of meeting and solving the most elementary problems confronting its people.

45. The practice of the art of insult and calumny can in no way suffice to create happiness for a people. On the contrary, it is quite obviously detrimental to our hopes for a better life, and the tangible result has been paralysis, distrust and even hostility. The theory that for 20 years a continuing conspiracy has been under preparation by the imperialists with the complicity of the so-called "neighbouring States" is a mystification that deceives no one. Furthermore, how can one understand why the imperialists should obstinately move against the Government of a country that is always most sympathetic concerning their interests, as is the case here, despite all their false professions of revolutionary sincerity.

46. This statement has been made without my having studied the document distributed to the Security Council yesterday by the delegation of Benin. When I know the contents of that document and should it be necessary for me to comment on them, I shall take the liberty of again requesting the Council's permission to present my delegation's views on the subject.

47. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the representative of Senegal for his cordial references to the excellent relations between our two countries and for the kind words he addressed to me.

48. I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Madagascar in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion without the right to vote. Consequently, I propose, in accordance with the usual practice and with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, under the provisions of Article 31 of the Charter and rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure.

49. In view of the limited number of places available at the Council table, I invite the representative of Madagascar to take the place reserved for him at the side of the Council chamber, on the understanding that he will be invited to take a place at the Council table whenever he wishes to address the Council.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. B. Rabetafika (Madagascar) took the place reserved for him at the side of the Council chamber.

50. Mr. LEPRETTE (France) (*interpretation from French*): Mr. President, I should first like to discharge the pleasant duty of congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of April. The excellent relations of friendship between France and Venezuela give me grounds for deriving pleasure from seeing you guiding proceedings which I am sure will be difficult and delicate. Please be assured of my delegation's

support. We all admire the way in which you conduct our proceedings.

51. We have the same admiration for Ambassador Young, your predecessor, whom we would also like to thank for the wisdom, breadth of vision and devotion he displayed from 1 to 31 March.

52. As we pointed out on 8 February last [1987th meeting], the French delegation would like once again to associate itself with all those delegations which have in the course of this debate—as, indeed, in the course of our previous meeting on this item—condemned the operation of which the People's Republic of Benin was the victim. I should like to remind members that my delegation approved the dispatch by the Council of a mission of inquiry into the events which gave rise to our initial meeting on this question. We have acquainted ourselves with the report drawn up by the Mission and also the documents annexed to it. We should like to convey to Ambassador Illueca, Ambassador Kikhia and Mr. Mulye our appreciation of the dedication with which they discharged their task.

53. We would have liked this report to have been the subject of calm and impartial examination by the Council. Having listened attentively yesterday to the representative of Benin [2000th meeting], however, I regret to have to say that the style he proposes for this debate seems to be a different one. In the circumstances, I find myself obliged to make the following points at this stage.

54. First I should like firmly and solemnly to repeat my Government's commitment to respect for the independence of States and to non-intervention in their internal affairs. As I have said, this principle brooks no exception. The actions of adventurers against independent African States must be condemned unequivocally. They threaten those States with an insecurity detrimental to their economic development.

55. But I have another reason, just as fundamental, for speaking. My delegation was indeed surprised—I might even say stupefied—when we heard certain passages of the statement of the representative of Benin. He suggested that the whole of the operation originated in France, that it was mounted in France and carried out by Frenchmen. Furthermore, while recalling the ties of friendship and co-operation between the people of France and Benin, he made a connexion between the leaders of the commando group and the French authorities by claiming that the leader of the commando group was a French officer, an officer in active service answering to the name of Gilbert Bourgeaud.

56. My delegation cannot accept such an allegation. Indeed, I can assure the Council that the investigations undertaken have revealed that no officer answering to that description exists in the French Army, either on active service, in the reserves or serving under foreign status.

57. Moreover, one may well ask why France would have become involved, either closely or remotely, in an undertaking of this kind.

58. I would remind the Council that, since Benin's accession to independence, there have been three Presidents

and several Governments in my country, and yet there has been one constant: the policy of co-operation between France and Benin. In the same period, there have been successive Governments, and perhaps even various régimes, in the State of Benin. The people of Benin have exercised the choices that they have the right to exercise. France has always accepted those choices, quite simply because it refuses to intervene in the internal affairs of States. Despite these changes that have occurred in the past, both in France and in Benin, and despite all the vicissitudes, co-operation has continued. The representative of Benin was good enough to say that this policy had been welcomed by the people and Government of his country.

59. That being the situation, I do not see what France would have had to gain by encouraging such a shocking operation, an operation which, had there not been people killed and wounded and had not damage of all kinds been caused, could be described as infantile. There remains the question of "French imperialism", this imperialism which "has armed and launched and will continue to arm and launch attacks against our country, by dispatching its secret services and its parallel and subversive networks" [*ibid.*, para. 66].

60. I leave it to others to decide what this entity actually is and what advantage—in the light of what I have just said about France's interests and policy—the imperialism in question could have hoped to derive, materially or morally, from an operation which was apparently very expensive, an operation mounted against a country whose representatives themselves say that they are waging a difficult struggle for their development alone.

61. To conclude my remarks on this point, I would remind the Council that no French service took either a close or a remote part in, or was in any way associated with, the raid of 16 January against Cotonou. In those circumstances, we do not understand why the Benin authorities should have decided to make such serious accusations and bold allegations in the report they saw fit to circulate yesterday,² basing themselves exclusively on documents which are alleged to have been abandoned at the airport and on the testimony of a single witness. I note that, in the conclusions of their own report, the members of the Mission make clear that their terms of reference and the time they had available for the performance of their task did not enable them to pursue their investigation any further or to verify the statements of the prisoner. The report adds that the same observation applies to the evidence submitted in the documentation.

62. That brings me to my third point, concerning individuals participating in the operation who are alleged to be French nationals. Some names have been mentioned. In passing I would note that these persons too have masqueraded under pseudonyms. For instance, I have found a Mr. Carter and a Mr. Young. I have noted that Mr. Gilbert Bourgeaud is also a Mr. Maurin.

63. Yesterday I heard the representative of Benin ask the French authorities to institute the necessary legal pro-

² Subsequently circulated as document S/12319/Add.1.

ceedings against their nationals, to the extent that those nationals were involved. I can say here that investigations have been undertaken by the French Government, on its own initiative and in accordance with its own legislation.

64. I said to my colleague from Benin during the first part of this debate that his Government would no doubt deem it useful to place directly before the French Government the complaints that Benin might have in this matter. I note, three months after the events, that no representations have been made to the French authorities. I cannot believe that the representative of Benin, who has repeatedly stated his concern to see this entire matter dealt with sincerely and in good faith, would wish to reserve this point, which is so essential, just for the sake of dramatic effect. Indeed, relations between Benin and France, as I have already said, have never been interrupted and we can only express surprise that the Government of Benin, if it had complaints, did not use the normal channels of bilateral diplomacy to present them.

65. I would add that the French Republic is a hospitable country, a land of liberty. Those among you who have lived in or visited my country must be aware of that. The movement of persons, the purchase of airline tickets, the opening of bank accounts are subject to no limitations and require no special authorization, if the normal rules for those kinds of operations are respected. There can be no question of our placing a policeman behind each Frenchman or behind each of our guests. The authorities in my country are very vigilant about preventing abuses of the hospitality or the freedom so generously offered by my country. But it is not always in the power of the French Government, under our system, to prevent some hot-headed adventurers from doing certain things on their own initiative.

66. We have listened with attention to what has been said about the use of mercenaries. A greater awareness of the problems arising from that kind of activity should emerge from this debate. We would be only too ready to associate ourselves with those who would condemn such undertakings and, in this regard, I do not think I need remind the Council that we share the bitterness and indignation expressed by the representative of Benin.

67. But, I repeat, we cannot tolerate that, on the basis of these facts, which we condemn, and through a train of arguments we cannot understand, unfounded accusations should be made against any country.

68. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the representative of France for his kind words about the relations between his country and mine and about me personally.

69. The next speaker is the representative of Morocco. I invite him to take a place at the Council table and to make his statement.

70. Mr. BENGELLOUN (Morocco) (*interpretation from French*): I should like first of all to express the sincere gratitude of my delegation at being authorized to participate in the present debate. I wish also, Sir, to stress how

happy my delegation is that this debate is taking place under your presidency. You represent a nation with which the Kingdom of Morocco has friendly and cordial relations. Your well-known humanistic qualities guarantee that these discussions will be held in an atmosphere of serenity and objectivity, in the interest of the international community.

71. Furthermore, I should like to pay a tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Young, who guided the Council's work during the past month with acknowledged competence and with a profound and sincere desire to contribute to the solution of African problems in the interest of the peoples of our great continent.

72. Turning to the question on the agenda, I wish immediately to protest most vehemently and express my profound indignation at the decision of the delegation of Benin to circulate a slanderous report prepared by its Government for the manifest purpose of casting an ignoble and intolerable suspicion on heads of State who are known for their wisdom, moderation and respect for the principles that govern the international community.

73. What the delegation of Benin has done is all the more reprehensible because by the terms of a consensus, reached no later than yesterday morning, it was decided that the members of the African Group taking part in these debates would avoid any attacks against African countries. This manoeuvre is discourteous vis-à-vis the Security Council. On the one hand, Benin requests that a mission of inquiry be sent and, on the other, it draws up its own report and decides to distribute it, as though Benin no longer had any confidence in the conclusions of the members of the said Mission.

74. I energetically reject all those fallacious and slanderous accusations, all those speculations that proceed from a morbid imagination and which undeniably represent an intolerable aggression against the most sacred institutions of my country.

75. I wish to make a solemn appeal to the members of the Council to remove that reprehensible document from their debates because it is false and partisan and should not have any attention paid to it.

76. The delegation of Morocco is convinced that right and justice will always triumph in the end, just as we are sure that the members of the international community in their wisdom and foresight cannot be deceived by such scandalous manoeuvres.

77. In defending its most sacred values, the Moroccan people is not guided by any feeling of hostility towards anyone. We have never intervened and never shall intervene in the internal affairs of any country.

78. I wish now to recall that Morocco, as an African and an Arab country, since its accession to independence, has ceaselessly striven for African unity and Arab-African co-operation. This has been a constant goal of our foreign policy, a deeply-felt need of the Moroccan people and the first principle of our Constitution.

79. We are aware that the unity of African peoples and their harmonious development can be achieved only by putting an end once and for all to all acts of subversion and intervention from whatever source.

80. We have never ceased to bear witness to our active solidarity with all brother countries victims of subversive acts directed against their sovereignty and independence. We cannot forget that our country is at present the victim of such acts of subversion directed from outside with the aim of jeopardizing our territorial integrity, and we know that, as in the past, we will find the necessary support and assistance in the international community.

81. It is therefore natural for us firmly to condemn any aggression against any country wherever that country may be. In so doing, we reaffirm our dedication to the fundamental principles of the Charter and, in particular, to the right of each people to choose its own political, economic and social régime, without foreign intervention.

82. Thus, we deem it more necessary than ever to take every measure to protect the stability of our African continent and thus enable our countries to devote themselves to the exalting task of economic development for the benefit of our respective peoples.

83. We are alarmed by the increase on our continent in mercenary operations to which another brother and friendly country in Africa has just fallen victim. We should like, on this occasion, again to express our complete solidarity with the friendly Republic of Zaire. Those operations which arm groups of people and direct them against other countries to sow anarchy and spread destruction and suffering must cease.

84. The Council, by its resolution 404 (1977), decided to send a special mission to the People's Republic of Benin in order to ascertain the facts. That Mission, which consisted of the representatives of India, Libya and Panama, under the chairmanship of Ambassador Illueca, went to Benin and submitted its report on 8 March 1977.

85. My delegation pays tribute to the praiseworthy efforts of the members of the Mission to carry out an extremely difficult task in so short a time. But we sincerely regret that the report includes accusations against sovereign States Members of our Organization unsupported by any proof.

86. Obviously, in an official United Nations document one cannot take into account the testimony of an individual, of a single individual, who is suspect in more ways than one, as is proved by the biography contained in the report. Who is this individual who bears several names, who under extraordinary circumstances was found on a beach, it appears, waiting for somebody to come and pick him up? Who is this person, who sounds just like someone in an adventure story and who says that he innocently participated in a vast operation of mercenaries the details of which he knew nothing? No doubt this was a person who was manipulated and who recited a lesson learnt by heart; or perhaps he is even an *agent provocateur* very well aware of the role he is to play. One cannot in good faith accord any credence to

this adventurer who—going from the sublime to the ridiculous—asked the Mission “to use its influence with the Beninese authorities so that the authorities will be lenient towards [him]”. Really it does seem to me that the Mission should not have taken into account the slanderous statements of this individual, still less included what he said in an official document of the Organization.

87. Furthermore, the delegation of Morocco notes that the number of mercenaries arrested after the departure of the attackers has curiously diminished. The representative of Benin stated at the Council's meeting on 7 February:

“Their pirate aircraft had to take-off very rapidly, leaving behind quite a number of mercenaries, who were heavily drugged and out of their minds” [1986th meeting, para. 19].

Why, then, did the Mission not ask to hear all those mercenaries who, since the attack on 16 January, had had sufficient time to sober up and calm down?

88. Likewise, I believe it is inconceivable, particularly when sovereign States are involved, to admit as evidence simple printed leaflets or alleged documents abandoned as if by chance at the Cotonou airport by those mercenaries, as though that were their only concern at the time. The procedure is too facile, too simplistic. In that way, anybody can forge or succeed in obtaining identity documents and then draw conclusions from them in order to harm the dignity and reputation of a country.

89. We agree that there are certain factors that in no way serve to clarify the mystery. All those inconsistencies hardly deserve even to be mentioned, were it not that unfortunately it is on the basis of those fallacies that sovereign States Members of our Organization have been odiously defamed.

90. My delegation does not wish to enter into a sterile debate, but it is my duty to make things clear in order to prevent the confusion which the enemies of African unity are trying to spread.

91. It is with real satisfaction that my delegation takes note of the final sentences of the report, which, in our opinion, should have been the only conclusion:

“However, the Special Mission wishes to state that the terms of its mandate, as well as the time available at its disposal for its implementation, did not permit it to investigate further and verify the testimony of the prisoner pertaining to these matters. The same is true of the suggestive evidence contained in the documentation.” [S/12294, para. 145.]

Here we can only pay tribute to the honesty of the members of the Mission for that evaluation, which removes every misunderstanding and every ambiguity.

92. The Government of His Majesty the King wishes to reaffirm its solemn protest against all the fabricated testimony and documents which implicate the Kingdom of

Morocco and which it considers to be flagrant attacks on the dignity of the people of Morocco.

93. The Government of His Majesty the King solemnly declares that it cannot be implicated either directly or indirectly in the tragic events of which the people of Benin were the victims on 16 January 1977. It respectfully draws the attention of the Council to the gravity of the manoeuvres directed against sovereign States and Members of our Organization and to the need to prevent our Organization from being used for ulterior motives by conspirators and detractors who are opposed to African unity.

94. The Government of His Majesty the King wishes to repeat its condemnation of the use of mercenaries and states that it will collaborate, as it has in the past, in all undertakings by our Organization to establish an international mechanism to prevent mercenary operations and to protect more effectively the sovereignty and integrity of small countries.

95. In the statement made on the occasion of the commemoration of the throne on 3 March this year, His Majesty King Hassan II, after recalling the role played by Morocco as host to the first African summit meeting in 1961 and as President of the Organization of African Unity in 1972, reaffirmed the continuity of Moroccan policy on that subject. His Majesty stated, *inter alia*:

“At any rate, our country will continue to work to strengthen the ties of friendship and co-operation with the other fraternal States of Africa which justly value the benefits that can be derived from loyal co-operation and sincere friendship.”

96. I hope that I have contributed to the Council's enlightenment with regard to the facts of the situation in the interests of the proper functioning of our Organization, so that it may attain its objectives for the well-being of the international community.

97. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the representative of Morocco for the kind words he addressed to my country and to me.

98. The next speaker is the representative of the Ivory Coast. I invite him to take a place at the Council table and to make his statement.

99. Mr. AKE (Ivory Coast) (*interpretation from French*): Mr. President, it is my pleasure first of all to extend to you and, through you, to all the members of the Council, my expressions of gratitude for permitting me to take part without the right to vote in the present discussion. I should like also to congratulate you most cordially on your assumption of the presidency of the Council. Your distinguished personal, human and moral merits, your rich political experience and your sense of justice and equity are a guarantee that you will conduct with competence and efficiency the proceedings of this important body which, in recent weeks, has been dealing particularly with African problems.

100. I should like to tell Ambassador Andrew Young, representative of the United States, your predecessor, how pleased we were at the way in which he presided over the work of the Council during the month of March. His efforts throughout the month to reconcile the views of the members of the Council on the question of South Africa, his initiatives and the suggestions that he made to facilitate a harmonious conclusion of the work of the Council demonstrate the outstanding statesmanlike qualities of a man who understands the problems of Africa, as well as the will of the new United States Government to contribute sincerely and effectively to the peaceful and gradual search for a solution to the situation in southern Africa.

101. We have departed today from our normal line of conduct and have asked to speak in the Council—we have done so, let me assure members, with some regret, but with a high sense of duty which derives from the present circumstances—to reply to the statement of the representative of the People's Republic of Benin [*2000th meeting*], to the allegations contained in the Beninese national report on the aggression of 16 January 1977, which has been distributed to members of the Council, and in particular to the statement of the representative of the Republic of Guinea [*ibid.*]. The phraseology, the insinuations, the allusions and the epithets used by our colleagues from Benin and Guinea and those to be found in the report hardly leave us any choice.

102. It was with indignation that the Ivory Coast learned, on the morning of 16 January 1977, of the events which had occurred at Cotonou, the economic capital of the People's Republic of Benin, and which caused so much suffering to the fraternal people of Benin. The Ivory Coast condemns all forms of violence and recourse to force, both in international relations and in internal conflicts or in relations between communities, and we could therefore not fail to condemn most strongly that act of force committed by a commando of mercenaries. Their evil actions, so detrimental to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the young States of Africa, can never be sufficiently condemned. No African State, no African people, no African leader can remain indifferent to such acts which pose a constant threat to the independence, security and peace so indispensable to the development of these States.

103. The gravity of the action perpetrated against the People's Republic of Benin and the danger constituted by the mercenary system have made it necessary to shed all possible light on the events of 16 January 1977, so as to discover who is to blame and in order to take appropriate measures to avoid repetition of such events, not only against Benin but against any other State, African or not. We are pleased, therefore, that the Security Council, in its wisdom, by its resolution 404 (1977), acceded to Benin's request and decided to send to that country a special mission composed of three of its members, India, Panama and Libya, with the task of investigating those events and reporting on them.

104. At a time when the Security Council is meeting to consider the report contained in document S/12294 and Add.1, we wish, first and foremost, to express our

congratulations to the authors of the report on the way in which they discharged their duties, duties which, after all, were difficult because of the circumstances surrounding this matter and the contradictory information which had created and fed doubts in certain minds.

105. It emerges from the conclusions of the report, particularly those in paragraphs 141-145, that the People's Republic of Benin was the victim of an armed attack by a commando group of mercenaries coming from abroad which landed at Cotonou airport on the morning of 16 January 1977 for the purpose of overthrowing the present Government of Benin and that, hence, Benin was the victim of aggression. Most of the aggressors, who were not nationals of Benin but white mercenaries, are alleged to have been recruited in Europe and Africa and to have arrived in Morocco from Paris, Dakar and Abidjan. They are further alleged to have received training at a base near Marrakesh, in Morocco, and been transported to Cotonou through Gabon.

106. Incidentally, we note that, according to this report, in their flight, the invaders left behind one of their own men, a certain Bâ Alpha Oumarou, a national of the Republic of Guinea, belonging to the Peulh ethnic group, a Moslem born in Senegal, who was taken prisoner by the Beninese forces. We also note that they had left behind a case containing, according to our colleague from Benin, "very important and particularly telling documents" [1986th meeting, para. 19] which have been published in the addendum to the report.

107. Finally, the Special Mission states

"that the terms of its mandate, as well as the time available at its disposal for its implementation, did not permit it to investigate further and verify the testimony of the prisoner pertaining to these matters. The same is true of the suggestive evidence contained in the documentation." [S/12294, para. 145.]

108. Whatever we may think of the report and of the information it contains, whatever doubts some may still harbour when reading this report, and particularly with regard to the testimony of the lone prisoner, one thing at least is absolutely clear: at no time did either the Beninese authorities or the Guinean prisoner implicate the Republic of the Ivory Coast in the preparation, organization or execution of this operation against the People's Republic of Benin. Indeed, at no point in his long statement did Mr. Bâ Alpha Oumarou indicate that the Government or the authorities of the Ivory Coast had participated in any way in that action. Bâ Alpha Oumarou, whose memory is so prodigious, would have had no grounds for remaining silent about the Ivory Coast if indeed he had had information about the participation of my country in the operation of 16 January 1977 against the People's Republic of Benin. Furthermore, in their conversations with the Benin authorities, the members of the Mission were not informed that the Ivory Coast was implicated in any manner whatsoever. If they had been, we can see no reason why they would have voluntarily refrained from mentioning it in their conclusions.

109. Need I recall in this regard that, in the course of the meeting of Heads of State and Government of the African, Malagasy and Mauritian Common Organization, held on 9 and 10 February 1977 at Kigali, capital of the Republic of Rwanda, the Foreign Minister of Benin, Captain Alladaye, discussed this matter with His Excellency Mr. Félix Houphouët-Boigny, President of the Republic of the Ivory Coast? The Beninese Minister stated at that time that neither the Ivory Coast nor Senegal was implicated in this affair. Captain Alladaye, keenly aware of the nature of the relations which the Ivory Coast has always had with Benin, and of the principles which had always guided its policy in relations with other African States, knew very well that the Ivory Coast would hardly take part in any kind of action designed to prejudice the sovereignty, independence or territorial integrity of the People's Republic of Benin or any other African State.

110. How great, then, was our surprise at learning that the Benin authorities, two months after the events of 16 January 1977, were implicating the Ivory Coast in this sinister adventure.

111. But what is in fact going on here?

112. We note from the national report prepared by the Government of Benin, adopted, we would point out, on 12 March 1977 by a joint special session of the Central Committee of the Party of the People's Revolution of Benin, of the National Council of the Revolution, and of the Revolutionary Military Government—thus by the highest authorities of Benin—that the Beninese authorities blame the Ivory Coast for having "authorized and assisted the stay on Ivory Coast territory of stateless persons of Beninese origin, most of whom had been sentenced to death following the failure of plots which they had hatched against the Beninese people and their revolution" and that the Ivory Coast had permitted them freely to organize "political meetings at Abidjan... for the purpose of hatching criminal plots the outcome of which was the treacherous attack on the People's Republic of Benin on Sunday, 16 January 1977". According to the same authorities, "the Second Combat Company of the mercenary army, known as the Foreign Intervention Group, which was supposed to attack the People's Republic of Benin from Togolese territory on Sunday, 16 January 1977, withdrew to the Ivory Coast a few days after the failure of the airborne operation". They note that, towards noon of that same day, "the presidential Fokker aircraft... of the Republic of the Ivory Coast violated Beninese air space".

113. The Ivory Coast had nothing to do, either directly or indirectly, with the events at Cotonou on 16 January 1977, and we reject out of hand all the grotesque and false accusations levelled at us by the Beninese authorities in their national report. We are particularly incensed at this because the essential concern of the Ivory Coast, which has always maintained relations of amity and co-operation with the Republic of Benin, has always been to work towards peace within and outside the country, to live at peace with its neighbours and not to meddle in the internal affairs of other States, to ensure the harmonious development of the country and to promote the well-being of all its people in dignity and fraternity.

114. These charges are particularly ridiculous because the Beninese authorities are well aware that several of their compatriots have been living in the Ivory Coast for many years—Beninese of every station, including those from the upper classes, who freely left their own country or fled it for personal reasons in order to find work or, at least, peace and security in the Ivory Coast. It is highly unlikely that those skilled persons, who had to immigrate to our country and to many other African countries where they could use their skills and their knowledge and ensure a better future for themselves and their families than that offered by their country of origin, should have sought, from the territory of the Ivory Coast, to overthrow the Government of their country by means which we firmly condemn.

115. It is an aberration to suppose or to believe that the Government of the Ivory Coast could, in any way whatsoever, have lent any assistance to the invaders of Benin or could have permitted them to organize their sinister action on our soil or that they would have retreated to our territory after the failure of their operation. We say this first because we think that any internal changes that may occur in a country should take place democratically and peacefully, without violence or bloodshed. We say it also because we in the Ivory Coast believe that every people has the sovereign right to institutions of its choice and to opt for the political, economic and social system that best suits it in order to ensure its happiness and satisfy its national needs. That people is the sole judge of its options, the sole master of its destiny. Whether we like those options or not, we are in duty bound to respect and accept them as such, to co-operate and to deal with the régime in question. Therefore, it is the right of no one, still less that of foreign Powers, to meddle in the internal affairs of such a country or to provide aid and assistance to certain of that country's nationals who, for reasons of their own that it is not our business to know or judge, wish to attempt a coup against their country of origin or its institutions.

116. For our part, we should like to assert here, before the members of the Security Council, that the Republic of the Ivory Coast and its leaders will never encourage subversion against any African country. They will never permit or tolerate that their African brothers who, for various reasons, have come to live there, should abuse their generous hospitality by making any attempt whatsoever against their country of origin. This is clear and subject to no exception whatever. Consequently, those citizens of Benin could not count on the assistance of the Ivory Coast in carrying out an operation against their country. The vigilance of our authorities, of our security services and of our party activists makes it possible for us to assert that this kind of subversive activity has not and will not exist in the Ivory Coast.

117. We would not be surprised—how should we be, accustomed as we are to such things, and particularly after the statement made yesterday by the representative of Guinea—if the Conakry authorities were spreading such charges against the Ivory Coast. But the Government and leaders of Benin have no right to try to gain credence for such grave charges, which are particularly gratuitous since they are based on no foundation and run counter to our philosophy. They have absolutely no right to allow them-

selves to be manoeuvred in such a way because, by so doing, they not only gravely compromise the friendly relations that have always existed between Benin and the Ivory Coast but also run the risk of damaging their reputation and dignity. If certain countries think so little of their dignity, we, the citizens of the Ivory Coast, on the other hand, very much cherish ours and shall not allow anyone to injure it with a tissue of calumnies. We can only pity the authors of those calumnies and express the regret that Benin, on the new path that it has traced for itself, should have reached this point and adopted towards us an attitude which, to say the least, is unfriendly and unwarranted.

118. Perhaps the time has come for us to share with members of the Council certain facts pertaining to the Ivory Coast that many of our detractors too often and too easily forget.

119. The Ivory Coast, which has more than 7 million inhabitants, plays host to 1.2 million non-Ivory-Coast Africans who come to our country to seek a larger measure of work, peace and security. Those Africans feel at home in the Ivory Coast and are welcomed and treated as brothers. This hospitality is extended to them on one condition, namely, that they respect the law of hospitality in our country and do nothing that may prejudice the relations of good neighbourliness that we maintain and intend to continue maintaining with our neighbours and other African countries.

120. Our friends in Benin are perfectly well aware that the Ivory Coast has laid down as a principle of its conduct that it will never meddle in the affairs of other countries. Suffice it to cite in proof of this the friendly and fraternal co-operation existing between the members of the Conseil de l'entente, which includes Benin, Upper Volta, Niger, Togo and the Ivory Coast. The Conseil de l'entente, it is worth recalling, is one of the oldest and most solidly based inter-African organizations and is founded on understanding and confidence among independent and sovereign States. The solidarity binding its members is reflected in specific and verifiable actions and there is no kind of intervention in the internal affairs of any of the member States.

121. The Conseil de l'entente just met at Ouagadougou, capital of the Republic of Upper Volta, on 30 and 31 March, under the chairmanship of His Excellency General Gnassingbe Eyadéma, its current chairman, and the meeting was attended by the heads of State of the Ivory Coast and Niger and by His Excellency Mr. Lamizana, President of Upper Volta, the host country. The President of the People's Republic of Benin did not take part in that meeting. Invited by the international press to communicate his views about this meeting, the President of the Republic of the Ivory Coast stated:

“The Entente is an organization of which we can be proud. It is the oldest and most stable regional grouping in Africa. It is based upon reason and active and effective solidarity. This organization has no supranational structures to encumber it, and thus independence, freedom of

action and respect for the identity of each State have been preserved.

"This organization has known success and this will continue—modest success because of the modesty of our resources. Solidarity is our weapon. I could even say without exaggeration that it is our absolute weapon. With this weapon, our successes are, of course, modest but they are encouraging and, in any case, the organization will never know any bitter victories."

The President continued:

"We deplore the absence of one of our colleagues but we think we shall shortly be meeting, all five of us, to continue our advance towards progress in freedom and brotherhood."

122. In spite of the internal upheavals which some of its members have been going through, the Conseil de l'entente has remained firm and its basis has remained solid. None of its members has been accused, as far as we know, of meddling in the affairs of its partners, and we do not see why or for what purpose we should change our attitude today. How would it profit us, we wonder.

123. Our co-operation with our partners, which has been so disinterested, has been distinguished by active and effective solidarity, as President Houphouët-Boigny emphasized, and not by a solidarity of hollow and empty words. That co-operation has always been free from any political considerations, because such considerations detract from the value we attach to that solidarity.

124. The Ivory Coast is, of course, a country of limited resources but it whole-heartedly invests all its faith and ardour in making the most of the scanty resources it has been provided with by nature. We do not want, as President Houphouët-Boigny himself said, in an image full of wisdom, realism and Christian charity, "to be an oasis of prosperity in a desert of poverty". If our policy is one of genuine solidarity, if we are concerned for the harmonious and peaceful development of other countries, it is because we hope that that oasis of relative prosperity which our country constitutes and which is a matter of jealousy for some people may be extended to the whole African continent.

125. I do not want to be misunderstood. We are not saying that, owing to our relations of friendship and co-operation, if Benin has proof of our complicity in the attack against it on 16 January 1977, which we condemn, it cannot say so. We regret the manner and we reject the charges themselves, because they are devoid of all foundation and based upon no evidence.

126. We have other concerns and other things to do in the Ivory Coast. We have neither time nor money to waste on sordid undertakings which, by their very nature, detract from our dignity and our reputation as a responsible, hard-working, hospitable and fraternal country, a country which wants peace at home and peace in other countries in Africa and elsewhere, a country which abides by the principles which constitute the very foundation of the

Charter of the United Nations and that of the Organization of African Unity.

127. We wish to assert that there is not a word of truth in all charges levelled against the Ivory Coast, a country with which Benin has no quarrel of any kind whatsoever. We call on the Benin authorities to refrain from following in the footsteps of the President of Guinea. The Ivory Coast considers Benin among its friends and intends to cultivate that friendship both bilaterally and within the framework of the interregional and African regional organizations to which they both belong. This is in the enlightened interest of both the Ivory Coast and the People's Republic of Benin. However, if, in spite of our goodwill and our co-operation, Benin were to adopt towards us the same attitude as Guinea and count us among its enemies, we would not be the ones to regret this the most or suffer from it the most.

128. The Ivory Coast, I repeat, is deeply committed to peace and therefore will never promote any action of any kind that could jeopardize peace in the neighbouring countries in Africa or elsewhere. We shall never encourage subversion against an African country, whatever its political, economic or social system. Guinea, however, has striven for many days, months and years to implicate us in so-called plots hatched against it or against other African countries and imagines mercenary troops massed on our borders ready to attack it.

129. The statement of our Guinean colleague yesterday, which did not fail to follow this rule, helped us particularly to understand better what underlies all these machinations aimed at implicating the Ivory Coast in the events which occurred on 16 January 1977 at Cotonou, machinations which have one single goal, that of discrediting the Ivory Coast and certain African countries, poisoning our relations with Benin and ultimately compromising the sincere efforts being made by all African leaders to build gradually and harmoniously the African unity which we all so ardently hope for.

130. Of course, the Guinean President, who lives in an atmosphere haunted by conspiracies, cannot bear not to see the hand of the Ivory Coast in this matter of Benin. Was he not the first, immediately after the aggression was committed, to level with disconcerting but hardly unexpected lightness the flagrant and gross charge to the effect that the Ivory Coast and Senegal had participated in the aggression and to claim to anyone willing to listen that he had information proving such participation?

131. What proof? Is this the information he is supposed to have received from a so-called Ivory Coast "patriot" whom he mentioned in one of his recent statements and to whom the representative of Guinea referred in his statement yesterday? For the purpose of reply, it will suffice for us to cite this sentence taken from the communiqué of the Political Bureau of the Democratic Party of the Ivory Coast, published following the charges made by Benin: "If Sékou Touré knew how our people felt about him, he would look elsewhere for his information" [*see S/12320 of 8 April 1977*]. We challenge this method of producing evidence, and we challenge those who produced it to

demonstrate its authenticity; otherwise, it would be too easy for them.

132. If President Sékou Touré were really concerned about the interests of Benin and if he really did possess, as he claims, evidence of that aggression against Benin, he could at least have warned the Benin authorities so that they could have made the necessary arrangements to repel the invaders and confiscate their aircraft. But he maintained a reprehensible silence which cost Benin dear. And, to top it all, the only invader who was taken prisoner turned out by chance to be a "Guinean" from the Republic of Guinea. What an annoying coincidence! The prisoner is not from the Ivory Coast nor from Senegal, nor from Togo, nor from Morocco, nor from Gabon, but from Guinea. Obviously, no Benin cadre, still less one from the Ivory Coast or Senegal, would risk his life in such an adventure. Why would he do so, anyway? What idol would he be worshipping? So we are left with this quaint Bâ Alpha Oumarou, the circumstances surrounding whose arrest should really make us smile: he was the only one to let himself be captured in the adventure. All this is not very serious.

133. Guinea has so accustomed us to these complicated plots and these fantastic accusations that we no longer attach any importance to them. Bursting with sick jealousy of the Ivory Coast, President Sékou Touré finds no other way of explaining to his people his lamentable failures and the bankruptcy of his economic and social policies than by blaming his neighbours, in this case the Ivory Coast and Senegal. The charges levelled only yesterday by the representative of Guinea, that mercenaries were supposed to be massing along the Guinean frontier ready to attack Guinea, belong to the same fantasy. They are really just hallucinations.

134. It is true that the Guinean leader cannot conceive of a plot or an aggression—which we would, incidentally, condemn—against an African country without the participation of the Ivory Coast and Senegal, as though those two countries had no other concerns and nothing to do but to hatch plots and to meddle in the internal affairs of other African States. President Sékou Touré is so convinced of this that, if such an event were to occur in central or east Africa or elsewhere, he would see the hand of the Ivory Coast even there. This is a pathological case that really requires the serious attention of the medical profession.

135. We shall take the opportunity provided by this debate, which we really did not want but which has been forced upon us, to assert in the Council with all due solemnity that the Ivory Coast flatly rejects the false allegations levelled against it with the sole purpose of sowing confusion in people's minds, fomenting hatred, pitting Africans against each other and, in this particular case, pitting the people of Benin and Guinea against the people of the Ivory Coast. Before the Council we assert that in the Ivory Coast there is no recruiting office, no centre for the training of mercenaries, still less any mercenaries massed on our frontiers ready to invade Guinea.

136. The Government of the Ivory Coast will never waste a single minute of its precious time or use a single inhabitant for purposes other than economic and social

development, the only means of ensuring the prosperity of Ivory Coast citizens, which is the final and ultimate goal of its national and international policy. We should like, in this respect, to remind the Council of what the President of the Republic of the Ivory Coast, M. Félix Houphouët-Boigny, stated in June 1976 following fresh charges by Guinea:

"With regard to the Ivory Coast, we are inspired by one sole concern: the economic and social development of our country and, to that end, the whole population, civilian and military, is mobilized. We do not have sufficient manpower for our national construction, for which we have been working unremittingly since our independence, so how could we be so careless or so foolish as to divert any of our manpower to purposes other than development? I appeal to all Ambassadors accredited to the Ivory Coast,"—some of the members of the Council are represented in my country; I shall not mention them—"a free country in which they can move about either by day or by night without requiring prior permission, to go and ascertain whether or not the allegations of Mr. Sékou Touré are well founded. I call on the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity to send missions as soon as possible to check the degree of accuracy of the charges made by Guinea against the Ivory Coast, and I challenge Mr. Sékou Touré to prove the presence of 'mercenaries' ready to attack Guinea along our common frontier or in training at some place in our national territory. I even ask him to send to the Ivory Coast side of our common frontier members of his army and police force to check into the existence of so-called 'mercenaries' in the Ivory Coast."

137. After the statement made yesterday by my colleague from Guinea, this statement by the President of the Republic of the Ivory Coast takes on particular importance. I should also like to take this opportunity once again to request the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity and all those who so wish to respond to the invitation of the President of the Ivory Coast, which still stands, to go and investigate on the spot the accuracy of these accusations so as to put an end to them and once and for all expose the truth concerning the plot which so fascinates the Conakry leaders and which is infecting the Beninese revolutionaries.

138. We reserve the right to speak again to clarify our position even further if by any chance some think we have not been sufficiently clear.

139. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): The next speaker is the representative of Algeria. I invite him to take a place at the Council table and to make a statement.

140. Mr. BOUAYAD-AGHA (Algeria) (*interpretation from French*): Mr. President, allow me to join preceding speakers in congratulating you on your accession this month to the presidency of the Council. The Algerian delegation is very happy that it should be precisely the representative of Venezuela, a country of the third world, who has assumed the heavy and important responsibility of guiding the work of the Council at this time. I should also like to express my delegation's gratitude to members of the

Council for allowing us to participate at this late hour in the Council debate on this question.

141. Today the Council has to discuss the report of the Special Mission it decided to send to Benin, and to reach a decision on the complaint submitted by the People's Republic of Benin.

142. First of all, my delegation feels duty bound to express its great appreciation to the members of the Mission for the work they have done and for the honesty, prudence and undeniable conscientiousness they demonstrated in carrying out their task. The report they have submitted to the Council is testimony to their concern for objectivity and impartiality, as well as to their complete knowledge of the political and human aspects of the problem placed before them. They certainly deserve our admiration and our thanks for the valuable contribution they have thus made to the Council's work in a matter in which aggression—now clearly established—was committed against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a member of the Council. As a matter of fact, one of the first conclusions of the report of the Mission makes it undeniably clear that there was an act of aggression against the People's Republic of Benin by other Governments. In that connexion, I should like to remind the Council of the following conclusions in paragraphs 141 and 142 of the report:

“On the basis of the testimony received and evidence examined by it, the Special Mission is in a position to conclude that the People's Republic of Benin was thus subjected to an armed attack by the armed force which arrived at Cotonou airport on the morning of 16 January 1977. The primary objective of the invading force was the overthrow of the present Government of Benin.

“Inasmuch as the territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty of the State of Benin was violated by this invading force which came from outside the territory of that country, there can be no doubt that the State of Benin was subjected to aggression.”

143. In the first place, that justifies the complaint that Benin legitimately addressed to the Security Council and puts an end to the scepticism—very self-serving, not to say suspicious—that some quarters have maintained regarding the very bases of the complaint. But it shows, too, that the present debate is of the utmost importance in terms of the responsibilities that the Charter confers on the Council. The most serious threat to the principles of the Charter, the one that most directly endangers international peace, is certainly foreign interference, direct or indirect, in the affairs of other countries. The international community would be taking the path of its destruction if it were to tolerate such acts of aggression, the seriousness of which cannot be measured in terms of the size of the country victim of the aggression. Those who think that aggression against a small country like Benin, one other small country in Africa, is after all a geographically limited and politically harmless matter are greatly mistaken. They are mistaken if they do not see that such acts establish extremely dangerous habits in international relations and that, while today a small African country is involved, tomorrow they will inevitably be affected.

144. The members of the Security Council will understand that our apprehension and that of all African countries is quite justified, since this is not a purely theoretical, but a real threat to our independence and sovereignty. The planning of the plot, as revealed by the documents collected by the Special Mission, clearly demonstrates that a scheme was drawn up that could easily be applied to each of our countries. We have every reason for concern at the training of what would now appear to be a body of professionals in subversion, prepared to place themselves at the service of any Government not too much bothered by considerations of international morality and prepared to pay large sums to get rid of political enemies without assuming direct responsibility for the act. As we know, mercenaries have been used from time immemorial and they will remain forever at the service, not of fortune and wealth, but of cowardice and immorality in relations among nations.

145. The aggression against the People's Republic of Benin was perpetrated by mercenaries, for the most part white. That emerges clearly from the following conclusion in paragraph 143 of the report of the Special Mission:

“It is also clear that a majority of the attacking force, not nationals of Benin, were participating in this action for pecuniary motives and were, therefore mercenaries.”

146. We have already said that the use of mercenaries in relations among States poses a great danger to all the members of the international community. It is obvious that this is a real danger only for countries like ours, that is, the countries of the third world, of whose vulnerability we are all aware. Each of our countries, indeed, feels directly threatened by action such as that of which Benin has just been the victim. We have no illusions. If the aggression had succeeded, it would immediately have been interpreted as a settling of domestic accounts in Benin; the carefully worked out technique for this type of intervention had even provided the names of the new leaders and the solemn statements by which they were to proclaim their accession to power. Aggression by proxy, through mercenaries, is an internal matter if it succeeds. If it fails, as, fortunately, it did in Benin, it becomes somewhat more embarrassing to those who instigated it.

147. The Security Council must definitely deal with this practice by certain Governments of having recourse to mercenaries for political aims in other countries. The use of mercenaries, as we have already said, is not a new phenomenon on the international scene. The organization, recruitment and hiring of mercenaries are no longer secrets; everyone knows about this, and the whole system could not be maintained without the complicity, or at least the complacency, of certain Governments. It must be clearly understood by everyone that, as far as we are concerned, those Governments are directly responsible for all the acts of these mercenaries. It goes without saying that there will be a constant danger to international peace so long as these anonymous elements, at the service of the highest bidder—these mercenaries—are interposed in relations between States.

148. We recognize that, although it is established that flagrant aggression was committed against the People's

Republic of Benin, it is difficult and delicate to determine who was really responsible for this aggression. In its report, the Special Mission has set forth facts, testimony, documents. We understand and agree with the reasons for the prudence it showed in drawing its conclusions, for, in the final analysis, it is for the Security Council itself to make the decision. Nevertheless, we would venture to express our astonishment at the reaction of the Western press to the events that took place on 16 January last in Benin. That press is generally very vigilant when anything affecting nationals of Western countries happens in our countries, particularly if their security is endangered. Well, that is precisely the kind of thing that happened at Cotonou, and the nationals of various Western countries were affected: some of them had to be evacuated for reasons of health.

149. Our surprise is all the greater in regard to the countries implicated, directly or indirectly, in the report of the Special Mission. Far be it from us to draw immediately the conclusion that logically follows from the findings of this report. But we would venture to express at least our surprise at the reaction of some of these countries which, instead of contributing to making the situation clear, limit themselves in their attempts to defend themselves—clumsy attempts, at that—to proclaiming that they are the victims of the ill will of certain other countries.

150. The aggression against the People's Republic of Benin is an extremely serious act. Some elements of that aggression have been clearly established by the Special Mission. Some others must undoubtedly be made more clear. The Security Council, like the rest of the international community, cannot be content with merely the indignant denials of the Governments implicated in this matter. The least it can expect of those Governments—the least that all of us can expect of them—is that they should voluntarily contribute to making clear what is still confused in the information furnished by the Mission. Any reticence on the part of those Governments can only be taken for a confession—embarrassed but scarcely disguised—of complicity in an act of aggression against another country.

151. In any case, the responsibilities of the Council are clearly defined in this case, more than in any other. Considerations affecting each of the members of the Council obviously have their importance in the decisions the Council will take, but, in the final analysis, the resolutions the Council will adopt at the end of this debate will be judged in terms of the requirements of international understanding and peace.

152. Mr. ILLUECA (Panama) (*interpretation from Spanish*): In the course of the debate this morning, some speakers referred to parts of the report of the Security Council Special Mission and passed judgements that might give rise to different interpretations. With a view to contributing to an objective debate and in my capacity as Chairman of the Special Mission, I cordially invite the participants to reread the following text of paragraphs 16 and 17 of the report:

“The Special Mission also decided that English would be its working language and that, consequently, all its proceedings would be conducted in English. The members felt that it was necessary, in order to be able to implement their mandate effectively, for their daily

proceedings to be recorded in verbatim records, drawn up only in English and made available to them regularly on the day following each meeting.

“In accordance with the request contained in paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 404 (1977), the Secretary-General provided the Special Mission with the necessary secretariat assistance.”

Everything that the Special Mission did is recorded in the files of the Secretariat and available to the representatives of Member States.

153. In addition to the fact that those documents are available to all representatives, I should like, as Chairman of the Special Mission, to state that my colleagues from India and Libya and I are available to answer any questions which representatives may wish to ask on any point which, in their opinion, might require further elucidation. Representatives may rest assured that our replies will be friendly, forthright and direct and no one need therefore entertain any doubt about the impartiality and objectivity of the members of the Mission.

154. Mr. RAMPHUL (Mauritius): I wish to place on record that, when I made my statement yesterday, I had not yet read the national report of Benin on the agenda item now under consideration. I have since read the report which was handed to my delegation during our meeting yesterday.

155. I must say that I was taken by surprise by the private distribution by Benin of that report to members of the Council and I regret that action taken by the delegation of Benin without prior consultation with its African colleagues on the Council. That distribution seems to me to be against the spirit of a recommendation by the African Group which states:

“It is highly advisable to avoid attacks against African States, bearing in mind that those aspects of the problem involving African countries are in the hands of the Organization of African Unity.”

156. Benin is a sovereign, independent State; Benin is a responsible member of the Security Council. It is therefore not for me to comment on the wisdom of its action, which it exercises in its best interests as is its right; but I hate to see members of the Organization of African Unity publicly divided in the Council.

157. The Council is meeting to consider the report of the Special Mission—nothing else. I do not believe that the Council is in any way concerned with inter-African relations.

158. I appeal to my African colleagues at the United Nations to stop washing their dirty linen in the Council and to consider taking their problems to the Organization of African Unity. Enough damage has already been done; this is not in the best interests of Africa.

159. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): I have been informed that the representative of Guinea wishes to exercise the right of reply. Because of the lateness of the hour he will be allowed to do so at our next meeting.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.

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