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NOTE

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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.

NINETEEN HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-SIXTH MEETING

Held in New York on Monday, 7 February 1977, at 5 p.m.

President: Mr. James MURRAY (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland).

Present: The representatives of the following States: Benin, Canada, China, France, Germany, Federal Republic of, India, Libyan Arab Republic, 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/1986)

1. Adoption of the agenda
2. Complaint by Benin:
 - (a) Letter dated 26 January 1977 from the Chargé d'affaires *a.i.* of the Permanent Mission of Benin to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/12278)
 - (b) Letter dated 4 February 1977 from the Chargé d'affaires *a.i.* of the Permanent Mission of Guinea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/12281)

The meeting was called to order at 5 p.m.

Expression of thanks to the retiring President

1. The PRESIDENT: Before turning to the business before us this afternoon, I should like to pay a tribute, on behalf of the Council, to my predecessor, Ambassador Troyanovsky of the Soviet Union, who was President of the Security Council during the month of January. I cannot say that I have had an opportunity to examine all the precedents, but I suspect there have been few previous occasions on which a permanent representative to the United Nations has been called upon to take on the onerous duties of President of the Council during his first month of office. I should like, therefore, on behalf of my delegation, to express to Ambassador Troyanovsky our profound admiration for the exemplary way in which he carried out the business of the Council during his presidency and, since he is not present himself, I ask the representative of the Soviet Union, Ambassador Kharlamov, to be kind enough to convey this to him. I shall do my best in the coming days to emulate his example.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Complaint by Benin:

- (a) Letter dated 26 January 1977 from the Chargé d'affaires *a.i.* of the Permanent Mission of Benin to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/12278)
- (b) Letter dated 4 February 1977 from the Chargé d'affaires *a.i.* of the Permanent Mission of Guinea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/12281)

2. The PRESIDENT: I should like to inform members of the Council that letters have been received from the representatives of Algeria, Guinea, Madagascar, Rwanda and Togo, in which they request to be invited to participate, without the right to vote, in the discussion of the question on the Council's agenda. Accordingly, I propose, in accordance with the usual practice and with the consent of the Council, to invite these representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, under the provisions of Article 31 of the Charter and rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Council. There being no objection, I invite the representatives of Algeria, Guinea, Madagascar, Rwanda and Togo to take the places reserved for them at the side of the Council chamber, on the understanding that they will be invited to take places at the Council table whenever they wish to address the Council.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. A. Rahal (Algeria), Mr. A. Doukouré (Guinea), Mr. B. Rabetafika (Madagascar), Mr. I. Karuhije (Rwanda) and Mr. A. A. Kodjovi (Togo) took the places reserved for them at the side of the Council chamber.

3. Mr. BOYA (Benin) (*interpretation from French*): Mr. President, my delegation welcomes your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month of February 1977. Your country, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, has played and, indeed, is still playing an important role in the history of the total liberation of the peoples of the world from foreign imperialist and colonialist domination. Your country has important responsibilities vis-à-vis Africa in the heroic and worthy struggle being waged by the true sons of Zimbabwe for their liberation from the barbaric and shameful oppression of the rebel clique of Ian Smith. My country has no doubt of your country's immense ability to help the true sons of Zimbabwe to free themselves at long last.

4. For these reasons, Benin is particularly pleased to see you directing the proceedings of this Council, the urgent convening of which my country requested so that it might consider the aggression committed by imperialism and its gang of barbaric mercenaries against the city of Cotonou,

the economic capital of my country, on Sunday, 16 January 1977.

5. My delegation ventures to hope that, thanks to your distinguished qualifications as an enlightened diplomat, the debate beginning today will proceed in the calm, lucid and objective manner which should characterize the Council in its role of maintaining international peace and security in the interests of the freedom and independence of the peoples of our world.

6. Before going on to the subject before us, I should like to discharge two very pleasant duties.

7. First, I wish to express to my colleague from the Soviet Union, Comrade Ambassador Troyanovsky, the full admiration of my delegation for the very responsible manner in which he conducted the work of the Council during the month of January.

8. Secondly, I should like to ask the United States delegation to be kind enough to convey to our brother and friend Ambassador Andrew Young the warmest congratulations of the People's Republic of Benin on his appointment to this important post. His nomination is a symbol, a sign of the times. It is a sign of the significant changes taking place in this great and beautiful country, the United States. President Jimmy Carter said of his inauguration that it marked a new starting-point and a new spirit. My delegation hopes that that desire will each day be manifested in new deeds at a time when the struggle for the liberation of Africa from racist oppression and *apartheid* is reaching a decisive stage. While we wish Ambassador Young every success, we cannot forget his distinguished predecessor, Governor Scranton, whose honesty, frankness, forthrightness and sense of fair play we very much admired in his work in the Council and elsewhere at the United Nations.

9. My delegation sincerely thanks the members of the Council for being kind enough to recognize the gravity of the situation and accept Benin's request for the convening, as a matter of urgency, of a meeting of this important body of the United Nations to consider in a clear and objective atmosphere all the details of the complaint put forward by the People's Republic of Benin.

10. The question before the Council, the act of aggression of imperialism and its mercenaries against the People's Republic of Benin, is nothing less than the obstinate and continued dangerously unjust refusal of the colonialists and neo-colonialist imperialist Powers of our world to allow small countries like mine and peace-loving peoples of the third world such as mine to live and prosper in peace, security, freedom, independence and national sovereignty.

11. These are the facts.

12. On Sunday, 16 January 1977, at 7.03 a.m., a pirate DC-7 aircraft, curiously equipped with turbo jets, landed at the airport at Cotonou, our economic capital. It had on board a gang of mercenaries.

13. As soon as they disembarked, those mercenaries ruthlessly attacked the airport with automatic weapons and

neutralized all our men, who were unexpectedly overcome in the airport area. The mercenaries took up a position and advanced towards the city in columns. In their advance they performed a drag-net operation and then concentrated all their equipment and weapons on the Palace of the Presidency of the Republic, which was obviously one of their principal targets. At the same time, and in a co-ordinated manner, they attacked our military camp with mortars and rockets.

14. The aim of the aggressors was, then, clear: they wished to immobilize the People's Armed Forces and place the city of Cotonou under military occupation as a first stage. It is easy enough to guess their objective during the next stage.

15. As a result of this senseless treacherous attack severe damage was inflicted upon our airport, the television building, the Hall of Congress, the Hotel Croix du Sud, the new Embassy of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Conseil de l'entente buildings, the new Treasury building, the Palace of the Presidency of the Republic, 40 housing units and the building of the Benin Office of Social Security.

16. Our country, the People's Republic of Benin, was the victim of a carefully prepared and executed act of aggression by well trained persons equipped with ultra-modern war *matériel*. The weapons and equipment abandoned by the gang of mercenaries, who were beaten back, were extremely sophisticated. I shall read the list to the Council. It is long, but I shall read it to the end.

17. There were 1,256 9 mm cartridges with regular bullets, PA-PM, Lot No. 23-4-SFM75, of French origin; 405 NATO-type 9 mm cartridges with regular bullets, of Belgian origin; 33,668 NATO-type 7.62 mm cartridges with regular bullets, of Belgian origin; 10,230 NATO-type 7.62 mm cartridges on detachable magno-metal belts (1 tracer and 4 regular bullets) of Belgian origin; 3,000 7.62 mm cartridges on detachable magno-metal belts (1 tracer and 9 regular bullets) with Arabic markings; 1,875 12.7 mm cartridges on detachable magno-metal belts (1 tracer and 4 regular bullets), of Belgian origin; 6 offensive hand grenades, D-37, Lot No. SPA 38-60, of French origin; 5 fuses for offensive explosive hand grenades, Lot No. 42 RYN 60; 7 explosive hand grenades, D-37, Lot No. 4-EB-59, of French origin; 4 explosive hand grenades, D-37, Lot No. 6-TYN-58, of French origin; 1 explosive hand grenade, D-37, Lot No. 4-TNP-60, of French origin; 5 fuses for hand grenades, D-37, Lot No. 5-EB-59, of French origin; 4 fuses for explosive hand grenades, D-37, Lot No. 114 RYN-58, of French origin; 53 40 mm explosive rifle grenades, APAV, Lot No. 2-MPA-77, 4 of which were destroyed, of Belgian origin; 10 offensive-defensive hand grenades, M2, with fuses, M-204 A1, Lot No. I MI-6-71, of American origin; 18 explosive shells, 81 mm, FA-32 5 BT 36, Lot No. 32, of French origin; 20 propellant cartridges for 81 mm shells, Lot No. 44-CF-51, of French origin; 20 fuses, DP 24/31 RYG 18, for 81 mm shells, Lot No. 9 ATS-62, 1 of which was destroyed, of French origin; 64 relays for 81 mm shells, Lot No. 122, CF-51, of French origin; 11 81 mm smoke shells, complete, with fuses, Lot No. 211-71, (fuse, Lot No. 441-76), of British or American origin; 5 explosive 81 mm shells, complete, with fuses, Lot

No. 211-71 (fuse, Lot No. 441-76), of British or American origin; 4 65 mm AC explosive rifle grenades, with Arabic markings, 2 of which were destroyed; 32 66 mm AC explosive rockets, M-72-A-2, Lot No. LS 220-R-8-74, 26 of which were destroyed, of American origin; 12 89 mm AC explosive rockets, BM-66, Lot No. 1-73, 1 of which was destroyed, of Spanish origin. Other objects were found: wine, Moroccan, French and American cigarettes and some dates.

18. On 1 February, the people of Benin, still in mourning, paid a solemn and heartfelt national tribute to all its martyrs who had fallen nobly on the field of honour, killed by the bullets of the gang of criminal mercenaries who, slavishly and blindly obeying their dastardly imperialist masters, in a cowardly and treacherous manner carried out armed aggression against our country, the People's Republic of Benin, against our peacefully militant people and against our people's democratic revolution.

19. Those mercenaries—downright criminals—had a decisive encounter with the first units of our People's Armed Forces, which immediately launched an intense and sustained counter-attack. Thus, after approximately three hours of fierce fighting, the vile hired killers, who had thought to surprise the vigilance of our People's Armed Forces and of our militant people, were halted in their progress and, being repulsed, beat a hasty retreat which quickly turned into a rout. In a helter-skelter stampede characterized by general disorder and an attitude of "every man for himself", those blood-thirsty agents abandoned in the field a considerable quantity of war *matériel*, arms and munitions, to which I have just referred, as well as very important and particularly telling documents. Their pirate aircraft had to take off very rapidly, leaving behind quite a number of mercenaries, who were heavily drugged and out of their minds, as well as the bodies of their accomplices which they could not take with them.

20. This ignoble aggression caused more than material damage; it cost our country, the People's Republic of Benin, the lives of many of our true sons both civilians and soldiers, not to speak of the wounded at present being treated in our hospitals.

21. Here we should ask ourselves a series of questions which the Security Council and the international community will have to help us to answer in order to shed light on all the facts. What group of citizens of Benin could, even by combining their resources, afford the luxury of acquiring an aircraft, such sophisticated weaponry, so much ammunition and so many well-paid mercenaries? In what country and in what market are such sophisticated weapons of war publicly sold to the first buyer? What citizens of Benin, traitors to the sacred cause of our democratic and popular revolution, have airfields at their disposal from which a DC-7 aircraft could take off without any prior formalities?

22. It is up to the Council clearly and objectively to find adequate answers to these questions. As far as the people of Benin, the victims of aggression, are concerned, they have not been taken in and know perfectly well what to make of it. The people of Benin are convinced that no man, no group of traitors to the sacred cause of the people of Benin

has the necessary financial means to organize and perpetrate an infamous aggression on such a large scale.

23. Moreover, members of the Council will agree with me that, even in countries where arms are freely sold, it is not possible to acquire such sophisticated weapons of war without any restriction. The Council will agree also that, even in those countries where air transportation is the least developed, no aircraft, let alone a military aircraft, could operate so easily without the competent authorities of the country concerned knowing about it. That is to say that this kind of operation, if it is not carried on openly, is of necessity supported by accomplices.

24. The statements of the reactionary and imperialist press, which is spreading lies about the events which took place on Sunday, 16 January 1977, are ridiculous and not based on an objective analysis of the facts. This far-reaching campaign to distort the truth and disseminate gross and stupid lies about Benin, a campaign of which *The New York Times* and *Le Monde* are the instruments and the champions, is part of the strategy of which the pro-imperialist circles of the press are past masters, a strategy aimed at sowing confusion and covering up the humiliations, the intolerable pressure and the acts of sabotage and aggression of which the progressive countries of the third world are the intended victims. It is by that adroitly orchestrated press campaign that those who exploit us try to cover up their crimes and set their conscience at rest. They try to pass off an aggression from abroad, organized and carried out by them, as an internal struggle in the People's Republic of Benin. In sum, the masters of international blackmail, the professional poisoners of public opinion and unscrupulous liars have set their propaganda machinery noisily in motion in order to have falsehood accepted as truth, darkness as light, foreign aggression and the crime of mercenaries as internal clashes in the People's Republic of Benin.

25. The repulsive authors of this barbarous act of aggression, those who organized this mass killing, this airborne expedition of war, are primarily the imperialist, colonialist and neo-colonialist Powers and, secondarily, financial circles, international reactionary and conservative circles and the international capitalist bourgeoisie.

26. All these enemies of the progress of the peoples of the third world are highly organized and supported by various secret services and mass media. By resorting to all kinds of blackmail, pressure and mass killings, they aim primarily to prevent the countries of Africa, Latin America and Asia from freely enjoying their sovereignty and their independence and from opting for a socio-political system of their own choice.

27. My country comes before the Council as an accuser and not as the accused. The people of Benin accuses those Powers and those circles and holds them responsible for the savage killings perpetrated by their mercenaries, who were first well trained, then drugged, transformed into mad hunting dogs and hurled at a peaceful city, Cotonou, the economic capital of the People's Republic of Benin.

28. As I said before, in their haste, the mercenaries left behind certain important and telling documents. On the

basis of those documents we can say that the mercenaries, for the most part whites, were recruited and trained by the secret services of powerful financial circles. The sophisticated military equipment was given by those powerful financial circles to the gang of mercenaries who carried out the barbaric act of aggression which took place on Sunday, 16 January 1977. The war plane which transported the gang of mercenaries belonged to those financial circles.

29. On the basis of these overwhelming facts and on the basis of this tangible and irrefutable proof, it is easy enough to conclude that this is a case of foreign aggression directed against our people and its democratic and popular revolution. This is clearly a case of a plan hatched by the colonialists to win back our country. It is obviously a case of an attempt to unseat the revolutionary régime of the People's Republic of Benin. It is a plot against the progressive régimes of the third world. This is borne out by the testimony of accredited diplomatic representatives in our country, the People's Republic of Benin.

30. The French Ambassador at Cotonou stated:

"There can be no doubt in the minds of any of those who witnessed that aggression that it was an act of aggression conducted by a group of experienced mercenaries and was clearly an attack mounted from outside the country."

The Ambassador of Zaire at Cotonou stated:

"As an African, and especially as a citizen of Zaire, I say that for those of us who remember the mercenary activity of the period 1960 to 1967, this is an abominable action. We were invaded several times by mercenaries, whites and blacks, we know what they are capable of, and I can say that in this case Zaire is with Benin."

The Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany at Cotonou stated:

"We are against using force in any form in international relations. I should like to stress that fact in the light of the events which have just taken place here at Cotonou."

The Ambassador of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea at Cotonou stated:

"We saw with our own eyes the mercenaries marching from the airport towards the Presidential Palace of the Republic. That ignominious act of aggression must be condemned by the whole world."

The Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt stated:

"I cannot find words to denounce that ignoble attack . . . Employing mercenaries is a shameful and disgraceful act."

My delegation is making available to each member of the Council an album containing photos which will give members an idea of that act of aggression committed against Benin.

31. But the imperialists, all reactionaries, conservative elements and powerful financial circles underestimated the

strength of our people. That is why they did not expect the devastating response of the People's Armed Forces and of all the people of Benin, mobilized and organized by the Party in the vanguard, the Party of the People's Revolution of Benin.

32. The people of Benin, on the basis of the actual condition of our country, resolutely and in an independent and responsible manner chose the path of scientific socialism for its development. That option is one which was taken by the people of Benin in the exercise of its sacred and inalienable right to self-determination, independence and sovereignty, which the United Nations recognizes as the right of all nations and peoples.

33. Despite the barbaric nature of colonial aggression, the people of Benin will always remember that during the two world wars, from 1914 to 1918 and from 1939 to 1945, when differences among the imperialist Powers had been exacerbated to the point where they endangered world peace and the freedom and independence of the countries and peoples of the world, primarily those of Europe, without any hesitation they—the people of Benin—made great human and material sacrifices to guarantee the territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty of those very Powers that today stubbornly refuse to recognize the right of our country and our hard-working and peaceful people to freedom, dignity, independence and sovereignty—in brief, the right to development on the basis of a socio-economic system of their choice. We shall never forget the immortal martyrs of Benin and of Africa who voluntarily laid down their lives for the freedom of Europe and who are resting in the cemeteries of France, Germany, Italy and other countries.

34. Our immortal martyrs of the two world wars were imbued with the idea that, by making the supreme sacrifice of their lives to safeguard the independence and freedom of Europe, they were affirming the inalienable right of all the peoples of the world and, more particularly, the right of the people of Benin, to independence, freedom, sovereignty and progress.

35. Why then did those bloodthirsty European mercenaries, those international outlaws, who were recruited and armed by imperialism, who have no love or allegiance but to money and mass crime, commit aggression against us on 16 January 1977? What crime had been committed by the people of Benin and its democratic and popular revolution between 26 October 1972 and 16 January 1977?

36. The people of Benin had committed no crime. The people of Benin had committed no aggression against any nation or any State. The people of Benin had offended no one and had been conducting its internal revolution against no other country. The people of Benin is a peace-loving people which does not have an aggressive army that can be used outside its national territory. The people of Benin does not interfere in the internal affairs of other States. The people of Benin, ever since the historic date of 26 October 1972, has endeavoured to establish and develop friendly relations and mutually advantageous co-operation with all the countries of the world without distinction.

37. In Africa, the people of Benin is committed to fraternal co-operation as established by the Organization of African Unity. In the West African area, bearing in mind the interests of other States, the people of Benin has remained in the *Conseil de l'Entente*, the members of which are Benin, the Ivory Coast, Upper Volta, Niger and Togo. Again, in the interests of subregional co-operation, the people of Benin originated the process of reforging the goals and objectives of OCAM [African, Malagasy and Mauritian Common Organization], the present members of which are Senegal, the Central African Empire and the five countries of the *Conseil de l'Entente* I have just mentioned. The people of Benin co-operate with all French-speaking countries in Africa that are part of the same monetary zone, that of the franc. The people of Benin are proud to have been among the promoters of the new Economic Community of West African States. This is a dynamic community without linguistic barriers which brings together 16 countries of the West African region. In spite of the vicissitudes of a still recent colonial past, the people of Benin are devoted to the development and strengthening of their relations with France.

38. At the national level, since 26 October 1972, the people of Benin have made significant progress towards building an independent and prosperous economy. Even the reactionary newspapers acknowledge that fact. The entire people of Benin is now committed to a national production campaign.

39. Benin is a peace-loving and hospitable country that is anxious to achieve development through the hard work of its people. It wishes, first and foremost, to rely on its own strength and on the creative drives of the hard-working masses of its countryside and towns.

40. The people of Benin demands that light be shed on the aggression of which it was the victim on Sunday, 16 January 1977. The people of Benin wishes the Security Council to dispatch a special mission to Cotonou in order to ascertain the facts in a clearer and more objective manner, to determine who was responsible for and who carried out the armed aggression and to help the People's Republic of Benin assess the damage caused. During a second stage, appropriate action should be taken so as to repair material damage and to prevent a recurrence of such barbaric acts of aggression by mercenaries in the pay of foreign domination.

41. In conclusion, I should like to state in no uncertain terms that it must be clear in everyone's mind that our people has chosen scientific socialism as the path of development and Marxism-Leninism as its philosophic guide. That is an irreversible option and the people of Benin will fight to defend it. They will make the supreme sacrifice. They will fight to the death of the last of their patriotic sons. No pressure, no blackmail, no act of aggression from whatever source can make us change our minds.

42. Mr. RAMPHUL (Mauritius): Mr. President, I miss Comrade Troyanovsky in the Chair but I am very happy to see you occupying it in the absence of Mr. Ivor Richard. You may count on my co-operation.

43. The Council is meeting this evening at short notice to consider, at the request of Benin, yet another complaint regarding an attempt to interfere in the domestic affairs of a sovereign and independent State and—what is in this case more serious—an actual act of armed aggression against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a State Member of the Council.

44. I have listened very attentively to the statement of my beloved African brother, the representative of Benin. We are now all aware that an attack by foreign and unidentified mercenaries of different colours took place at Cotonou on the morning of 16 January. Nobody has yet denied the fact that, first, a jet-propelled DC-7, armed to the teeth with sophisticated modern lethal weapons and carrying between 100 and 150 international mercenaries wearing paratrooper uniforms, landed at Cotonou, secondly, that the mercenaries fired on the Presidential palace, military installations, strategic points, including communication centres, and so forth, causing extensive material damage and, thirdly, that no less than six citizens of Benin were killed.

45. We cannot but admire and congratulate the President and Government of Benin and the Beninese army and people who valiantly defended their territory against this unwarranted and unprovoked barbaric act and who effectively repulsed the faceless enemies of peace until they left, dragging their corpses with them.

46. This attack against the sovereignty and integrity of Benin is an attack against the whole of Africa. It is Benin today; it could be Mauritius tomorrow. Indeed, this is not the first time that such an act of aggression has taken place in Africa. It happened in November 1970, when armed bandits, international mercenaries, with the help of the then Portuguese colonial army, invaded the Republic of Guinea. Recently, the territorial integrity of Uganda was violated by Israel. How long and how often are we going to allow such reckless acts to continue?

47. I believe that the Council must act and act quickly and with foresight. It will perhaps be argued by some that the Council cannot act unless the enemy or enemies of Benin in the present circumstances is or are identified. In this connexion, I should like to point out that the President of Benin has already informed the international community including—through the representative of Benin—the Security Council, that the enemies were international mercenaries. I do admit, however, that no proper identification has so far taken place. In fact, we cannot expect Benin to point with precision at those who committed aggression against it. It is for this reason, if for no other, that I believe that the Council should act immediately and come to the help of Benin by assisting it to pin-point responsibility for this barbarous and illegal act committed by the dark faces of evil in such a way as to unmask them. I suggest that one way that the Council can help to maintain peace and security in Benin and in Africa and, indeed, international peace and security, is to dispatch a special fact-finding mission to Benin. After that mission has reported to the Council, we shall be in a better position to give fuller consideration to the complaint, to assign responsibility, to condemn the aggressors who will, I hope, have been identified by the mission, and to take any other necessary action.

48. I believe that we all agree that a *de facto* aggression has taken place at Cotonou. It is now up to us to do our best to identify the aggressors. The aeroplane that landed at Cotonou did not come from or return to outer space. It is for this reason that the African members of the Security Council, namely, Benin, the Libyan Arab Republic and Mauritius, have decided to contribute to the work of this Council by submitting a draft resolution, which I now have the pleasure of introducing orally so as to allow members of the Council plenty of time in which to consider it:

[The speaker read the draft resolution which was subsequently circulated as document S/12282.]

49. This is a most uncontroversial draft, and I believe it represents the least that the Security Council can do at this stage. I hope it will be adopted unanimously. It is based on a previous draft prepared on a similar occasion, namely, when the Republic of Guinea was attacked.

50. I was hoping that it would be possible for members to adopt this draft resolution this evening, but I understand there are several representatives who are listed to speak, and some members may wish to receive instructions from their respective Governments. I understand the situation, and I reserve my right, Mr. President, if you would allow me, to speak again at a later stage.

51. The PRESIDENT: The next speaker is the representative of Rwanda, whom I invite to take a place at the Council table and to make his statement.

52. Mr. KARUHIJE (Rwanda) (*interpretation from French*): Mr. President, before taking up the matter which is before the Council at the present time, I should like to express my gratitude to you and to all members of the Council for having given me an opportunity to express here my solidarity and that of the entire African Group with the fraternal people of Benin.

53. I hope you will also allow me to address to you my sincerest congratulations and best wishes for success in your duties as President of the Council. We are aware that the country which you represent—the United Kingdom—as well as your own personal qualities, are the best possible guarantee of the way in which you will conduct our work. I am particularly pleased to address my good wishes to you, since my country has not forgotten your time in Rwanda as the first Ambassador of the United Kingdom and I must say that your memory is still alive there.

54. I wish also to congratulate your predecessor, the President of the Security Council for the month of January, for the excellent work which he accomplished. During his presidency African problems were before the Council and today, once again, we are dealing with an African issue.

55. The complaint which the Council has before it today from the People's Republic of Benin is fully justified and we endorse it on behalf of the Group of African countries. The People's Republic of Benin was attacked on 16 January last by real armed forces, albeit of unknown origin. The facts are there; they have been described lucidly and in detail by the representative of Benin and there is no need to

revert to them. As we have heard them, those facts are striking, and they shocked us deeply. The territorial integrity and the sovereignty of the People's Republic of Benin have been violated and, what is most serious, this was done by mercenary forces. The use of mercenaries has been strongly condemned by international public opinion, particularly in Africa, and I should like it once again to be vigorously condemned by the entire international community, otherwise the efforts of our Organization will be completely negated.

56. What we are asking of the Council in this particular case is that it use the powers conferred upon it by the Charter to clarify this situation that is so dangerous, not only for the peace and security of the State Member, Benin, which is the victim, but also for those of the entire African continent. The dispatch of a mission of inquiry is essential.

57. It is clear that this attack was intended first and foremost to topple the established institutions in Benin by sowing disorder and panic among the population in the name of a criminal, imperialist ideology. Unfortunately, it is the resultant deaths and incalculable damage that we have to deplore today, and Africa is deeply saddened thereby.

58. Allow me here to share with you a few general thoughts. I should like to recall that the Council has had before it more than one case of aggression or attack against an independent African State. This is becoming very disturbing, because it means that Africa is still the first target of the dark designs of imperialism. Is it because it refuses certain ideological alliances and political allegiances? Is it because Africa is without any protection or military capacity of its own?

59. Today, imperialism is taking on more subtle and sophisticated forms, but it still has the same constant feature: the domination of the weak by the strong, with all the consequent humiliations for the former. The methods have not changed: within a State, imperialism tries to sow rivalries in the form of nationalism and conflicting ideologies. But, fortunately, States are alert to this. Benin has just demonstrated this by its act of heroism, for which it deserves praise, in preserving its aspirations for freedom from servitude. It is to be regretted that small States necessarily become the object of imperialist designs and are easily subjected to political and economic domination. But it is very dangerous to believe that even within a small State those in authority have the truth. Be it an individual or a collective institution, if it tries to impose its own truth on others, it becomes responsible for a fatal division and thereby shows itself to be imperialistic.

60. I have often heard it said, and I have also read this in the press, that Benin is a small country, a poor country, with many problems. That is perhaps true. But that is no reason for it to have imposed upon it institutions or any kind of domination. Its Government possesses a deep-rooted and constant revolutionary spirit and has established for itself a far-reaching goal, and a limitless task, namely, to build a State, to construct a society, to encourage a nation, and this in a spirit of discipline. Anyone who impedes that progress in the guise of liberation is only manifesting imperialist designs.

61. Mr. President, like the other members of the Council, you are aware that everyone is against imperialism. But, since this is often a matter of empty words, imperialism has not disappeared from the face of the earth. Today it is camouflaged by subtle language which makes not for law but rather for the reign of hypocrisy.

62. The Council, which is the protector of the principles of the Organization, must remove all disguises behind which imperialism appears these days, and it must energetically condemn its acts. Indeed the tragedies of the past and those we are now experiencing should prompt us to look far beyond that, for the sake of protecting the very existence of the Organization. Such as we are, we should be fully aware and convinced of our potential unification which will probably be transformed into unity, although today we are still tragically divided. At all events, the Organization offers us the prospect of a peaceful life without slavery, without exploitation and without domination of the weak by the strong.

63. The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Rwanda for the kind words he addressed to me. I was particularly pleased that he should have referred to my stay in his country. I retain the most agreeable memories of the years I spent as the first British Ambassador to his very beautiful country and I hope that he will convey my best wishes to my many friends there.

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

65. Mr. RABETAFIKA (Madagascar) (*interpretation from French*): Mr. President, about 15 years ago it was discreetly suggested to representatives of States not members of the Security Council that they refrain from congratulating the President. I do not know whether that was in any way related to the existence of consecutive interpretation, a provision of the Charter or any article of the provisional rules of procedure. However, it remains true that silence on my part in this connexion might well be construed as reflecting the existence of some uneasiness either in our personal relations or in those between our two countries. I can assure you that that would be absolutely wrong, and I hasten to hope that you will bring to this difficult debate your customary sense of justice and morality to which I should like to pay a warm tribute.

66. To justify our participation in the Council's work—a result of the permission given us by the members of the Council and for which, through you, Mr. President, we should like to thank them—and so that the Council may be able to measure the degree of commitment of my country to the cause of Benin, I should like first to read out a message my President, His Excellency Mr. Didier Ratsiraka, addressed to the President of the Republic of Benin on 17 January:

"The odious aggression perpetrated by international imperialism and its lackeys against the revolution of Benin gives me a further opportunity to call upon progressive and revolutionary countries in Africa and elsewhere to be vigilant and to be united in their action.

"The Malagasy people, its Supreme Council of the Revolution, its Government and I myself thus address both to you and to the valiant people of Benin our warmest congratulations on your brilliant victory you have scored over the mercenaries who invaded your country and we offer you the militant support of the Malagasy revolution."

67. My delegation is gratified to note that, despite certain tergiversations and manoeuvres, arising in part from a literal or restrictive interpretation of custom or procedure, in its collective wisdom the Security Council is able to meet to consider the complaint of the People's Republic of Benin following the aggression to which it fell victim on 16 January last. For us this is a meeting of particular importance because, in holding it, the Council has already decided on two points which have in recent weeks so concerned a part of the press whose impartiality towards the third world is not strikingly obvious.

68. In effect, by acceding to the request in document S/12278, the Council has recognized the admissibility of the complaint of Benin. Secondly, it has affirmed its own competence as described in Article 39 of the Charter. Furthermore, it has established the validity of the complaint, since by submitting it to the Council, Benin was only abiding by the stipulations of the General Assembly resolution on the definition of aggression [3314 (XXIX)].

69. It is not customary for us to take refuge in so many formal and formalistic precautions, but the development of the situation and the comments made by those who wish to interpret it according to a viewpoint distorted by prejudice make it necessary for us here to take up the challenge that has been issued elsewhere.

70. Some doubt has been cast on the good faith of a Member State, as if the gravity of an act can be gauged by the degree of sympathy its victim enjoys in certain circles. Hypotheses have been put forward, each more slanderous than the other, in order to submerge the actual facts under a flood of proofs that are largely imaginary.

71. It has been stated that there could have been no aggression because the aggressor has not been identified, or that it is not a matter of international law—as though we could believe that a crime ceases to be a crime simply because there is no known perpetrator, or because the crime is simply not within the competence of a local court.

72. Some have even had the effrontery to say that since other African countries seem to be implicated—and I stress the word "seem"—it is up to Benin to turn to the Organization of African Unity. I wonder what would be the reaction of some Members of the United Nations which are so wedded to defending the principles enunciated in the Charter if they were asked to take their concerns to their own regional organizations and not to bother the United Nations with them.

73. Those are some of the aberrant and cynical arguments which have been thrust upon us and which, unfortunately, have found some echo within the Organization. It was therefore our bounden duty to insist from the very outset

on a decision being taken by the Security Council regarding the admissibility and the validity of the complaint of Benin, in order to avoid any misunderstanding, to refute in advance any interpretation not based on the facts and to cut short any pseudo-legal quibbles.

74. My delegation will not repeat the facts which have been presented soberly, strictly and with feeling by the representative of the People's Republic of Benin. Some would perhaps have preferred an account as neutral as a police report in order to get an objective view of the situation. But the Security Council is not simply a court of law; it is above all a political body whose main concern is to maintain international peace and security.

75. However, there will be neither international peace nor international security as long as a single Member of this Organization feels that its sovereignty, its independence and its territorial integrity are threatened, either directly or indirectly, and that it cannot fully rely on the guarantees of the Charter and on their automatic nature.

76. There will be neither international peace nor international security as long as any region seeks to submit another region to some sort of *diktat*, organized for the protection of obsolete interests and acquiescing in extravagance and dubious justifications, in contempt of mutual respect and non-intervention.

77. There will be neither international peace nor international security as long as we are not prepared to assume the collective commitment to which we subscribed in the Charter, to repulse aggression in whatever form it appears and wherever it comes from, as well as to come to the aid of the victim of aggression, irrespective of any ideological consideration.

78. There will be neither international peace nor international security as long as the principle of the sovereign equality of States remains a dead letter and as long as international reaction continues to deny the evident fact that every State is entitled to choose its socio-economic system and is free to be unmoved by certain types of retrograde proselytism.

79. There will be neither international peace nor international security as long as some people believe that the interdependence which today's world calls for can be manipulated and used in order to promote the establishment of new relations based on dependence, exploitation and domination.

80. Finally, there will be neither international peace nor international security as long as it is felt that the group of revolutionary countries is the target of a particular ideology and that it therefore has to be saved despite itself by all possible means, including force.

81. What I have just said is not designed to distract the Council from the main topic under consideration: the aggression against Benin. Indeed, my delegation feels that that aggression might not have taken place had we been as zealous in asking for the application of international law as in conforming to international morality.

82. Thus, by way of example, it appears that the recruiting of mercenaries is legal in a number of countries, and, formally speaking, a Government of a country of which these mercenaries are citizens may always officially ignore or overlook the recruiting which is carried out on its territory or even authorize it and promote it, since the law does not say otherwise. This is the culmination of Pharisaism.

83. But we are all aware that, with one or two exceptions, the time is now past when regular mercenary armies could be set up; we are also all aware that these mercenaries are in the pay of international interests and finally, we are all aware that Governments or special government services are identified with these interests to such an extent that it could be said that war is no longer waged directly or through client nations but through the intermediary of mercenaries. Powers tend to acquiesce in this situation, which shows the intolerable degeneration of international morality, particularly since they can shirk their responsibilities, thus, for their own purposes, blocking the international machinery for intervention in the case of aggression.

84. Determining the existence of an act of aggression would be reduced to a routine formality, particularly in the present case where there is already a commission of inquiry made up of Benin, Guinea and Nigeria, were it not coupled with the assignment of individual and collective responsibility, particularly in the light of the Charter. This procedure, which does not set a precedent since it has been frequently applied by United Nations commissions of inquiry, will make it possible for the Council to discharge its functions under the best possible conditions.

85. At this stage my delegation does not intend to elaborate on the question of responsibility. It will have an opportunity to do so subsequently. However, we wish to reject out of hand the idea that there can be no international responsibility simply because mercenaries are the principal guilty parties in the aggression against Benin. In the same way, we must say that the violation of the territorial integrity of Benin, the intervention of foreign interests in the domestic policies of that country and the refusal to recognize its sovereign choice in socio-economic and ideological matters prompt us to place the main responsibility at the door of international imperialism.

86. This position is by no means something which derives from a mere formality. It is justified by an objective analysis of what is happening and of the plotting that has been going on for several years from the Congo to Somalia, from Angola to Mozambique and Madagascar, from Guinea and Benin to Uganda, to cite but a few African countries, and not to mention the lamentable expedition of the Bay of Pigs. The conspiracy is growing, gaining ramifications and becoming more sophisticated; it is perfectly normal that, in the face of this force growing alongside it, the Organization should affirm its authority, if we do not want an international society which lags behind the times and is sometimes without faith or law.

87. Benin, which is a peaceful country and which has no conflict with riparian States or States of the region, has addressed itself to the Security Council to right a wrong

done to it and to ask that measures be taken against the direct or indirect perpetrators of flagrant and out-and-out aggression. It could have succeeded by itself, as has already been shown, or with the assistance of fraternal and friendly countries, in overcoming the difficulties entailed in a situation where militant readiness must prevail over submission and defeatism. But it decided, since it was sure of its rights, to choose the sometimes perilous path of recourse to international judgement, because its case is not an isolated one and, essentially, consists of trying to bar the road to reaction, that reaction which continually manages to profit from the ambiguous interplay of law and morality, the limits of the power of intervention of the Organization and the compromises to which we agree in trying to save the established order.

88. The Security Council is at the service of all the Members of the Organization, at the service of ideals which we find in the Charter, at the service also—and we must not forget it—of all those initiatives by which we try to bring closer the realization of those ideals. I already brought out the fact that my delegation could not subscribe to the Security Council's engaging in a routine operation in this case. Benin could have simply transmitted to the Security Council a thorough and documented file on the matter so that the Council could weigh the evidence. The immediate situation in Benin could thus formally have been solved, although we are highly suspicious of the determination of some Member States to carry out the recommendations of the Council in this regard.

89. It follows that steps are necessary, steps which must take account of the actual precepts of the Charter but which must particularly take account of the aggressive acts to which some of our States are systematically exposed, steps which will put an end to the impunity apparently enjoyed by those who, under the guise of juridical formalism, pursue the most heinous and reprehensible designs on the international scene, steps which, finally, will give their real meaning to the principles of mutual respect, non-intervention and sovereign equality.

90. At all costs, the Security Council must sooner or later take political decisions on military and other forms of aggression, on the recruitment and training of mercenaries and on the international responsibility of States in this respect. Otherwise, Benin and other countries like ours will know how to draw the necessary conclusions by strengthening international solidarity, by staging a last-ditch resistance against all that we consider to be contrary to the full exercise of our sovereignty and, by reaffirming our own responsibility, create a society which is more truly guided by justice and morality.

91. The PRESIDENT: The next name on the list of speakers is that of the representative of Guinea whom I invite to take a place at the Council table and to make his statement.

92. Mr. DOUKOURE (Guinea) (*interpretation from French*): Mr. President, the delegation of the Republic of Guinea is indeed honoured to extend to you its congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Council.

Guinea is well aware of your heavy responsibilities at a time when Mr. Ivor Richard is doing his utmost to reach a negotiated settlement of the situation in Zimbabwe. A few days ago your people joyfully celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the accession to the throne of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth. My delegation wishes to associate itself with those that presented their compliments on that occasion.

93. We are pleased that the Security Council has convened to consider the complaint of the Government of Benin. We cannot deal with the heart of the matter without referring to the message [*see S/12281*] addressed to you by His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Sékou Touré, President of the Republic of Guinea, with the purpose of helping to ensure that no manoeuvres would be used to obstruct our work. The Secretary-General was good enough in his reply to state that he personally would follow the implementation of the suggestions made by my head of State, in order that the present meeting may help to bring about a just settlement for the people of Benin, victims of a cowardly act of aggression on 16 January 1977.

94. On that day at daybreak an unidentified plane crash-landed at the airport of Cotonou. As the rules of international civil aviation require, our brothers at the airport swiftly went to the assistance of the aircraft which they thought was truly in distress. There are no words to describe their surprise when they were met by passengers armed to the teeth who were none other than mercenaries under the influence of drugs who were in Benin solely to sow death and destruction. Their goal, which is typical in such cases, was to occupy the strategic points in the capital, and first and foremost the Presidential Palace of the Republic, where there was bloody fighting for more than two hours.

95. In an admirable upsurge of patriotism, the people and the armed forces of Benin, to whom we pay a heart-felt tribute, beat back the invaders, who, after they were to put to rout, left behind military matériel and some of their gang, who will surely reveal the whole truth about their heinous deeds.

96. The revolutionary people of Guinea, thanks to the ideology of the Party, is well aware of the meaning of counter-revolution. It knows about its objectives and its methods and that is why it would not be surprised to learn from specific facts that counter-revolution does exist. In fact there are two types of counter-revolution. The first type represents a shrewd approach; it is always better organized and is clandestine. The counter-revolutionaries appeal to the people as though they were defending their interests, but since their words do not correspond to their deeds, there is an imbalance and this type of counter-revolution is inevitably doomed to failure. The second type of counter-revolution is different and contains the seeds of its own destruction. In the Republic of Guinea we can say that we are familiar with counter-revolution and we are even more familiar with it today, because we are determined to continue the revolutionary offensive so as to bring about radical changes in the living standards of our people, and nothing will prevent us from carrying out that mission. We want that to be clear to everyone.

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97. Our brothers in Benin, after a difficult struggle for independence, finally, on 1 August 1972, set up their people's régime which decided once and for all to free the country from colonialism and neo-colonialism. It discovered, as we had done in Guinea, that the number one enemy of Africa was imperialism. Therefore it dismantled the whole neo-colonialist structure which aimed at permitting the survival of a régime which allowed the exploitation of man by man. That is why the act of aggression of 16 January, of which the fraternal people of Benin were the victims, is understandable. It was a recurrence of what happened on 22 November 1970 at Conakry, and was aimed at overthrowing the people's Government under the enlightened leadership of Comrade President Mathieu Kérékou.

98. The people of Guinea, in solidarity with the people of Benin in these tragic circumstances, did not hesitate to express their hatred of the mercenaries and their masters and immediately dispatched a delegation to Cotonou. The Government of the Republic of Guinea solemnly proclaimed that if there was a recurrence of aggression, the army of Guinea would be at Cotonou with its brothers to safeguard the overriding interests of Africa.

99. We have said and we have written that imperialism recruits depraved Africans to commit aggression against our countries. We have said and we have written that those men without a country are trained, often in neighbouring countries, where the régimes are bent on betraying our continent and where they are provided with all the means they need to commit murder. Only a few weeks ago the voice of the revolution, the radio station of the Republic of Guinea, issued a strong warning to the renegades who were preparing to commit their foul deeds.

100. The imperialist press is bending over backwards to cover up for the malefactors. Imperialism is a past master in the art of lying and it is constantly trying to heap scorn on us by minimizing the gravity of the aggression of which our people has been the victim. In November 1970, there was a printed report to the effect that the aggression of which Guinea was the victim was merely the settling of accounts between opposing factions. Another act of insanity was the attempt that was made to have people believe that Guinea had invented those plots and that, the economy of the country being in a precarious state, an effort was being made to divert the attention of the people to external matters. We read about the alleged feats of an African Zorro who was fighting at Conakry to liberate the people of Guinea. To liberate it from what? One can read in the same newspapers today about the aggression in Benin and see that only the name of the country has changed; the lies are the same because they are all cast in the same mold, which can be called the imperialist press.

101. The acts of aggression against Africa have been occurring for some time. They were introduced by the explorers and the missionaries; they arrived with the trading posts and all the trappings of the European adventurers who came to our continent. At that time, Africa, faithful to its traditional humanism, thought that those people were honest men and sons of God. The results of those first meetings showed up in the shameful trade of ebony, the drowning of slaves who could not survive the crossing of the Atlantic and the barbaric genocide to which Africa had to say no. How many African bodies are at the bottom of the seas which link the Caribbean with Africa? And how many famous names may be found in the history of those brave people who conducted such noble resistance against colonialist penetration? Of those names I should like to mention Samory Touré and King Behanzin of Abomey. Those two men faced colonial aggression and fought to the death to safeguard the values of Africa. Almamy Samory of Guinea and King Behanzin of Benin would be proud of the courageous resistance which the fraternal peoples of Benin and Guinea continue to display to combat neo-colonialist domination.

102. The objectives of imperialism have not changed. It would be a serious mistake, indeed, to believe that yesterday's enemies had changed their minds and been won over to become today's friends. The African peoples must reconsider the problem of the security of our States, especially since disreputable elements like Congo Muller, Schramm, Steiner, Seibold and others continue in complete freedom to recruit mercenaries in order to destroy the achievements of our young nations.

103. After hearing the list of equipment read out by the representative of Benin, members of the Council, who are distinguished men of education, will surely appreciate the magnitude of the injustice committed against Africa. They will surely agree with us that it is high time that the aggression against our young countries was halted and that serious action was taken to ensure that peaceful peoples, which want only to improve their lives, are not subjected to the constant threat of bandits in the pay of colonialism.

104. On 12 July [1940th meeting] we drew the attention of the Council to the consequences of any form of weakness in the face of the aggression of which Uganda was a victim. Thereafter, we read books and we saw films which glorified the raid on Entebbe. Those practices have encouraged the invasion of the airports of sovereign States. The Council did not meet our request of 12 July, but it is time that justice was done.

105. Benin, Guinea and all progressive countries of Africa and of the world understand that they want to muzzle us in order to cancel the victory of the liberation movements. Imperialism will never succeed; we shall all the more arm our brothers of Zimbabwe, Namibia and Azania and, with all brothers on the continent, check the diversionary tactics and the crimes constantly being plotted against us. The stakes are high and my delegation is certain that the peoples of Africa will not be duped by those who are trying to plunder our gold, our diamonds, our iron ore, copper, bauxite and manganese and leave us with leprosy, smallpox, hunger, illiteracy and the other miseries of this world.

106. At this first stage of the debate, in the solidarity which binds us to our brothers of the Popular Republic of Benin, my delegation would like to bow respectfully before the graves of those that fell on the battlefield, and we propose, with your permission, Mr. President, that the Council support the request of the Government of Benin, that we firmly condemn the use of mercenaries to sow death and destruction in our countries and that, following consultations between the President of the Security Council and others who are involved, a special fact finding mission be set up and given the responsibility of preparing a report that would allow the Council to reach a final stand and take appropriate action that would be to the credit of the United Nations and to mankind as a whole.

107. The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Guinea for his expression of good wishes to my country on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the accession to the throne of Her Majesty the Queen, and for his kind words to me personally.

108. The next speaker is the representative of Algeria, whom I invite to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

109. Mr. RAHAL (Algeria) (*interpretation from French*): Mr. President, first of all, I should like to say how pleased we are to see you presiding over the Security Council for the month of February. We are all aware that in the troubled world in which we live your responsibility, like that of the Council, is neither wholly simple nor undemanding. Your experience and the wisdom which you have often displayed will, I am convinced, permit you once again to discharge your duties most satisfactorily and in the best possible interests of international peace and security.

110. I am grateful that the Council has allowed me to participate in this debate, which is of concern to my Government for more than one reason. Since this is a typical act of aggression against the independent State of Benin, my delegation would first like to reiterate here its total abhorrence of an act that runs so grossly counter to the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations and which endangers peaceful coexistence among the various members of the international community. That aggression, which is the subject of the complaint of Benin to the Council, has been unanimously acknowledged in the international press, both by journalists and by diplomats who were able to verify the effects and evidence of that act *in situ*. That fact alone justifies this meeting of the Council, whose responsibility is never so much involved as when peace is threatened in a particular region of the world.

111. My delegation's participation in this debate can also be explained by the danger for all African countries inherent in the attack of which the Republic of Benin has just been a victim. The solidarity that we would here like to convey to the people of Benin and its leaders is strengthened by an awareness of our common vulnerability in the face of the boldness and unscrupulousness of those deliberate acts directed against our sovereignty and our security.

112. In this case—as in many others, unfortunately, in the still very recent past—the act of aggression was the work of mercenaries. Numerous African countries have already had

to deal with mercenary attacks, a new method of warfare that is so marvellously well adapted to certain policies, and whose showy exploits have even won admiration in some parts of the world where violence is still extolled when it is directed against others.

113. The attraction of adventure, the taste for violence, the morbid pleasure in spreading terror and death are not sufficient, however, to explain the acts of mercenaries whose essential motive is greed and the desire for considerable and immediate financial reward. Behind the actions of mercenaries is hidden the mind of a politician whose aims, quite apart from disorder, destruction and devastation, are, first and foremost, of a political nature. Mercenary action has replaced that of the colonial armies or, in certain cases, has strengthened it; their goals merge. That is why we should not be put off by the superficial appearance of mercenaries as adventurers, malefactors and killers. The problem which they represent and which, particularly in Africa, has assumed alarming proportions, must be viewed in the political context, must be evaluated in terms of its political consequences, and must be tackled at the level of its political origins.

114. Today we join with the Government of Benin in denouncing to the international community the constant threat to our countries, which takes its most dangerous and pernicious form in attacks by mercenaries, coming from places unknown and sufficiently well paid not to reveal the identity of their employers.

115. This scourge is a real threat to the entire international community, even if its most destructive effects are felt in the countries of the third world, particularly in Africa. Those who today seek to use this means to achieve their own ends may in the near future themselves fall victims to it, because the action of mercenaries is governed more by the desire for profit than by political or racial affinities. The problem that we are bringing before the Security Council is not confined to limited or isolated events which perhaps would not be deserving of the attention of the international community as a whole. This is a much more complex and universal phenomenon and that is why it should arouse the concern of all. It requires energetic, concerted action, which is the only appropriate way to eliminate this danger and prevent its recurrence.

116. The aggression perpetrated against the People's Republic of Benin has all the features of mercenary action. Unforeseen, swift and destructive, leaving traces of its destruction but camouflaging its political origins, giving proof of its determination, but disguising its real significance, the attack committed on 16 January presents too much concrete evidence for its reality to be called into question, but its origins and its purposes are still sufficiently unexplained for its real nature to give rise to all kinds of conjecture.

117. In publicly denouncing the aggression against Benin and by publishing the details and describing the weapons seized, the Cotonou Government has shown its legitimate desire to uncover the real culprits and to determine the actual scope of this action. We would emphasize particularly, as a sign of restraint, moderation and responsibility,

that the Benin Government has not levelled any precise accusations or sought to draw hasty conclusions from an inquiry which, we are convinced, was not a purely superficial one. The Government of Benin has not yielded to the understandable emotion which such an aggression might naturally arouse in order to assign responsibility or apportion blame. On the contrary, it addressed itself to the Security Council, requesting that it denounce this serious act which violated the integrity, sovereignty, and security of its country, and also that it dispatch a mission of inquiry in order to determine, on the spot, the evidence of aggression and to uncover its origin or origins.

118. The Government of Benin is fully entitled, as a Member of the Organization, to appeal to the Security Council so that light may be shed on all these incidents, the seriousness of which cannot be overstressed. The people of Benin by their vigilance and courage have succeeded in repulsing the aggression; it is up to the international community now to determine who is responsible, who were its instigators and how the aggression was carried out.

119. In giving our full support to the request of the People's Republic of Benin we should ourselves also like to

avoid any speculation as to the precise meaning of the events of 16 January at Cotonou. The situation throughout the African continent is extremely threatening for the future of our countries. We are aware of that, and that is why more than ever we wish to associate the international community with our preoccupations and, if possible, with our hopes. Africa is no longer the preferred site for colonial adventures. It is no longer a continent divided up among different forms of foreign domination and subject to either concerted or competing exploitation. The African peoples have set out on the road to their rehabilitation in the community of free peoples. That must be the price of peace in Africa and, of course, of peace throughout the world.

120. We are certain that the Security Council will accede to the appeal that has been made to it by the Government of Benin. Discovering the truth about the aggression of 16 January is not up to Benin alone. It concerns all members of the international community and it is first and foremost the responsibility of the Council.

The meeting rose at 6.55 p.m.

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