



Central organ/MEC/AMB/2 (LXVIII)

**SEVENTY-EIGHT ORDINARY SESSION OF THE
CENTRAL ORGAN OF THE OAU MECHANISM FOR
CONFLICT PREVENTION, MANAGEMENT AND
RESOLUTION AT AMBASSADORIAL LEVEL**

ADDIS ABEBA, TUESDAY, 27 NOVEMBER 2001

Original: French

**REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL
ON THE DEPLOYMENT OF A MILITARY OBSERVER
MISSION FOR ARMS COLLECTION IN ANJOUAN
WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT
FOR RECONCILIATION IN THE COMOROS**

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RECONCILIATION IN THE COMOROS**

I. INTRODUCTION

1. On the occasion of its 75th session held on 22 August 2001, in Addis Ababa at Ambassadorial level, I had informed the Central Organ about the efforts of the OAU, the countries of the Region and the rest of the international community to implement the Framework Agreement for the reconciliation in the Comoros of 17 February 2001. In my report, I had highlighted some issues which were still in abeyance such as the problem of arms collection, the Transitional Government of national Unity and the adoption of the Draft Constitution.
2. At the end of its deliberations, the Central organ, among others, reaffirmed the determination of the OAU to continue to assist the Comorian Parties in their efforts for reconciliation, expressed satisfaction at the progress made in the implementation of the Framework Agreement for reconciliation in the Comoros and encouraged the Parties to establish the other sub-committees provided for in the Agreement, particularly the sub-committee in charge of arms collection and reintegration of the youths, for the speedy and successful conclusion of the reconciliation process.
3. Since then, efforts for the implementation of the Framework Agreement for reconciliation in the Comoros, continued in spite of the substantial delay caused by difficulties linked to the functioning of the various committees and sub-committees established within the Framework of the implementation of the Agreement and the instability prevailing in Anjouan since the overthrow of Colonel Abeid on 9 August 2001. Indeed, an initial attempt to overthrow the new authorities of Anjouan was made on 27 August 2001. Other attempts were made on 24 September and 2 November 2001.
4. Each time, the General Secretariat reacted to the events in Anjouan by deploring the instability which persisted in that Island and which could be detrimental to the reconciliation process in the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros. Each time, the General Secretariat urged all the Comorian Parties concerned to commit themselves firmly to implement the Framework Agreement. Finally, the Secretariat, constantly, reiterated the Commitment of the OAU to continue to support the National Reconciliation process in the Comoros and work, in close cooperation, with its partners in the International Community for that purpose.

5. However, in spite of the upheavals, the preliminary Draft Constitution, adopted by the Experts since 3 August 2001, was considered at the different meetings of the Law Sub-Committee, the Tripartite Committee and the follow-up Committee, which finalized it at its seventh ordinary Session, which concluded its deliberation on 26 September 2001. At its 8th Ordinary Session, which opened on 6 October 2001, the Follow up Committee, enlarged to the Bureau of the Tripartite Committee, the National Independent Electoral Committee and the Law sub-Committee, endorsed the Draft Constitution and fixed 23 December 2001 as the date for submitting it to a referendum. The Draft Constitution was officially handed over the Head of State, Colonel Assoumani Azali, on 8 October 2001 at the "Palais du peuple" in Moroni.

6. With the prospect of the Organization of a Constitutional referendum, the Comorian Government and the Anjouan Authorities had constantly reiterated their concern about the need to establish conducive conditions for it particularly through the collection of arms. In order to assist the Comorian Parties in this task, the General Secretariat requested the support of South Africa to make available a Military Expert. South Africa responded positively to the request of the Secretariat by placing at its disposal a Military Officer who is in The Comoros since 11 November 2001. Furthermore, and in order to contribute to the establishment of a climate of serenity in Anjouan. The OAU Liaison office in Moroni handed over the Anjouanese Authorities, on 4 October 2001, a contribution of US\$ 70,000, comprising a contribution of US\$ 50,000 from South Africa and US\$ 20,000 for the OAU, as humanitarian assistance.

7. Considering the urgency of the dates set, the Secretary General requested his Special Envoy, Mr. Francisco Madeira, to go to the Comoros leading a delegation comprising on that occasion, a Military Officer of the Organization. The Mission of the Special Envoy, who stayed in the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros from 5 to 8 November 2001, was among others, to assess the progress made in the implementation of the Framework Agreement in the light of the finalisation of the Draft Constitution and the preparation for the referendum and to consider, in cooperation with the Group of Military Experts, the practical modalities for the collection of arms.

8. The Special Envoy held talks with Colonel Azali and all the Comorian Parties, including the Anjouanese Authorities. All the Comorian Parties reiterated their determination to carry out successfully the reconciliation process. They also recognized the urgent need for the operation of arms collection.

II. ARMS COLLECTION

9. It should be recalled that the Framework Agreement established a technical sub-committee in charge of collecting arms and the reintegration of youths. That sub-committee is composed of 5 national experts.

10. To enable the organization of a free and serene referendum, all the Comorian Parties and, particularly, the Authorities of Anjouan, considered that the operation of arms collection should start before the beginning of the campaign for the referendum, scheduled towards the beginning of December 2001. They also expressed the wish to be assisted by International Experts. In a letter of 24 August 2001 addressed to the OAU Secretary General, Commander Bacar urgently appealed to the entire International Community and, particularly, the OAU to carry out urgently an operation of collection of arms circulating in Anjouan which, according to him, could, with the smallest incident, plunge the Island into a situation of anarchy. That appeal was reiterated in a letter of 4 November 2001 addressed to the Secretary General.

11. On its part, the Comorian Government addressed notes verbales to some countries of the Region (South Africa, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles) and to the French Government to request their support and military observers to guarantee the smooth operation of arms collection and establish a climate of trust among the Anjouanese. After that, the Comorian Government sent on 13 October 2001 a Note Verbale to the OAU Liaison Office in Moroni to request the assistance of the OAU to strengthen the request submitted to the four countries.

12. Considering the importance of the operation of arms collection, the Secretary General decided to include in the delegation led by his Special Envoy, an OAU Military Officer. One of the aspects of the mission of the Special Envoy was, indeed, to consult the Comorian parties about the expected role of the OAU in the operation of arms collection and to establish contact with the Group of National and International Military Experts in order to make concrete proposals to me on the practical modalities for the arms collection in Anjouan and determine the logistical and financial needs for that purpose. The OAU Military Officer extended his mission to the Comoros to participate in a meeting of the Military Experts held in Anjouan from 10 to 12 November 2001.

13. During the talks held by my Special Envoy with all the different Anjouanese civilian and military leaders, the latter informed him that there was no armory in Anjouan while many persons possessing weapons, particularly the military staff would be ready to surrender those arms on the sole condition that they be stored safely in an armory. The Special Envoy recommended that the OAU contribute US\$ 50,000 for the rehabilitation of the armories whose total cost would amount to US\$ 100,000. The Secretary General agreed in principle.

14. The reconciliation of figures made by the Comorian military Experts between the number of weapons counted before 3 August 1997 (date of the outbreak of the Separatist crisis) in the Comorian Gendarmerie and Defence Force camps with the present number of arms, made it possible to determine approximately the number of arms of all categories to be collected, which totaled 415. It is broken down as follows:

- i) 313 arms received by the regular military personnel and listed in the Gendarmerie register as well as arms abandoned during the attempted landing by the National Army in Anjouan on 3 October 1997;
- ii) 2 Weapons possessed by a civilian;
- iii) 1 weapon seized in Moheli from a civilian who took part in the penultimate attempted coup in Anjouan;
- iv) 99 weapons to be sought by the Gendarmerie throughout Anjouan

15. No additional arms and ammunition from outside was reported so far on the Island. On the other hand, there was no information on unexploded ammunition and explosives.

16. The meeting of the National and International Military Experts held in Mustamudu from 10 to 12 November 2001 made it possible to discuss and determine the practical modalities as well as the organization and schedule of the operation of arms collection.

17. In the light of its discussions with the military Experts, the OAU delegation, led by my Special Envoy, proposed the speedy deployment of a military observer mission, according to the following operation plan:

- a) The mandate of the Military Observer Mission would be to:
- supervise the smooth operation of arms collection to be carried out by the comorians;
 - verify and monitor the compliance with arms collection procedures;
 - play the role of mediator in case of conflict during the operation.
- b) It was suggested that a total of 16 Military Observers, at the rate of 4 Officers per country, be provided by the following countries of the Region: South Africa, Mauritius, Madagascar and Seychelles and be deployed in Anjouan before the end of November 2001. It should be recalled that Seychelles had already indicated that it would not be able to provide Military Observers. That country would, therefore, have to be replaced by another country of the Region.
- c) The Comorian Parties strongly recommended the participation of France because of the psychological impact it could have on the operation of arms collection. In that regard, the Secretary General addressed a letter to the French Minister Delegate of Cooperation to inform him of that request of the Comorian Parties and request the logistical and financial support of France.
- d) Organizational Aspects: The Operation of arms collection on the Island of Anjouan would be carried out by the Anjouanese Military with the assistance of two (2) officers from Grand Comoros, member of the Committee of National Experts and under the supervision of 16 International Observers.
- e) Duration of the operation: A minimum of 21 days.
- f) Funding of the operation: OAU and possibly other donor countries.
- g) Logistics: considering the very short duration of the operation, the meeting of Experts deemed it more advantageous to resort, as much as possible, to hiring locally logistical means and the possible assistance of NGOs present on the spot or the UN agencies (UNDP, for example), rather than buying equipment from outside, which would take a long time before reaching its destination. The following means would be required for the operation of arms collection:

i. Transport

9 vehicles of which 2 were already available at the OAU Liaison Office in the Comoros:

ii. Communication

- 4 HF fixed Radio stations of which 3 were available at the OAU Liaison office in Moroni; the fourth one would be sent from Addis Ababa;
- 5 HF mobile stations which could be sent from Addis Ababa (Logistics depot of the General Secretariat)
- 1 satellite phone (OAU Logistics depot)

iii. Office materials: to be rented locally

- At the CP:
- 2 computers with printers and stabilizers
 - a) 1 photocopying machine
 - b) 1 fax machine
 - c) Office supplies

iv. Fuel and lubricant for the vehicles

h) Estimates for the operation

The estimates for that operation would amount to US\$ 105,000. The estimates are indicative and take into account some parameters such as possibility of hiring locally some equipment for the mission. They take into account transportation to and from Anjouan of observers and some equipment from Moroni and Addis Ababa, insurance, daily subsistence allowance of the Military observers, office supplies and allowances for the local staff.

i) Schedule

- D – 5: Beginning of the sensitization campaign
- D: Arrival of International Observers
- D+1 to D+2: Installation of International Observers and preparation of the operation
- D+3 to D+10: Beginning of voluntary handing over of arms
- D+11 to D+18: Investigation and recovery of remaining arms
- D+19: Dismantling of operation
- D+20: Departure of the Mission

III. OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A) Observations

18. All the Comorian Parties recognize the urgent need to collect the arms as soon as possible. This operation is technically feasible and the support of all the Parties, including the Civil Society, is crucial to ensure that it is carried out under calm and serene conditions.

19. However, there is a tendency, at the level of the Leaders, to demand in parallel with the arms collection, the payment of salary arrears and the restructuring of the Security Force. Such an operation will require more time and, consequently, will be difficult to carry out before the holding of the referendum.

20. Whatever be the decision of the Comorians on this matter, it is imperative that, in the medium term, the legislative provisions on arms possession, in Anjouan and in the entire country, be strengthened.

21. During the talks between the delegation and the Anjouan Authorities, the latter pointed out that they had begun appealing to the military and the population to surrender their arms. But it was difficult, at present, to evaluate the results.

B) Recommendations

22. In the light of the afore-mentioned observations, the Central Organ could decide to:

- i) authorize the Secretary General to deploy, as a matter of urgency, an OAU Military Observer Mission during the operation of arms collection, in conformity with the operation Plan described in Paragraph 17 above;
- ii) urge the Member States concerned to provide speedily the Military observers for the OAU Mission;
- iii) reiterate its appeal to all the Comorian Parties to implement the Framework Agreement for Reconciliation in the Comoros and establish the conditions conducive to the organization of the Constitutional referendum scheduled for 23 December 2001.