

B. Peace consolidation in West Africa

Initial proceedings

Decision of 9 August 2006 (5509th meeting): statement by the President

By a letter dated 3 August 2006 addressed to the Secretary-General,⁵⁰ the representative of Ghana transmitted a concept paper to help guide the deliberations of the Security Council at an open debate on peace consolidation in West Africa to be held under Ghana's presidency. In the concept paper, it was noted that the political instability that afflicted the region had largely subsided, creating a unique opportunity for nation-building and the promotion of sustainable development. The paper identified broad cross-cutting themes, a discussion of which at the open debate was expected to result in concrete and realistic recommendations to enable the Security Council formulate definitive measures spanning the peace consolidation spectrum of conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

At its 5509th meeting, on 9 August 2006, the Council adopted the item entitled "Peace consolidation in West Africa" and included in its agenda the above-mentioned letter. Following opening remarks by the President (Ghana), the Council heard briefings by the Secretary-General and his Special Representative for West Africa, as well as by the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS. The Council members made statements, as did the representatives of Brazil, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Finland (on behalf of the European Union),⁵¹ Guatemala, Guinea, India, Liberia, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Namibia, the Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).⁵²

Welcoming the recent establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission as one of the most important

outcomes of the ongoing United Nations reform process, the President stressed that while simmering tensions in States such as Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea-Bissau must be resolved before they became intractable, foundations of peace should be strengthened even in those countries that had not experienced any major upheavals or conflicts. He was of the view that many of the problems in West Africa could rightly be blamed on authoritarian rule, lack of good governance and unaccountable leadership. He was pleased to note in that regard the evident determination of the West African people to construct new societies founded on the principles of democratic accountability, respect for human rights and the rule of law. He acknowledged that ECOWAS was faced with severe constraints in terms of capacity and resources despite having been at the forefront of peace operations in West Africa, but assured that once empowered, it would be a reliable partner for peace and wealth creation for the benefit not only of the region, but also of the entire world. The President believed that the strategy for peace consolidation should focus on resolving ongoing conflicts as quickly as possible and preventing a relapse into conflict and a fresh outbreak of conflict, developing the institutional framework and relevant capacities for peace initiatives, mobilizing the required resources for such peace initiatives, and addressing the underlying causes of conflict in a comprehensive manner. It was particularly important to achieve the complete disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants, particularly child soldiers and mercenaries.⁵³

The Secretary-General reaffirmed his view that a holistic approach was needed to address the different but interconnected conflicts in West Africa and in that context welcomed the willingness of the West African leaders to engage in conflicts in the region, without following the usual tendency to uphold the principle of non-interference into internal affairs. He stressed that for peace to prevail and to last, the international community must develop meaningful peacebuilding initiatives, including reconciliation and confidence-building processes, as well as mechanisms to strengthen the rule of law. He voiced concern that many international responses to post-conflict situations

⁵⁰ S/2006/610.

⁵¹ Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Montenegro, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey and Ukraine aligned themselves with the statement.

⁵² Qatar was represented by the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs; Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire were represented by their respective Ministers for Foreign Affairs; and Guinea was represented by the Secretary-General in the Ministry of State in charge of Foreign Affairs.

⁵³ S/PV.5509, pp. 3-4.

had suffered from shortage of funds, lack of international coordination and a tendency to leave too soon. He hoped that the Peacebuilding Commission and UNOWA would play a role in addressing those weaknesses. He promised that the United Nations was committed to continuing to work with States of the subregion towards sustainable peace.⁵⁴

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa observed that the subregion faced various new threats as a result of the ongoing political, economic and demographic transition, unemployment and informal migration of young people. He urged the Council to pay particular attention to countries in transformation by reinforcing their institutional capacities and assisting their vulnerable populations. Priority in that regard should be given to youth unemployment and its impact on national and regional peace and stability, unauthorized immigration and its increasing impact on local government and international relations, peaceful democratic change of Government as a means of preventing conflict, rapid urbanization and increasing insecurity, and support for private sector in Africa as a way of ensuring progress.⁵⁵

The Executive Secretary of ECOWAS observed that the Peacebuilding Commission was designed to fill a gaping hole in the peace activities of the United Nations, to assist countries in their transition from war to peace and stimulate stability, democracy and development. According to him, peace consolidation for West African countries should include four major components, namely: the rebuilding of democratic institutions including the judiciary, parliament and the civil service; security sector reform to establish competent, truly national security forces; support for the economic capacity of the Government to rebuild destroyed infrastructure and deliver social services to the people; and private sector development to create jobs and economic opportunities for the large army of unemployed people, especially youth. He held that the United Nations could lead international efforts to help consolidate peace in post-conflict countries through budget support programmes, project facilitation, especially the reconstruction of infrastructure, institution capacity enhancement and assistance in policy formulation. While believing that West Africa should be a natural beneficiary of the work of the Peacebuilding Commission, he was of the view that

the Commission might not be in a position to take on many countries in its first year. As such, the various United Nations agencies on the ground, in coordination with UNOWA, should continue to support the countries concerned and ECOWAS initiatives for peace consolidation.⁵⁶

Most speakers welcomed the transition from war to democratic rule in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea-Bissau, as well as efforts aimed at free and fair elections in Côte d'Ivoire. They held that despite the fragile security situation in those countries, West Africa as a whole was closer than ever to consolidating peace in a comprehensive and coordinated manner. They commended ECOWAS and the African Union for their leading role in that regard and urged further cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations, including the European Union, and international financial institutions.

Speakers stressed that the root causes of conflict must be tackled in the quest for lasting peace in West Africa. In that respect, some speakers highlighted the need to build the capacity of national institutions, especially in the areas of governance, the rule of law and the fight against impunity.⁵⁷ Others considered that more attention should be given to the issues of poverty, unemployment and underdevelopment.⁵⁸ Several speakers, however, opined that both a strategy to promote democracy and good governance and a strategy to reduce poverty were simultaneously required for peace to sustain.⁵⁹

Among those who stressed the importance of good governance, institution-building and respect for the rule of law and human rights, the representative of the Russian Federation stated that the most important means of preventing internal conflicts was strengthening the

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-8.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 13 (Russian Federation); p. 16 (Argentina); p. 17 (Denmark); p. 20 (France); p. 23 (Slovakia); p. 24 (United States); p. 25 (Japan); p. 27 (United Kingdom); and p. 28 (United Republic of Tanzania); S/PV.5509 (Resumption 1), p. 3 (Guatemala); p. 6 (Namibia); p. 10 (Senegal); p. 13 (India); p. 19 (Nigeria); and p. 22 (Niger).

⁵⁸ S/PV.5509, p. 9 (Qatar); p. 14 (Russian Federation); p. 15 (China); p. 25 (Japan); and p. 27 (United Kingdom); S/PV. 5509 (Resumption 1), p. 12 (India); p. 15 (Sierra Leone); p. 16 (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela); and p. 18 (Republic of Korea).

⁵⁹ S/PV.5509, pp. 11-12 (Côte d'Ivoire); p. 23 (Slovakia); and p. 24 (United States).

rule of law and developing democracy and good governance.⁶⁰ The representative of Denmark noted that while more efficient peacekeeping was only a first step in dealing with post-conflict situations, a far more sustainable approach was to ensure that national security institutions were in place early on in the transition process.⁶¹ The representative of France pointed out that the lack of good governance was at the root of the disturbances that the region had experienced.⁶² Concurring, the representative of the Niger held that the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance should be promoted because it had deterrent potential when it came to preserving good governance.⁶³

Among those underlining the urgent need to reduce poverty and promote economic development, the representative of China argued that all problems in West Africa boiled down to development.⁶⁴ The representative of Sierra Leone noted that peace consolidation in West Africa was a development exercise which must be seen and addressed in the context of poverty alleviation programmes in the subregion.⁶⁵ The representative of Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) cautioned that extreme poverty was the greatest threat to peace as billions of people surviving on less than two dollars a day could be a source of destabilization.⁶⁶

Most speakers expressed hope that the recently created Peacebuilding Commission would play a critical role in assisting countries emerging from conflict to achieve sustainable peace and stability and many welcomed the fact that Sierra Leone had been selected among the first cases on its agenda.⁶⁷ The representative of Denmark observed that an important task for the Commission was looking for best practices in facilitating disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform processes and

the rule of law in post-conflict situations.⁶⁸ The representative of Greece held that the Commission must work closely with the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, national authorities and ECOWAS in order to achieve long-term goals, such as combating youth unemployment and the provision of health, social and educational services.⁶⁹ The representative of Japan stated that the Council and the Commission should take up issues of security, governance, reconstruction and socioeconomic development in accordance with their specific areas of responsibility, with the Commission offering constructive input to the Council. He further suggested that the Commission should prioritize the matters on its agenda and study carefully the peacebuilding strategies for each State under its consideration.⁷⁰ The representative of Guatemala also considered that the Commission should help national authorities establish priorities and devise realistic strategies and coherent policies adapted to the circumstances of each country.⁷¹ The representative of Egypt expected the Commission to play a leading role in ensuring efficient coordination among the various actors contributing to peacebuilding efforts. He noted with concern the limits to the capacity and role of the Security Council in addressing the requirements of the transition from conflict to comprehensive development, particularly as it had repeatedly hesitated to open channels of genuine and effective coordination with the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the relevant regional and subregional organizations.⁷² The representative of India held that the Peacebuilding Commission must not only work with the Security Council but also take into consideration inputs from other United Nations bodies and work under the overall guidance of the General Assembly.⁷³

On the issue of combating impunity, several representatives commended the arrest and trial of Charles Taylor.⁷⁴ The representative of Norway was of

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁶³ S/PV.5509 (Resumption 1), p. 22.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁶⁵ S/PV.5509 (Resumption 1), p. 15.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁶⁷ S/PV.5509, p. 14 (Russian Federation); p. 15 (China); p. 16 (Argentina); p. 20 (France); p. 22 (Congo); p. 23 (Slovakia); and p. 24 (United States); S/PV.5509 (Resumption 1), pp. 5-6 (Namibia); p. 11 (Brazil); p. 15 (Sierra Leone); p. 18 (Republic of Korea); p. 19 (Nigeria); pp. 20-21 (Pakistan); and pp. 22-23 (Niger).

⁶⁸ S/PV.5509, p. 17.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.

⁷¹ S/PV.5509 (Resumption 1), p. 3.

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁷⁴ S/PV.5509, p. 20 (France); p. 24 (United States); p. 27 (United Kingdom); and p. 28 (United Republic of Tanzania); S/PV.5509 (Resumption 1), pp. 3-4 (Finland, on behalf of the European Union); p. 18 (Nigeria); and p. 19 (Norway).

the view that a war-torn society could not be healed unless those responsible for crimes against humanity and violations of international humanitarian law were brought to justice.⁷⁵ The representative of Namibia believed that reconciliation was the key to sustainable peace and that the pursuit of justice should not aim to punish those who committed crimes, but to rehabilitate them and correct the mistakes that had been made.⁷⁶ For his part, the representative of Côte d'Ivoire emphasized that justice must be rendered at an appropriate time. He cautioned that if justice was pursued too early, it could undermine a still fragile peace and call into question the still timid confidence among former enemies. If too late, however, it could prevent a society from entering a new era through the revelation of the truth aimed at achieving national reconciliation.⁷⁷

The representative of the United Republic of Tanzania was of the view that there was no shortage of ideas on maintaining and consolidating peace in post-conflict situations in West Africa. What was lacking, he stressed, was the will, the resolve and the resources to effectively implement the many recommendations already on the table.⁷⁸ In that respect, several representatives reiterated the need to urgently stop the proliferation and illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons,⁷⁹ while others stressed the importance of the successful disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform processes.⁸⁰ While the representative of Qatar urged the Council to recognize education as a vital tool for enhancing and consolidating

peace, security and stability,⁸¹ the representative of Peru called for implementing educational curricula that would promote peace and development.⁸² The representative of Denmark advocated a greater focus on women in conflict resolution and peace consolidation.⁸³ Similarly, the representative of Namibia noted that post-conflict peacebuilding programmes should be designed for women, children and girls, especially in the areas of education and employment creation.⁸⁴

At the end of the meeting, the President made a statement on behalf of the Council,⁸⁵ by which the Council, *inter alia*:

Stressed the importance of addressing the issue of peace consolidation in West Africa in a comprehensive and coordinated manner;

Stressed the primary role of each West African Government in peace consolidation for the benefit of all citizens;

Underlined the crucial importance of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants;

Reiterated the importance of finding effective solutions to the problem of refugees and internally displaced persons in the area;

Urged the international community to provide adequate resources as part of a coordinated humanitarian response strategy to improve the human security of the people of West Africa in need of such protection;

Stressed the need to ensure improved coordination of donor initiatives in order to make the best use of available resources;

Further stressed the need for continued and enhanced cooperation between the United Nations, ECOWAS and the African Union in peace consolidation initiatives;

Underscored the importance and the role of the Peacebuilding Commission in assisting countries emerging from conflict to achieve sustainable peace and stability;

Requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with the ECOWAS secretariat, to submit to it by the end of the year a report with recommendations on the cooperation between the United Nations missions deployed in the region and on the cross-border issues in West Africa.

⁷⁵ S/PV.5509 (Resumption 1), p. 19.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁷⁷ S/PV.5509, p. 11.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 11 (Côte d'Ivoire); S/PV.5509 (Resumption 1), p. 9 (Senegal); pp. 15-16 (Sierra Leone); p. 19 (Nigeria); and p. 23 (Liberia).

⁸⁰ S/PV.5509, p. 16 (Argentina); p. 23 (Slovakia); and p. 25 (Japan); S/PV.5509 (Resumption 1), p. 5 (Namibia); p. 9 (Senegal); and p. 11 (Brazil).

⁸¹ S/PV.5509, p. 10.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁸⁴ S/PV.5509 (Resumption 1), p. 5.

⁸⁵ S/PRST/2006/38.