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INTRODUCTORY NOTE OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL
ON THE SITUATION IN BURUNDI
CAIRO, EGYPT - DECEMBER 7, 1993

Mr Chairman,
Your Excellencies the Heads of State and Delegation,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On the 21st October 1993, there was an attempted military coup d'état in Burundi which resulted in the assassination of President Melchior Ndadaye and some of his colleagues and generalized inter-communal killings throughout the country. Africa and the International Community responded by strongly condemning the attempted coup as a retrogressive step, undermining the policies of accommodation and of national reconciliation on course in Burundi, and as a serious blow to the cause of democracy not only in that country but also in Africa as a whole.

In an attempt to help the people of Burundi in their search for an end to the political crisis which ensued, the leaders of Rwanda, Tanzania and Zaire convened in a Summit Meeting in Kigali on 28 October 1993. The Summit decided, as a result, to call for the establishment of an International Force of Stabilization and Confidence Building in Burundi drawn essentially from African countries and requested the Secretaries General of the United Nations and of the Organization of African Unity to undertake consultations on its early setting up. Immediately after the Kigali Summit, I together with the Special Envoy of the Current Chairman,

Ambassador Saed Refaat undertook a visit to Bujumbura on 30th October 1993 in order to explore, with all the political forces in the country, what the OAU could do, in concrete terms, to help restore confidence, promote dialogue and pave the way to the re-establishment of social order and constitutional rule. While in Bujumbura, we held extensive discussions with the Government and with the Army Command especially on the proposal to establish an International Force for Stabilization and Confidence Building. We left Bujumbura keenly aware of the extreme political polarization and an attendant serious crisis of confidence in the country, especially between the Government and the Army, but encouraged that they nonetheless expressed shared disposition to cooperate with the OAU in the search for a speedy end to the political impasse which has gripped the country.

I followed up my visit by despatching, on 2nd November 1993, a Special Envoy, Amb. Papa Louis FALL to Burundi, to expand on the dialogue I had initiated with the Government and the Army Command. My Special Envoy held extensive and wide-ranging consultations with the Government and the Army Command, as well as with Representatives of Political Parties, of the Civil Society and of Religious Institutions, on the kind of role the OAU could play in restoring confidence, enabling the government institutions to begin to function, and helping the people of Burundi reconcile with themselves and commence the process of healing. While many and divergent

views were expressed in these consultations, ultimately, convergence was found in the need of an international presence which could promote the restoration of confidence, and facilitate the return to normalcy and constitutional rule in the country. It was consequently agreed with my Special Envoy that, that presence would take the form of an "International Mission of Protection and Observation for the Restoration of Confidence in Burundi." The Mission of 200 people, which would comprise of a Military component of 180 personnel and of a civilian one of 20, would be drawn from African countries. The mission will be for a six months duration, and will, in collaboration with the elements of the Burundi Presidential and VIP Protection Services, provide protection to high ranking government and political leaders. The main role of the Mission would continue to be that of restoration of confidence.

In view of this agreement we have reached with the Government and the Army, I initiated consultations with Member States on the composition of that Mission. I also initiated contacts with potential donor countries.

The Central Organ of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution which met, at Ministerial level, in Addis Ababa, on the 17th and 18th November 1993 decided to establish the proposed International Mission of Protection and Observation for the Restoration of

Confidence in Burundi and requested me as Secretary General, to undertake the necessary consultations and make appropriate arrangements for the deployment of the Mission. In the meantime I have received a formal communication from the Prime Minister of Burundi requesting the OAU to send the proposed Mission to Burundi and stating the disposition of the Government of Burundi to provide it with maximum support.

Within the framework of the implementation of this decision and also in view of the questions raised by this decision in Burundi, particularly within the opposition ranks, I decided to despatch a second Mission to Bujumbura led by my Special Envoy. The Mission stayed in Bujumbura from 27 November to 1 December 1993. While in Bujumbura, my Special Envoy held a series of meetings with the Minister of External Relations, who is also the Acting President of FRODEBU, the ruling party, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Defence, the Permanent Secretary of the Government, the Chiefs of Staff of the Army and Gendarmerie and all the political parties including FRODEBU, UPRONA, the former ruling party and the other parties which are not represented in the National Assembly. The Mission also met with the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General in Burundi, Members of the Diplomatic Corps in Bujumbura including the Ambassador of Egypt and the Representative of UNHCR. The Mission had also the opportunity to meet Mrs. NDADAYE.

The objectives of the Mission were:

- To consolidate the agreement reached by my Special Envoy, during his first Mission regarding the establishment of the OAU Mission in Burundi.
- To have preliminary discussions with the Government on the practical modalities for the establishment of the Mission.
- To convey a message of peace to all parties involved in the Burundi crisis and urged them to embark on a dialogue.

The OAU Team encouraged the Government, the Army Command and other political forces to work together in order to narrow-down their differences through dialogue. It urged the Army Command and the opposition parties to help the Government, in their common endeavour to overcome the crisis. I am happy to report that since then positive moves have been taken by the Government and other parties. Thus, members of the Government started to visit provinces in order to calm the population. They started also to go to their respective offices eventhough not continuously. Mrs. NDADAYE, on her part, addressed a powerful message of peace and tolerance to the people of Burundi.

Regarding the establishment of the OAU Mission in Burundi, I wish to stress that both the Government and the Army could have assured us of their cooperation. I should mention in passing that the Opposition Groups have told us that they believe that in view of what they consider positive developments in the security situation, they do not think that it is necessary to have military personnel. Their views have not been shared by the Government. Nor do I share it. I wish to report that I have approached, formally, several Member States requesting them to contribute troops. They include four countries which are Members of the Central Organ. These are, Cameroon, Djibouti, Niger and Burkina Faso. As of today, I am awaiting concrete responses. I have also approached many non-African countries requesting them to provide financial, material and logistical support for the establishment of the OAU Mission in Burundi. I wish to report, in this respect, that their reaction was positive and very encouraging as some of them pledged to provide financial and or logistical support for the Mission.

Finally, I would like to stress the fact that the situation in Burundi remains explosive and that it is important that we act with speed. I have already appointed my Special Representative in Burundi in the person of Amb. Papa Louis Fall of Senegal. I have asked him to be in Bujumbura on the 14th December 1993. But it is of paramount importance that the military component of the Mission or at least

elements of this component must be in place in Bujumbura as soon as possible in order to keep the momentum of the slow but positive evolution which has started in Burundi.

This is why I would like to conclude in appealing to the Member States I have already approached to take into account the urgency of the matter and to respond quickly to our request. The OAU operation in Burundi is the first initiative taken by the OAU within the framework of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. As I have stated in my introductory remarks, this is a crucial step for the credibility of our Mechanism. More important the speedy emplacement of the OAU Mission in Burundi is of considerable importance in the quest for the restoration of peace and security, in ending of senseless killings and the promotion of national reconciliation.

In the meantime, let me also stress the grave humanitarian dimension of the crisis. Almost a million people have been rendered refugees in the neighbouring countries of Rwanda, Tanzania and Zaire. We need to further sensitize the international community to provide assistance to these refugees as well as tens of thousands of displaced persons.

