

against the seizure of power by force and expressed concern that Guinea-Bissau could become a failed state.<sup>48</sup> The representative of Chile pointed out that all coups d'état should be repudiated, whether bloodless or violent.<sup>49</sup> The representatives of the Russian Federation, France and Guinea requested that the Council monitor the situation and ensure the holding of free and fair elections.<sup>50</sup> The representative of the Russian Federation also asked to be briefed on the means undertaken in preparation of the legislative elections in Guinea-Bissau and the use of the funds provided by the donors for that purpose.<sup>51</sup> Some members stressed the possible negative consequences for the United Nations of a failure of the peacebuilding efforts in Guinea-Bissau.<sup>52</sup> The representative of

Guinea hoped that the Council would make the extension of the peacebuilding mandate in Guinea-Bissau a priority.<sup>53</sup> The representative of Mexico considered that the task of the United Nations would be to ensure the holding of elections, monitor the economic crisis and coordinate efforts among the agencies involved.<sup>54</sup>

The representative of Guinea-Bissau expressed regret that the use of force had appeared to be the only solution, but underlined that consensus was prevailing in Guinea-Bissau over the transitional Charter and asked the international community to recognize the differences between the coup of Guinea-Bissau and the events in the Central African Republic.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 5 (Germany); and p. 10 (France).

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 7 (Russian Federation); p. 10 (France); and p. 11 (Guinea).

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 8 (Pakistan); p. 11 (Guinea); and p. 13 (Mexico).

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., pp. 13-15.

## 15. The situation in Guinea following recent attacks along its borders with Liberia and Sierra Leone

### Initial proceedings

#### **Decision of 21 December 2000 (4252nd meeting): statement by the President**

At its 4252nd meeting, on 21 December 2000, the Security Council included in its agenda the item entitled "The situation in Guinea following recent attacks along its borders with Liberia and Sierra Leone". The Council then invited the representative of Guinea to participate in the meeting. The President (Russian Federation) drew the attention of the Council to a letter from the representative of Mali,<sup>1</sup> transmitting the final communiqué of the twenty-fourth session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), held at Bamako on 15 and 16 December 2000. The communiqué stressed the need for the disarmament of irregular armed groups and the restoration of peace in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone and called for an immediate deployment of interposition forces along their borders.

<sup>1</sup> S/2000/1201.

At the meeting, the President made a statement on behalf of the Council,<sup>2</sup> by which the Council, *inter alia*:

Condemned incursions into Guinea by rebel groups coming from Liberia and Sierra Leone;

Also condemned the looting of the facilities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian organizations;

Reaffirmed its commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Guinea; called on all States to refrain from providing any military support and from any act that might contribute to further destabilization of the borders between Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone;

Requested the Secretary-General to consider what support the international community might provide ECOWAS in order to ensure security on the border of Guinea.

<sup>2</sup> S/PRST/2000/41.

**Deliberations of 8 March 2001 and 14 May 2001  
(4291st and 4319th meetings)**

At its 4291st meeting,<sup>3</sup> on 8 March 2001, the Council heard a briefing by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, following which statements were made by most members of the Council<sup>4</sup> and the representatives of Guinea and Sierra Leone.

In his briefing, the High Commissioner for Refugees reported that the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had realized initial contacts with the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) regarding the principles of safe access and passage for displaced persons. He stated that he had invited both the Government of Guinea and RUF to refrain from military actions in the area of Kambia in order to allow the road from Forecariah to Kambia to be a safe passage for the return of refugees from Guinea to Sierra Leone. He further noted that, overall, the principles of “safe access to and safe passage of” were being respected by the three countries and RUF. Moreover, he observed that this was the beginning of the successful implementation of the mandate of resolution 1270 (1999). He stated that there were indications that RUF was prepared to leave the Kambia area under UNAMSIL control. Nevertheless, he argued that at that stage UNAMSIL was still too weak to effectively control the area and asked the Council to strengthen it with both additional troops and a new mandate.<sup>5</sup>

The majority of speakers expressed concern for the situation of the refugees and the need for an effective repatriation. They highlighted the need for a thorough assessment of the capacity of Sierra Leone to absorb such a large number of refugees and requested assistance in the process. On the role of RUF in the process, some speakers indicated their reluctance to

dialogue with such force, considering it unreliable.<sup>6</sup> Others appreciated the efforts made by the High Commissioner for Refugees and argued that at that stage dialogue was possible and could be beneficial.<sup>7</sup> Some speakers highlighted the need to create “safe corridors” in the RUF-controlled territory to allow refugees to return to Sierra Leone.<sup>8</sup> Other speakers questioned the feasibility of such initiative, highlighting the insufficient strength of the troops of UNAMSIL and other issues.<sup>9</sup> On this issue, some speakers favoured strengthening of UNAMSIL.<sup>10</sup> Others underlined that the strengthening of such troops would require time and that the Council had to respond to the situation in a more timely manner.<sup>11</sup>

The representative of Jamaica expressed concern for the fact that relocating the estimated 135,000 refugees in the Languette region would take considerable time. She therefore urged the High Commissioner for Refugees to develop a plan for a quick relocation of these refugees. Moreover, she observed that the key for stability in Sierra Leone was to bring the activities of RUF to an end and suggested that a strengthening of UNAMSIL would constitute a crucial factor in achieving this goal.<sup>12</sup>

The representative of the United Kingdom urged the Government of Guinea to avoid indiscriminate attacks from helicopters if they endangered refugee populations. He observed that strengthening of UNAMSIL would inevitably require time and argued that the Security Council should not disregard a short term plan that reflected the realities of what the United Nations was able to do and that had, as a priority, the relocation of refugees in dangerous areas to adequate camps away from the border. Specifically, he estimated that in order to create a safe corridor for the refugees out of the “parrot’s beak” into a safer area such as Kenema, UNAMSIL would require a force at least three times bigger than what was available. Finally, he

<sup>3</sup> At its 4276th meeting, held in private on 12 February 2001, the Council met with the delegation of the Economic Community of West African States Mediation and Security Council, composed of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mali (leader of the delegation), the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Togo and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nigeria, regarding the situation in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

<sup>4</sup> The representative of the Russian Federation did not make a statement.

<sup>5</sup> S/PV.4291, pp. 2-5.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7 (United Kingdom); p. 8 (France); and p. 10 (United States).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13 (China, Singapore).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12 (Mali); pp. 14-16 (Mauritius); and p. 24 (Sierra Leone).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7 (United Kingdom); pp. 8-9 (France); and pp. 9-10 (United States).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13 (China); pp. 13-14 (Singapore); and pp. 14-16 (Mauritius).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7 (United Kingdom); pp. 8-9 (France); and p. 16 (Bangladesh).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5-7.

expressed doubts on the reliability of RUF in abiding by its commitment with the High Commissioner and argued that a deterrent to encourage them to respond to the requests of the international community was necessary.<sup>13</sup>

The representative of Tunisia noted that the commitment of the parties was only the first step in a long process and stressed that it was essential to determine the authorities and mechanism for ensuring the safety of the refugees; who would be in charge of the operation since neither the army of Guinea nor UNAMSIL seemed to be able to do it; as well as to confirm the cooperation of all non-State actors.<sup>14</sup>

The representative of France expressed doubts about the cooperation of RUF and other rebel movements in the region, especially the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy. He therefore expressed concern for the feasibility of a safe repatriation of such a great number of refugees. He suggested that UNAMSIL would have to focus its energy on its mandate and not on other tasks until it could increase its numbers in a second phase. He finally argued that the best strategy in the short term was to provide more means to Guinea to help the refugees resettle on its territory the large numbers of refugees it had accepted, as well to continue the policy of welcoming refugees until they could be returned to their country of origin.<sup>15</sup>

The representative of the United States highlighted that the Security Council should focus on the refugees' immediate need for protection and relief. He stated that his country did not support the creation of "safe corridors" for refugees through RUF-held territory as RUF could not be considered trustworthy. He finally observed that the strengthening of UNAMSIL was a priority and a condition for a positive solution of the situation.<sup>16</sup>

The representative of Colombia noted that the interposition force that ECOWAS had called for in December 2000<sup>17</sup> had not become a reality. Therefore, he observed that it might be necessary to review the options offered by the presence of UNAMSIL in the

field and the results of its most recent contacts with RUF.<sup>18</sup>

The representative of China observed that despite the risk that RUF was not reliable, its willingness to cooperate, as well as that of the three Governments, was encouraging.<sup>19</sup>

The representatives of Mali and Singapore concurred that the first priority of the Council should be to achieve a formal agreement between the Governments of Guinea and Sierra Leone and RUF, on the basic principles of freedom of access and safe passage.<sup>20</sup>

The representative of Mauritius commented that some humanitarian organizations on the ground in Guinea had argued that the refugees would not utilize the safety corridors for fear of being attacked by RUF, no matter what guarantees had been secured. They argued that the refugees should be temporarily relocated to northern Guinea until the situation improved. He also stressed the importance of the President of Liberia being fully involved in finding a solution for the safe return of all refugees.<sup>21</sup>

The representative of Guinea stated that the "sole cause" of the humanitarian situation in the southeast of Guinea was the "armed attack perpetrated by rebel groups with the support of the Government of Liberia". He argued that a successful resolution of the refugee situation in the "parrot's beak" should take into account two conditions. First, a "safe corridor" within the territory of Sierra Leone needed to be set up for refugees' repatriation, followed by safe reception areas within Sierra Leone. Finally, he stated that Guinea was willing to transfer refugees that wanted to remain on its territory for safety reason in interior areas, with the cooperation of the High Commissioner for Refugees.<sup>22</sup>

At the same meeting, the High Commissioner for Refugees replied to the comments of the other speakers and provided additional information on the situation in the "parrot's beak". He reiterated that there had been a remarkable slowdown of the hostilities in the region and that RUF demonstrated increasing willingness to dialogue. He noted that this change of attitude was

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp. 6-7.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., pp. 7-8.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., pp. 8-9.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., pp. 9-10.

<sup>17</sup> See S/2000/1201, annex.

<sup>18</sup> S/PV.4291, pp. 10-11.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., pp. 12-13.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., pp. 11-12 (Mali); and pp. 13-14 (Singapore).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., pp. 17-19.

probably determined by the fact that RUF had realized that the possible strengthening of UNAMSIL and the stronger position of the Sierra Leone Army would have eventually changed the balance of power in the region. Moreover, he noted that RUF was in an increasingly difficult situation, as it was being progressively isolated by the international community and non-governmental organizations. He indicated his reluctance to allow large flows of refugees and suggested that the opening of the border should be limited to the area from Forecariah to Kambia. He further argued that the mandate of UNAMSIL did not prevent its troops from taking over the Kambia area. Rather, the problem was the inadequate number of troops available at the moment. He finally noted that the efforts of repatriation of the refugees would be limited to a single corridor in the Forecariah-Kambia route, in the context of RUF pulling out and it becoming UNAMSIL territory.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, the representative of Sierra Leone expressed his support for the idea of “safe corridors”, but highlighted that Sierra Leone had limited capacity to accept the returnees. He highlighted how his country was already overwhelmed by both the large number of returnees and the thousands of internally displaced persons.<sup>24</sup>

At its 4319th meeting,<sup>25</sup> on 14 May 2001, the Council included in its agenda a letter dated 30 April 2001 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council,<sup>26</sup> transmitting the report of the Inter-Agency Mission to West Africa. The report provided a large number of recommendations on the crisis in Sierra Leone and West Africa, including, *inter alia*, the necessity of a comprehensive approach, the establishment of a United Nations office for West Africa, the need for a two-track strategy (short and long term), increased cooperation with ECOWAS, and various suggestions aimed, *inter alia*, at controlling

migrations and implementing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes.

At the meeting, statements were made by all members of the Security Council, as well as the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs and the Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator. The President (United States) drew the attention of the Council to a letter from Mali dated 11 April 2001 addressed to the President of the Security Council,<sup>27</sup> transmitting the final communiqué of the Extraordinary Summit of the Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS held in Abuja on 11 April 2001. The communiqué highlighted the willingness of ECOWAS to deploy an interposition force along the borders of the countries concerned and the need to establish “safe corridors” for refugees to be repatriated.

At the outset, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations briefed the Council on the recent political developments in the region. He stated that the major political development was the meeting of ECOWAS, the United Nations, Sierra Leone and RUF, held in Abuja on 2 May 2001. On this occasion, Sierra Leone and RUF had renewed their commitment to remove roadblocks and to refrain from military action. The meeting had called for the simultaneous disarmament of RUF and the Kamajors, as well as the establishment of a joint committee to implement the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. Moreover, it had displayed the intention of Sierra Leone to facilitate the certification of RUF as a political party. The Under-Secretary-General further noted that RUF had committed itself to withdrawing from Kambia and argued that this action would facilitate efforts in repatriating refugees of Sierra Leone. Finally, he observed that progress had been made towards establishing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.<sup>28</sup>

The Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator stated that the regional approach had proven to be the right one, as the crisis in each country was fuelling the crises in the neighbouring countries. She highlighted that at the time between 200,000 and 300,000 persons were internally displaced in Guinea and she observed that the conditions for repatriation were still lacking. Significant numbers of refugees were spontaneously

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 19-23.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>25</sup> For more information on the discussion at this meeting, see chap. XII, part III, sect. B, with regard to encouragement or calls by the Security Council for action by regional arrangements in the pacific settlement of disputes, and part III, sect. D, with regard to consideration or authorization by the Security Council of enforcement action by regional arrangements.

<sup>26</sup> S/2001/434.

<sup>27</sup> S/2001/353.

<sup>28</sup> S/PV.4319, pp. 2-5.

returning to Sierra Leone, often via areas controlled by RUF, which was creating problems for the humanitarian community as well as posing risks for the refugees themselves. The reception of these returnees was creating difficulties for Sierra Leone, as their numbers were increasing and the resources to relocate them limited. She further observed that the situation in Liberia was not improving, as fighting was continuing along the border of Lofa County and between 60,000 and 80,000 people were displaced within its territory. She finally recommended the establishment of a subregional capacity by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in order to facilitate the exchange and analysis of strategic information.<sup>29</sup>

The Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs highlighted the lack of progress in dialogue among the Heads of State in the Mano River subregion, and invited the Security Council and ECOWAS to intervene as facilitators. He observed that relaunching the peace process in Sierra Leone was essential, as well as introducing into the agenda the planning of elections to improve political stability. He then addressed the issue of institutional arrangements, observing that the establishment of a United Nations office for West Africa would be an appropriate means to develop an integrated approach to the different issues. Moreover, he recommended the creation of an inter-agency working group in order to coordinate the efforts of different bodies and increase the exchange of information. Finally, he called for the expansion of the mandate of UNAMSIL to include also Guinea and Liberia. This would offer the conditions for better monitoring the borders in the entire “parrot’s beak”. He observed that the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration process should be developed under a regional perspective.<sup>30</sup>

At the same meeting, the majority of the delegations acknowledged the importance of a regional approach in dealing with the situation in Guinea, as the numerous cross border issues required a wider perspective. In this regard, they encouraged increased cooperation with ECOWAS and welcomed the proposal for a regional office in West Africa as an important development. They also expressed support for the implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, as well as for initiatives

aimed at a strengthening of security and economic development. Several speakers stated that sanctions against Liberia were not to be lifted until the country complied with resolution 1343 (2001) and that the Council had to ensure the effectiveness of the arms embargo, the travel ban and the diamond embargo.<sup>31</sup> With regard to regional security, some speakers argued that a cautious approach should be used when dealing with RUF. They noted that despite its collaborative attitude, RUF could not be fully trusted.<sup>32</sup> In this respect, some speakers expressed support for the deployment of ECOWAS interposition forces on the borders, in order to monitor the situation and facilitate refugees’ repatriation.<sup>33</sup>

The representative of Jamaica stressed that the proposal to expand the mandate of UNAMSIL into the neighbouring countries deserved serious attention.<sup>34</sup> The representative of Mali expressed support for the ECOWAS recommendation on broadening the mandate of UNAMSIL, and called on the Council to respond positively to the ECOWAS offer to strengthen UNAMSIL by 3,000 men.<sup>35</sup> The representative of Ukraine suggested that the proposal for the expanded role of UNAMSIL should be further studied by the Secretariat so that the Council could operate in the most effective way.<sup>36</sup>

The representatives of the United Kingdom, the Russian Federation and the United States expressed disagreement with the proposal to expand the mandate of UNAMSIL to Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia. They noted that the problems that affected the three regions were different and that an approach focusing on the enhancement of the coordination of subregional structures in West Africa would produce better results.<sup>37</sup> The representative of Ireland noted that a substantial change to the mandate of a peacekeeping force already in operation presented practical difficulties.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5-9.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 9-13.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16 (United Kingdom); p. 17 (Tunisia); and p. 18 (Ireland).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19 (Ireland); and p. 20 (Bangladesh).

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17 (Tunisia); p. 20 (Bangladesh); p. 21 (Russian Federation); p. 25 (Jamaica); and p. 28 (China).

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16 (United Kingdom); p. 21 (Russian Federation); and p. 31 (United States).

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19 (Ireland).