

UNITED NATIONS
INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM



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MEMORANDUM INTERIEUR

TO: Mr. Vijay Nambiar
A: Chef de Cabinet
Executive Office of the Secretary-General

DATE: 24 January 2007

REFERENCE:

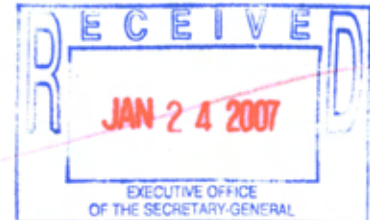
THROUGH:
S/C DE:

FROM:
DE:

H.H.
Horst Heitmann, Director
Security Council Affairs Division, DPA

SUBJECT:
OBJET:

Security Council: Report on activities



Attached please find, for the information of the Secretary-General, a note on the proceedings of the Security Council on Wednesday, 24 January 2007.

cc: Mr. Gambari



PROCEEDINGS OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Wednesday, 24 January 2007

FORMAL MEETING

The situation in Georgia

At its 5623rd (closed) meeting, the Security Council heard a briefing by Mr. Jean Arnault, SRSG for Georgia, who introduced the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2007/15). SRSG Arnault stressed that the report should not be seen as a final judgment on compliance with resolution 1716 (2006) but rather as a description of developments. With regard to steps taken towards the implementation of resolution 1716 (2006), SRSG Arnault highlighted the significant decrease in the presence of Georgian armed personnel in the Upper Kodori Valley, as well as the Georgian decision in principle to adopt a number of transparency measures for the transit of Georgian vehicles through the security zone. In addition, he pointed to the resumption of UNOMIG-CIS joint patrols in the Upper Kodori Valley as well as the Abkhaz decision to allow UN police activities in Gali and surrounding districts.

Meanwhile, SRSG Arnault cautioned that much still needed to be done in order to build confidence between the two parties and to improve the prospects for enhanced security, IDP return and development. In addition, he emphasized the importance of launching a genuine political dialogue, adding that tensions remained very high. Particularly, he noted that the Abkhaz side remained "categorically opposed" to political dialogue without first addressing the issue of the transfer of the Abkhaz government in exile to the Upper Kodori Vallay. On the other hand, SRSG Arnault stated, the Georgian government remained concerned with possible repercussions of the settlement of the final status talks for Kosovo. SRSG Arnault warned that given the high political tensions, killings and other violent acts could lead to escalation.

With regard to UNOMIG, SRSG Arnault expected that the mission's full authorized strength would be deployed shortly, adding that UNOMIG intended to increase its activities in the conflict zone so as to improve its deterring, monitoring, investigative and mediating capacities. He added that it might become necessary to request a modest increase in UNOMIG's authorized strength.

Pointing out that the two sides were devoting more efforts to influencing the international community than each other, SRSG Arnault concluded by underlining the need for the international community to restate its commitment to genuine political dialogue between the two sides. He added that an opportunity for doing so could be at the February meeting in Geneva with the UN and the Group of Friends.

INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS

The situation in Georgia

Immediately following the private meeting, Council members convened in informal consultations to continue their discussion on the issue. Many speakers, such as Slovakia, the United Kingdom, Belgium and China, commended the work of UNOMIG and welcomed the recent positive developments, while Congo and Qatar were concerned about the "slow" and "limited" progress on the ground. Bearing in mind that the mandate of UNOMIG was set to expire in mid-April, Council members generally hoped that more achievements could be made by that time. To that end, they supported that SRS G Arnault and the Group of Friends in their ongoing efforts on the basis of agreed principles, including respecting Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity while duly considering Abkhazia's legitimate concerns.

Most delegations, including the United States, China and France, attached great importance to building confidence and restoring trust between the parties. They welcomed the resumption of joint patrolling by UNOMIG personnel and CIS peacekeepers in the Upper Kodori Valley, and expressed the hope that the practice could continue. In light of the surging killings in the Gali and Zugdidi districts, which France feared could lead to a deteriorating situation, Italy, the United Kingdom and Peru believed that bringing those responsible for the killings to justice would help build confidence. At the same time, noting that negotiation would be the only means to achieve lasting peace, many speakers called on the parties to resume dialogue. The United States urged that "direct" and "sincere" talks be carried out without delay, while Italy held that the two sides could start with dialogue and cooperation on technical issues, so as to restore confidence before launching talks on more substantive issues. Similarly, Belgium, echoed by Indonesia, advocated that a "bottom-up" approach, as discussed at a meeting in Berlin last week, should be adopted in order to revive the political process. In addition, Slovakia, the United Kingdom and South Africa expressed the hope that more progress

on confidence-building could be made at the high-level meeting in Geneva in February.

Some delegations underscored the commitment by the parties to a peaceful solution to the conflict. The United Kingdom and others urged Tbilisi and Sukhumi to implement their outstanding commitments and obligations, including the Moscow ceasefire agreement. China stressed the urgency of full implementation of resolution 1716 (2006), calling on both sides to exercise constraint and refrain from taking unilateral steps that might complicate the situation. Likewise, South Africa believed that implementation of the resolution could lead to a settlement of the conflict. Meanwhile, Qatar pointed out that resolution 1716 (2006) had contained specific objectives for the parties to achieve as well as the steps they needed to take to that end, adding that progress on the ground should be assessed against these provisions.

Panama observed that the Council was facing a "traditional" conflict between the Abkhaz claim to self-determination and the Georgian right to territorial integrity. Since the two parties had not been able to reach an agreement, Ambassador Arias added, the UN was obligated to maintain stability in the area and to encourage the parties to search for a consensus, guided by Council resolutions and other agreements, including the basic principles for distribution of competencies between Tbilisi and Sukhumi. Ghana concurred that the peace process should be conducted within the agreed framework.

In addition, Slovakia held that special attention should be given to the return of refugees and IDPs. Concurring, the United States noted with concern that human rights abuses, including arbitrary conscription in the Gali district and denial of freedom of movement to the local population, had hampered the peace process. Ambassador Sanders strongly urged the parties to end such practices.

The Russian Federation maintained that the UNOMIG/CIS joint peacekeeping operations had been playing an important stabilizing role in Abkhazia. Ambassador Churkin noted that some measures taken by the Georgian side had been considered "provocative" by the Abkhaz side, adding that Tbilisi should be blamed for the current political stalemate. The Russian Federation reiterated that the deadlock could be broken only through diplomatic means, not by unilateral actions, stressing that the violence must be stopped.

Responding to questions, SRSG Arnault said that the mission was currently short 6 civilian police and 13 military observers according to its authorized strength. Given its "fairly hefty" workload and the number of incidents at the ceasefire line, he noted that UNOMIG may require a modest increase in its authorized strength in order to be in a position to act more quickly if needed. He clarified that he had yet to discuss this in detail with DPKO. On the Geneva meeting, SRSG Arnault said that he expected it to reaffirm resolution 1716 so as to maintain the ongoing momentum and particularly to revive the security dialogue. As for the joint patrolling, he expected that this practice would become a "regular feature". On the measures by the Georgian side to improve its transparency in transiting military assets through the Security Zone, SRSG Arnault said that it was time to translate talk into action.

As regards the impact of the final status talks of Kosovo on the issue, he observed that no matter what the outcome might be, the Kosovo issue had constituted an international context which the two conflicting parties were playing out. While acknowledging that their positions had remained almost unchanged in the past 13 years, SRSG Arnault attributed the existing difference to the lack of confidence between the two sides, adding that he was convinced that there was still room for them to improve relations, including in the security area and return of IDPs. Improved bilateral relations could create an amiable environment for further negotiation, he said. Finally, SRSG Arnault believed that the EU neighbourhood plan was a very good idea, and hoped that better relations between EU and Abkhazia might assist Georgia and Abkhazia in establishing new relations.

Other Matters

Somalia: South Africa requested that the Council receive a briefing by the Secretariat on the situation in Somalia. Ambassador Kumalo recalled that he had indicated his wish for such a briefing during yesterday's luncheon with the Secretary-General, as the situation in Somalia was changing rather rapidly. He noted that the Secretary-General had expressed his preference for informing the Council only after an official request had been made by the AU, but Ambassador Kumalo expressed his fear that the "window of hope" might close shortly if the Council did not react.

The President agreed to convey the request to the Secretariat, and suggested that the briefing be scheduled for Tuesday, 30

January, as the meeting currently scheduled for that day had been cancelled.

Qatar expressed a preference for the briefing to take place in a public meeting. The President indicated that he would consult the Secretariat regarding the format for the briefing.

Programme of Work (The Middle East): The President pointed out that he had received a letter from the Permanent Representative of Cuba requesting to speak at the following day's meeting on the Middle East. He noted that this would alter the current format of the meeting, and requested the views of members.

Council members had a lengthy discussion on the matter, in which South Africa, China, Indonesia, Panama, Qatar and others held that the request should be accommodated, and suggested that the main regional and political organizations be allowed to participate. Other delegations, such as France, the United Kingdom and the United States, expressed concern that this would trigger several other requests for participation, turning the meeting into an open debate. Members also discussed the option of having a private meeting with USG Gambari, Israel and Palestine, so as to avoid "exposing" the wider membership to USG Gambari's briefing without allowing them to make statements.

Finally, members agreed to keep the current format of having an open meeting with USG Gambari, Israel and Palestine making statements, and with the possibility of Syria and Lebanon, as parties to the conflict, also making statements, if they so requested. As scheduled, this meeting would be followed by informal consultations. In addition, it was agreed that Slovakia would try to schedule an open debate on the Middle East during its presidency in February, so as to allow the wider membership to speak on the issue following the Quartet's meeting in Washington on 2 February.

Signe Jepsen/Xiaoning Huang
SCSB/SCAD/24 January 2007