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CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Provisional agenda (S/Agenda/2003)	1
Adoption of the agenda	1
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

NOTE

Symbols of United Nations documents are composed of capital letters combined with figures. Mention of such a symbol indicates a reference to a United Nations document.

Documents of the Security Council (symbol S/. . .) are normally published in quarterly *Supplements of the Official Records of the Security Council*. The date of the document indicates the supplement in which it appears or in which information about it is given.

The resolutions of the Security Council, numbered in accordance with a system adopted in 1964, are published in yearly volumes of *Resolutions and Decisions of the Security Council*. The new system, which has been applied retroactively to resolutions adopted before 1 January 1965, became fully operative on that date.

2003RD MEETING

Held in New York on Wednesday, 13 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/2003)

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 11.05 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 previously taken by the Council, I invite the representatives of Algeria, Botswana, Cuba, Egypt, Gabon, Guinea, the Ivory Coast, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Madagascar, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Somalia and Togo to take the places reserved for them at the side of the Council chamber.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. F. K. Bouayad-Agha (Algeria), Mr. M. Modisi (Botswana), Mr. L. Gómez Anzardo (Cuba), Mr. A. E. Abdel Meguid (Egypt), Mr. L. N'Dong (Gabon), Mr. M. S. Camara (Guinea), Mr. S. Aké (Ivory Coast), Mr. V. Sourinho (Lao People's Democratic Republic), Mr. B. Rabetafika (Madagascar), Mr. M. Kane (Mauritania), Mr. A. Bengelloun (Morocco), Mr. J. Poisson (Niger), Mr. J. M. Baroody (Saudi Arabia), Mr. M. Fall (Senegal), Mr. A. H. Hussen (Somalia) and Mr. A. A. Kodjovi (Togo) took the places reserved for them at the side of the Council chamber.

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

2. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): In addition, I wish to inform members of the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Mozambique in which he requests to be allowed to participate in the debate on the question on the agenda. Consequently I propose, in accordance with past practice and with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the debate, 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 above-mentioned representative to take the place reserved for him at the side of the Council chamber on the usual 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. J. C. Lobo (Mozambique) took the place reserved for him at the side of the Council chamber.

4. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): The first speaker is the representative of Mauritania, whom I invite to take a place at the Council table and to make a statement.

5. Mr. KANE (Mauritania) (*interpretation from French*): Mr. President, first of all I should like to perform a pleasant duty and extend to you my warm congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for April. Those important responsibilities have fortunately been entrusted to you at a time when the world, and Africa in particular, is facing many distressing problems of which we are aware, and needs a man of your wisdom, experience and talent to guide the proceedings of the Council towards success. The high sense of responsibility we know you possess guarantees success for the Council.

6. Without doubt, this year Africa has been one of the continents of greatest concern to the international community. That concern has of course loomed large in the activities of the United Nations and the Security Council.

7. The question being considered today by the Council, and the many problems it has had to deal with since the beginning of the year, are so many signs unfortunately revealing the profound and difficult crisis through which Africa is passing. However, for more than 17 years, the African continent has set an example, not only in terms of stability and homogeneity but also, and above all, because of the wisdom that has marked the political options of its

States. The unitary vision of the continent and the common destiny of the African peoples have made it possible to protect Africa from the contradictions that are rending our world and to thwart the numerous attempts at colonial reconquest of Africa.

8. It was that unfailing solidarity that made it possible in 1963, in the ex-Belgian Congo, now the Republic of Zaire, to thwart the forces of colonial reconquest led by the notorious Schramm. That active solidarity also enabled the Federal Republic of Nigeria to preserve its unity by thwarting the Biafran secession. The unity of the African continent has made it possible also for the Republic of Egypt and the Arab countries to put an end to the expansionist ambitions of international Zionism. Those indissoluble links were demonstrated when the Republic of Guinea, the Republic of Uganda and the Republic of Zambia were the victims of invasions financed and conducted by Powers from outside Africa. These are so many examples which prove, if proof were necessary, that Africa has always been able to restore its unity and solidarity when any of its States has been the victim of aggression.

9. If that unity has made it possible to safeguard some of the fundamental interests of the African peoples, it has none the less not discouraged those who, in subtle and varied ways, have continued to attempt to reconquer the immense wealth of the African continent. The events of 16 January 1977 at Cotonou, capital of the People's Republic of Benin, were a demonstration that enabled us to understand both the grave threat to small countries and the infinitely dangerous international consequences which acts of that kind may involve. The date of 16 January 1977 could have been a fatal one for the people of Benin and a tragedy for all African peoples if the courage, determination and high level of mobilization of the people of Cotonou had not succeeded in overcoming the cleverly conceived aggression the objective of which was, without any doubt, that of overthrowing the present Benin régime. Such a flagrant intervention in the internal affairs of Benin, an independent and sovereign State, is reprehensible in every respect because of the ill effects it causes and the suffering and misfortune it imposed upon the people of Benin.

10. The people of Mauritania, its party and Government did not fail to manifest their militant solidarity with the Benin people and Government from the very outset of the aggression. This solidarity of the Mauritanian people was reiterated by Comrade Hamdi Ould Mouknass, Minister for Foreign Affairs, at the meeting of the OAU Council of Ministers held at Lomé last February. The active support of the Mauritanian people for the people of Benin originates in the profound links of friendship and fraternity which have so long united Mauritania and Benin. The losses of Benin were very deeply felt in Mauritania, and the tragedy which affected the people of Benin was shared by the whole Mauritanian people.

11. The acts of vandalism and the odious crimes committed in Benin by the forces of invasion and the mercenaries in their pay constitute a sufficiently eloquent warning for the international community to contemplate, here and now, effective measures to put an end to this evil.

The policy of colonial reconquest through the use of mercenaries each day threatens the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of young States and in the long term is liable, because of its ill effects, to create a climate prejudicial to international peace and security.

12. If such a dangerous and tragic situation has hitherto prevailed in Africa, and if the forces of colonial reconquest have not been disarmed, it is because they still succeed in recruiting throughout the world hired killers greedy for spectacular action and sometimes for power. The events at Cotonou eloquently demonstrated the monstrous nature of the invasion, the objective of which was to re-enslave the people of Benin.

13. As a result of the aggression against Benin, the Security Council, we are sure, will be able, together with the international community, to undertake effective action against mercenaries, whose activity in Africa and elsewhere constitutes a genuine threat to international peace and security.

14. A moment ago I said that what was now happening in Africa was of concern for more than one reason. Many of the statements we have heard in this Council, particularly those of African delegations, unfortunately faithfully reflect the conflicts which are undermining the African continent. We are among those who continue to believe that the internal problems of Africa, however urgent and serious they may be, should in no way be allowed to go beyond the African framework. Effective institutions already exist to find for each problem of our continent a solution that would preserve friendship and the higher interests of the African peoples.

15. Although this meeting of the Security Council has been called—as it had to be in view of the origins of the aggression—certain aspects of the question before the Council should be dealt with exclusively among Africans. A consensus to that effect was, incidentally, arrived at by the African Group at the United Nations. It is regrettable that, after so much effort, discordant notes should have been sounded, calling into question the spirit of unity and solidarity demonstrated by the African Group.

16. In this respect we regret that, in spite of the information contained in the report of the Security Council Mission, Benin deemed fit to communicate to the Council a report that has had the effect of checking the momentum of solidarity we had been patiently building with regard to the aggression at Cotonou. The grave charges made by the Benin Government against certain African heads of State and the particularly virulent character of those accusations constitute a distressing precedent the consequences of which will affect relations among African States for a long time to come.

17. However that may be, we do not understand why our brothers in Benin chose to adopt this attitude, which, in every respect, is prejudicial to the cause we defend, damaging to the relations of brotherhood which have so long united the people of Benin with its neighbours, and fatal to the sacred unity of the African continent. Indeed, neither the report of the Security Council Mission, nor the

documents identified by the Mission, still less the statements of a mercenary, appear to be sufficient to constitute irrefutable proof of the charges against the incriminated African States.

18. Certain members of the Mission at least had the candour to recognize this. As proof, I need cite only the following statement made by our brother Mansur Kikhia after the visit by the Mission to Cotonou:

“Our terms of reference and the time available to us did not enable us to verify the authenticity of the documents.”

He said also:

“Our mandate was not to determine responsibility or to make recommendations, but to examine the facts. It was a fact-finding mission.”

Those statements are clear and sufficient; they spare me the necessity of making a detailed analysis of the report of the Mission.

19. The representative of one African delegation said yesterday here that the statements of the mercenary Bâ Alpha Oumarou were valid because they had been made in complete freedom. If such a procedure is to be adopted by the Council and if any statement made by any so-called mercenary is to be considered as a piece of basic evidence in a case, then we have to say here and now that a gloomy future faces international relations. Mercenaries are nothing more or less than stateless agents attracted by greed; their essential role is to destroy the countries in which they operate, from the point of view both of internal equilibrium and of relations between those countries and the neighbouring States. The simplistic accusations made by the mercenary Bâ Alpha against certain African States are instructive in that respect.

20. It would appear as if, for some people, the events in Benin were a long-awaited opportunity, which made it possible for them to conjure up old demons. The disconcerting rapidity with which Gabon, Senegal, the Ivory Coast, Togo and Morocco have been placed in the dock is sufficient proof that some people are doing everything in their power to discredit others by means of the events in Benin. We regret that such attempts should have succeeded to such a point as to give the debates in the Security Council the acrimonious nature we have witnessed in recent days. We do not believe, for our part—and the facts furnish eloquent proof of this—that the countries I have just mentioned could have organized, financed or even facilitated, closely or remotely, an active aggression against the people of Benin. The ties of brotherhood and blood that unite the people of Benin and the peoples of those countries do not permit of such a hostile attitude, an attitude with such serious consequences for Benin. We continue to think that the confessions of the mercenary Bâ Alpha are part of a huge plan whose purpose is to worsen relations between Benin and its neighbours and to pit African States against other African States.

21. Africa should therefore reflect on the events in Benin in order to overcome its weaknesses. The health of the peoples of Africa depends on their unity and solidarity.

22. If we have too often accused imperialism, we should recognize, for the good of our continent, that there is another form of intervention in the internal affairs of Africa which is as dangerous and as fraught with consequences as the threat posed to Africa by imperialism. We too often forget that, while we have driven out the hyena by the front door, we have unfortunately allowed the tiger to slip in by the back door.

23. The various political somersaults that we have been witnessing in southern Africa and the tragic situation now prevailing in the Republic of Zaire are eloquent testimony to the new threat hanging over Africa. We fear that tomorrow the defence of the higher interests of Africa may give way to the benefits of belonging to a given bloc.

24. Despite the particularly alarming situation in Africa, we remain optimistic. As was said so well by Comrade Moktar Ould Daddah, President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania:

“What is happening in various parts of Africa should incline us towards deep pessimism, but we continue to have confidence in man’s better nature.”

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

26. Mr. GOMEZ ANZARDO (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank you, Mr. President, and all the members of the Council for allowing my delegation to participate in this important debate on the wanton, indescribable aggression perpetrated against the fraternal people of the People’s Republic of Benin on 16 January last in the capital of Benin, Cotonou.

27. As we take a place at the Council table, we are filled with joy at seeing the representative of a fraternal Latin American country, Venezuela—which gave America and mankind Simón Bolívar, the Liberator—occupying the Chair of the Council for this month.

28. In 1889, in the magazine *La Edad de Oro*, dedicated to children and youth in America and the rest of the world, José Martí, the great man of the Cuban revolution during the war of independence against Spanish colonialism, the intellectual author and guide of the second revolutionary process that gave our people its total and complete sovereignty and liberation from imperialism and reaction under the leadership of my President, Comrade Fidel Castro, wrote the following for future generations, in reference to the example of Bolívar:

“While there are many men without dignity, there are others who have within them the dignity of many men. They are the ones who fight with tremendous force against those who have robbed the peoples of their freedom, who have robbed men of their dignity. Those

men are sacred: Bolívar of Venezuela; San Martín of Río de la Plata; Hidalgo of Mexico.

"He liberated Venezuela and New Granada. He liberated Ecuador. He liberated Peru. He founded a new nation: Bolivia. He won great battles with barefoot and half naked soldiers. The generals fought at his side with supernatural courage. They were an army of young men. No one has ever fought more or better for freedom in the world. Bolívar waged a great struggle for the right of man to self-government, but even more for America's right to freedom. He died poor, but left a family of nations. It is said that a traveller reached Caracas one day at dusk and, without even shaking the dust off his clothes, without finding out where he could eat or sleep, he asked where the statue of Bolívar was. And it is said that the traveller, alone, with only the tall, sweet-smelling trees to keep him company, stood and cried before the statue, which seemed to be moving, like a father who has just seen his son. That was only natural, because all Americans should love Bolívar as they would love their father. They should love Bolívar and all those who fought as he did to make America the continent of Americans. All of them, from the most famous hero to the common foot-soldier, the unknown hero."

29. Our countries, Cuba and Venezuela, have indissoluble links with the fraternal countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, to which we are bound by geography, history and the struggle against the common enemy. We share yearnings for progress and social change in the struggle for economic development and greater culture. We are bound by ties of international solidarity with the countries of the third world, against any form of exploitation and discrimination on the part of peoples and countries.

30. Mr. President, my delegation appreciates the noble gesture of solidarity by your President, Carlos Andrés Pérez, and his Government and people in connexion with the brutal act of terrorism perpetrated against a civilian aircraft, in flight, with 73 persons on board, including 57 Cubans, who were the victims of mercenaries and imperialism. The perpetrators are now being tried by the Venezuelan authorities under their judicial processes.

31. We wanted to make those general references to a few of our great heroes in America because their ideals and principles are still valid in the struggle being waged today by mankind, and their causes are appropriately reflected in the Charter of the United Nations. Also, this provides us with an opportunity to tell you, Mr. President, a distinguished son of the land of Bolívar, of our conviction that, with your experience, reputation and talents, your record as a fighter and your well-known ideals, the work of the Council under your presidency during the month of April will be successfully completed.

32. My delegation supports the complaint put forward by the representative of the People's Republic of Benin, Comrade Boya, on behalf of the people and the Revolutionary Military Government of Benin, headed by President Kérékou, about the act of aggression of which his country was a victim on 16 January, an act committed by mercenaries who, supported by international imperialism

and reaction, attacked the capital, Cotonou, violating the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Benin and causing deaths and considerable material damage.

33. The People's Republic of Benin is bounded in the north by Niger, in the north-west by Upper Volta, in the west by Togo, in the south by the Gulf of Guinea and in the east by Nigeria. It has 3 million inhabitants; there are 46 ethnic groups in the country, the main ones being the Fons, Yorubas, Ajas, Baribas, Sombas and Peulhs; the official language is French, but a number of dialects are spoken. Benin is fundamentally a rural country; about 85 per cent of the people live in the countryside. Palm oil is the most important product in the economy, although some effort is being made by the Government of President Kérékou to promote industrial activity. Transnational oil companies, such as Shell, British Petroleum, Texaco, Mobil, Agip, Depp and others, have been nationalized. The country covers an area of 112,622 square kilometres. The capital is Cotonou.

34. On 26 October 1972, the army, under the leadership of Mr. Kérékou, put an end to the shameful situation of exploitation, poverty and discrimination suffered by the former colony of the Kingdom of Dahomey, whose republican status was declared in 1958, and which became independent of France on 1 August 1960. I pass over the long struggle that was waged against the colonial system.

35. Under the leadership of the National Council of the Revolution Benin adopted a new course. The Council was made up of representatives of the army, union leaders and youth and women's organizations. In a short time the internal and external policies of the country were completely transformed. The Government, presided over by the young official Kérékou, broke off ties with the reactionary régimes, including those of Rhodesia and South Africa, and decided to promote co-operation with progressive Governments of the area—Guinea, Algeria and others—and to expand relations with the socialist countries.

36. After nearly a century of colonial domination and 11 years of a republican régime under the influence of foreigners, the present People's Republic of Benin found ways and means of recovering its dignity. The course of socialist development which was chosen for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the country has not been immune to acts of aggression and danger from colonialists and others who oppose the nation's best interests.

37. On 30 November 1974, before the people gathered in Yabro Square, at Abomey—an ancient site evocative of a magnificent culture and resistance to foreign domination—President Kérékou proclaimed the building of a new society based on the principles of scientific socialism. On that occasion, the second anniversary of the triumph of the movement which brought President Kérékou to the leadership of the country, he denounced infiltration of the National Council of the Revolution by reactionary elements whose mission was to curb the country's political development. He also announced the need to change the Council into a revolutionary political party. The next year, in a campaign designed to recover the nation's resources, to nationalize the former monopolies and to make certain

administrative reforms in accordance with the new objectives, the Party of the People's Revolution of Benin was created; its objective was to promote an understanding of its ideology and to mobilize the masses so that they might fulfil their historic destiny.

38. I have given a brief review of the politico-social background of the People's Republic of Benin, because, together with the historic victories of the heroic peoples of Viet-Nam, Cambodia and Laos in their just wars for national and social liberation, the achievement of independence by the fighting peoples of Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, Mozambique and Angola, and the irrevocable existence of socialism in Cuba—the first socialist country in America—it confirms that the main characteristic of our time is the revolutionary movement from capitalism to socialism, in which the general crisis of capitalism and imperialism is being exacerbated, the colonial system is collapsing and neo-colonialism is doomed to perish.

39. In the face of this irreversible historical movement, the desperate reaction of international imperialism and reactionary forces takes the form of violation of the peace and sovereignty of peoples, as it did in Benin, and of undermining the provisions of international law and of the conventions and the Charter of the United Nations, so as to put a brake on the revolution in Africa which is sweeping through its jungles and forests seeking the redemption of that continent that has suffered slavery, discrimination and exploitation, and so as to bring Africa once more under the yoke of colonialism and to transform it once more into a source of raw materials and wealth.

40. My delegation has considered very carefully the report of the Security Council Special Mission, established under resolution 404 (1977), which went to the Republic of Benin and carried out an exhaustive investigation into the events which took place in the capital of Cotonou, on 16 January last. We shall not go into the voluminous and well-documented report in detail because other representatives have already done so, but we should like to say that the statement made, the evidence provided and proof submitted are in harmony with the conclusions of the Special Mission. They provide valuable information in helping to define the aggression, to identify those directly responsible and to describe the strategy of international imperialism and reaction and their use of mercenaries to commit acts of aggression against those who are fighting for a better life by freeing themselves from colonialism, neo-colonialism, exploitation, dependence, discrimination and underdevelopment.

41. My delegation wishes to praise and congratulate the members of the Special Mission for the work they have done: its Chairman, Ambassador Illueca, from the fraternal people of Panama, Ambassador Mansur Kikhia from Libya and Mr. Ramesh Mulye of India. We feel that they have produced an honest, valid and valuable report of great usefulness which will help the Council in adopting a wise and just resolution.

42. The head of my delegation, Comrade Ambassador Alarcón, in his statement to the Council on 31 March last during the debate on sanctions against South Africa, said:

“The continued provocations against Angola, Mozambique, Zambia and other African countries, the resumption of unbridled repression by the racist régimes against peoples whom they subrogate and the recruitment and deployment of mercenaries by the agencies of imperialism are a threat to the whole of independent Africa, a threat which must be countered by energetic and effective action.” [1999th meeting, para. 25.]

43. In the light of the facts which have been analysed during the debate and the documents made available to the Council, my delegation would like to emphasize that the aggression committed against the People's Republic of Benin, as well as similar acts of aggression committed earlier against other African peoples which, after their struggle for liberation and sovereignty, had made fundamental social, political and economic changes, in furtherance of the interests of their respective peoples and to combat foreign exploitation, clearly show the complicity of the reactionary régimes which, as part of a strategy for carrying out an imperialist offensive in that part of Africa, are committing acts of aggression of various kinds against brother countries struggling for independence.

44. The case of Benin is the latest link of that strategy of international imperialism, and the repeated tactic of the use of mercenaries is an alarming matter which obliges the international community, and the organs of the United Nations in particular, to take appropriate action against the ugly weapon of mercenary activity, which is conspiring against the peace, sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and flagrantly violating the principles of the Charter.

45. Because of the continuous acts of aggression by mercenary commandos against the peoples which have thrown off the bonds of imperialism and colonialism, many countries now feel that the time has come to reveal the scope and the importance on the world scene, of aggression by mercenaries and to eradicate it once and for all by means of an international convention which should shortly be prepared to combat the use of mercenaries.

46. Neither cunning nor hypocrisy, neither the way in which mercenaries are used nor the campaign of the imperialist press to mask its misdeeds can hide the hand of imperialist and reactionary aggression in the case before us.

47. The people of the People's Republic of Benin and all the peoples of Africa and the world which have liberated themselves and taken the path of sovereignty and well-being for their masses have and will always have the wide and firm support of the socialist and non-aligned countries and the international progressive movement.

48. My delegation congratulates the people of Benin, the Party of the People's Revolution, the National Council of the Revolution and the Revolutionary Military Government headed by President Kérékou because, in the face of aggression by imperialist and reactionary mercenaries, they fought valiantly and routed the enemy, thus contributing to the defence of the reign of justice, peace and the sovereignty of peoples.

49. In view of the abundant proof provided by the report of the Special Mission and the facts contained in the report

of the Government of the People's Republic of Benin, and in view of the undoubted aim of the armed aggression carried out by mercenaries guided and armed outside the territory of Benin with the obvious participation of international imperialism and reactionary forces to overthrow a legally constituted Government, I wish, Mr. President, on behalf of my delegation, to call upon the Security Council, over which you are presiding, to adopt, without any further delay, an appropriate resolution condemning all those responsible for armed aggression, in order once and for all to put an end to punitive incursions by mercenaries against the peoples of Africa and of the world which have chosen to build their own future. Also, appropriate measures must be adopted in order that compensation may be paid consonant with the material damages caused, as requested by the Government and the people of Benin.

50. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the representative of Cuba for his references to the Liberator Simón Bolívar, the ideologist and precursor of the struggle of our peoples, and José Martí, Hidalgo and San Martín. I thank him also for what he said about President Pérez and the cordial relations between Cuba and Venezuela, and, of course, for the kind words he addressed to me personally.

51. Mr. HASHMI (India): Mr. President, first of all we should like to extend our warmest felicitations to you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of April. We are confident that, in carrying out your tasks, you will display the wisdom, far-sightedness and dignity which all of us have come to associate with your person and which, indeed, you have been displaying. I need hardly add that this high honour conferred on you, the representative of Venezuela, a country with which we have the friendliest relations, gives us added joy.

52. We should also like to express our appreciation for the manner in which Ambassador Young of the United States presided over our deliberations in the month of March. In the short time he has been here, he has already given irrefutable proof of his courage, competence and clarity of vision. We wish him all success in his term as Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations.

53. My country had the privilege of being selected as a member of the fact-finding Mission which the Security Council sent to the People's Republic of Benin in pursuance of its resolution 404 (1977). We should like to place on record our appreciation for the leadership and sagacity of the Chairman of the Special Mission, Ambassador Illueca of Panama, and the spirit of team work displayed by him and Ambassador Kikhia of Libya. We are happy to have had that opportunity of making our modest contribution in the furtherance of a cause which is vitally important for a number of small developing countries. I should also like to take this opportunity to thank all those who were good enough to say generous words about my colleague, Mr. Ramesh Mulye, a member of the Mission.

54. In so far as the report of the Special Mission is concerned, the representatives of Panama and Libya have, in their respective statements [*2000th and 2002nd meet-*

ings], dealt ably and in depth with its important aspects. We should merely like, at this point, to reiterate what the Chairman of the Mission said while introducing the report, namely, that the conclusions contained in paragraphs 141-145 of the report represent unanimous agreement on the part of the members of the Mission. We believe that in establishing the facts concerning the events that occurred at Cotonou on 16 January, the Mission carried out its task objectively and in a businesslike manner. Its findings are now before us and it is for the Council, the highest organ of the United Nations, to address itself to the points arising out of the Mission's report and to arrive at an appropriate decision.

55. We share with the representative of France [*2001st meeting*] the expectation and the hope that the Council will examine the report in a calm and objective manner, for, if it were to adopt any other method in doing so, it would merely serve to distract us from our common goal. We are happy to note that, so far, all the participants in the debate have been unanimous in condemning the events of 16 January and in avoiding acrimony and polemics, occasional bursts of passionate defence of respective points of view notwithstanding.

56. As we have noted, the report raises a number of important issues. One of them concerns the personnel constituting the attacking force which landed at Cotonou on 16 January. We are heartened to note the assurance of the representative of France that an investigation, in accordance with the internal laws of France, is already in progress concerning the points arising out of the documentation mentioned in the report. We were equally gratified to note from the statement of the representative of Senegal [*ibid.*] that his Government had also undertaken to investigate the case of Bâ Alpha Oumarou, the prisoner captured by the Benin forces from among the fleeing attacking force on 16 January. Other States in a position to throw any light on any of the events or personnel mentioned in the report would do well to supply the Council with such information as would help us fully to unravel the mystery of that unfortunate event. Cries of outrage and injured innocence might prove tempting but they are no substitute for a responsible and constructive approach dictated by objective considerations.

57. In our opinion, any decision the Council arrives at should have the following elements.

58. First, it should unequivocally condemn the act of aggression to which the People's Republic of Benin was subjected on 16 January.

59. Secondly, it should reaffirm the Council's abhorrence of mercenaries who attack small, defenceless countries which want to be allowed to pursue their development in conditions of peace and harmony. In the past, the Council has adopted resolutions condemning the use of mercenaries. However, that has deterred neither their use nor their activities in conflicts, particularly in Africa. Perhaps the time has now come for us to contemplate prohibiting, under our individual domestic laws, the recruitment and use of mercenaries, as well as assistance to them in any form. We are convinced that only concerted action on the part of

the comity of nations can be of any value and effect if we are sincerely to try and curb that menace.

60. Thirdly, Benin has suffered extensive damage as a result of that unprovoked armed aggression which so blatantly violated its sovereignty and territorial integrity on 16 January. While all of us sympathize with it for the losses it has suffered in terms of material damage and personnel, both civilian and military, we believe that it is incumbent on the world community to give more concrete shape to that sympathy. In document S/12318/Add.1 of 5 April, the Government of Benin has given a rough idea of the extent of the damage which it suffered as a consequence of the events of 16 January at Cotonou. It would only be fair for all Member States of the Organization to contribute generously to the mitigation of Benin's suffering. That would, in our opinion, be an ideal way of articulating our moral indignation and sympathy in concrete terms.

61. We believe that a decision along these lines would be a wise one and would add to the stature of the Council. Indeed, the Council cannot be expected to do anything less; what is being sought is the very minimum. We hope the Council will act in a manner befitting its role and responsibility.

62. Mr. AKHUND (Pakistan): Sir, it gives me great pleasure to felicitate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of April. We have no doubt that, under your wise and able guidance, the Council will deal effectively with the complex and difficult items on its agenda. Pakistan and Venezuela, both countries of the third world and sharing a common approach and similar views, have co-operated with each other in many different forums, and you can be assured of our full co-operation here and our support in the discharge of your responsibilities.

63. I take this opportunity also to place on record our warm appreciation to Ambassador Andrew Young, who so ably conducted the Council's deliberations last month and gave a striking demonstration of the qualities of energy and candour, a reputation for which had preceded him in his appointment as his country's Permanent Representative to the United Nations.

64. The Council is now engaged in considering the report of the Special Mission it sent to Benin last February in pursuance of resolution 404 (1977), to investigate the complaint made by that country. My delegation would like to place on record its deep appreciation to the members of the Special Mission—Ambassador Illueca of Panama, Ambassador Kikhia of Libya and Mr. Mulye of India—for the meticulous care with which they discharged the tasks assigned to them under the able chairmanship of Ambassador Illueca. The Mission was entrusted with a difficult assignment and its report fully justifies the confidence placed in it by the Council.

65. We note that the Special Mission visited the sites of the events which took place on 16 January 1977, heard the testimony of a number of witnesses, including that of the one prisoner who was taken, and examined and recorded carefully all available evidence.

66. While pointing out in its report 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” [S/12294, para. 145],

the Mission was able to arrive at certain significant conclusions with the help of the available evidence. First, “the People's Republic of Benin was . . . subjected to an armed attack” [ibid., para. 141] the primary objective of which seems to have been “the overthrow of the present Government of Benin” [ibid.]. Secondly,

“Inasmuch as the territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty of the State of Benin was violated by [the] invading force . . . , the State of Benin was subjected to aggression.” [Ibid., para. 142.]

Thirdly,

“a majority of the attacking force, not nationals of Benin, were participating in this action for pecuniary motives and were, therefore, mercenaries” [ibid., para. 143].

Fourthly, that similar operations “could be conducted elsewhere against small defenceless countries for similar purposes” [ibid., para. 144].

67. The conclusions of the Special Mission require careful examination and appropriate action by the Council. As I said when the Council was discussing this question in February, small and medium-sized countries, especially those of the third world, “must rely for their security on the maintenance of orderly relations among States and on respect for international law” [1987th meeting, para. 47].

68. The United Nations in general, and the Security Council in particular, has to perform its primary task, stipulated in Article 1 of the Charter, which is:

“To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace. . . .”

69. The Special Mission has concluded in its report that, by virtue of the attack on Cotonou on 16 January, “the State of Benin was subjected to aggression”. We have thus before us a case of aggression against a Member State, which must be strongly condemned by the Security Council. Further, as “a majority of the attacking force, not nationals of Benin,” were mercenaries, the Council is once again called upon to deal with this persisting evil. It is the view of the delegation of Pakistan that the Council, while reaffirming its resolution 239 (1967), should call upon all States to ensure that their territories and resources, both human and material, are not used for the recruitment, support or sustenance of mercenaries, who appear to find a fertile field for their lawless activities, especially in Africa. We support the suggestions put during this debate by a number of colleagues, that international action against

mercenaries should be initiated and institutionalized on a permanent basis. It is time, we feel to formulate a convention on this subject and to seek its universal application.

70. Benin has also suffered considerable loss of life and material damage as a direct result of the attack of 16 January. There is, therefore, urgent need to enable Benin to make good the material damage and to provide compensation for the regrettable loss of life. It is the view of the delegation of Pakistan that the international community as a whole should come to the succour of Benin and help to repair the damage caused to its economy and its people.

71. I should like to conclude by reiterating the friendship and sympathy which my country has always felt for the young and striving nations of Africa. We share the problems of economic and social development that they face and we understand their desire to be left alone to pursue those goals in the light of their particular circumstances and following the social system that they consider best suited to their conditions. We should consider it a matter for dismay if differences over these questions caused disunity and dissension among them. The unity of Africa is essential in the difficult struggle for political emancipation and racial equality, of which southern Africa is the battleground. It is also a most important factor for the peace and security of the world. It is the hope of my delegation that the events that are the subject of our present debate will not weaken the fabric of African unity, but, on the contrary, provide occasion for renewed efforts to strengthen it.

72. Mr. BOYA (Benin) (*interpretation from French*): Mr. President, my delegation would like to express to you its satisfaction at the way in which you have been conducting this debate.

73. The direction in which certain delegations have been trying to lead our discussion reveals the ridiculous strategy that has been so actively worked out by imperialism and its lackeys to camouflage the truth and cover up their abominable crime against the peace-loving people of Benin. We denounce these delaying tactics, which do no credit to their authors. But my delegation would also like to express its pleasure at the positive support of the Council in its effort to determine the truth and all the whys and wherefores of that aggression. From the statements that we have heard so far, it has become clear that the Council did something particularly useful by dispatching a special mission of inquiry to Benin to verify the facts as I presented them on 7 February before this very Council [1986th meeting]. Thanks to the evidence and to the testimony examined, it is now established that the People's Republic of Benin was the victim of an act of armed aggression committed by a horde of mercenaries, that its sovereignty and territorial integrity were violated and that what occurred was a flagrant instance of intervention in the internal affairs of Benin.

74. All the representatives that we have so far heard have recognized and vigorously condemned that act of aggression, and there is now no longer any doubt that it occurred. This unanimity is encouraging to the people of Benin, to its

democratic and popular revolution and to all peoples that love peace and justice throughout the world.

75. Imperialism and its servile lackeys have just sustained a stinging defeat in the eyes of the world. But they do not want to accept that defeat. That is why they are now striving vainly to demonstrate, through hollow and empty arguments devoid of any logic, that the military operation of colonial reconquest of Sunday, 16 January 1977 was either the work of the Holy Ghost or a staged operation sometimes described as ridiculous, sometimes as more infantile than ridiculous.

76. Imperialism and its lackeys have also tried to divert the Council's attention by noisily and hysterically engaging in facile polemics and by digressing to subjects that have nothing to do with the item on our agenda. Why have they resorted to these tactics? What is behind this obvious strategy? Now that it has been established that there was an act of aggression against Benin, where mercenaries were only the instruments, we must also establish that there were actual aggressors.

77. My delegation has listened most attentively to the statements of certain delegations. We have paid particular attention to that of France [2001st meeting] and, especially, to those of Togo [2002nd meeting] and of Gabon [2000th meeting]. My delegation believes it to be its national and sacred duty to reply calmly to certain parts of those statements.

78. My delegation believes it entirely natural that people should defend themselves when they are accused, but we categorically reject the hysterical polemics that we heard—as sterile as they were childish—the perilous acrobatics and the verbal juggling, an exercise of hollow rhetoric that has made no positive contribution to this debate on a question so important that repercussions of all kinds are liable to be felt by all, because no one is really safe from the use of mercenaries by the forces of evil against the independence of small, defenceless States.

79. Before proceeding further, my delegation would like to remind everybody that my country came to the Council not as a defendant but most definitely as a plaintiff, absolutely convinced of the validity of its case. So, if we made charges against anyone here, it was not without proper thought or consideration, or without taking the necessary time or considering the numerous inquiries undertaken by many commissions and missions which came to Cotonou, the scene of the aggression. This procedure is in conformity with the revolutionary axiom to the effect that "Whoever has not made an inquiry has no right to speak". So we are not making gratuitous assertions; our assertions are well founded and can be objectively verified or checked.

80. Having made that point, my delegation would like to exercise its right of reply, in a general way, on a certain number of points that were made in common by a number of delegations whose countries were implicated in one way or another in the aggression of 16 January 1977 against the People's Republic of Benin.

81. People have made much use of, and I would say abused, such expressions as "scenario", "forged documents", "the single black so-called mercenary who is, moreover, Guinean" and upon whom pressure was supposedly exerted; mention has been made of "altered evidence of foreign residents and Beninese nationals", because "the said witnesses", it has been alleged, "were also subject to similar pressure not to depart from the official line"—a statement which presupposes that those gentlemen are very well informed about the aggression against Benin but refuse to give their information to the Council. It has also been said that this was just an operation undertaken by certain hotheads thirsty for adventure or that it was just a spree on the part of a group of marauders. Mention has been made of pseudo-mercenaries, strange documents, imbroglío and multifaceted mysteries. All this has been said in an attempt to prove that this was an operation that mere individuals initiated for their own personal reasons and carried out on their own account without anyone else being behind them. Whom are they trying to deceive? Who would have benefited from the crime of these so-called adventurers if the operation had succeeded? Obviously, imperialism and its lackeys, caught up in their own contradictions, are at their wits' end to know how to hide their crime against the people of Benin, a people which has already exposed them.

82. This clumsy and odious strategy of camouflage undertaken by those responsible and by their accomplices cannot succeed. The intentions behind it constitute a grave insult to the people of Benin, which has serious reasons for making accusations against all those who have vainly attempted to distract the Council from the question before it.

83. Indeed, neither the argument that the operation was undertaken by isolated individual adventure-seekers nor the fabrications that the sponsors of the aggression and their accomplices have been trying to make people believe stand up to any reasonable logical analysis. By what exercise of intellectual acrobatics can it be proved that the people of Benin recruited white and black adventurers from Paris and from African capitals to commit aggression against it? Did the Beninese people hatch a plot against itself? Why? Did the Beninese people cause damage of such wide scope against itself simply for the malignant pleasure of being able to attack countries with which it has always maintained very good and mutually advantageous relations? Did the people of Benin invent the prisoner, the mercenary of Guinean origin called Bâ Alpha Oumarou? In the eyes of our impenitent detractors the people of Benin supposedly organized our whole plot, an armed conflict, to kill in cold blood its bravest sons and then to hold national funerals in their memory. That is really the height of cynicism! The people of Benin supposedly hatched this plot to harm its own economy, to paralyse its administration. That is really the height of folly. If Bâ Alpha Oumarou was invented, what prevented us, according to that same logic of our detractors, from inventing 10 or 20 more? Permit me to say to our detractors who are so short of arguments that, if Bâ Alpha Oumarou was a fiction thought up by the people of Benin, the various missions and commissions to which he has been presented would have been able to uncover that hoax. Such a hoax is perhaps being played elsewhere; but in

our country, Benin, our people are deeply attached to the truth.

84. Now, with regard to the documents whose authenticity has been questioned in such a light way, I should like to quote a passage from my statement of 6 April which unequivocally replies to any questions about the authenticity of those documents:

"Now that the actual facts of the aggression have been 100 per cent established—the material damage, the loss of life on both sides, the arms and munitions abandoned by the mercenaries, the mercenary taken prisoner, and the abundant evidence from so many sources—, one would have to be of congenital bad faith to believe that the people of Benin had recourse to falsehood in order to find where to lay the blame.

"One would have to be naive or really ill-intentioned to believe that the People's Republic of Benin had forged the national identity card of Lieutenant-Colonel Gilbert Bourgeaud or that of Sy Sawané. One would have to be intellectually dishonest to believe that the People's Republic of Benin had invented the bank account numbers, the airline tickets, the names and addresses of those hired killers who are the mercenaries that invaded Cotonou on Sunday, 16 January 1977.

"What the reactionaries and colonialists are afraid of and what is causing disarray in the camp of imperialism and its African lackeys is the fact that Benin is in possession of such valuable documents which completely unmask the whole diabolical imperialist plan for the colonial reconquest of Africa. It is vain, after the scrupulous inquiries conducted by various commissions and missions, to try to sow doubt in the minds of the people of the world by questioning the authenticity of the documents." [*Ibid.*, para. 59-61.]

85. However, one may wonder why recourse has been had to such ignominious means in the effort to escape blame. Why these insincere attitudes, this denial of the truth, this Pontius-Pilate-like behaviour? It is a case of a thief who is being chased and who cries "thief". The representatives of the countries that have been charged would do well to resort to more subtle manoeuvres.

86. The facts exist and are obvious, and it is difficult to eliminate them by a wave of a magic wand. It is difficult to disregard them. They are so obvious that they cannot but be observed, so revealing are they of a grave political scandal in which certain States are disgracefully implicated.

87. The public denials with which some delegations that have come here have contented themselves are nothing but gratuitous assertions devoid of any meaning. They have been accompanied by threats or gestures of intimidation, but these have been made in a very clumsy and grotesque way. They make no positive contribution to this debate, to which, we repeat, Benin attaches vital importance.

88. My delegation considers it necessary, at this stage, to make some precise points for the benefit of certain countries, to avoid any misunderstanding and to permit the

Council to continue its discussions in an atmosphere of calm, objectivity and responsibility, the natural characteristics of so important an organ.

89. My delegation has noted the statement of the representative of France [2001st meeting] with regard to Gilbert Bourgeaud, the French mercenary who led the operation of aggression of 16 January 1977 against Benin. If the French mercenary Bourgeaud, about whom we have evidence of all kinds identifying him, is not in the French Army, he could perhaps be in the police force or in some other French organization. What is true, undoubtedly, is that the representative of France does not deny the existence of that mercenary as the individual who led the armed attack of 16 January 1977 against Cotonou. So who is Gilbert Bourgeaud? This question, which Benin asks very clearly, retains all its validity in the light of what has been said so far.

90. Similarly, the French representative referred to investigations already undertaken by France concerning the mercenaries who left France to attack Cotonou and he expressed regret that the Government of Benin had not so far contacted the French Government through bilateral channels in order to make complaints on this score. I sincerely regret to have to say to the French representative that, in view of the nature of the relations between our two countries, it is difficult to understand why the French authorities should wait to be informed before co-operating with Benin in solving the mystery surrounding this serious affair that has plunged a peace-loving and friendly country into mourning. And I must say here that all friendly countries throughout the world manifested their support for Benin immediately after the aggression of 16 January 1977.

91. The valuable information that each one has should be included in the dossier in order to make it possible to establish with objectivity the whole truth about this scandalous affair, which is nothing more or less than an operation of colonial reconquest. The Government of Benin wished to put its cards on the table because it has nothing to hide, and it was in order to enable the international community to consider this matter along with us that we brought it to the Security Council. Without acrimony, we want to say to the French delegation that the special relations between us give the people of Benin hope that the French authorities will co-operate honestly in the Council to shed the greatest possible light on this act of aggression.

92. As I said earlier, I should like particularly to go back to certain parts of the statements of the representatives of Gabon and Togo.

93. The representative of Gabon, with unexpected haste, made his diplomatic debut in the Council on 6 April [2000th meeting]. Our brother from Gabon could have taken his time and read my statement before launching such a hysterical attack on my country. I want to make it clear that the arguments put forward by the representative of Gabon, who spoke of a stage-managed operation, a manufactured plot, an allegedly manipulated mercenary, Beninese and foreign witnesses being subjected to pressure, and so on, are worn-out clichés of the pro-imperialist and

the pseudo-African press of Paris. Why reproduce servilely, like a schoolchild, the silly stories of *Jeune Afrique* and *Le Monde*? Let us be dignified at least.

94. Ever since 16 January 1977, we have been hearing the same old song, the same old refrain, to camouflage the truth and to spread lies of all kinds about our country. My country has since then rebutted all the arguments one by one, and today, caught in their own trap, the reactionaries of all kinds and the press which serves them have been obliged to acknowledge the facts contained in the many reports now available, which can be consulted by anyone. All these confused and infantile assertions can but make us smile. They show how much haste was involved and how little time was taken to examine documents and to weigh arguments properly in the effort to shift the blame.

95. Finally, the representative of Gabon referred also to some multifaceted assistance and fraternal co-operation, which he said was disinterested. I should like to say here for his benefit, that our country is open to all forms of mutually advantageous co-operation, but that Benin relies above all on its own resources for its development. However, the co-operation and assistance referred to by the representative of Gabon are not unilateral, and the Government of Gabon, which he represents, is in a position to know that. It is rather dangerous to proclaim all this from the rooftops. For us, co-operation must be sincere and without ulterior motives, and Benin has never begged alms from any country. Benin wants co-operation, whether bilateral or regional, to be devoid of all political pressure and it wants the advantages to be mutual.

96. I should now like to ask the representative of Gabon to tell the Council whether Recruitment Contract No. 02327/MFP/R.A. of 3 August 1976 of the French mercenary Gilbert Bourgeaud is a forgery. What were the personal papers of Bourgeaud doing at Cotonou Airport on 16 January 1977? Perhaps he came to Cotonou as a tourist on that day and just lost his papers. In that case, why did he not make the proper declaration—as he did, in fact, at Abidjan, when he lost his driving licence, which had been issued in Morocco? Similarly, would the representative of Gabon dare say that account No. 35-025.020 T of the Bank of Gabon and Luxembourg, opened at Libreville in the name of the French mercenary Bourgeaud, is also a forgery? I should like particularly to draw to the attention of the representative of Gabon the fact that all the papers of the French mercenary Bourgeaud are to be found reproduced in annex VI to the report under discussion.

97. I should now like to say a few words to the representative of Togo. As he concluded his statement yesterday [2002nd meeting], the representative of Togo was obviously satisfied by the tremendous feat he had just performed. He was obviously pleased, because, after an introduction containing contradictory and gratuitous assertions, he said, as the Council will remember, that he had received explicit instructions from his Government to speak in a debate “shrouded in mystery”. I say he was obviously happy, after having devoted several pages of his statement to the geographical and historical factors uniting Togo and Benin, to have also devoted long passages to the exceptional

qualities of the Togolese President, Eyadéma, who travels a lot, according to him.

98. Permit me to say that that statement was completely beside the point. But why did the representative of Togo so deliberately avoid the problem before us? Why was this strange brother of ours so delighted to insult the people of Benin so much, instead of helping it to clear up the mystery surrounding the events of 16 January 1977, which he himself condemned? Why does this strange brother of ours give us the impression of someone who has not even read the valuable document the Special Mission has made available to him? Would it be natural for anyone who had closely followed the operations of 16 January 1977 at Cotonou to cast malicious doubt on the bravery of our forces by asking how the mercenaries were able to leave in an aircraft? Why does this strange brother of ours try to blacken the reputation of the people of Benin and its revolution by insinuating that we begged 6 billion from the international community? Why all this indignation against the people of Benin and its revolution? Simply because our so-called brother completely failed in his attempt to lull the vigilance of our people.

99. My delegation is very tempted to reply point by point to the insults of the representative of Togo, but we shall not do so because we quickly discovered in him a subversive *agent provocateur*, and we do not want to tax the patience of the members of the Council or to waste their time, and also because a matter of such great political importance should not be allowed to be drowned in a flood of insults.

100. But we should like to say this. If the representative of Togo received categorical instructions to describe our people so outrageously, in such disgraceful terms, in the Council, we lay on the leaders of Togo full responsibility for the effects of their thoughtless verbal onslaught. Those who play into the hands of imperialism and the odious policy of political colonial reconquest in Africa, will alone bear, in the face of history, the inevitable responsibility for their treachery. Insults are an act of weakness and a confession of guilt. The People's Republic of Benin reserves its right to reply later, at an appropriate point, to all these insults.

101. Furthermore, the representative of Togo stated:

"We regret that those who are responsible for the decadence"—he said "decadence"—"of Benin thought it a good idea to use this ramshackle operation at Cotonou in order to publicize the lowness of their methods and the flagrant incompetence of their régime." [*Ibid.*, para. 88.]

102. As it is well understood that the representative of Togo is speaking on behalf of the Togolese authorities, Benin is pleased to see for the first time, behind the thick veil of hypocrisy, what those authorities really think of the revolutionary process that has been going on in our country since 26 October 1972. We understand now the significance of many unfriendly and unbrotherly acts and the hatred fanned and maintained by the ruling circles in Togo against the people's anti-imperialist régime at Cotonou. Our suspicions and our accusations are very well founded. The Togolese ruling circles are fiercely opposed to the continua-

tion of our revolutionary experiment; thus, they have become the designated accomplices of our principal enemy.

103. Benin knows now, after the aggression of 16 January 1977, where it stands. But, we repeat, the facts are there, and it is on these facts that we want the discussions to be focused—and on nothing else. No one needs to resort—to rid himself of guilt—to such a clumsy, and even comical, manoeuvre.

104. Having made that point to the representatives of Gabon and Togo, we should like to make some other points.

105. My delegation respects all the heads of African States and vigorously protests against the insults to the Guinean leader. No African representative—whether an ambassador or a permanent representative to the United Nations—has the right to describe any African head of State in such opprobrious terms. Those who indulge in this facile exercise detract from African unity. It is they who cultivate hatred and who, consequently, are ready to lend a strong helping hand to subversion. A solid anti-imperialist front has been established between Guinea and Benin. All the efforts of the enemies of Africa to deal a low blow to that front are doomed to failure. Let that be clearly understood.

106. My delegation would venture to hope that, after this point I have made concerning the malicious digressions introduced into this discussion to sow confusion, everyone will know where things really stand. My delegation desires a frank discussion on the question of the aggression against my country. All the States in favour of peace and security must work for the truth, and nothing but the truth.

107. Before concluding, my delegation would like to make it clear that it has scrupulously respected the consensus reached by the African Group, which duly received a mandate from the OAU Council of Ministers at its twenty-eighth ordinary session, to act in solidarity with Benin during the debate of the case by the Security Council.

108. In my statement of 6 April, I did not name any of the African countries that were accomplices in the aggression of Sunday, 16 January 1977. Why, then, have we made our national report available to the Council? It is obvious that the circulation of this report as an official document of the Council is only normal, and that it is in keeping with the promise made by the Benin authorities to the members of the Special Mission when they were at Cotonou. In other words, this document, had it been available earlier, could have been annexed to the report under discussion and published at the same time. The highest authorities in Benin approved this document only on 12 March 1977. It was read and reread over the air by the Voice of the Revolution. It was published in full in our national organ, *Ehuzu*. Hence, it has become a public document, circulated throughout Africa. So what kind of crime of *lèse-majesté* have we committed, and what do people want us to believe?

109. Contrary to what some would like members of the Council to believe, Benin is very devoted to African unity;

the militant, active, combatant, anti-imperialist unity; the unity that closes the door to all threats, domination and aggression against Africa's independence.

110. Benin is absolutely convinced of the facts and the documents under discussion. We challenge any delegation to prove the contrary. Gratuitous statements and denials prove nothing and convince no one.

111. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): The next speaker is the representative of the Lao People's Democratic Republic. I invite him to take a place at the Council table and to make his statement.

112. Mr. SOURINHO (Lao People's Democratic Republic) (*interpretation from French*): The Security Council is at present considering the report of the Security Council Special Mission established under resolution 404 (1977), following the complaint by the People's Republic of Benin concerning the armed attack to which it had been subjected on 16 January 1977.

113. But before I take up that subject, I should like to express to you, Mr. President, and to all the members of the Security Council, my delegation's gratitude for being allowed to take part in this debate. I should also like to offer you my delegation's warmest congratulations on your accession to the presidency of the Council for the month of April. You are a distinguished representative of your great country, Venezuela, whose deep devotion to the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as to universal peace and security, need no further proof. My delegation is convinced, in view of your country's excellent tradition and your wide experience, that you will assume with the greatest success the heavy responsibilities that will be yours until 30 April.

114. My delegation would like also to associate itself—not as a mere formality, but sincerely—with the tributes that preceding speakers have paid to your predecessor, Ambassador Young of the United States, for the very skilful way in which he led the Council's work in March.

115. The conclusions of the report of the Security Council Special Mission have, in my delegation's opinion, completely removed the veil from the deadly event in Benin on 16 January last. This report allows for no confusion whatever about the nature of that event. My delegation wishes to thank all the members of the Special Mission, and particularly its Chairman, Ambassador Illueca of Panama, for their very conscientious and objective work.

116. As the report clearly states in paragraphs 141 and 142, this was an act of armed aggression carried out from outside the country and designed to overthrow the Government at Cotonou. That cynical and senseless attack was of unprecedented brazenness, in view of the fact that the People's Republic of Benin is at present one of the non-permanent members of the Security Council. It was moreover an act of inadmissible and intolerable interference in the internal affairs of Benin that grossly flouted the principles and norms of international law and the objectives of the Charter.

117. My delegation would like to join the other members of the international community in condemning with the utmost vigour that scandalous act of aggression which endangers international peace and harmony. In the circumstances, my country, which for many years was a victim of the most barbaric form of aggression at the hands of American imperialism, cannot help but feel solidarity with the people of Benin and we unreservedly support their action in the Security Council or any other international body to promote their just cause.

118. Our active solidarity and unreserved support go also to the other peoples of Africa which, through Benin, have once again been subjected to the worst form of neo-colonialism and imperialism.

119. Never can enough stress be placed on the fact that, if the world is to live in peace and harmony, it is imperative that every people and every nation should have the right to choose in complete freedom and in full tranquillity the course of development and the economic and social régime which best suits it, free from any outside interference. It goes without saying that international peace and stability will always be jeopardized so long as that principle is not applied everywhere throughout the entire world and especially so long as certain imperialist, neo-colonialist and reactionary circles continue to interfere in the affairs of others. In this regard, the event that occurred in Benin has once again brought to light the hypocrisy and cunning of international imperialism, which loudly claims to support the principles of sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of States but cynically continues to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries.

120. We should like to repeat once again that the armed attack of which Benin is the most recent victim is not an accident or isolated fact; it is one phase in a long series of sordid plots which international neo-colonialism and imperialism have laid to commit acts of aggression against the peoples of developing countries, in particular those which make political options that do not suit them. It is only too true that, for their security and stability, all the peoples of the third world—of Africa, Latin America and Asia—and the rest of the international community must seriously stand together to fight against all acts of aggression by international imperialism, especially those perpetrated by mercenaries in the employ of others.

121. Furthermore, the report of the Special Mission, which clearly states in paragraph 144 that "a similar operation could be conducted elsewhere against small defenceless countries for similar purposes", only further underlines the serious threat which hangs over the other developing countries without exception. It is a matter of urgency that the international community and, in particular, the Security Council should not only verbally condemn this disgraceful system of the use of mercenaries but also take action to remove this scourge.

122. Similarly, it is also desirable, with regard to the question now before the Council, that all countries, and in particular those mentioned in the report of the Special Mission, give their active and forthright assistance to the

Security Council in its efforts to shed light on this sorry affair.

123. Since its popular revolution of 1972 and notwithstanding the constraints on its national development, Benin has never slackened its efforts in the international arena to work for the triumph of the principles and purposes of the Charter and to build a better world for one and all. Its presence in the Security Council as a non-permanent member makes it unnecessary to comment any further.

124. Furthermore, in its bilateral relations with other countries, Benin has recently affirmed through its representative in the Council, Ambassador Boya, that it has been pursuing a policy of peace, good-neighbourliness and sincere co-operation with complete respect for the principle of independence and sovereignty. Thus, the people of Benin must be considered a valiant and peaceful people.

125. The dastardly attack committed against it on 16 January 1977 has had a very grave impact on the country's economy. In this connexion, we firmly support Benin's request that the international community give the people of Benin, which unjustly fell victim to aggression, just compensation for the damage incurred.

126. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): I should like to inform members of the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Equatorial Guinea, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the question on the agenda. Consequently I propose, in accordance with past 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.

127. In view of the limited number of places available at the Council table, I invite the aforementioned representative 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 speak.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Ecuá Miko (Equatorial Guinea) took the place reserved for him at the side of the Council chamber.

128. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): The next speaker is the representative of Egypt, whom I invite to take a place at the Council table and to make his statement.

129. Mr. ABDEL MEGUID (Egypt): Mr. President, I should like first of all to associate myself with preceding speakers in congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month and in expressing happiness at seeing you presiding over the Council's deliberations on an issue that is vital for Africa and the third world. I should also like to express my delegation's gratitude to you and to the members of the Council for having given us the opportunity to participate in the debate on this important matter.

130. The Security Council meets today to study an extremely serious situation which has dangerous consequences for the maintenance of international peace and security because it involves an attempt against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a State Member of the Organization.

131. The fact that the armed forces and the courageous people of Benin were able to repulse the invaders does not alter the fact that a peaceful, small African State has been subjected to an attack in violation of the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, and that the threat of aggression against small independent States exists and will continue to exist unless a conscious effort is undertaken by the international community.

132. The primary objective of the attack was to undermine the achievements of the people of Benin. The invading force came from outside the territory of Benin and, therefore, there could be no doubt that the State of Benin was subjected to aggression in clear violation of its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. It is known that the attacking force was made up of mercenaries and that a similar operation could be conducted elsewhere against small defenceless countries for similar purposes.

133. What happened in Benin is not an isolated act. It is unfortunately not the first time that the Council has been seized of a case of clear violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a small African State, nor is it indeed the first time that Africa has been subjected to the abhorrent practice of the use of mercenaries. Mercenaries have operated in most parts of Africa—in Zaire, in Guinea, in Nigeria, in Angola and elsewhere. The use of mercenaries has grown to be a most disturbing phenomenon and quite a dangerous aspect of international life, which deserves the full attention and collective action of the international community as a whole.

134. The heads of State or Government of Africa and the non-aligned countries have for many years been attempting to draw attention to the danger of the use of mercenaries and appealing to the international community to take the necessary action to check that danger. They have called upon all States to cease tolerating the recruitment of mercenaries and not to allow their nationals to serve in their ranks.

135. The Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity held in Mauritius in July 1976 and the Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries held at Colombo in August the same year once again drew the attention of the international community to the importance and the urgency of creating the necessary machinery to dismantle the existing mercenary organizations and to punish the crime of employing mercenaries in the future. The Afro-Arab Summit Conference held at Cairo from 7 to 9 March 1977 in turn reiterated the position of Africa and the Arab world on that matter. The Political Declaration adopted by the Conference stated:

"The . . . Conference strongly condemns the practice of mercenaries and undertakes to eliminate this phenom-

enon in Africa and the Arab world." [S/12298, annex, para. 11.]

136. The General Assembly and the Security Council have already condemned the use of mercenaries, and we should like to join other delegations in expressing the hope that the present debate of the Council on the complaint by Benin will not result in just another condemnation of the use of mercenaries but will lead to the initiation of concrete steps towards the enactment of international legislation providing for the establishment of an international convention against the hiring of such international criminals.

137. While we have attempted to underline the serious implications of the mercenary phenomenon, we cannot but

also stress a more important aspect, namely, the imperative necessity for collective action to ensure that the territorial integrity and political independence of States are respected.

138. We wish to seize this opportunity to make a solemn appeal to the international community, in the name of African unity and solidarity, to act in harmony and unison so that the lessons of the recent events at Cotonou will be learned and the tragedy not repeated. We fully realize that this is a great challenge, but we are thoroughly convinced that it is our duty to meet it in order to overcome it.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.