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THIRTY-SECOND YEAR

2047th MEETING: 22 NOVEMBER 1977

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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.

2047TH MEETING

Held in New York on Tuesday, 22 November 1977, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. Mansur R. KIKHIA
(Libyan Arab Jamahiriya).

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/2047)

1. Adoption of the agenda

2. Complaint by Benin:

Letter dated 4 November 1977 from the Permanent Representative of Benin to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/12437)

The meeting was called to order at 4.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Complaint by Benin:

Letter dated 4 November 1977 from the Permanent Representative of Benin to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/12437)

1. The PRESIDENT: The Security Council is meeting today in response to the request made by the Permanent Representative of Benin in his letter of 4 November 1977, addressed to the President of the Security Council and circulated in document S/12437.

2. Members of the Council are aware that the item on today's agenda was considered by the Council during the months of February and April this year. Two resolutions on the matter were adopted: resolution 404 (1977) of 8 February and resolution 405 (1977) of 14 April 1977.

3. I should like to inform the members of the Council that letters have been received from the representatives of Cuba, Guinea and Madagascar, in which they request that they should be invited to participate in the discussion.

4. In accordance with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite the representatives of those States to participate in the discussion, without the

right to vote, in conformity with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure.

5. In view of the limited number of places available at the Council table, I invite the representatives of Cuba, Guinea and Madagascar to take the places reserved for them at the side of the Council chamber, on the usual understanding that they will be invited to take a place at the Council table when they wish to address the Council.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Alarcón (Cuba), Mr. Kondé (Guinea) and Mr. Rabetafika (Madagascar) took the places reserved for them at the side of the Council chamber.

6. Mr. BOYA (Benin) (*interpretation from French*): Mr. President, my delegation congratulates you on your accession to the presidency of the Council for the month of November. My delegation is pleased to see you presiding over the Council at a time when it resumes consideration of the question of the barbarous aggression by international imperialists against my country of Sunday, 16 January 1977. My delegation has no doubt that you will guide this discussion with serenity, in a spirit of responsibility and with the sense of integrity which we know you to possess, and that, through the efforts of the members of the Council, this discussion will reach specific conclusions satisfactory to my country.

7. The relationship which unites our two countries and our two peoples covers several fields and becomes stronger every day. It could not be otherwise since our two peoples are resolutely committed to the revolutionary struggle for the total liberation of Africa, our beautiful and rich continent, from all forms of colonial and imperialist domination. Our two peoples are resolved to defeat the subversive manoeuvres of international imperialism and its plans of aggression and colonial reconquest in Africa. It is with great admiration that we follow the many-sided struggle of the Libyan people, under the enlightened leadership of Colonel Qadhafi, to build a socialist society. That is why we feel such great pride at seeing you preside over the Council at this time.

8. I wish to thank you and all the members of the Council for the efforts made for a meeting today of the Security Council to study once again this very important question which has deeply affected the people of Benin as a whole. I take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Kurt Waldheim, for his assistance, which enabled us to draw up and issue, under resolution 405 (1977), an

evaluation report of the extensive damage caused to our country by the barbarous aggression of Sunday, 16 January 1977 [see S/12415]. I also wish to thank the friendly States Members of the Organization which, since that aggression, have continually shown their constant and militant solidarity with the Beninese people.

9. The enemies of Africa and of the Beninese revolution continue their dirty work. They spread slander and lies about my country. They endeavour to distort the real sense of the complaint by Benin to the Security Council. Shamelessly and with malice they proclaim that by requesting another meeting of the Council my country seeks above all to obtain international aid. I wish to say now for everyone to hear that the new Benin is resolutely committed to the path of honour and dignity. It is precisely because our people does not wish to hold out its hand to those who plunder its resources that it has proclaimed to the world, since 30 November 1972, its determination to free itself totally, completely and definitively from foreign domination in order to build a Benin politically independent and economically master of its own resources, a Benin determined to make its modest contribution in the concert of nations to establishing healthy relations of economic interdependence. Therefore, if Benin asks the Council once again to take up consideration of this question, it is in order to take stock of the situation since the adoption of resolution 405 (1977).

10. We wish to take stock of the situation for two essential reasons. The first is that the additional information gathered by us has confirmed that the aggression of Sunday, 16 January 1977 against the People's Republic of Benin, far from being a simple affair of isolated adventurers, was indeed an operation organized by international imperialism to put an end to the revolutionary process which began in our country on 26 October 1972. We said this last April and we reaffirm it today, and even the Western press, in particular the press in Paris, has finally accepted that this truth is well-founded.

11. The aggression of 16 January 1977 is part of the imperialist plans directed against Africa and all the third-world countries. On this point there can be no shadow of doubt; we say it categorically. All attempts to create confusion about the tragic events of 16 January 1977 are doomed to failure.

12. The Central Committee of the Party of the People's Revolution of Benin is categorical on this point. It is stated in the final communiqué of the sixth session of the Second Committee of the Party of the People's Revolution of Benin, which met at Cotonou from 25 July to 1 August 1977:

“Cornered in their last trenches by the revolutionary forces, the imperialist forces, those decadent forces of history, did not even conceal their diabolical game. In fact, they openly and cynically resorted to reactionary violence, armed invasion and every form of provocation and pressure based on a planned redistribution of zones of intervention and missions among the imperialist Powers for the colonial reconquest of our great, rich and beautiful continent, Africa.

“The imperialist armed aggression of Sunday, 16 January 1977 against our country, the People's Republic of Benin, the successive armed attacks on the People's Republic of Mozambique, the People's Republic of Angola, Zambia and Botswana, the armed conflicts which have been provoked or stirred up at various places in our continent by international imperialism, are significant examples. Furthermore, the new mercenary training camps which have opened here and there and the clandestine disembarkation in our subregion and elsewhere of regular troops of foreign imperialist armies in Africa, in preparation for new over-all invasion plans covering the People's Republic of Benin, the sister Republic of Guinea, the Republic of Angola and other independent and sovereign countries of Africa, show the furious and criminal determination of all these odious monsters to go even further in the intensification of mass crimes against the peoples of Africa and the States which fight with perseverance and devotion for their independence and true sovereignty.”

Thus in Africa, and particularly in our subregion, a serious situation exists. International imperialism threatens the independence, sovereignty and security of defenceless small States such as my own.

13. Let me continue my quotation:

“It should also be noted that, unlike the period of disorganization that followed the imperialist armed aggression on Sunday, 16 January 1977, today, in the ranks of the Beninese and African reactionaries the attempts to reorganize those reactionary ranks are under way in firm and discreet liaison with imperialism within the framework of intensive preparations for a new plan for generalized armed aggression combined with internal sedition and subversion.

“The Central Committee of the Party of the People's Revolution of Benin is following closely the new criminal plans for invasion and subversion which international imperialism continues to design against our country, our people and our revolution. The Central Committee is watching this situation with revolutionary care and vigilance.”

14. It is clear: imperialism has not disarmed. It is hatching new plans of aggression, new plots. It is meticulously preparing its weapons against the People's Republic of Benin.

15. Since the adoption of resolution 405 (1977), the Government of the People's Republic of Benin has taken certain steps to go deeper into the information on the criminal mercenaries who acted on the orders of imperialism on Sunday, 16 January 1977 at Cotonou.

16. In pursuance of paragraph 10 of resolution 405 (1977), the Government of the People's Republic of Benin undertook bilateral contacts with some foreign Governments whose nationals and whose infrastructure had served the imperialist armed aggression of Sunday, 16 January 1977. In various letters addressed to those Governments by the Beninese authorities, they were asked to

co-operate with Benin under paragraph 10 of resolution 405 (1977) and to provide any information in their possession so as to permit further light to be cast on the identity of the criminal mercenaries who had taken part in the aggression. Some countries replied and we are deeply grateful to them.

17. But the Government of Benin has been especially surprised by the silence, maintained to this day, by the Government of France, a country with which Benin continues to have privileged relations. The silence on the part of the French Government contrasts with the statements made by its representative on the Security Council, Ambassador Leprette, who, on 7 April 1977, said in this chamber:

"I can say here that investigations have been undertaken by the French Government, on its own initiative and in accordance with its own legislation." [2001st meeting, para. 63.]

My delegation would like, through the Council, to ask the French representative what have been the results of those investigations. What body have they been transmitted to? What has happened to the French mercenaries who left Paris to assault Cotonou? On the other hand, the French representative stated:

"I said to my colleague from Benin during the first part of this debate that his Government would no doubt deem it useful to place directly before the French Government the complaints that Benin might have in this matter. I note, three months after the events, that no representations have been made to the French authorities." [Ibid., para. 64.]

18. At that time we said what we thought about that statement by the representative of France. But how can we understand that the step proposed to us should be met not merely with silence, but even with irritation on the part of the French authorities? The people of Benin, the victims of aggression, do they not have a right to draw the obvious conclusions?

19. Do we not have a right to draw conclusions after the additional information gathered by us through inquiries proves beyond any doubt that high-level French officials at Cotonou were aware of the barbarous aggression long before its execution and that two French agents at Cotonou participated in the preparation and execution of that crime against our people? The French authorities know very well that the Government of Benin has always approached this question with a high sense of responsibility. They know perfectly well the humanitarian treatment we have given to those dastardly agents who acted at Cotonou. The entire world knows the rigorous treatment reserved for such agents.

20. But the people of Benin will continue to act in accordance with the maintenance of good relations with France and asks only that its inalienable right to true independence and its national sovereignty should be respected. The people of Benin will tirelessly continue with its efforts to cast more light on this ignoble act of

aggression. It is a question of life or death for our revolution.

21. Since 16 January 1977 and since it denounced to the world the main instigator of that act of aggression, Benin has continually been subjected to pressures and discriminatory economic measures on the part of the imperialists. Not having succeeded with their armed aggression and not wishing in any way to renounce their diabolical task of arresting the revolutionary process in our country, having decided to perpetuate the exploitation of our wealth, they are endeavouring to plot at the economic and financial levels. Thus there has been a vast campaign which has led to a total modification of our trade and financial relationships with some partners. Most of the negotiations for credits that were under way or even concluded have been broken off. Our importers have been refused any postponement of payment deadlines and must settle in cash all their importations of goods and services. The smallest supplier requires that credit should be established and confirmed by a bank in his country and this compels our national banks to freeze considerable funds abroad. The effect on our investment programme is incalculable, for many current negotiations are at present frozen. We lack credit and those same aggressors are using their influence, vis-à-vis international financial institutions, to sabotage and to thwart the realization of our development projects.

22. Benin has very sound reasons for being concerned and for denouncing before the Council the new threats posed by imperialism to our national democratic people's revolution.

23. Now I should like briefly to refer to the question of international mercenaries. The utilization by international imperialism of mercenaries to destabilize the progressive régimes is a danger for international peace and security. Obviously the case of aggression against Benin offers the Security Council an exceptional opportunity to adopt effective measures to eliminate that scourge. All States members of the international community must pool their efforts in that struggle.

24. In asking the Council to take up again consideration of this question, the Government of Benin wishes to confirm its determination to publicize that act of aggression and to bring legal action against the mercenaries. The Government of Benin considers that the international community must now seriously study the question of international mercenaries with a view to ending their use against the sovereignty, the integrity and the territorial independence of small and practically defenceless States. My delegation considers it essential for the Council again to ask all States whose nationals took part in various degrees in the aggression of Sunday, 16 January 1977 against the People's Republic of Benin to co-operate with Benin in order to arrest and put out of action those mercenaries who are still alive. Such sincere co-operation and the positive results that would follow would be the only firm proof of the good faith which some proclaim.

25. The second reason for which we have requested this meeting of the Council is to introduce our evaluation report. Paragraph 7 of resolution 405 (1977) states:

"Requests the Secretary-General to provide appropriate technical assistance to help the Government of Benin in

assessing and evaluating the damage resulting from the act of armed aggression committed at Cotonou on 16 January 1977".

26. In keeping with the foregoing, the Secretary-General, at our request, provided us with two expert consultants: Mr. Ali Assem of Egypt and Mr. Marcel Kheir of Lebanon. These two expert consultants visited Cotonou from 27 June to 26 July 1977 and worked in close co-operation with the members of the National Evaluation Commission. I take this opportunity to convey to those two expert consultants the warm thanks and recognition of the people and Government of Benin.

27. On the basis of the statistics available after this year's harvest, the National Evaluation Commission drew up the revised report issued as document S/12415. The figure appearing in that report is \$US 28 million, that is, 7 billion CFA francs. This figure refers essentially to material damages and human losses suffered by our people; it also includes the losses suffered by our agriculture and our industry as a result of the barbarous aggression and all the unforeseen expenses sustained by our budget in meeting the cost of the many missions that came to our country and the many missions we had to send abroad, not to mention the expenses involved in all the security measures which we adopted and which are still in force in the People's Republic of Benin.

28. This figure is far from compensating for the innumerable sacrifices our people will still have to endure to safeguard its independence, its freedom and its sovereignty in view of the frenzied determination of international imperialism to put an end at any price to the revolutionary process that has been begun in the People's Republic of Benin. In order to arrive at this new evaluation, we have had to confront many obstacles placed in our way by imperialism to prevent justice from being done on behalf of our people. Certain imperialist offices in Benin have spared no efforts to prevent a correct evaluation of the damages resulting from the aggression, and to close the file on this question.

29. Publication of the evaluation report and the favourable echo it found among friends who have helped us in healing the wounds of the aggression represent another victory over the obscurantist imperialist forces. The fact that many countries have announced to us their intention to participate actively in the forthcoming donors' conference is another indication that the militant and active solidarity with the people of Benin gives us the courage to continue our struggle for national liberation, thus creating the objective conditions for building a socialist society in the People's Republic of Benin.

30. The people of Benin, basically a peace-loving people, aspires only to freedom, to real independence, to sovereignty, to prosperity, to peace and to security inside its borders, to peace with all its neighbours, to peace with all the States of the world. Our choice of the socialist path of development is not a whim. We have made it with full knowledge of what is involved. It was dictated to us by history, by the history of the political domination and economic plunder of our country. Our people, like all

peoples of the world, has the right to a happy life, and that is why it decided to fight to build on the African soil of Benin a society in which there will be a good life for all Beninese men and women. Whoever places obstacles on our path will be fought mercilessly. The people of Benin, hard-working and courageous, will fight with determination and sacrifice to defend its territory against the invasions and aggressions of mercenaries in the pay of international imperialism.

31. As far as damages are concerned, we ask only for justice and not for charity. Benin can stand on its own feet, as it has constantly proved to the world. We know that the struggle will be a long and difficult one but we shall overcome because our cause is just.

32. The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Benin for his kind words addressed to me and to my country. I wish to assure him of the solidarity of Libya with Benin and to endorse what he said about the co-operation and solidarity between our leaders, our peoples and our two sister countries, in our joint fight for the liberation and progress of Africa. I would assure him again of our unshakable support.

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

34. Mr. RABETAFIKA (Madagascar) (*interpretation from French*): Mr. President, the delegation of the Democratic Republic of Madagascar wishes to offer you its fraternal congratulations on this occasion when you are guiding the work of the Security Council in such a worthy and responsible manner, and to express to you its feelings of gratitude for having given it permission to participate in a debate whose importance is only too well known to you in the context of the struggle that your country, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, and mine are waging, with the same faith and the same zeal, side by side with the forces of progress and genuine revolution.

35. The dedication you have shown during the debate on the aggression perpetrated against Benin, the objectivity with which you have discharged your responsibilities as a member of the mission of inquiry sent by the Council to Cotonou, to mention only two qualities among many others, are for us an additional source of reassurance when, at the request of the People's Republic of Benin, we are resuming consideration of the question of the aggression to which Benin was subjected.

36. In Security Council resolution 405 (1977) all Members States were requested to consider taking measures to deal with the violation of the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of the State of Benin. Those measures are not new since they are merely a repetition of those that were adopted in 1967 when other mercenaries were used in Zaire.

37. However, it is necessary, in order to refocus on the debate which is resuming after eight months of patience and gestation, to recall certain principles that the Organization endorsed, as well as the measures that we planned to

take in order to deal both with the aggression and with the use of international mercenaries.

38. I do not think there is any need to go back over the condemnation pronounced against any State which persists in permitting or tolerating the recruitment of mercenaries as well as the provision of facilities for mercenaries with a view to overthrowing the Governments of States Members of the United Nations. That point is now accepted, and it is only for those who have a bad conscience and who, wittingly or unwittingly, have mistakenly transgressed against that decision to claim that it was peremptory and unrealistic.

39. It is also necessary to stress that, in that same resolution, the Security Council condemned all forms of external interference in the internal affairs of Member States, including the use of international mercenaries to destabilize States or to violate their territorial integrity, sovereignty or independence.

40. That would require no comment if, despite the protests and pressures which have been brought to bear at a certain level for the adoption of a declaration to that effect within a given framework, these provisions had been acted upon. Unfortunately, that is not the case for, since April 1977, there has been no lack of interference in the internal affairs of certain Member States in our continent—and everyone knows what I am referring to.

41. The Council also requested all States to exercise the utmost vigilance against the danger posed by the recruitment, training and transit of mercenaries in their territory.

42. That set of principles which normally would have served as the basis for a better understanding of relations among States unfortunately has not been respected; without my citing specific examples, the members of the Security Council know what we are talking about.

43. Thus, it has been demonstrated that when the imperialist Powers or certain circles allied to those Powers decide to defend what they believe to be their interests, the principles, recommendations and decisions of the Organization have no value and that, whatever the protests made by the international community, these Powers and their allies do not hesitate to resort to the most barefaced subterfuge to promote their economic, political and military purposes under cover of a so-called ideological crusade, in which their own public opinion believes less and less.

44. We could discuss at length the definition of international mercenaries and the use that might be made of them under cover of the principles of the Charter. It nevertheless remains true that the practice is reprehensible when the objectives of those who recruit the mercenaries are in direct contradiction with the principles of the Charter itself and the peoples' aspirations on which it is based.

45. At another level, resolution 405 (1977) has not found any practical application either. Of course, we must pay a tribute to the Secretary-General who has given the Benin Government appropriate technical assistance to help it to determine and assess the damage resulting from the act of

armed aggression committed at Cotonou on 16 January 1977. However, that assessment, which remains a theoretical one, does not address the political aspect of the problem, namely the fomenting of plots hatched abroad.

46. Also, to our knowledge, States requested to do so by Benin in view of certain responsibilities have not provided the Council with all the information they might have concerning the events of 16 January 1977 which could shed additional light on those events. Following the debates in April last, it would seem that we are faced with two situations: either we accept the conclusions of the Security Council mission of inquiry,¹ chaired by Mr. Illueca of Panama, supported by the Benin national report [*S/12319/Add.1*] requested by the mission of inquiry—and in that case, in accordance with the practice of the Security Council, there would no longer be any need to go back over all this because the facts are established and it is up to the Council to draw the necessary conclusions—or we must take into account the statements made at meetings of the Council—statements of which moreover the Council did not take note in its resolution 405 (1977)—thus giving them a degree of verisimilitude even though the persons who made those statements never ceased to argue that they were well disposed towards Benin.

47. In our view, the Security Council must remain strictly objective and base itself on the conclusions of its own mission of inquiry with regard to the implications pointed out by the mission. However, since we are meeting in a place in which exchanges of views and dialogue are the rule, the Council can only ask those who have made promises to keep them, for if, on the one hand, it has been said that the aggression against Benin was a "murky business" and that, on the other hand, those who are pulling the strings are most unwilling to reveal the full details, that would amount to a real evasion on the part of certain States of their responsibilities under the Charter. We can only profoundly deplore that dubious attitude which is based not on mere caution but on a desire to protect oneself or to protect the international criminals we call mercenaries. What we should do is to ask all States: first, to enter into a solemn and unequivocal commitment with regard to the use of mercenaries in conformity with paragraphs 2 to 6 of resolution 405 (1977); secondly, to enter into an equally solemn commitment to help the Security Council to determine responsibility and possible sanctions following the armed aggression of which Benin was the victim; thirdly, to enter into a commitment to preserve, since it has now been demonstrated that the case of Benin cannot be an isolated one, all the principles contained in the Charter, the Declaration on the Inadmissibility of Intervention in the Domestic Affairs of States, the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States and the Definition of aggression. That is what it will cost for us to ensure truly effective respect for the right of every State freely to choose its political, social and economic systems without being threatened directly or indirectly, implicitly or not, by subversive tactics, tactics which hardly do credit even to their spineless and cowardly perpetrators, the neo-colonialist imperialists.

¹ See *Official Records of the Security Council, Thirty-Second Year, Special Supplement No. 3.*

48. We have dwelt on the political aspect of this item on our agenda in the firm conviction that international peace and security will remain threatened, especially from the standpoint of small States, unless we can count on the guarantees contained in the Charter and the automatic nature of those guarantees, and as long as we feel that the international community is hesitating to honour its collective commitment under the Charter to rebuff aggression, to come to the assistance of the victims and to determine international responsibilities quite separately from any considerations of power or ideology.

49. It is this responsibility that Benin is invoking in submitting its report in document S/12415, which contains the assessment of the damage resulting from the act of aggression of 16 January 1977, an assessment which, moreover, is called for in paragraph 7 of resolution 405 (1977) and which only confirms in its main lines the contents of the first Beninese national report issued in document S/12318/Add.1.

50. We would recall that when that last report was put before the States members of the Security Council, some of them made unfavourable comments both on the submission of the report and on its contents, even attributing to the Beninese Government intentions which should not again be mentioned here in order not to disturb the calm atmosphere of this debate.

51. Does a country which has self-respect and which, moreover, has suffered from imperialist and capitalist aggression, not have a right to say what damage has been caused by that aggression as well as the economic and social consequences? Property damage and injury to persons are certainly quite easy to assess and we do not think any delegation can question them.

52. It could be argued that the consequences of the aggression to the national economy and to the security efforts of the People's Republic of Benin may be open to differing assessments. It none the less remains true that those consequences are real and we thank the Beninese authorities and the United Nations for having given us an idea of their magnitude although that certainly does not fully reflect the true situation. But those who have suffered from aggression and occupation will understand that these figures can be no more than indicative and reflect only the short-term effects felt by the country. In this connexion, it would have been interesting, following a political analysis of the situation and the continuing attempts to subvert the Beninese régime, to calculate all the harm that that might cause to the economy of the country.

53. The figures we see in the report in document S/12415 are purely indicative, as I said, and can be interpreted differently by different people, but they are above all indicative of the efforts that a country like Benin must make to protect its independence, its territorial integrity and its freedom in the face of all the manoeuvres to which it is exposed. That is why my delegation thinks it necessary, on the one hand, for the United Nations, as we repeatedly said when the aggression inflicted on Benin was under discussion, to concern itself at the political level with throwing all possible light on the events and to ask the

States concerned to co-operate in ensuring that these violations of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Benin should cease once and for all, and, on the other hand, for the international community, once it has been properly established that such a violation took place, to do everything possible to help Benin to guard against all dangers and to rehabilitate itself economically, socially and politically.

54. The PRESIDENT: I should like to thank the representative of Madagascar for his kind words to me. I assure him of friendship and solidarity between Libya and Madagascar.

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

56. Mr. ALARCON (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Mr. President, I should like to thank you and members of the Council for granting us the opportunity to take part in this debate. This is not the first time that I have taken part in discussions in the Council under your presidency, but it is always a pleasure for me to take the opportunity to convey our greetings to you and to express our satisfaction at seeing you lead the activities of this important organ. We know of your personal qualifications, of your commitment to the principles of the Charter and of your loyalty vis-à-vis the struggle of peoples everywhere in the world to exercise their national rights, and all this convinces us that a debate of the importance of the present one is favoured by your excellent leadership. That is also the case because you represent a Government and a people which, in the African continent and in what is known as the third world, take a stand of militant participation in the efforts of all those fighting for their liberation. Because of all this, Libya, its Government and its representatives, are very dear to all the peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

57. The Security Council is considering once again the situation which has resulted from the dastardly attack committed against the People's Republic of Benin on 16 January this year. The investigations and evaluations on the spot have allowed us to appreciate the extent of the damage caused to that people as a result of a totally unwarranted, cowardly act of aggression committed not only against the Government of the People's Republic of Benin but also against the citizens of Cotonou and the surrounding areas, who were victims of an unprecedented attack for which there can be no possible justification.

58. The documentation before the Council clearly shows how serious were the material damages caused to the People's Republic of Benin, totalling approximately \$US 28 million. Naturally, as has correctly been pointed out in the statement of Ambassador Boya, that figure is far from reflecting the true magnitude of the direct and indirect losses of Benin resulting from the attack of 16 January; neither that figure nor any other can even remotely reflect the implications in terms of suffering caused by loss of life and the injuries that resulted from the aggression, or of the sacrifices and the efforts Benin has made and must continue to make in order to guarantee its independence and territorial integrity.

59. It is, to say the least, curious that some circles should have attempted to question the validity of the request of the People's Republic of Benin that the Security Council should consider this question. It is curious indeed that there should be any doubt as to the right or, I would even say, the duty of a State to use the procedures and means established in the Charter for seeking just and peaceful solutions to problems affecting it. We need only for a moment imagine the international outrage and upheaval that would have ensued if another State, for example a developed capitalist State of Europe, had been the victim of an aggression such as that suffered at Cotonou on 16 January.

60. But in no other case would there be so much justification for asking the Council to take appropriate action as there is in this case, in which a complaint is made by a small State, a State with limited material resources, a peace-loving State that has never been in conflict with any other State, which has never been the object of criticism or international censure, which has never demonstrated anything but an internationalist vocation to live in peace and co-operation with the rest of the international community. It is precisely in cases such as this, the case of a country with limited defence potential that has been the object of undoubted aggression that has produced innumerable and irreparable damages, that the Security Council must demonstrate whether or not it is in a position to fulfil its obligations under the Charter.

61. Resolution 405 (1977) establishes an obligation on the part of the international community; it draws attention to the duty of all States to co-operate in order to arrive at a complete clarification of the events of 16 January—not merely in order to satisfy any particular curiosity, but to guarantee that the attack will not go unpunished and that other States, like Benin, with limited resources and small territories, do not become the victims of aggressions such as that about which Benin has informed the Council. The resolution also sets forth the responsibility of the international community to help to repair the damages caused by the aggression against Benin. The information we have now received strengthens our conviction that all States must co-operate effectively to ensure that events such as that of 16 January will not occur again and that the assistance needed by the People's Republic of Benin is provided generously and promptly.

62. In his statement, Ambassador Boya provided us with an analysis of events as they have evolved since January, which clearly indicates that the plans for aggression and imperialist attempts to stop the revolutionary process in Benin and seek the overthrow of its people's Government have not ceased and that Benin continues to be the object of threats which should cause us all grave concern. If the imperialists wish to halt the course of the Beninese revolution, if they are not satisfied with the progress of events in that country, that is precisely because, first, Benin is undergoing a profound people's revolution which opens up for its people the path to the construction of a socialist society that will make possible the true and full emancipation of its workers and will ensure for them a future which will appropriately crown the process of liberation from the colonial era and because, secondly, the People's Republic of

Benin has known how to maintain firmly, coherently and with dignity an international policy that has given that country a place of honour among all the progressive forces of the world.

63. In the words of a distinguished African Head of State, President Ahmed Sékou Touré, there is a desire to recolonize Africa. That intention was manifested at dawn on 16 January of this year at Cotonou. But Africa has enough strength and will to safeguard its independence and to move forward along the path of affirmation of its self-determination and freedom, as is precisely demonstrated by the heroic effort of the people of Benin under the leadership of the Party of the People's Revolution. It has firmly and decisively met the aggression of January, the plots and subversive plans of today, and the sabotage and hostile activities in the economic and financial fields. Acting on the basis of a decision by its own people, on the basis of its will not to move backward and with the support of all the revolutionary peoples of the world, we are certain that, as stated by its representative a few moments ago, Benin will overcome all its enemies.

64. An important aspect of this debate is the role being played by mercenaries as instruments to cut short African independence. In this connexion, I feel that the statement just made by Mr. Rabetafika, the representative of Madagascar, has been sufficiently enlightening. He has clearly pointed out the importance of this matter and the urgency with which the Security Council and the United Nations must take appropriate action on it.

65. I should like to conclude by reaffirming once again our support for and solidarity with the people and the Government of the People's Republic of Benin and to reiterate to them our decision to continue to co-operate with them on the basis of our common revolutionary principles and in the assurance that under the leadership of its Government and Party the people of Benin will face up to all obstacles and achieve the objectives of the people's revolution.

66. The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Cuba for the kind words he addressed to me and my country. I should like on this occasion to affirm to him the admiration, support and appreciation of Libya for the positive and decisive role played by Cuba in the struggle for economic, social and political liberation in our present world. In fact, Cuba sets an excellent example of how a small nation can resist pressure, intimidation and blackmail and participate positively in the struggle and fight to shape the course of history.

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

68. Mr. KONDE (Guinea) (*interpretation from French*): May I first of all express to you, Mr. President, and the other members of the Security Council my gratitude for having been allowed to participate in this debate. I should also like to congratulate you on your accession to the presidency of the Council for the month of November and to offer you my best wishes for success at this time when

you are directing the resumption of the Council's debate on a question intimately linked in its importance and scope with the maintenance of international peace and security. We are sure that your great experience will contribute to the success of these deliberations. This is also the place to pay a deserved tribute to the militant action of Libya, your great country, in the community of nations and to stress the fraternal and cordial links which happily exist between our two peoples.

69. More than six months ago, the Security Council considered the complaint of the People's Republic of Benin, the victim of a most savage aggression on 16 January of this year. That debate happily led to the adoption of resolution 405 (1977).

[The speaker read out paragraphs 2, 6, 7, 8 and 9 of resolution 405 (1977).]

70. In the light of the provisions of resolution 405 (1977) which I have just quoted, the Council thus had to meet again to assess the situation which has remained before it since April 1977. That is what prompts us today to launch an urgent appeal for consideration of the request of the sister Republic of Benin to obtain the just compensation to which it is entitled.

71. The aggression against Benin was one of the attempts of imperialism to get its hands back on a country engaged in its national reconstruction, a country whose only crime is that it has chosen true independence by decisively rejecting imperialism and neo-colonialism.

72. The Republic of Guinea, which suffered one of the most treacherous acts of imperialist aggression, is in a good position to assess the situation resulting from the abortive attack of 16 January 1977 against the People's Republic of Benin.

73. It is a happy coincidence that the present debate is taking place on 22 November—now known as Africa Day by a decision taken by the Organization of African Unity at Lagos in December 1970 following the aggression against the Republic of Guinea. As I speak, the lights have just been extinguished at Conakry following the great demonstrations which every year mark this historic date of the victory of the whole of Africa over international imperialism. On 22 November 1970, the stubbornest adversaries of the Guinean revolution—those very people who had so many reasons to have confidence in imperialism—were taken aback. At dawn, boats had landed mercenaries, purely and simply to reconquer Guinea, a country that had rebelled against neo-colonialism.

74. The Council is sufficiently well aware of the effects that that operation, even though it failed, had on a population undergoing the fast of Ramadan: hundreds dead, including women, old people and children. We are particularly happy on this anniversary of 22 November to offer members once again the sincere gratitude of the people of Guinea for their unreserved support in our time of trial. A few days after the aggression, the Organization of African Unity held a special meeting from 9 to 12 December 1970 at Lagos and adopted unanimously a

resolution demanding exemplary punishment for all those who had prepared, encouraged, organized and perpetrated the aggression against the Republic of Guinea. For its part, the Security Council, after its investigation in Guinea, adopted resolution 290 (1970), which declared the aggression to be an act of serious threat to international peace and security and in which the Council declared itself grieved at the loss of life and extensive damage caused by the armed attack and invasion of the Republic of Guinea and endorsed the conclusions of the report of the Special Mission to the Republic of Guinea.

75. We certainly do not like to think in this, the last quarter of the twentieth century, that States which claim to be to some degree civilized can have recourse to such retrogressive methods as the use of mercenaries to overthrow the Governments of independent and sovereign States, as was the case in Cuba, Guinea, Benin and elsewhere. The problem of the use of mercenaries is not, however, such an isolated problem as some people would have us believe. We know that, like the need for aggression which engenders it, the use of mercenaries is an integral part of the same complex and systematic plan of international imperialism which, in its arrogance and stubbornness, thinks that it can halt the process of change and turn back the clock in order, on the one hand, to maintain its position indefinitely and protect its selfish interests throughout the world and, on the other hand, to thwart the efforts made by the third world to replace the old economic system by a new economic order which provides for a fairer sharing of the resources of the world. We are convinced that the Security Council and the General Assembly must now take immediate and effective measures to co-ordinate the struggle against international mercenaries, that gangrene which is eating away so dangerously at the moral values of our so-called civilized world.

76. As we have said in previous debates, we now reaffirm our militant and total solidarity with the people and the Government of the People's Republic of Benin and we hope that the Security Council will take all the necessary measures to give effect as quickly as possible to its resolution 405 (1977) with a view to enabling that country to bind up the wounds of war.

77. The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Guinea for his kind words addressed to me and to my country. I should like to reciprocate and tell him that we in Libya shall never forget the eminent role of Guinea in the liberation of Africa. We shall never forget that Guinea was one of the first victims of mercenaries and that its famous "no" to colonial control triggered the real revolution in Africa.

78. Mr. LEPRETTE (France) (*interpretation from French*): The French delegation has heard with the greatest attention the statement made by the representative of Benin.

79. As I have already clearly said in previous statements to the Council on 8 February [*1987th meeting*] and then on 7 April [*2001st meeting*], France is particularly devoted to

the principle of respect for the independence of States and non-interference in their internal affairs. That principle is one of the bases of our foreign policy and can brook no exceptions. I added at the time that its application was even more imperative in the case of countries like Benin, with which France has relations based on mutual respect, friendship and co-operation.

80. The French delegation, I recall, approved without reservation on 8 February the sending of a Security Council mission to study the events of 16 January at Cotonou. On 7 April, it strongly condemned all forms of the use of mercenaries. It expressed the desire that this debate should lead to a greater awareness of the problems connected with that form of action. Is there any need for me to repeat today that that position still stands?

81. That being said, I cannot allow my country to be accused without proof on the basis of facts that France condemns, but that are still far from being clear. The French delegation wishes to make quite clear, as it did before the Council on 7 April, that it denies that the French Government or any of the French services had any responsibility for the preparation and execution of the raid of 16 January on Cotonou. France formally condemns that operation.

82. Having noted that documents communicated by the Beninese authorities to the mission of inquiry sent by the Security Council mentioned individuals who were termed French nationals, the Government, as is known, on its own initiative and in accordance with its laws, undertook an investigation. The investigation produced nothing. The Government of Benin, through its Ambassador in Paris, was informed on 8 August of the conclusions of our investigation. It is true that the mysterious circumstances—surprising for an operation of that nature in that the perpetrators of the raid left “documentary evidence” on the spot—cast doubts on the value of the documents appended to the report of the mission of inquiry. We must observe now that our investigation is over, that those doubts appear well founded.

83. We certainly understand the emotions caused by the raid of 16 January on Cotonou. Such action by adventure-seekers against independent African States is one of the scourges of our times. France supports the efforts of international organizations to end such inadmissible interventions in the internal affairs of States. But we cannot allow any accusation of ourselves with regard to events in which, I repeat, we were not involved in any way.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.

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