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REPORT OF THE INTERIM CHAIRPERSON ON CONFLICT
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REPORT OF THE INTERIM CHAIRPERSON
ON CONFLICT SITUATIONS IN AFRICA

1. This report deals with the different conflict situations in Africa since the last Executive Council session in N'Djamena, last March. More specifically, it focuses on developments in The Comoros, Somalia, The Sudan, in the relations between Eritrea and The Sudan, the peace process between Ethiopia and Eritrea, in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia. It also gives an account of efforts deployed by the African Union to help find peaceful and negotiated solutions to these different situations.

A. COMOROS

2. At its session in N'Djamena, in March 2003, I informed Council of the difficulties encountered in the implementation of the Fomboni Framework Agreement, due to the conflict of powers between the Union and the Autonomous Islands on the issues of internal security, collection and sharing of customs revenue, as well as the adoption of the budget for the year 2003. I also briefed Council on the recommendations of the Ministerial Session of the Countries of the Region and the Troika on The Comoros held in Moroni, on 28-29 January 2003. In particular, I underscored the need to create the necessary conditions to complete the electoral process and establish the institutions of the New Comorian Entity.

3. The period following the Executive Council Session was marked by a series of initiatives aimed at overcoming the difficulties in the reconciliation process. In March 2003, the Ambassador of France in The Comoros, in cooperation with the International Organisation of the Francophonie (OIF) and the United Nations Development Programme, initiated actions with a view to ending the deadlock. In this connection, a document focusing on four essential points, namely, the budget, power sharing between the Islands and the Union, the Constitutional Court and the modalities for the continuation of the electoral process, was submitted to the parties concerned. However, the proposals contained therein were rejected by the President of the Autonomous Island of Ngazidja (Grande Comoros), Abdou Soulé El Bak, invoking, among other things, in support of his decision, the lack of a revenue collection mechanism, the need to establish certain conditions before the holding of legislative elections (such as the recovery by the Island of prerogatives incumbent upon it under the Fundamental Law of The Grande Comoros and prior deployment of foreign military observers who will act as security forces throughout the electoral process, etc.)

4. While these talks were going on, the archipelago experienced great tension resulting from a series of strikes by teachers in secondary and primary

institutions, demanding the review of the salary scale and the payment of salary arrears, and demonstrations by secondary school students on 24 and 25 March 2003. There were violent clashes between the latter and the law enforcement agents, with many wounded on either side.

5. During the same month, a conflict of powers pitted the Union against the Island of Ngazidja concerning the collection of licence fees and taxes, each party inviting taxpayers to pay their licence fees and taxes to its departments. The economic operators therefore refused to pay, and stopped work on 8 April 2003, completely paralyzing the Island of Ngazidja. Other demonstrations by women movements and opposition political parties took place in March, in Moroni, to protest against the arrest and imprisonment of Cheik Ali Bacar Cassim, Interior Minister of the government of the Island of Ngazidja, accused of attempting to destabilize the government. He was freed on 30 May 2003.

6. On 24 March 2003, the President of the Union of The Comoros, Azali Assoumani, addressed a letter to me, concerning the stalemate in the process for the implementation of the Fomboni Framework Agreement. In the letter, President Azali wrote that «the neo-separatist will of the Executives of Grande Comoros and Anjouan, expressed by their refusal to collaborate legally in the organization of the legislative elections and the appointment of members of the Constitutional Court, is impeding the successful establishment of institutions». Stating that the deadlock poses a real danger, President Azali stressed that «had the elections of the various Assemblies of the islands and the Union taken place, the deliberate crisis created and kept alive in total disregard for the law, common sense and respect for the sacrifice of the Comorians and the efforts of the international community, would have been resolved». In conclusion, President Azali called on the African Union to help overcome the current difficulties, emphasizing that the Continental Organization «could not allow a systematic, ill-advised and short-sighted action to destroy the fruit of so much effort and patience».

7. In reply, in a letter dated 4 April 2003, I reiterated that the AU remained seriously concerned over the impasse in the implementation of the Fomboni Framework Agreement and the Paris Consensus, reached at the meeting held in the French capital in November 2002. I emphasized that the AU would continue to do its utmost to facilitate the completion of the reconciliation process. To this end, I informed President Azali of my intention to initiate consultations with South Africa, in its dual capacity as coordinator country of the regional efforts on The Comoros and the Chair of the AU, with a view to examining possible ways and means of overcoming the crisis, and to send my Special Envoy to The Comoros, Minister Francisco Madeira, to the Archipelago.

8. Mr. Madeira stayed in the Archipelago from 21-26 April 2003. During his stay, he met with President Azali Assoumani, the Chief Executives of the

Autonomous Islands, as well as the other Comorian parties. This visit enabled my Special Envoy to carry out a comprehensive assessment of the situation and examine with his interlocutors how to break the deadlock and complete the reconciliation process. My Special Envoy was scheduled to return to the Archipelago in May. However, this new mission had to be postponed due to scheduling problems.

9. As part of efforts to overcome the crisis, Mrs. C. Dlamini Zuma, Foreign Affairs Minister of South Africa, sent an emissary to The Comoros from 17 to 24 May 2003. On that occasion, the South African Emissary delivered letters of invitation to the Chief Executives of the Autonomous Islands of Anjouan, Mohéli and Grande Comoros, inviting them to come to South Africa to exchange views on the current situation. The visit, which should also enable the Chief Executives to familiarize themselves with the *modus operandi* of South African institutions, is scheduled for 9 to 13 June 2003.

10. In the meantime, at the initiative of the OIF, the Technical Commission of the Union of The Comoros charged with preparing draft bills, met in Paris from 21 to 23 May 2003. This meeting, which brought together representatives of the Union and the Autonomous Islands, examined the issue of power sharing, particularly issues pertaining to customs revenue and the budget, internal security forces as well as the Legal System and the Constitutional Court.

11. The meeting was a follow-up to the mission of a delegation of the International Organisation for the Francophonie to The Comoros at the end of March 2003, to liaise with all the parties in order, firstly, to secure their commitment to a political agreement, prior to the organization of peaceful legislative elections, and secondly, to prepare the terms of the said agreement, based on a consensus on the crucial issue of power sharing between the Union and the Autonomous Islands. For his part, the Secretary General of the OIF, Abdou Diouf, had written to brief me on the outcome of this mission and the follow-up action he envisaged to take, including the meeting held in Paris towards the end of May.

12. Nearly two and a half years after its signing, the Fomboni Framework Agreement is faced with serious difficulties. The lack of consensus on the issue of power sharing and the completion of the reconciliation process, if allowed to persist, could bring to naught the achievements of the past years thanks to the combined efforts of the Comorian parties and the international community. I strongly urge the Comorian parties to transcend their differences in order to successfully complete the reconciliation process and enable the Archipelago to overcome, once and for all, the cycle of instability and the crisis, which has characterized its development since it attained independence in 1975.

B. SOMALIA

13. Since the last Session of the Executive Council, held in early March 2003, in N'djamena, Chad, I have continued to follow closely the unfolding dynamics of the IGAD-led Somali peace process at Mbagathi, Kenya, as well as monitor the developments on the ground in Somalia. My Special Envoy, Amb. M.A. Fom, has continued to follow the proceedings of the Somalia National Reconciliation Conference during the period under review. In addition, I have maintained contacts with Amb. Bethuel Kiplagat, the Kenyan Special Envoy and Chairman of the Conference.

14. Although the peace process encountered constraints arising from divergences of views among the Somali parties and within the IGAD Technical Committee itself, the shortage of funds, as well as outbreaks of hostilities in Mogadishu and southern parts of Somalia, I am pleased to report that significant ground has been covered in pursuit of the objective of restoring normalcy and durable peace in Somalia, through the achievement of a comprehensive political settlement among the Somali parties. Not least, such a settlement should also provide for a programme of DDR and post-conflict reconstruction in the country.

15. On 18 March 2003, after repeated outbreak of hostilities in Somalia, I issued a statement condemning the renewed fighting in the country and their perpetrators. This statement followed another that I issued in January 2003 to the same effect.

16. Around the same time, I received a letter from Amb. Kiplagat requesting the AU to consider deploying a mechanism to support the implementation of the cessation of hostilities in Somalia within the framework of the 27 October 2002 Eldoret Declaration. Subsequently, in early April 2003, Amb. Kiplagat dispatched General J. A. Musomba, coordinator of activities/functions of the Committee Monitoring Cessation of Hostilities, to Addis Ababa, to consult with the Commission regarding the said request.

17. From 23 to 26 April 2003, I dispatched a delegation to Nairobi to join with my Special Envoy for consultations regarding a joint IGAD-AU proposal to deploy a fact-finding mission to Somalia, with the mission being tasked to undertake an assessment of the political, military, social and humanitarian situation on the ground for purposes of informing the way forward in the post-Mbagathi stage of the Somali peace process. On 9th May 2003, I dispatched another delegation back to Mbagathi to finalise plans, jointly with the Committee Monitoring Cessation of Hostilities (under Technical Committee), pursuant to the Eldoret Declaration. On 22 May, the IGAD-AU fact-finding mission traveled to Somalia. At the time of finalizing this report, the mission

was pursuing its consultations with the Somali parties concerned. In this regard, I should like to commend the efforts made by the Technical Committee and IGAD in allocating the required funding for the exercise.

18. I am pleased to report that the six Reconciliation Committees, established on 29 November 2002, then in Eldoret, to deliberate on various aspects of the transitional agenda, had worked steadfastly until the end of March 2003, when they submitted their reports to the Chairman of the Conference. Subsequently, a Harmonization Committee, made up of Somali experts, was set up by the Technical Committee to integrate the reports for presentation to, and deliberation by, the Plenary Session of Phase II. To this end, the Committee submitted the integrated report to Amb. Kiplagat on 6 May 2003. In view of this progress, the Technical Committee invited the Kenyan Foreign Minister and Chairman of the IGAD Committee of Frontline States Foreign Ministers, Hon. Stephen Kalonzo Musyoka, to Mbagathi to receive the single report and to open the Plenary of Phase II. My Special Envoy represented me on the occasion. At the time of finalizing this report, the Plenary had concluded its deliberations on four reports, out of six. Deliberations on the two last reports (conflict resolution and reconciliation, federalism and provisional charter) are expected to be concluded in the first week of June.

19. Meanwhile, a group comprising of four factions issued a declaration at the end of March 2003, announcing their withdrawal from the Conference and their intention to launch a parallel initiative in Mogadishu. In reaction, Somali leaders at Mbagathi issued a declaration denouncing the move taken in Mogadishu and re-affirming their confidence in and commitment to the on-going Mbagathi process.

20. On 19 May 2003, my Special Envoy met, in Nairobi, with the TNG Foreign Minister, Mr. Yusuf H. Ibrahim, at the invitation of the latter. The two sides exchanged views on the very same issue, as well as on the fact-finding mission, DDR, formation of a government and post-conflict reconstruction. In his words, the Foreign Minister asserted that: "there was never any initiative, as purported in media reports before, involving the TNG in kick-starting a rival parallel peace process in Mogadishu; the TNG was at the root of the Kenyan initiative to call for and convene the ongoing reconciliation conference and has maintained a significantly large delegation for the purpose. However, in the event that the current process did not conclude fruitfully, only then would the TNG consult with other Somali parties to chart an alternative way forward to end the crisis in Somalia".

21. At the beginning of April 2003, given the persistent tight budget on which the Conference has been running, especially since January 2003, and as part of the broad efforts to support the peace process, I authorized an AU

contribution of US\$ 50,000 to the Somalia National Reconciliation Conference. I would like to seize this opportunity to appeal to Member States in a position to do so to provide financial support in order to sustain the Conference.

22. Since the N'djamena session, I have also continued to follow developments in the self-declared Republic of Somaliland. In this respect, I would like to report that presidential elections were held in that part of Somalia on 14 April 2003, in the wake of the local elections of December 2002. On 19 April the Somaliland Electoral Commission declared President Kahin the winner of the elections, with 42.08% of the votes.

23. The period under review has also been marked by renewed efforts to ensure the effective implementation of UN Security Council resolution 733 (1992) of 23 January 1992, imposing an arms embargo on Somalia. On 25 March 2003, the Chairman of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 751 (1992) concerning Somalia, transmitted to the Security Council the report of the Panel of Experts mandated to collect independent information on violations of the arms embargo on Somalia and to provide recommendations on possible practical steps and measures for its implementation.

24. The Panel was appointed by the UN Secretary-General on 4 September 2002, in pursuance of resolution 1425 (2002) of 22 July 2002, for a six months period. In its report, the Panel concluded that "only comprehensive and concerted actions by the Security Council will pave the way to increased compliance with the arms embargo". It added that an effective arms embargo must, *inter alia*, include "a Somali-based effort designed to assist in identifying and impeding violators of the embargo; sustainable and incremental efforts by the international and regional organizations to provide support to Frontline States in implementing the arms embargo, and strengthening the investigative and monitoring tools available to the sanctions Committee".

25. On 5 May 2003, the Chairman of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 751 (1992) sent me a letter in which he drew my attention to the recommendation contained in the Panel's Report inviting among others, the African Union to actively assist the Frontline States (Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Kenya) in incorporating, into their national legislations, administrative guidelines and regulations required to fulfill all treaty obligations arising from the embargo. In the Panel's view, assistance may also be provided in the areas of enforcement of the embargo, of timely sharing of information related to the violations of the embargo, and responses to investigative requests. At the time of finalizing this report, the Commission was considering how best the recommendation could be taken forward, including the capacity of the AU to undertake the activities involved.

26. Subsequently, on 16 May 2003, the Executive Secretary of the AU Permanent Mission to the United Nations met with the Panel of Experts whose mandate was extended by UN Security Council resolution 1474 (2003) of 8 April 2003. On that occasion, the Panel sought the view of the AU on "the possibility of establishing a monitoring mechanism for the implementation of the arms embargo with partners inside and outside Somalia, in close cooperation with regional and international organizations, including the African Union".

27. Finally, I wish to commend the efforts of Kenya and the other IGAD Frontline States, as well as the international partners, that have enabled the Somali peace process to realize the tremendous gains as reflected above. I would like to seize this opportunity to urge the Frontline States to demonstrate greater cohesion and to spare no efforts to ensure that the suffering of the Somali people and the instability in Somalia are brought to a swift end. I also strongly appeal to the Somali parties, who have the ultimate responsibility to restore peace and security in their country, not to squander the real opportunity provided by the ongoing Reconciliation Conference. I also commend the continuing efforts led by the UN agencies and NGOs to bring relief to the suffering populations in Somalia. On its part, the AU, which, over the past months, has significantly stepped up its involvement in the Somalia peace process, will continue to do its utmost to ensure that the current efforts will yield the expected results.

C. THE SUDAN

28. During its Second Ordinary Session held in N'Djamena, I informed the Executive Council on the evolution of the peace process in The Sudan. In particular, I recalled the signing, in July 2002, of the Machakos Protocol and the subsequent negotiations between the Government of The Sudan (GoS) and the SPLM/A, including the second round of the Machakos talks that resulted in the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on the cessation of hostilities. I also apprised Council of the contribution of the AU to the negotiation process through the activities of my Special Envoy, Ambassador Baba Gana Kingibe, who maintained close contacts both with the parties and the mediators.

29. Since the N'Djamena session, efforts aimed at achieving a comprehensive peace for The Sudan have continued. As indicated in my March Report to Council, one of the most difficult issues of the negotiations relates to the status of the three conflict areas of Abeyi, Southern Blue Nile and Nuba Mountains. The GoS opposed the discussion of these areas within the IGAD framework, stressing that the mandate of the regional body is limited to mediating the issue of Southern Sudan as it was defined at independence in 1956. The SPLM/A maintained a contrary view, insisting that

these areas be addressed within the IGAD framework. The mediators struck a compromise, namely that the three conflict areas would be discussed separately under the aegis of Kenya and not IGAD. It was on this basis that the 15 January to 5 February period was agreed on for talks. Eventually, the talks did not take place and were replaced by a three-day symposium, in Nairobi.

30. It is against this background that substantive talks on the three conflict areas were held in Karen, Kenya, from 4 to 19 March 2003. The objective was to address the root causes of the war as well as issues, grievances and concerns related to conflict and finally generate possible solutions. Prior to the resumption of the negotiations, both sides agreed on the modalities and approach for the talks. In particular, the parties agreed to form three committees to discuss Abyei, Southern Blue Nile, and the Nuba Mountains simultaneously. Informal consultations on these areas were held in Nairobi, from 23 to 26 May 2003.

31. On 15 March 2003, the Parties extended the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Cessation of Hostilities for a further three months period to be effective 30 June 2003. The Parties also signed an extension of the Agreement to protect non-combatant civilians and civilian facilities from military attack until 31 March 2004. I am encouraged by these steps, as they will no doubt contribute to the creation of a conducive atmosphere for the negotiations and reduce the untold sufferings inflicted on the civilian population throughout the conflict.

32. I would like also to inform Council that, at the initiative of President Mwai Kibaki of Kenya, President Omar Hassan Ahmed El Bashir and Dr. John Garang, Chairman of the SPLMA/A, met in Nairobi on 2 April 2003. On that occasion, President El Bashir and Dr. Garang reiterated their confidence in the mediators and agreed on the need to maintain the momentum towards reaching a comprehensive peace. They reaffirmed their commitment to honour the agreements reached between the Parties, and to facilitate unrestricted delivery of humanitarian assistance to affected areas in The Sudan. They discussed possible ways to enhance the arrangements for monitoring and verifying the cessation of hostilities. They also agreed on the need to open communication channels between them and on effective modalities for enhancing communications at various levels. They committed themselves to be forthright on upcoming issues in the negotiations, with a view to boosting the peace process. They expressed hope on reaching a final peace agreement by the end of June 2003.

33. From 7 to 16 April 2003, the Fourth Session of the Political Committee Task Force took place in Nairobi. These talks were held pursuant to the Machakos Protocol and aimed at working out the security arrangements that

will be implemented prior to and during the six-year interim period in The Sudan.

34. The talks were preceded by presentations from resource persons on issues on Ceasefire and Security Negotiations; Verification and Monitoring; Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration; as well as Police and Policing. On the basis of separate consultations with the parties, the mediators drew up a tentative programme for the talks. The GoS accepted the proposed agenda, while the SPLM/A did not, insisting on the need to include the status of the envisaged armed forces in the proposed agenda. The SPLM/A also objected to the inclusion of the agenda item on the "Establishment of National Security Commands and Coordination", on the grounds that this issue should be dealt with during the discussions on wealth and power sharing. As a result, the proposed agenda was turned into what was then termed points of discussions for security arrangements.

35. In the course of the discussions, the SPLM/A indicated its desire to have two separate armies during the interim period. In support of its position, the SPLM/A stated that the Government has not honored any of the commitments it made in previous agreements. It emphasized, too, that the presence of its army in the South would ensure the protection of the Southerners in the event that there are any violations of the final agreement.

36. On its part, the GoS reiterated its position on the need to have one united army, adding that such a position is in line with the dictates of the Machakos Protocol. The GoS further stated that a single army will be a step towards building a united Sudan and will testify to the political will of both sides to promote unity. The GoS indicated that the SPLM/A proposal would mean that the existing militia groups would end up maintaining their military personnel as well, invariably creating a chaotic situation. Finally, the GoS stressed that it would not risk receiving the wrath of the international community by violating agreements it has signed in their presence.

37. The talks on security arrangements also focused on the issue of the Verification Monitoring Team (VMT). It is to be recalled that the Addendum to the MoU on Cessation of Hostilities, signed by the Parties on 4 February 2003, provides for the establishment of a VMT to check on all reported cease-fire violations. However, the Addendum was not clear on how the VMT is supposed to operate, in particular with regard to the responsibility of deploying missions on the ground. As a result, the two parties had divergent interpretations: the GoS felt that the MoU Channel of Communication Committee on Cessation of Hostilities should be responsible for tasking the VMT, while the SPLM/A was adamant that this responsibility should be assumed by the Chairperson of the VMT.

38. I am happy to report that, during the Fifth Session of the Political Committee Task Force on Wealth and Power Sharing, held in Nairobi, from 7 to 21 May 2003, the Parties finally signed the Verification and Monitoring Teams Tasking Procedures and gave permission to the VMT to carry out reconnaissance missions that will be followed by the deployment of teams on the field.

39. Also during this Session, the mediators, together with the parties agreed to develop an all-inclusive negotiating framework on all the outstanding issues in power, wealth-sharing and security arrangements under the IGAD process, except, of course, the three areas that are to be addressed under the Kenya mandate. The Parties also worked closely with technical experts from the IMF and World Bank in developing common understanding of ways of resolving the problems of economic governance, structures of Government and resource sharing, including land.

40. With the view to developing the best possible compromise, the Chief Mediator, Gen. L. Sumbeiywo continued consulting with both Parties to finalize the draft proposal of the final agreement after the session ended. This proposal will be presented to both parties during the next session that will assess the details of security arrangements and international and regional guarantees of the comprehensive peace agreement.

41. During the N'Djamena Sessions of Council, I reported on the AU role on the peace process. In the period that followed, the AU has continued to lend its support, along with the other observers, to the peace process. My Special Envoy, Ambassador Baba Gana Kingibe, participated in the negotiations that took place. He also maintained close contacts with the Parties. In this respect, my Special Envoy traveled to Khartoum from 14 to 16 March 2003, for discussions with the Sudanese authorities on the peace process.

42. I would also like to inform Council that the AU has made a contribution of US\$50,000 to the IGAD Secretariat for Peace in The Sudan. The Commission is also exploring ways of strengthening its delegation to the peace talks, in particular through securing the services of a military expert who will assist in security-related aspects of the negotiations.

43. In a related development to the peace process, the US President George W. Bush on 21 April 2003, certified to Congress that the GoS "has engaged in good faith negotiating to achieve a permanent, just, and equitable peace agreement", and that it "has not unreasonably interfered with humanitarian efforts". Such certification is called for by The Sudan Peace Act, which requires the US President to report every six months, certifying whether the Government and the SPLM/A are making progress in The Sudan peace talks.

44. It is also important to note that, in anticipation of a comprehensive peace agreement, a three-day donor conference for the reconstruction of The Sudan was held, from 1 to 3 April 2003, in Noordwijk, the Netherlands. The aim of the Conference was to identify and coordinate reconstruction activities that could begin immediately after an agreement is concluded between the GoS and the SPLM/A. The meeting discussed peace-building activities, such as mine clearance, disarmament and the rehabilitation of the country's infrastructure.

45. Subsequent to the Netherlands Conference, another meeting was held in Nairobi on 9 May 2003, during which the Parties agreed to form a joint Planning Mechanism and to work together to identify programme priorities for the Pre-Interim Period. They also agreed to immediately initiate capacity building activities with the assistance of the donor community.

46. In conclusion, while tangible progress has been made since the signing of the Machakos Protocol, there are still difficult issues to be resolved before the parties reach a comprehensive agreement. It is, therefore, crucial that they remain committed to the search of peace and continue to cooperate fully with the IGAD-led peace process. It is also the duty of the international community to remain focused and to continue to make every contribution possible in support of The Sudan peace process.

D. SUDAN – ERITREA

47. In N'djamena, I informed Council on developments in the relations between Eritrea and Sudan. In this respect, I indicated that, as part of AU's effort, to defuse the tension between the two countries, a delegation led by the South African Foreign Minister and comprising the Interim Commissioner for Peace, Security and Political Affairs visited Khartoum early February, where it had consultations with Government officials.

48. As Council is aware, the delegation was also supposed to visit Asmara. However, as the dates suggested were not convenient for the Eritrean authorities, the visit could not take place. During the period under review, no new development was brought to the attention of the AU.

E. PEACE PROCESS BETWEEN ETHIOPIA AND ERITREA

49. At its N'djamena Session, I briefed the Executive Council on the progress made in the peace process between Ethiopia and Eritrea. In this respect, I reported on the steps taken for the implementation of the 13 April 2002 Decision on the delimitation of the border between the two countries, including the meeting of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC) held in London on 8 and 9 February 2003 to clarify certain issues and address

concerns of both parties. I also appraised Council on the efforts being made by the United Nations to facilitate the implementation of the Algiers Agreements of June and December 2000, and the contribution of the African Union to this process.

50. Since then, I have continued to follow closely the developments in the peace process, particularly regarding the demarcation of the border. Council will recall that, following the 13 April 2002 Decision, the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC), submitted to the parties, for comments, a 1:25,000 scale map of the areas through which the proposed border would pass. The parties' comments reached the EEBC towards the end of January 2003.

51. In its comments, Ethiopia expressed its concerns regarding the demarcation process, stressing the obligation for the EEBC to conduct a careful demarcation exercise, including an on-the-ground examination of the human and physical geography. Eritrea's response focused on demarcation technicalities.

52. In the EEBC's view, as expressed in its eighth report of 21 February 2003, Ethiopia's comments, "in a number of significant respects, amounted to an attempt to reopen the substance of the April Decision", while the Commission has no mandate to vary the boundary already delimited – the December 2000 Agreement having expressly precluded it from deciding matters *ex aequo et bono*. However, it expressed its readiness to do so if both parties agree. On 21 March 2003, the EEBC issued a statement in which it reaffirmed its 13 April 2003 Decision as final and binding. It also emphasized that "it is inherent in any boundary delimitation that it may give rise to anomalies on the ground. This is essentially a matter for the parties to deal with by agreement between themselves, or by agreeing to empower the Commission to vary the boundary, or by turning to the United Nations as contemplated in Article 4.16 of the December 2000 Agreement".

53. On its part, the Ethiopian Government sent communications to the United Nations and other members of the international community, requesting UN's involvement under Article 4.16. Furthermore, on 2 May 2003, it sent a note verbale to the AU Commission emphasizing its position. The Ethiopian Government expressed its deep disappointment with the way the demarcation process has been conducted by the EEBC, and considered that the EEBC was misrepresenting "Ethiopia's efforts, particularly its Comments of 24 January 2003." It stressed that Ethiopia was still in acceptance of the April 2002 EEBC's Decision and what it was seeking was, for "the Commission, to address the issues the Decision had, itself, left open for resolution during the demarcation process", so as the demarcation would be consistent with the April 2002 Decision and the Algiers Agreements. The Ethiopian Government urged the AU

Commission to support Ethiopia's call for immediate action by the UN Secretary-General under Article 4.16 of the December 2000 Agreement.

54. On its part, Eritrea denounced Ethiopia's stand and requested the Security Council to take the necessary steps to ensure the full implementation of the EEBC Decision.

55. All these developments have led to delays in the demarcation process, which was due to start in May 2003. It is now expected to commence this July.

56. On a more positive note, I would like to note that there have been additional contributions made to the UN Trust Fund for the Delimitation and Demarcation of the Border. Out of the US\$ 7.6 million requested by the EEBC for its work in 2003, 6.2 millions have already been obtained, leaving a shortfall of only US\$ 1.4 million, compared with a shortfall of US\$ 4.6 million last January. On the ground, the EEBC has identified all provisional pillar sites of the new border Sector East, in anticipation of demarcation.

57. In its resolution 1466 (2003) of 13 May 2003, the UN Security Council urged both Ethiopia and Eritrea to continue to assume their responsibilities and to fulfill their commitments under the Algiers Agreements and called upon them to cooperate fully and promptly with the Boundary Commission, to implement fully the Commission's binding Demarcation Directions and to abide promptly by all its Orders. The Security Council urged the two parties to begin sensitizing their populations about the demarcation process and its implications. It encouraged the guarantors, facilitators and witnesses of the Algiers Agreements and the Friends of UNMEE to further intensify their contacts with the authorities in both countries, with a view to contributing to an expeditions demarcation. It invited specifically the African Union to continue to lend its full support to the peace process.

58. On 21 March 2003, I had a meeting with the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, Ambassador Legwaila Joseph Legwaila. The meeting provided an opportunity to review the peace process in the light of the difficulties encountered in the demarcation process and the role the AU could play to assist in resolving these difficulties. Subsequently, Amb. Legwaila met with President Thabo Mbeki, in his capacity as chair of the AU. On 4 April, I convened, in Addis Ababa, a meeting of the witnesses of the Algiers Agreements, as part of the efforts to move the peace process forward.

59. During the period under review, the situation in the Temporary Security Zone (TSZ) has remained generally calm, in spite of some reports of shootings around the Mereb River area, which could not be confirmed by UNMEE. Both the Eritrean Defense Forces (EDF) and the Ethiopian Armed Forces (EAF) have

maintained the same positions and continued to respect the TSZ. However, some difficulties must be noted. These relate to restrictions on the freedom of movement of the UN peacekeepers in the northern areas adjacent to the TSZ and cross-border grazing in the Drum Drum areas (Central Sector). It should also be noted that the long-standing problem of a direct high altitude flight for UNMEE between Asmara and Addis Ababa is still not resolved.

60. In its resolution 1466 (2003) mentioned above, the Security Council extended the mandate of UNMEE until 15 September 2003. The Security Council also addressed the difficulties faced by the peacekeeping mission, calling on the parties to cooperate fully and expeditiously with UNMEE in the implementation of its mandate.

61. During the period under consideration, the Military Coordination Commission (MCC), whose mandate is to facilitate the functions of the peacekeeping mission, held its 16th meeting in Djibouti, on 19 March 2003, to address issues pertaining to the peace process. There has been no progress in implementing the MCC's decisions especially the activation of MCC structures at local level; similarly no progress has been made on the proposal to hold the MCC meetings alternatively in Asmara and Addis Ababa. Ethiopia supports the proposal, but Eritrea did not agree.

62. The humanitarian situation in both Eritrea and Ethiopia remains grave, mainly as a result of the drought and the poor response from the international community. The situation has been compounded in Ethiopia by severe floods in the Southern part of the country. In early May, the UN World Food Programme (WFP) estimated that the donations confirmed for 2003 accounted only for 34% of its total needs for Eritrea, while it had a short fall of 54% for its requirement for Ethiopia.

63. In response to this situation, the United Nations agencies have taken a number of steps. For its part, the AU, in November last year, made symbolic donations of US\$ 200,000 each to Ethiopia and Eritrea. I am concerned by the poor response of the international community to the drought situation in the two countries. It is my fervent hope that this situation will soon be corrected, as any delay will only worsen the situation of the affected civilian populations.

64. The AU Liaison Mission in Ethiopia-Eritrea (OLMEE) has continued to play its role in the peace process, in spite of the financial constraints experienced by the Mission and which led in a scaling down of its size. The Senior Political Representative (SPR) has continued with his liaison work with the parties, UNMEE and other institutions involved in the peace process, both in Asmara and Addis Ababa. The Senior Military Representative (SMR) has continued to conduct inspection visits to the TSZ and to liaise with military commanders and officials of the parties and UNMEE. He also participated in

the MCC meeting of mid-March 2003. In addition, OLMEE liaison teams continued to deploy and patrol the TSZ in conjunction with UNMEE.

65. Although significant progress has been made in the peace process since the signing of the Algiers Agreements, thanks to the political will demonstrated by both parties and the cooperation extended by them to UNMEE and the EEBC, I remain deeply concerned by the problems encountered in the implementation of the demarcation process. This situation underlines the need for the international community to step up its efforts in support of the peace process. As one of the witnesses of the Algiers Agreements, the African Union, working closely with its partners, in particular the United Nations, shall spare no effort to bring the peace process to a swift and successful conclusion.

F. BURUNDI

66. During the period under review, I continued to closely monitor developments in the political, social and security situation in Burundi. Although there were positive developments in the political situation, especially with the rotation of the presidency, the security situation remained precarious, characterized by the resurgence of clashes between the regular armed forces and the armed movements of Pierre Nkurunziza's CNDD-FDD and Aghaton Rwasa's Palipehutu-FNL. From the economic and humanitarian standpoint, there was no significant improvement in the situation, as evidenced by continued fighting in some provinces, resulting in the destruction of social and economic infrastructure, as well as mass displacements of civilian populations.

67. Concerning political developments, I am gratified by the remarkable progress achieved in the past few months. Indeed, in keeping with the commitments made by the Burundian parties, the President of the first phase of the transition, Major Pierre Buyoya, on 30 April 2003, handed over the highest office of the land to his Vice-President, Domitien Ndayizeye, who will lead the second phase of the transition to the end, *i.e.* 1 November 2004. On the occasion of the handing over ceremony, which I personally attended, I commended the courage of the stakeholders of the Burundian political scene for the token gesture made which would forever mark the political life of Burundi.

68. I seized the opportunity to appeal once again to the government and the CNDD-FDD of Pierre Nkurunziza to respect the Ceasefire Agreement signed on 2 December 2002, and effectively implement it. Furthermore, I urged the Palipehutu-FNL of Aghaton Rwasa to join in the negotiation process in order to sign a ceasefire agreement.

69. Concerning the implementation of the Ceasefire Agreement of 2 December 2002 between the transitional government and Pierre Nkurunziza's

CNDD-FDD, my Special Representative in Burundi, Ambassador Mamadou Bah, in close collaboration with the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General, the Representative of the European Union and the Ambassadors of France, Belgium and the United States, constituting an informal group to support the ceasefire, worked to facilitate the lifting of blockade due to the stopping of food supplies to elements of the CNDD-FDD.

70. Council may recall that following the signing of this agreement, the two parties were to observe a truce on the battlefronts, the truce, however, did not last. The problem of pre-cantonment of the elements of this armed movement and the provision of their supplies then arose, in order to contain them in «controllable» areas and prevent them from continuing to perpetrate acts of violence against the civilian populations on the pretext of searching for supplies. In this respect, it should be noted that, thanks to the efforts deployed by the informal group mentioned above, the European Union agreed to supply food to the armed movements. However, this operation, which started well, was discontinued, since the government opposed it due to violations of the 2 December 2002 Agreement and continued fighting in various provinces of the country attributed to Pierre Nkurunziza's CDD-FDD movement.

71. I am pleased to inform Council that, in keeping with the Joint Declaration of 27 January 2003, according to the terms of which the two parties, requested, among other things, the immediate deployment of military observers from the African Union, and the decisions of the Central Organ at its session held from 14 January to 3 February 2003, African Union observers, the first elements of which arrived in Burundi mid-February, were deployed in the Makamba, Bubanza, Gitega, Ruyigi and Kayanza provinces in March 2003, and are now fully operational. The total number is 43. At this juncture, I would like to express my gratitude to Burkina Faso, Mali, Gabon, Togo and Tunisia for having, in a spirit of African solidarity, provided the requisite personnel, in a precarious security context.

72. In this same vein, I would like to express my satisfaction at the beginning of the deployment of forces of the African Mission provided for under the terms of the Ceasefire Agreement of 2 December 2002, following the 2 April 2003 Communiqué of the Central Organ which defined its objectives and mandate. With regard to the last point, it should be noted that the principal mandate of the Mission, which shall be deployed for an initial period of one year, pending the deployment of a UN Peacekeeping Force, is to oversee and evaluate the implementation of the Ceasefire Agreement; facilitate the activities of the Joint Ceasefire Commission and the technical committees for the restructuring of the national defence and police forces; secure the assembly and withdrawal areas which have been identified; facilitate the supply of technical assistance for the disarmament,

demobilization and reintegration process; and facilitate the supply of humanitarian assistance.

73. Several technical meetings were also held at the headquarters of the Commission in Addis Ababa as well as in Bujumbura, to examine the operational deployment plan, including the rules of engagement, and the Mission's budget. Based on a total strength of 3225 men and for an initial period of one year, the budget is estimated at 190 million dollars. It is now a question of beginning the delicate task of mobilizing the required resources. If our partners are – in the name of international solidarity and universal peacekeeping – called upon to provide a substantial part of this amount, it is also the duty of Member States to contribute to this effort, thereby showing Africa's determination to assume its responsibilities. I wish to seize this opportunity to express my profound gratitude to South Africa, Ethiopia and Mozambique not only for contributing troops, but also for bearing the expenses for an initial period of 60 days, pending the mobilization of the required resources and the establishment of a repayment mechanism.

74. The African Mission is placed under the political responsibility of my Special Representative to Burundi, Ambassador Mamadou Bah. The military component is under the command of the South African General Sipho Binda, assisted by Brigadier General Gebret Ayele Bicha of Ethiopia. The first South African, Ethiopian and Mozambican elements have already arrived, and the headquarters of the force is now functional.

75. At the beginning of April 2003, my Special Representative attended, in New York, a meeting of Special Representatives and Envoys to Burundi convened by the United Nations Secretariat. Issues considered during this meeting, focused, *inter alia*, on the financial needs of the African Mission and the subsequent deployment of a United Nations Peacekeeping Force.

76. On 27 January, the parties to the conflict agreed to the establishment of a Joint Ceasefire Commission (JCC), which would be under the responsibility of a chairperson nominated by the United Nations. For now, the JCC is led by an Interim Chairperson in the person of Colonel Alioune Samba of Senegal. The Commission is already at work. It works with the representatives of Jean Bosco Ndayikengurukiye's CNDD-FDD, the Palipehutu-FNL of Alain Mugabarabona and the MIOB. I hope that the representatives of the Palipehutu/Karatasi and the CNDD/Nyangoma who arrived in Bujumbura on 14 May 2003, as well as those of the Frolina/Karumba, who arrived a bit earlier, will contribute to the progress of the work of the Commission. I however deplore the absence, to date, of the representatives of the CNDD-FDD of Pierre Nkurunziza.

77. Despite this absence, the JCC has already met on three occasions. At its second meeting on 14 April 2003 in Bujumbura, the representatives of the different parties discussed and agreed on the areas of cantonment. Three areas were chosen by consensus, namely, Muyange, Bugarama and Buhinga in the Bubanza, Gitega and Muyinga provinces respectively. At this juncture, I wish to inform Council that a deployment plan has been agreed on; however, it can only be effective when all the elements of the African Mission are present in Bujumbura and the combatants of the armed movements have all accepted the principle of cantonment, in other words, when the cessation of hostilities is effective.

78. At the initiative of my Special Representative, assisted by the Commander of the African Mission, a coordination meeting, bringing together the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General in Burundi, the Interim Chairperson of the JCC and some UN agencies, was held on 15 and 16 May 2003, to discuss the different logistical aspects of cantonment. The food and medical supply aspects were discussed with the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the World Food Programme to define, organize and plan the activities of the various partners prior to the beginning of cantonment.

79. Apart from the monitoring of the Ceasefire Agreement, the issue of repatriation of numerous Burundian refugees remains at the centre of my preoccupations. In this respect, I am gratified by the close cooperation existing between the HCR in Burundi and the AU Mission in Burundi (MIOB). Within the framework of this cooperation, MIOB participated in the 5th Burundi/Tanzania/HCR Tripartite Commission held in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, at the end of February 2003, and my Special Representative received, on 29 April 2003, the HCR Regional Coordinator for the Great Lakes Region, Mrs. Wairimu Karago, with whom he discussed the issues of refugees in the light of new prospects offered as a result of the deployment of military observers from the African Union and the seamless change in the leadership of the State.

80. My Special Representative in Burundi also closely monitored the work of the *ad hoc* mechanism established by the World Bank to address the issues of disarmament, demobilization, re-settlement and reintegration of ex-combatants. In this context, he received two experts working on the World Bank's multi-state programme for demobilization and reintegration (PMDR), as well as an Adviser to the Bank responsible for the Regional Programme for Demobilization in the Great Lakes Region, of which Burundi is a beneficiary.

81. I also wish to inform Council that during my visit to Bujumbura from 29 to 30 April 2003, on the occasion of the handing over ceremony between the out-going President, Major Pierre Buyoya and Domitien Ndayizeye, President of the second stage of the transition, I laid the first stone of an OAU/AU

village. The project involves the building of fifty residential houses, as the contribution of our Organization to receive Burundian returnees, as a mark of the AU's solidarity with these distressed populations.

82. My Special Representative in Burundi also continued to participate in the meetings of the Arusha Agreement Implementation Monitoring Commission (AIC), the second session of which was held from 17-21 March 2003, and the third from 19-23 May 2003, as well as the deliberations of the AIC Executive Council. I am gratified by the efforts of the transitional Government and Parliament to implement the activities provided for under the Arusha Agreement. These activities are, among other things, legal, judiciary and administrative reforms and the adoption of laws conducive to the development of the democratic process in Burundi, particularly the law on political parties. I would like to invite the transitional Government and Parliament to redouble efforts to achieve the adoption of all the other proposed laws provided for in the timetable fixed by the Arusha Agreement, including the law on the reform of the defence and security forces, temporary immunity granted to politicians returning from exile, etc.

83. Needless to stress that the situation in Burundi, to which the OAU/AU has devoted so much effort in the last decade, will remain at the centre of the concerns of our Organization. The latter will spare no effort to contribute to the final resolution of the Burundian crisis. Noticeable progress has been made, particularly at political level. However, there is still a lot to be done, particularly in the security and socio-economic areas. Efforts aimed at persuading the CNDD-FDD of Pierre Nkurunziza to implement and respect the Ceasefire Agreement signed on 2 December 2002 should be pursued; similarly, all efforts should be deployed in order for Aghaton Rwasa's Palipehutu-FNL to join the on-going peace process. I would also like, once again, to make an urgent appeal to the international community to provide Burundi with the necessary humanitarian and economic assistance to consolidate the peace process.

G. DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC)

84. The positive evolving situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which I gave an account of in my report at the Second Session of the Executive Council held in N'Djamena, in March 2003, has been generally consolidated since then, to the extent that there is hope for an irreversible follow-up to the process, in spite of the unstable situation which still prevails in the North-Eastern region of the country.

85. On 6 March 2003, the parties to the Inter-Congolese Dialogue concluded an agreement on pending issues at the signing in Pretoria, South Africa, on 17 December 2002, of the Global and All-Inclusive Agreement, namely, the

Transitional Constitution, the national army and security measures for the transitional institutions and their coordinators. The Plenary Session of the Dialogue to adopt the different sectorial agreements previously concluded (ranging from Sun City, 25 February- 19 April 2002, to the 6 March 2003 Agreement) was held from 1-2 April 2003 in Sun City, South Africa, under the aegis of Sir Ketumile Masire, Neutral Facilitator of the Inter-Congolese Political Dialogue. The ceremony for the conclusion of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue was attended by all the Congolese parties, as well as many of the Region's Heads of State; the Commission of the African Union was represented by my Special Representative in the DRC, Mr. Martin Bongo.

86. On 4 April 2003, President Joseph Kabila promulgated the Transitional Constitution. On 7 April, he was sworn in and on 15 April, he granted amnesty for exploits of war committed between 2 August 1998 and 4 April 2003. On 14 April, the Implementation Monitoring Commission for the Global and All-Inclusive Agreement held its first meeting in Kinshasa chaired by President Kabila, with the participation of all its members, except two delegates from the RCD/Goma (RCD/G), who were absent from Kinshasa «for security reasons». Following a meeting between the Chairperson of the Monitoring Commission and the International Committee to Oversee the Implementation of the Agreement, the United Nations Mission in The Congo (MONUC) which chairs the Committee, obtained the assurance of the United Nations Secretary General that MONUC elements would ensure the security of RCD/G delegates; the latter arrived in Kinshasa on 27 April 2003, and have since participated in meetings of the Monitoring Committee.

87. The International Committee to Oversee the Implementation of the Agreement or the Committee to support the transition institutions, for its part, held its first meeting on 10 April 2003.

88. Concurrently with the establishment of the transitional institutions, the Ituri Pacification Commission (CPI), in the North-Eastern region of DRC, provided for under the Luanda Agreement of 6 September 2002, was finally established, after the signing, on 18 March 2003, in Bunia, of a Ceasefire Agreement between all the parties to the process for the restoration of peace in the region, with the exception of the Union of Congolese Patriots (UPC) of Thomas Lubanga. The launching ceremony of the CPI took place on 4 April 2003 in Bunia. Presided by the Deputy Representative of the United Nations Secretary General in DRC, the CPI includes, among others, representatives of the Congolese, Angolan and Ugandan governments, members of civil society organizations, delegates of parties to the conflict in the region and representatives of target communities. The CPI, whose mission, *inter alia*, is to put in place an administrative authority, establish a structure to maintain law and order and ensure the complete withdrawal of Ugandan troops from the region, held its first meeting on 11 April 2003 in Bunia.

89. However, the fact remains that the creation of the CPI has not put an end to the war, looting and all manner of atrocities, as well as the massive displacement of civilian populations, which have been taking place in the Ituri region for many years. For instance, as soon as the withdrawal of Ugandan troops from the region was announced, and despite the presence, particularly in Bunia, of considerable MONUC forces, fighting resumed and escalated between the militia of the Hema and Lendu ethnic groups.

90. On 3 April 2003, hundreds of people, mostly of the Hema ethnic group, were massacred in Drodo, a locality under the Bunia administrative authority. The events were indignantly condemned by the international community, and the United Nations diligently carried out an inquiry, the results of which are still pending. I issued a communiqué in which, among other things, I strongly condemned the massacre and urged the parties to implement the Ceasefire Agreement of 18 March 2003.

91. Fighting culminated in the capture on 12 May 2003 of Bunia by the UPC and the «withdrawal» of Lendu militia to the outskirts of the town where they attempted, at the cost of many dead and wounded on both sides, to recapture the «abandoned» positions. Concerned by the events, I issued a communiqué on 13 May 2003 in which I once again invited the parties to immediately implement the Ceasefire Agreement and join in the on-going peace process in the country. Furthermore, I added my voice to that of the Chairperson of the African Union, President Thabo Mbeki, in calling for the reinforcement of the mandate and capacities of MUNOC to impose peace in Ituri.

92. On 14 and 15 May 2003, President Joseph Kabila presided, in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, a meeting of the parties to the peace process in Ituri, in the presence of representatives of some countries of the region. At the end of the meeting, the parties reiterated their commitment to reviving the process for the re-establishment of peace in Ituri, the cessation of hostilities, the cantonment outside Bunia of the elements of their respective forces and the demilitarisation of Bunia. The parties also called for the deployment of foreign troops in the region under the aegis of the UN; they called on foreign countries to end all support to armed groups and requested that the Congolese government be neutral.

93. The Extraordinary Session of the Executive Council held in Sun City from 21-25 May 2003, among other things, noted with satisfaction the significant progress made in the peace process; it expressed grave concern over the prevailing situation in the East and North-Eastern regions of the country. The Executive Council urged the parties to the conflict in the Ituri region to abide by the commitments made in Dar-es-Salaam in mid-May 2003.

94. On 30 May 2003, the Security Council adopted a resolution authorizing the deployment, until 1 September 2003, of a Multi-National Interim Emergency Force in Bunia. The objective of the Force is to stabilize security conditions; improve the humanitarian situation; guarantee the protection of the airport and displaced persons in camps in Bunia; and ensure the security of the civilian population, the staff of the United Nations and humanitarian organizations in the town. France shall lead the Multi-National Force; the United States has promised to provide logistical assistance.

95. The capturing of the town of Bunia by Ugandan forces on 6 March 2003, created great tension between Kampala and Kigali, the two capitals accusing each other of maintaining and supporting their respective oppositions. The dangers of renewed clashes between the armies of the two countries on Congolese territory led to the timely intervention of the international community to diffuse the tension.

96. On 10 March 2003, the President of the United Nations Security Council issued a declaration in which he urged, firstly Uganda to honour its commitment to withdraw its troops from DRC, and secondly, Rwanda to refrain from any action which could aggravate the situation in the Ituri region.

97. On 18 March 2003, I issued a press release in which I reminded the parties of the commitments they had made. I stressed that the Commission of the African Union expected them to honour these commitments, thereby contributing to accelerate the re-establishment of peace and stability in the region.

98. On 20 March 2003, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1468 (2003) on DRC. Concerning the specific situation in Ituri, the Security Council requested that all governments of the Great Lakes Region immediately put an end to their military and financial support for parties engaged in conflicts in Ituri.

99. On 11 April 2003, President Thabo Mbeki, in his capacity as Chairperson of the African Union, presided, in Cape Town, over a mini-summit, which brought together Presidents Joseph Kabila, Yoweri Museveni, Paul Kagame and Benjamin Mkapa to examine the situation. The two parties made commitments. This meeting greatly contributed to reducing tension between Uganda and Rwanda.

100. At the invitation of the government of the United Kingdom, Presidents Kagame and Museveni met in London on 8 May 2003. The meeting, which took place under the mediation of Mrs. C. Short, the British Secretary of State for Development, enabled the two Heads of State to consider the issues dividing them and «create conditions for the normalization of their State to

State relations». Furthermore, they called for the implementation of the ceasefire agreement in DRC and invited all parties to stop arming the militia and negative forces in the Eastern region of DRC.

101. I considered dispatching a fact-finding and goodwill mission to Presidents Yoweri Museveni and Paul Kagame, led by the Honourable Dawit Yohannes, President of the Chamber of Representatives of the Peoples of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. The mission, initially scheduled from 24 to 25 April, was postponed until 23-27 May and finally cancelled due to difficulties encountered in obtaining audiences for my emissaries with the Ugandan and Rwandan Heads of State.

102. Despite numerous and serious problems, which could impact negatively on the on-going process, the general evolution of the process nonetheless gives hopes for optimism. The process however, remains fragile and there is a need to support and consolidate it. This task requires, even more than ever, the participation of all internal and external stakeholders in the peace process.

H. ANGOLA

103. Council will recall that, at its N'djamena session, it took cognizance of the challenges of post-conflict reconstruction in Angola and the difficulties facing the country in many other areas, and called upon the AU Commission, in collaboration with the Angolan government, to sensitize the international community on the socio-economic reconstruction and development needs of Angola. Council also noted with satisfaction the Report of the AU Ad-hoc Committee on the Implementation of Sanctions Against UNITA.

104. Since the Council's session, I have continued to follow developments in Angola. In this respect, I would like to welcome the Declaration of the Government of Angola of 4 April 2003, in which it solemnly pledged to resolve all the country's internal problems "in a spirit of unity and brotherhood and with the permanent objective of promoting peace and harmony," as part of the process of promoting reconstruction, as well as consolidating democracy and development.

105. I am also pleased to report that, despite the many challenges facing the country, peace is being consolidated and the Angolan Government is now actively engaged in post-conflict reconstruction. The demobilization, disarmament, de-mining, reintegration and other rehabilitation efforts have been going on despite financial constraints. So far, almost 90,000 ex-combatants have undergone the registration process, while an estimated 15,000 are still waiting to move to their designated reception areas from the provinces, as well as from neighboring countries.

106. In support of the country's post-construction efforts, the World Bank, on 27 March 2003, adopted a 125 million dollars programme for Angola's transition strategy. The World Bank programme will focus on projects of macro-economics management, support for demobilization, reinsertion of former soldiers and the fight and prevention of HIV/AIDS, among other areas. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has also started talks with the Government to assess its economic reforms and performances.

107. However, the humanitarian situation remains a matter of serious concern. According to the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), some 2.1 million Angolan citizens are currently facing food insecurity. As a response to the 2003/UN Inter-Agencies Consolidated Appeal, the donors had, by the end of March, contributed only 16 per cent of US\$ 63 million, the total amount requested. I would like to appeal to the international community to positively respond to the call for humanitarian assistance that is crucial to the success of the peace building efforts. The government of Angola has also released figures that show that 1.8 million people remain internally displaced, although 1.5 million IDPs have returned to their areas of origin.

108. I want to seize this opportunity to recommit our Continental organization to help sustain the peace process and to contribute, along with the international community, to the on-going post-conflict reconstruction efforts.

I. CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

109. The period following the N'Djamena session was marked by crucial developments. Indeed, on 15 March 2003, General François Bozizé, former Chief of Staff of the Central African armed forces, seized power from the constitutionally elected President, Ange-Félix Patassé. I strongly condemned this putsch. The Central Organ, meeting in its 90th Ordinary Session in Addis Ababa on 17 March, also condemned the coup, recalling on this occasion, the total rejection and unequivocal condemnation by the AU of all anti-constitutional changes of government.

110. The Central Organ requested the perpetrators of the coup to take immediate measures to re-establish the democratically elected government of the country. In the meantime, the Central Organ recommended the suspension of the participation of the CAR in activities of the decision-making organs of the AU. The Central Organ appealed to Member States, the AU's partners and the international community as a whole to support the efforts of the countries of the region and the AU to restore constitutional order.

111. The Central Organ asked me to immediately initiate contacts with the Central African parties to examine in concert with the latter the modalities for

a rapid return to constitutional legality. To this end, the Central Organ requested me to dispatch without delay, my Special Envoy, Sadok Fayala, to the countries of the region for consultations with the concerned leaders, with a view to examining the situation and finding the ways and means of rapidly resolving the crisis.

112. President Thabo Mbeki, on behalf of the AU, CEMAC, CEN-SAD, the European Union, France, and the United States of America also condemned the coup d'état.

113. On the ground, the situation evolved rapidly. Having suspended the government and dissolved the National Assembly, General Bozizé established a new government, led by Mr. Abel Goumba, appointed to the post of Prime Minister, and announced an 18 to 30 months transition period. On 28 March, Mr. Goumba introduced a government comprising 28 members from the different political forces of the country. Soon after, General Bozizé established the National Transition Council, an ostensibly consultative structure bringing together all the active and socio-political strata of the country and which shall assist the Head of State and the government in dealing with legislative issues.

114. On 18 March, General Bozizé received the Foreign Ministers of Gabon and the Republic of Congo. At the end of this meeting, the Congolese Foreign Minister declared that the CEMAC Heads of State had noted with interest General Bozizé's readiness for transparency, highlighted in his address to the nation on 16 March. At a meeting in Libreville on 21 March, CEMAC Member States decided to grant the request of General Bozizé who wished for CEMAC forces deployed in the country to be maintained and reinforced in order, pursuant to the Libreville Communiqué of 2 October 2002, to secure the Chad-Central African border and guarantee the safety of President Patassé. At the end of the meeting, CEMAC defined a new mandate for its forces, which will henceforth be to «contribute to securing the Central African Republic and the restructuring of the Central African armed forces».

115. As part of the implementation of the communiqué of the 90th Session of the Central Organ, I dispatched my Special Envoy, Mr. Sadok Fayala, to the region, from 14 to 21 April 2003.

116. In Libreville, Mr. Fayala met with President El Hadj Omar Bongo and the Foreign Minister, Jean Ping. In Bangui, he held talks with the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Hervé Charles Wenezoul, the Prime Minister, Abel Goumba, General François Bozizé, the Head of State and representatives of the European Union, BONUCA as well as the civil society and trade unions. In N'Djamena, he was received by President Idriss Déby. In Brazzaville, due to difficulties in communication, he was unable to meet the Congolese authorities.

117. During the meetings with my Special Envoy, Presidents Bongo and Déby reaffirmed the need to respect the AU principles on the rejection of all anti-constitutional changes, stressing that the continental organization could not adopt a policy of double standards despite the peculiar nature of the Central African problem. President Déby was particularly interested by security issues; in this respect, he indicated that the issues should be analysed from the Central African as well as sub-regional perspectives.

118. In Bangui, the Central African authorities expressed their willingness to assume their responsibilities in all transparency and called on the international community to assist rather than condemn them. They appealed to the African Union to show understanding. Mr. Goumba informed my Special Envoy that his presence at General Bozizé's side is a guarantee that democracy will be consolidated in Central Africa, and that his government is genuinely a government of national unity since all the political parties are represented therein. General Bozizé, for his part, gave assurances that his action was a noble action designed to salvage the country. While thanking the AU for its initiatives in the Central African crisis, he indicated that he had no objection to the opening of an AU Liaison Office in Bangui. He underscored that his priorities focused on security problems and the restructuring of the army. He also reaffirmed his willingness to organize a national dialogue.

119. On 23 April 2003, General Bozizé enacted a law granting amnesty to the perpetrators of the 28 May 2001 coup d'état, thereby enabling a number of Central Africans to return to their country. However, the return of the former President André Kolingba created a few difficulties in Bangui, where the authorities wish to decide on the modalities of his return with the person concerned. Mr. Kolingba embarked on a tour of the region, visiting N'Djamena, Libreville and Brazzaville.

120. Furthermore, the new government paid, on the due date, the salaries of government workers for the months of April and May, and established an inter-ministerial committee charged with preparing an emergency programme for economic and social recovery.

121. The Central African authorities initiated a clarification campaign abroad. After a tour of the Central African region by Foreign Affairs Minister, Karim Meckassoua, General Bozizé was received by President Bongo on 25 April. At the end of this visit, he declared that he would not contest in the presidential elections, to be organized at the end of the transition. After Libreville, he visited N'Djamena on 5 May, where he met President Idriss Déby. On the same day, the Prime Minister Abel Goumba was received by President Bongo. The following day, he travelled to Paris, where he was received by the Minister for cooperation and Francophonie, André Wiltzer.

122. On 23 May, General Bozizé travelled once again to Brazzaville. At the end of the visit, President Denis Sassou Nguesso, current Chairperson of CEMAC, announced that an extraordinary summit of CEMAC would be held from 2-3 June in Libreville. On 30 May, at the inauguration ceremony of the National Transition Council, General Bozizé announced that by January 2005, constitutional order would be restored, thus indicating when the transition period would end.

123. For its part, the European Union has granted 1.17 million CFA Francs aid to CAR, since the first coup d'état of 15 March, to revive health activities. A meeting between the Central African authorities and the EU is scheduled for 12 June in Brussels, to discuss the resumption of cooperation.

124. Faced with the prevailing situation, it is obvious that our Organization should abide by the Lomé Declaration on Anti-constitutional Changes of Government and maintain the suspension of the participation of CAR in the activities of the AU pending the re-establishment of constitutional order. At the same time, the AU should initiate a constructive dialogue with the Central African authorities - dialogue which has already begun with the visit of my Special Envoy – to accelerate the return of constitutional order and contribute to the resumption, by international partners, of cooperation with CAR, since it is clear that the economic difficulties experienced by CAR are the principal cause of the recurring instability which the country faces. In this regard, the Commission proposes to speed up the opening of the AU Liaison Office in Bangui.

J. COTE D'IVOIRE

125. At the Second Session of the Executive Council held in N'Djamena, in March 2003, I gave an account of the evolution of the situation in Côte d'Ivoire since the signing of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement. I, in particular, recalled the difficulties encountered in the implementation of this Agreement and the decisive role of the Monitoring Committee, within which my Special Representative, Professor André Salifou, provided the support of the AU to the peace process.

126. Following a turbulent period, marked by resistance and violations of the ceasefire, considerable progress was made. At the invitation of President John Agyekum Kufuor, Current Chairperson of ECOWAS, the Accra Round Table on Côte d'Ivoire, which, on 7 March 2003, brought together the Ivorian political forces, facilitated the finding of a common platform on the controversial issues of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement. The compromise reached by the Ivorian parties has instilled new impetus into the implementation of the said Agreement, particularly concerning the attribution and distribution of

ministerial posts for the formation of the Government for National Reconciliation, the establishment of the National Security Council and the nomination, based on a consensus, of personalities to run the Defence and Internal Affairs Ministries. Through my Special Representative, who followed these deliberations, I expressed my satisfaction at this initiative, which contributed to ending the deadlock.

127. In the same vein, President Laurent Gbagbo signed two decrees. The first decree on 10 March, whereby some of his powers were delegated to the Prime Minister Seydou Diarra, in ten specific areas, and the other, on 13 March, on the appointment of 39 members of the government. It was in this peaceful climate that towards mid-March 2003, the inaugural session of the National Security Council and the first Council of Ministers was held in Yamoussoukro. I attended the Council of Ministers together with Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo and John A. Kufuor.

128. Following the handing over ceremonies involving the outgoing ministers and the incumbents held on 14 and 16 April 2003, a decisive as well as symbolic phase was attained on 17 April 2003, with the holding in Abidjan of the First Council of Ministers comprising the nine ministers from the rebellion. Subsequently, the Government Council met in Bouaké on 22 May under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister Seydou Diarra.

129. At the same time, the renewal of tension in the West and Central-Western regions of Côte d'Ivoire at the beginning of April 2003, underscored the fragility of the peace process. The resurgence of violence, characterised, on the one hand, by the Ivorian army's use of combat helicopters and, on the other hand, by the counter-offensive of rebels, at a time when the normalization process was beginning, did nothing to promote the peace process. I therefore supported the calls to order by the Monitoring Committee and the United Nations Security Council who requested that the parties respect the commitments made, immediately cease all attacks and urged the Ivorian government to immobilize the combat helicopters.

130. The deterioration of the situation at the Ivorian border with Liberia, observed mid-April, also gave rise to serious concern. The activism of Liberian and Sierra Leonian backup troops revived tension in an already extremely disturbed region, and increased suspicion between Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia. I am pleased by the meeting, in Abidjan on 30 April 2003, of the Chiefs of Staff of Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, in the aftermath of the meeting in Kara, Togo on 16 April, between Presidents Laurent Gbagbo and Charles Taylor, under the auspices of President Gnassingbé Eyadema. I remain hopeful that these different consultations will make it possible to find immediate solutions thereby putting an end to the existence of these armed groups who are a threat to the security of both countries, causing the displacement of many civilian

populations and who are guilty of looting, massacres and all manner of atrocities, human rights and international humanitarian law violations.

131. At internal level, at a time when political life is reasserting itself, all efforts should be deployed to help the government for national reconciliation to put an end to the proliferation of militia in the country and more particularly in Abidjan. It is important that the Ivorian active forces work towards the establishment and the promotion of measures to inspire trust, thereby encouraging the peaceful co-existence of institutions, particularly between Parliament and the Government for National Reconciliation, as well as the normalisation of political, economic and social life.

132. In this respect, it is important to note that last April, more than half of the people who were in custody pending trial, prosecuted for national security offences, participation in armed gangs and the illegal possession of firearms were released. This sign of a détente, which is in the spirit of national reconciliation, should be followed by others, including the amnesty for all civilians and soldiers involved in the events of 19 September 2002, promised by President Gbagbo. The government announced the preparation of a bill to this effect.

133. The improvement in relations between Côte d'Ivoire and neighbouring countries is worth mentioning. On 23 April, the Ivorian Minister of Trade visited Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, at the head of a large delegation comprising industrialists, businessmen and senior customs and Abidjan Ports Authority officials. This trip contributed to the re-building of trust, the renewal of trade relations and the resumption of railway traffic between Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso. Subsequently, the Burkina Faso Foreign Affairs Minister visited Abidjan on 8 and 9 May 2003. Finally, the Chiefs of Staff of Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso met in Ouagadougou on 28 May to consider the modalities for securing the common border between the two countries.

134. As part of efforts to consolidate peace, the Chief of Staff of the Ivorian army and the Commander of the MPCJ military operations, also Minister of Sports and Leisure, on behalf of the New Forces, signed on 3 May 2003, an All-Inclusive and Final Ceasefire Agreement. This Agreement provides, *inter alia*, for the complete and total cessation of hostilities throughout the national territory, desisting from the use of mercenaries and the recruitment of child soldiers.

135. On the following day, 4 May, the signatories to the All-Inclusive Ceasefire Agreement met in Tiébissou, in the central region of Côte d'Ivoire, within the framework of a meeting for the implementation on ground of the practical modalities of the all-inclusive ceasefire. The two delegations rejected the idea of the creation of a «buffer zone» between their two positions, in

order not to enshrine the image of the partition of the country. On the other hand, they accepted the principle of a «safe corridor» where Ivorian forces and the New Forces could circulate freely without arms or where the ECOFORCE and Operation Licorne neutral forces should be deployed.

136. At the time of finalizing this report, the National Security Council had still not reached a consensus on the appointment of the Ministers of Defence and Security. In the present context, this constitutes a handicap to the effective implementation of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement. I therefore urge members of the National Security Council to transcend their differences in order to rapidly fill these ministerial positions.

137. During the period under review, the international community continued to back the peace efforts of the Ivorian parties. In this regard, on 13 May 2003, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1479 (2003) whereby it decided to establish, for an initial six-month period, a United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (MINUCI), with the mandate of facilitating the implementation of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement and comprising a military component, as a complement to the military operations carried out by the French and ECOWAS forces. The Security Council approved the establishment of a select group charged with backing the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General with regard to political and legal issues, civil affairs, civilian police, elections, humanitarian problems, as well as the establishment of a military liaison group.

138. For its part, the Commission set out to ensure the operationalization of the AU Liaison Office in Abidjan. To this end, a mission visited Côte d'Ivoire from 29 March to 6 April 2003. The recruitment of staff for the Office is currently being finalized.

139. I wish to urge all the Ivorian parties to continue to demonstrate the political will and spirit of compromise required to complete the reconciliation process. The Linas-Marcoussis Agreement offers a genuine opportunity to resolve the serious crisis the country is experiencing and foster sustainable reconciliation between Ivorians.

140. I would like to commend ECOWAS and the international community, particularly France and the Security Council, for their contribution. I urge them to continue to be actively involved in the quest for a lasting solution and provide ECOWAS and its peacekeeping force with the necessary support.

K. LIBERIA

141. The present session of the Executive Council is taking place at a critical time when, on the one hand, the situation in Liberia, especially in the security and humanitarian domains, gives much cause for concern; and, on the other, the outcome of efforts which have been made by ECOWAS as well as the international community appear to have provided some hope for the eventual resolution of the conflict in Liberia.

142. As the parties to the conflict in Liberia have gradually moved towards an agreement to hold talks leading to a ceasefire and a comprehensive peace agreement, the political situation has improved to some degree. Thus, there appears to be greater consensus among the 18 political parties in the country, including the ruling National Patriotic Party, on a number of issues. In a joint statement issued on 13 May 2003, the political parties expressed their "total commitment" towards achieving peace in Liberia; agreed on the need for the deployment of an international force to disarm all warring groups; and also reached a common position on the need for a ceasefire. Similarly, there were indications that the two rebel groups, Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), a new group which emerged in March 2003, were prepared to attend the peace talks scheduled to be held in Accra, from 4 June 2003, in pursuit of a political and negotiated solution.

143. I regret to have to inform the Executive Council that, since its last ordinary session, the security situation in Liberia, as well as that obtaining in the sub-region at large, have palpably worsened. On the one hand, fighting has been taking place in the north, west and central parts of the country between forces of the Government of Liberia and those of LURD; on the other hand, fighting has also been occurring in the south-eastern part of the country between Government forces and those of MODEL. Between them, the two rebel groups, LURD and MODEL, control about 60% of the territory of Liberia.

144. The regional dimension of the war in Liberia also needs to be underlined. Indeed, the apparent involvement of Liberian nationals in the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire as well as the incursions into Liberia by Liberian rebels of MODEL, have given rise to renewed concern that, unless the Liberian conflict itself is resolved definitely, the chronic instability which plagued the Mano River region will continue to spread to other countries in the sub-region. Furthermore, there has been concern about the possible impact of the deteriorating security situation on Sierra Leone.

145. On 6 May 2003, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 1478 (2003) in which it expressed, inter-alia, its deep concern about the "serious instability"

in Liberia and neighbouring countries. The UN Security Council reiterated its demand that all States in the region cease military support for armed groups in neighbouring countries and take action to prevent armed individuals and groups from using their territory to prepare and commit attacks on neighbouring countries.

146. Well into May 2003, humanitarian organizations continued to characterize the humanitarian situation in Liberia as "extremely grave" and "desperate". The United Nations says that, currently, it has only 11% of the funds requested to address the situation there and it is getting worse by the day. As with the internal security situation in Liberia, the humanitarian situation also has a regional dimension to it. Further, Economic activity in the country has been severely curtailed as a result of the war.

147. An ECOWAS mediation and security verification mission composed of representatives of Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Togo and the ECOWAS Secretariat, visited Liberia from 7 to 11 April, 2003. Its mandate was to verify the country's compliance with the demands contained in relevant UN resolutions. The representative for Guinea could not participate in the mission due to the objections of the Government of Liberia.

148. At the end of its visit, the ECOWAS mission recommended, inter alia, that a ceasefire should be concluded between the Government and the rebel groups; a formal dialogue and negotiation process should be established as soon as possible between the warring factions to the conflict; an international force should be brought in to maintain peace and security, particularly in view of the impending presidential and legislative elections; the creation of safe humanitarian corridors to facilitate access to internally displaced persons and refugees should be considered; the leaders of Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone should be encouraged to pursue the peace process that was begun in Rabat in February 2003.

149. On 7 May 2003, a day after having been officially designated as the ECOWAS Mediator for the Liberian Peace Talks, General Abdulsalami Abubakar met President Taylor and representatives of the 19 political parties and civil society organizations. Further, on 26 May 2003, just over a week before the planned peace talks in Accra, members of LURD met General Abubakar in Freetown, Sierra Leone, in preliminary talks.

150. On 6 May, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1478 (2003), extending existing sanctions against Liberia. It is to be recalled that these consist of a weapons embargo, measures against the export of Liberian rough diamonds and travel restrictions on senior Liberian government officials. The Security Council also decided that the arms embargo applies to all sales or supply of arms and related material to any recipient in Liberia, all including

non-State actors such as LURD, and added a 10-month ban on the import of Liberian timber.

151. The UNSC decided to consider, by 7 September 2003, how best to minimize any humanitarian or socio-economic impact of the measures imposed on Liberian timber, including the possibility of allowing timber exports to resume in order to fund humanitarian programmes. It further requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to the Council by 7 August 2003 on the possible humanitarian or socio-economic impact of the measures in question.

152. On 28 February, 2003, the International Contact Group on Liberia met in its Second Working Session in New York. In the statement issued at the end of the meeting, the Contact Group expressed its serious concern over the conflict in Liberia and re-affirmed the need for a comprehensive approach to the solution of the Liberian crisis. Accordingly, it urged the President of Liberia and LURD to enter immediately and without pre-conditions into negotiations on a ceasefire, as they had both committed to do. While stressing the importance of free and fair elections in Liberia, the Contact Group concluded that the conditions for free and fair elections did not exist and urged the Government of Liberia to act rapidly to create such conditions before elections were held. In that regard, the Contact Group agreed to call upon the Secretary-General of the United Nations to consider sending a Needs Assessment Team to Liberia.

153. In accordance with the conclusions reached at that meeting of the International Contact Group on Liberia, its Co-Chairmen, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ghana (representing the ECOWAS Chairman) and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Sweden (and Special Representative of the Presidency of the EU to the Mano River Union countries), visited Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia from 14 to 15 April 2003. Representatives of the Commission of the African Union as well as from the ECOWAS Secretariat took part in the mission.

154. The Co-Chairmen held discussions with President Tejan Kabbah of Sierra Leone, President Charles Taylor of Liberia and Prime Minister Lamine Sidime of Guinea, during which they conveyed the decisions which the Contact Group had taken during its Second Working Session, especially as they related to the issues of a ceasefire and elections. The Co-Chairmen also met representatives of LURD, Liberia's registered political parties and representatives of civil society, women's organizations, religious bodies as well as members of the Contact Group represented in Monrovia.

155. The Co-Chairmen obtained a commitment from both the Government of Liberia and LURD to enter into bilateral ceasefire negotiations under the auspices of ECOWAS, with former Nigerian President General Abdulsalami

Abubakar as mediator. It was agreed that these bilateral ceasefire negotiations, in the form of a "side-bar" meeting, would start simultaneously and at the same venue as comprehensive roundtable talks would, with the participation of political parties and the Liberian civil society.

156. It is to be noted that all the interlocutors of the Co-Chairman stressed the need for an international military presence in Liberia, to monitor a ceasefire and provide security by facilitating the processes of disarmament, demobilization and re-integration, as well as the achievement of security sector reforms that will provide durable peace in Liberia.

157. On 10 April, President Charles Taylor wrote to me as the Interim Chairperson of the African Union. In his letter, he reiterated the interest of the Government of Liberia in seeking the assistance of the African Union in creating a peaceful and stable environment in Liberia. In that regard, the President, while noting the recommendations made by the International Contact Group that a Needs Assessment Mission be undertaken to Liberia, and in accordance with the understanding between the Government of Liberia and the Contact Group, formally requested the African Union, in collaboration with the United Nations and ECOWAS, to undertake a comprehensive Needs Assessment Mission to Liberia.

158. Accordingly, early in May, the said tripartite assessment mission, led by the UN Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, visited Liberia. It met with President Taylor and senior government officials, representatives of international organizations, NGOs, all registered political parties and civil society organizations including, the Inter-Religious Council and the Mano River Womens Peace Network.

159. The mission reported, inter-alia, on the high expectations of Liberians from all walks of life that the peace process would commence soon. It also reported on the demand of all parties for the unconditional cessation of hostilities. It made mention of President Taylor's request for an international monitoring force led by ECOWAS and the AU, to monitor the ceasefire. There was also agreement on the part of the civil society organizations and the political parties on the force, albeit with another name. The mission also reported that there was a consensus on the part of all stakeholders, except the Electoral Commission, that conditions for free and fair elections do not currently exist. The mission reported on the call by all parties, except the Government, that the Electoral Commission be reconstituted.

160. Regarding the question whether the forthcoming elections, scheduled for October 2003, should be postponed, the mission reported that President Taylor had given assurances that he would not obstruct a Supreme Court process seeking to respond to such a request. Mention was also made by the

mission of the lack of consensus on the nature and duration of a possible transitional government. The mission made reference to the call to the international community to prevail on the country's neighbours to withdraw their assistance to the rebels. The mission recalled that the political parties and the civil society organizations had emphasized the need to disarm all armed groups, including the Armed Forces of Liberia which they regarded as sectional. The mission reported that the Government had, however, insisted that the army was constituted constitutionally. The mission also recalled that there had been unanimity regarding the need to restructure all the security agencies so that they reflected a regional and ethnic balance.

161. A technical sub-group consisting of electoral experts of the UN/AU/ECOWAS Needs Assessment Team stayed on in Liberia, after the departure of the main team. It met the Electoral Commission and the political parties and made the following observations and recommendations: there is virtual unanimity that the current situation does not allow for the conduct of elections on the due date; there is a significant level of suspicion among the political parties of the Electoral Commission as currently constituted; the Electoral Commission lacks the necessary resources and logistics for the conduct of the elections; there is a need to reinforce the technical capacity of the Electoral Commission; and there are profound constitutional and legal issues that need to be addressed, in order that the process can be undertaken in a transparent and acceptable manner.

162. The Third Working Session of the International Contact Group on Liberia took place in Brussels, on 12 May, 2003. The meeting was attended by representatives of the AU and other members of the Contact Group, as well as by the mediator for the planned Liberian Peace Talks, General Abdulsalami Abubakar.

163. At its meeting, the Contact Group expressed its "deep concern" about the on-going conflict in Liberia. The Contact Group, thus, reiterated its call for immediate and unconditional negotiations between the Government of Liberia and LURD/MODEL, within the framework of an ECOWAS-led mediation process. It expressed its full support for ECOWAS efforts in that regard, and welcomed the appointment of General Abdulsalami Abubakar as the mediator. It further called on all the parties to the conflict to work with the ECOWAS mediator.

164. The Contact Group stressed that a comprehensive and credible peace process is an essential pre-requisite for continued engagement and support of the international community. It stated that it was prepared to consider recommending the deployment of a monitoring force when concrete progress has been registered. Based on a briefing by the UN/AU/ECOWAS Needs Assessment Mission to Liberia, the Contact Group concluded that all Liberians,

including President Taylor, shared its assessment that conditions for free and fair elections did not now exist; and that the peace talks would address the implications of that assessment. The Contact Group called on all the parties to the conflict to cease hostilities without pre-conditions. It also urged the neighbouring countries to prevent their national territories from being used to undermine the peace process. The Contact Group urged Liberia to comply fully with the demands of the UN Security Council in order for the UN sanctions regime to be lifted as soon as possible.

165. On 22 May 2003, ECOWAS Foreign Ministers met on the margins of the third extraordinary session of the AU Executive Council, held at Sun City, South Africa. A representative of the AU Commission was also in attendance. The meeting was briefed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ghana on on-going efforts to bring the Liberian parties to peace talks, soon to be held in Accra. It considered the need to mobilize resources from the sub-region, and the International community in order to facilitate the deployment of the monitoring force, and was further briefed by the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS on the financial support garnered so far with regard to ECOWAS Mediation efforts: Nigeria would fund the activities of General Abubakar to the tune of US\$1.5 million; the EU Commission had offered to provide some assistance, while the UN had agreed to provide an initial amount of US\$150,000.

166. For its part, the Third Extraordinary Session of the Executive Council adopted a Decision on Liberia in which it welcomed the "recent positive developments regarding prospects for peace in Liberia". The Executive Council called upon all sides to cease all military activities unconditionally; and urged all invited parties to attend the proposed peace talks, in order to achieve durable peace in the country and the sub-region. The Executive Council also appealed to the neighbouring countries to co-operate with on-going efforts to achieve peace in Liberia.

167. There is need to act decisively and speedily to put an end to a conflict which has festered in Liberia itself and caused much grief in the surrounding countries. What is being observed is a situation in which the refugees and armed fighters emanating from the fighting in Liberia are spilling over into the neighbouring countries.

168. It is for this reason that I wish to commend ECOWAS and members of the International Contact Group, as well as the international community at large, for the concerted and focused efforts they have made of recent, to bring the parties to the conflict in Liberia to the negotiating table. Notwithstanding the thorny issues at stake during the peace talks in Ghana in early June, I am confident that if the Liberian parties negotiate in a spirit of sincerity and seriousness, peace can be concretely and speedily achieved. I

would, therefore, appeal to all the Member States of the African Union and the International community at large to be generous in the provision of resources in concretely supporting the negotiations. Similarly, at the appropriate juncture, when the necessary international force is deployed to buttress the anticipated ceasefire and to stabilize the situation, help will be needed from the AU and the international community in terms of logistics, finance and men, to enable that force get off the ground.

169. The warring parties must also be encouraged to allow the establishment of humanitarian corridors to facilitate the delivery of such assistance, as well as to protect the humanitarian personnel who face such high risks.

170. There is also a need to encourage the Rabat Process, to enable the countries in the Mano River Region repair the strained relations, which have come about as a result of years of war and instability.

171. In the medium and long-term, given the region-wide nature of the persistent insecurity, the AU together with ECOWAS and the international community, must begin to look at the possibility of establishing and funding a comprehensive regional scheme which would ensure the efficient and complete disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of combatants from all the affected countries.