



**EIGHTY SECOND ORDINARY SESSION OF THE
CENTRAL ORGAN OF THE OAU MECHANISM FOR
CONFLICT PREVENTION, MANAGEMENT AND
RESOLUTION AT AMBASSADORIAL LEVEL**

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**REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL ON
THE SITUATION IN THE COMOROS**

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report provides an update on the situation in the Comoros since the 81st Ordinary Session of the Central Organ of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, held in Addis Ababa, on 28 February 2002. These developments relate to the elections held as part of the process of establishing the institutions of the New Comorian Ensemble. They also cover the activities of the OAU Military Observer Mission in the Comoros (OMIC).

II. THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

2. The Central Organ will recall that, during its 81st ordinary session at Ambassadorial level, it was briefed on the situation in the Comoros. At the end of its deliberation, the Central Organ, *inter alia*, encouraged the Comorian Parties to continue to implement the Framework Agreement for Reconciliation in the Comoros. In particular, the Central Organ appealed to all the candidates to the presidential primaries in Grand Comoros and all the parties involved in the constitutional referendum in the islands to remain calm and show restraint during the voting process and beyond, and to do their utmost in order to enhance the climate of confidence and reconciliation, as well as to safeguard peace and security in the country.

3. I wish to inform the Central Organ that the referendum for the constitution of the islands took place on 10 March 2002, and resulted in their adoption in Anjouan and Moheli. In Grand Comoros, the population rejected the draft constitution and, as a result, new steps were to be taken to prepare a revised draft and submit it for referendum. This was done on 7 April 2002, and the draft constitution for Grand Comoros was then adopted.

4. The first round election for the President of the Executive of Anjouan took place on 31 March 2002. Colonel Mohamed Bacar, hitherto the Authority of Anjouan, won with approx. 71%. No second round was needed in Anjouan. The first round election for the President of the Executive of Moheli also took place on 31 March 2002. The top two candidates (i.e. Mohamed Hassanali and Mohamed Fazoul) faced off during the second round of election, which was held on Sunday 7 April 2002. Mr. Fazoul won with over 55%. However,

the National Electoral Commission, which is in charge of the organization, supervision, publication and validation of electoral results, later suspended the results of the election in Moheli, following an appeal for annulment introduced by candidate Hassanali. On 22 April 2002, the National Electoral Commission decided to validate the results of the election in Moheli, but no official communication has been issued in this respect.

5. The primaries for the selection of the three candidates of Grand Comoros who were to stand for the election of the President of the Union des Comores did not take place as scheduled on 10 March 2002, owing to serious disagreements among the candidates. Eventually, they were held a week later, i.e. 17 March 2002, and resulted in the selection of Colonel Azali Assoumani, Colonel Mahamoud Mradabi and M. Said Ali Kemal as the top three presidential candidates. The national ballot was scheduled for 14 April 2002.

6. The first round election for the Executive of the island of Grand Comoros was delayed, owing to the rescheduling of the referendum for the constitution of the island. After several rounds of consultations, it was agreed to hold the first round on 21 April 2002, and the second round a week later on 28 April 2002.

7. However, the candidates Mradabi and Kemal held the strong view that the election for the president of the Executive of Grand Comoros should be held before the national presidential ballot, so as to impede the President of the Union from affecting the outcome of the election for the President of the autonomous island of Grand Comoros.

8. In an attempt to resolve the disagreement over the electoral calendar, several dates were suggested for the first round of election in Grand Comoros. Eventually, the Transitional Government of national unity decided, on 30 March 2002, to maintain the electoral calendar described above, but the candidates Mradabi and Kemal persisted in their call to postpone the holding of the presidential ballot to 28 April 2002, to enable the completion of the two rounds of election for the Executive of Grand Comoros. That position was reiterated in a communication dated 10 April 2002, and addressed by the candidate Mradabi to the National Electoral Commission.

9. On its part, the General Assembly of the National Electoral Commission issued, on 3 and 10 April 2002, a communiqué in which it stressed the need to abide by the sequence of the electoral process (i.e. the holding of the election for the Executive of the island before the national presidential

election). The National Electoral Commission expressed the view that it was not willing to take responsibility for the consequences that could result from the decision to change this sequence.

10. In a communiqué published on 11 April 2002, the National Electoral Commission indicated that since all the logistical conditions were now met for the holding of the national presidential election, it could organize the ballot on 14 April 2002, provided that assurances were given concerning the safety of its members.

11. In another communiqué published on 11 April 2002, "on behalf of the Authority of Anjouan", the Deputy Prime Minister of the Transitional Government of national unity expressed the view that the national presidential ballot should be postponed for two weeks, to enable the holding of the election for the Executive of Grand Comoros. In his view, this would preserve a climate of serenity and would ensure that the election would be transparent and impartial.

12. During their last campaign rally, held in Moroni on 12 April 2002, the candidates Mradabi and Kemal instructed their partisans and the Comorian people in general not to vote on Sunday 14 April 2002. Veiled threats of violence were issued against those who would be willing to act otherwise.

13. It is against this background that I decided to send his Special Envoy to the Comoros, Mr. Francisco Madeira, to monitor the conduct of the presidential ballot and to undertake any necessary initiative aimed at averting any action that could forestall the ongoing process. At the end of his consultations with various stakeholders, the Special Envoy noted that the candidate Azali wanted the election to be held on 14 April 2002, while the other two candidates were adamant about the need to postpone it for 28 April 2002.

14. On the eve of the ballot, these candidates requested the National Electoral Commission to withdraw their voting cards from all the polling stations. This was done on Sunday 14 April 2002. In certain polling stations, the partisans of the two candidates removed the voting cards by force. In other instances, ballot boxes were forcibly removed from polling stations. Overall, the climate was calm but tense, particularly in some areas in Grand Comoros and Anjouan.

15. The General Secretariat deployed an OAU Observer Team, led by Ambassador Mamadou Diawara, former Permanent Representative of the Republic of Guinea to the OAU. The OAU Team comprised Ambassador Kati Korga, Ambassador of the Republic of Togo to Ethiopia and Permanent Representative to the OAU, and four officials. It was part of the team of international observers deployed to the Comoros for the presidential ballot, who comprised representatives of the Francophonie, the Indian Ocean Commission and the Arab League.

16. In the joint communiqué issued on 15 April 2002, the Team of international observers, *inter alia*, noted the following elements:

- i. the institutions in charge of the organization of the electoral operations functioned in a satisfactory manner;
- ii. the wish expressed by some actors and protagonists to postpone the date of the presidential ballot, who invoked irregularities in the electoral rolls and disagreements over the sequence of the elections;
- iii. the assurances given by the National Electoral Commission concerning the holding of the presidential ballot on 14 April 2002.

17. The international observers held the view that the general climate during the ballot was calm, but various incidents were reported, and some were even witnessed by the Observers. They also noted that some delays in the opening of the polling stations, due mainly to the delayed delivery of polling material. According to them, the majority of officials at polling stations performed their duties earnestly and responsibly. However, the withdrawal, at the last minute, of candidates Mradabi and Kemal seemed to have had a certain impact on the turnout. The international observers also noted that, despite the fact that adequate security was not provided to all polling stations, the Comorian electorate demonstrated a sense of patriotism and discipline.

18. The international observers concluded by expressing the wish that the ongoing reconciliation and democratization process should continue and consolidate peace, stability and dialogue among the political and social actors in the Comoros.

19. In a communication dated 15 April 2002, and addressed to the National Electoral Commission, the candidates Mradabi and Kemal requested it to annul the election, on the ground that the period allocated to propaganda by the electoral law was not respected. It should be noted that Article 16

stipulates that the period for propaganda should not exceed 40 days or be less than 20 days. According to these candidates, the campaign period, which started officially on 5 April 2002, should have lasted until 25 April at the earliest. No decision was taken by the National Electoral Commission on the appeal made by the two candidates on this matter.

20. The National Electoral Commission has remained deeply divided over the decision to validate or invalidate the results on the presidential election. As a result, no formal decision on this matter has been reached.

21. Meanwhile, the situation has continued to deteriorate. The General Secretariat, which has continued to monitor closely the situation in the country, has received calls by several Comorian parties for OAU's assistance in the search for a peaceful and consensual solution to this crisis.

III. ACTIVITIES OF THE OAU MILITARY OBSERVER MISSION (OMIC)

22. The Central Organ will recall that, during its 81st ordinary session in February 2002, it authorized me to deploy, as a matter of urgency and as an initial step, 30 military observers and 9 technicians, to assist their Comorian counterparts in securing the Archipelago during the electoral process and beyond, in accordance with the recommendations of the Team of Military and Security Experts of the countries of the Region and the OAU Troika. That Team was mandated by the Ministers of the countries of the Region and the OAU Troika, meeting in Pretoria on 18 January 2002, to proceed on mission to the Comoros to assess the security situation in the country and make recommendations on the best way to help the Comoros meet its security needs and build its capacity with a view to establishing the conditions conducive to the smooth electoral process and promoting security and trust during the transitional period and beyond.

23. I am pleased to inform the Central Organ that the OAU Military Observers have been deployed to the Comoros since mid-march 2002. The Team, which is under the command of Lt.-Col. R. Gibson of South Africa, is comprised of 9 Officers from South Africa and 9 technicians NCOs, 6 Officers from Togo, 5 Officers from Mozambique and 5 from Senegal. The Officers are deployed in the three islands, as follows: Grande Comore, 9 Military Observers and 3 technicians; Anjouan, 9 Military Observers and 3 technicians; Moheli, 7 Military Observers and 3 Technicians. The Mission is monitoring the security situation, through vehicles and foot contact patrols, as well as through close collaboration with the Comorian Army.

IV. OBSERVATIONS

24. The current situation, if not resolved quickly, has the potential of undermining the reconciliation process. On 23 April 2002, I issued a communiqué in which, I appealed to all the parties concerned to place the interests of the country above any other consideration and to seek a solution to the pending problems through dialogue and compromise that have enabled the reconciliation process to reach its current stage. I wish to reiterate this appeal. In view of the urgency of the situation, I have decided to dispatch my Special Envoy, Minister Francisco Madeira, to the Comoros to assist the Comorian Parties overcome the current difficulties and bring the reconciliation process to a successful end.