

United Nations
GENERAL
ASSEMBLY

SIXTEENTH SESSION

Official Records

FOURTH COMMITTEE, 1309th
MEETING

Tuesday, 12 June 1962,
at 3.25 p.m.



NEW YORK

CONTENTS

	Page
<i>Agenda item 49:</i>	
<i>Question of the future of Ruanda-Urundi: report of the United Nations Commission for Ruanda-Urundi (continued)</i>	915

Chairman: Miss Angie BROOKS (Liberia).

AGENDA ITEM 49

Question of the future of Ruanda-Urundi: report of the United Nations Commission for Ruanda-Urundi (A/5126 and Add.1; A/C.4/516 and Add.1-4) (continued)

1. Mr. SPAAK (Belgium) considered that, in view of urgent and highly important nature of the decisions to be taken, it was imperative that minor details should be disregarded, controversial issues avoided and all efforts concentrated on the essential task. The Fourth Committee had before it for consideration the report of the United Nations Commission for Ruanda-Urundi (A/5126 and Add.1), to which he was glad to pay a tribute. That document reported one failure and two successes. On the one hand, the Commission had not succeeded in convincing the Governments of Rwanda and of Burundi of the advantages that they would derive from attaining independence in political unity, and their refusal to co-operate on that head had been a source of real concern to the Commission. On the other hand, the Agreement on Economic Union between the Governments of Rwanda and Burundi, signed at Addis Ababa on 19 April 1962 (A/5126/Add.1 annex XVI) represented an improvement over the Protocols signed by the same representatives at Brussels on 21 December 1961 (A/C.4/517 and Corr.1), for it was more complete and some of the procedures outlined in it would prove more effective provided they were correctly applied. Finally, the Commission had pursued the task, initiated at the earlier resumed session, of reconciling the two political parties in Rwanda; its efforts had been crowned by the entry of two opposition Ministers into the Rwanda Government and it could reasonably be hoped that the outcome of that new policy would be favourable.

2. With regard to the present situation in Ruanda-Urundi, he recalled that in February and March 1962 he had hoped to be able to lay the foundation for the economic union of the two countries and to conclude with them a provisional agreement relating to the maintenance of law and order, as also a technical assistance treaty on broad and generous lines which would promote a harmonious economic development. Subsequent events and certain unforeseen incidents had prevented him from carrying out that policy. In his opinion, the main reason for that state of affairs was the question of the withdrawal of Belgian troops, which was still in abeyance. The Belgian Government fully recognized that foreign troops must not be sta-

tioned on the territory of a sovereign State, save in exceptional circumstances, and that the responsibility for the maintenance of law and order was one of the essential attributes of a sovereign State. Until such time as Rwanda and Burundi achieved independence, that essential responsibility must be borne by the Administering Authority. The 1,200 Belgian officers and men stationed in the Territory represented the indispensable minimum required in order to cope with events, more particularly in Rwanda. He had always favoured the progressive withdrawal of those forces, a not inconsiderable part of which—300 men—had, moreover, already been repatriated. He had already intimated, too, that the Belgian Government intended to redouble its efforts to assist in recruiting, equipping and arming the national forces of Rwanda and Burundi. For that purpose it had already decided to spend the sum of 15 million Belgian francs in one country and 16 million in the other. Consequently, it was not without regret that he had learned from the report of the Commission for Ruanda-Urundi that the Governments of both countries had agreed with the Commission on a settlement of the problem of the withdrawal of Belgian forces, without giving the Belgian Government an opportunity of taking part in the discussion and stating its point of view. If such was indeed the declared will of the Governments of Rwanda and Burundi and of the United Nations, the Belgian Government would keep its promise and would evacuate its forces as soon as the two countries became independent.

3. The present situation in Rwanda, the state of the national armies in both countries and the economic aspects of the problem were, however, such that it might be questioned whether the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the Belgian troops was a reasonable measure. In fact, eighteen incidents, all of which had claimed victims and some of which had been extremely serious, had occurred in Rwanda between 15 February and 23 May 1962. Most of the cases had related to attacks coming from outside, some of which had provoked very violent reactions on the part of the Bahutu. It had been said that the large number of incidents proved that the presence of Belgian troops was useless. It might be asked, however, whether the incidents would not have been more numerous and more serious, and their suppression more violent, had the Belgian troops not been there. He himself was convinced that only the presence of Belgian forces—though there had probably not been enough of them—had prevented the situation from deteriorating still further. The political situation in Rwanda was in fact highly unsettled and it could not be said that law and order prevailed in the country. There was reason to hope, however, that the inclusion of two members of the opposition in the Rwanda Government would help to ease the situation. If national unity had really been achieved, then it was reasonable to hope that things would calm down,

but it would require singular optimism to believe that the results of the new policy would make themselves felt immediately and that the maintenance of law and order would henceforth prove an easy matter.

4. Turning to the question of the state of the national forces of Rwanda and Burundi, he said that the report of the United Nations Commission for Ruanda-Urundi (A/5126) was quite definite on that point: in paragraphs 187 and 188, the Commission declared that in Rwanda "the National Guard, with its present numbers and basic organization, is reported to be ready to assume limited responsibility for maintaining internal security" but would hardly be in a position to guard the frontiers before 1965. The situation was the same in Burundi, where the National Army was not yet adequately organized to fulfil its task. There were admittedly plans for organization but the cost of putting them into effect would be very heavy: in Rwanda, 450 million Belgian francs would be required to raise the strength of the National Guard to 3,000 men; in Burundi, in addition to an ordinary budget of 86 million Belgian francs, extraordinary credits of 120 million Belgian francs would have to be found and there were at present no resources from which they could be met. Before a final decision was taken, it was essential to reflect carefully on the statement in the Commission's report (para. 336) "that the national forces of Rwanda and Burundi are at present in an embryonic state and are not now in a position to replace the Belgian troops".

5. The economic situation of the two countries was dealt with in one of the best sections of the report. He thought it might be useful to recall that, in the opinion of the Commission, "Rwanda and Burundi will need considerable technical aid, at least for the next few years, in order to meet the essential needs of their administrative services" (para. 278). He wished, however, to add some details to the information supplied by the Commission. In 1962 the Belgian Government had had lengthy and difficult talks with the Governments of Rwanda and Burundi regarding the establishment of the budget. Even after it had succeeded in imposing a policy of drastic economy on them, the total budget deficit had amounted to 300 million Belgian francs, which sum the Belgian Government had undertaken to cover until the date of independence. In addition to thus sharing in the ordinary budget of both countries, it had spent 727 million francs in dealing with various problems and in order to ensure the essential financial rehabilitation it was willing to disburse a sum of about 1,000 million Belgian francs, equivalent to \$20 million for ordinary expenditure alone, up to the end of the 1962 financial year. Moreover, how was it possible to contemplate the development of the two countries if large sums were not devoted to road construction, investment and other items? The Commission was perfectly correct in stating that Rwanda and Burundi would need substantial technical assistance.

6. It had never been his wish to link technical assistance by Belgium to the presence of Belgian troops in the Territory. He wished to repeat, however, what he had said at the 1307th meeting: the efforts required to enable Ruanda-Urundi to live and to develop would be inconceivable if law and order were not maintained throughout both countries. No international organization would agree to undertake the vast expenditure required without first making certain that peace would be preserved and that the requisite effort would be possible and effective.

7. The difficulties in Rwanda, the military problems and the economic problems, were all part of the same problem. Now that the time had come to usher that Territory to independence, the United Nations had the obligation and the responsibility of ensuring that that independence proved successful and did not lead to chaos. For that reason, the over-simple policy of maintaining that since the two local Governments had asked that the Belgian troops should be withdrawn, that was enough and that must be the policy recommended by the United Nations, was in his view quite inadequate.

8. He was in agreement with the Commission on one essential point: namely, that although all the desirable prerequisites could not be met, for reasons which the Commission had explained very well in its report, the decision should be taken to grant independence to the Territory on 1 July.

9. An effort must be made, however, to safeguard the future. In that connexion, he reaffirmed the statement he had made at the 1307th meeting and declared that the future could not be assured unless the two Governments collaborated fully with Belgium and the United Nations. Belgium could not, by its own efforts alone, solve the problems arising from the independence of the Territory. He objected to being called a colonialist or neo-colonialist; he was perfectly aware of the need for establishing new relationships between Europe and Africa in the present-day world. The material burden of the independence of the two countries would, however, be too heavy to be borne by Belgium alone. However much it tried, Belgium could not satisfy the new needs of the two independent countries. For that reason, Belgium was requesting United Nations assistance and collaboration.

10. To be more specific, he considered that the United Nations should send a mission to the two countries immediately upon their independence. It need not be a commission responsible to the Fourth Committee or the General Assembly, but it would represent assistance given by the Secretary-General in a form to be determined.

11. Such assistance was necessary if the Addis Ababa economic plan was to be carried out. The regrettable fact that it had been impossible to achieve the political unity of the two countries must be neutralized by the formation of as strict and comprehensive an economic union as possible. All those who had studied the problem knew that without such an economic union the situation, which was already serious, would be much worse. Not only was the Addis Ababa Agreement not being applied, but the preparatory work was being delayed—and not by Belgium. During the last few weeks the Administering Authority had made many proposals for the application of the Brussels Protocols and Addis Ababa Agreement, but the work would not be completed by 1 July. It was absolutely essential that such an economic policy should be followed after independence. Yet he was not certain that after independence Belgium would have the necessary authority to ensure that the Addis Ababa Agreement was carried out. It was therefore essential that a United Nations economic mission should assist Belgium in seeing that the Addis Ababa provisions were put into effect.

12. Lastly—and he was coming to the most difficult point—he would like the United Nations to assist Belgium in finding a solution to the problem of the maintenance of order.

13. To begin with, he wondered whether it was necessary for identical decisions on the matter to be taken for Rwanda and Burundi. He had thought for some time that the immediate future of the two countries might be different, and he could have proposed a number of measures based on that view. He had refrained from doing so, however, lest hidden motives might be attributed to Belgium. It was quite clear, however, from the report of the Commission that the situation in the matter of law and order and the state of the troops was very different in Rwanda from that in Burundi. It might therefore be possible to settle the problem differently in the two countries. He would like to know the Committee's opinion on that point.

14. If, however, the same solution was to be sought for both countries, he would declare once again that it was clear that from the moment of independence the responsibility for the maintenance of order would rest directly with the two Governments concerned. There was no question of that responsibility being ascribed to Belgium. It might not be unwise, however, to suggest that for a short period, three months for example, Belgian troops should remain in the Territory at the disposal of the two Governments. The two countries, whose national armies were not yet ready, would thus have the means of ensuring order if they so wished. That arrangement would, of course, be purely temporary and he was not unaware of the disadvantages and difficulties it presented. It would, however, mean three months of grace, during which the task of the two local Governments, of Belgium and of the United Nations would be simplified, for they could consider jointly what technical military measures should be taken to accelerate the recruitment and training of the national armies. A report on the measures decided upon would then be made to the General Assembly at its seventeenth session.

15. In conclusion, he recalled that the situation was a delicate one for every State Member of the United Nations: it was a question of terminating the trusteeship over the Territory, in other words, of terminating the Agreement concluded between Belgium and the United Nations, so that the responsibility of the United Nations in the matter was as great as that of Belgium. He held that independence, with all its consequences, must be granted on 1 July, but, as he was anxious that Belgium should pass its last colonial test with honour, he also considered that some aid, which would not infringe the sovereignty of the two countries, should be provided by joint agreement between the two countries, Belgium and the United Nations.

16. Mr. RAHNEMA (Togo), Rapporteur of the United Nations Commission for Ruanda-Urundi, said that he was anxious to dispel any misunderstanding there might be on the point raised by the Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs.

17. In chapter IV.F of its report, more particularly in paragraphs 209 to 212, the Commission had de-

scribed the approach it had taken to the question of the withdrawal of Belgian troops from the Territory. In accordance with its terms of reference, it had merely asked the two Governments of the Territory to state their positions, and it had made the same request of the Belgian Government. Contrary to what the Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs had implied, it had never entered into discussions with the Governments concerned. There had therefore been no question of the Commission bringing Belgium into such discussions, since all the Commission had done had been to record decisions.

18. Mr. BINDZI (Cameroun) said that he had been impressed by the great interest which the Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs had shown in collaborating with the Governments of the new States which were soon to be independent and in securing a guarantee of such co-operation from the United Nations. The Belgian representative had spoken of agreements which might be concluded between the two Governments and Belgium, with the participation of the United Nations. When independence was proclaimed, the trusteeship would be terminated and the responsibility of the United Nations for the domestic affairs of the two countries would also be ended. In those circumstances, to link the agreements concluded by the two independent Governments to a United Nations guarantee might surely be a violation of the sovereignty of those States and, in a sense, a restoration of trusteeship. In any event, there was the risk of establishing a precedent. Since a tripartite arrangement of that kind aroused some misgivings on the part of his delegation, he would like to have more information on the subject; in particular, he would like to know whether the United Nations would be expected to approve the agreements after they had been concluded or whether it would itself be a party to the agreements.

19. Mr. SPAAK (Belgium) said that the representative of Cameroun might be quite correct from the strictly legal point of view. He himself, however, was wary of abstract, theoretical and unnecessary legalism and considered that the United Nations should find the most favourable solution for each problem before it, without worrying unduly about the danger of creating precedents.

20. One way of meeting the difficulty in the present case would be to persuade all the parties concerned to work out the desired joint policy before 1 July, i.e., before independence. The question was whether the United Nations, which, if it had legal scruples, should be concerned about the Agreement it had concluded with Belgium, would or would not agree to help Belgium in the matter. It seemed to him that the procedure he had proposed was fair, since it in no way affected the sovereignty of the two countries which were to become independent.

The meeting rose at 4.35 p.m.