

NOTES OF A MEETING BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA, H.E. ATO MELES ZENAWI, AND THE DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM, THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF OAU - ADDIS ABABA, 24th AUGUST 1998

Meeting started at 11:35 a.m.

Present:

- Foreign Minister
- An Officer in PMO - Ethiopia
- DD/Cab, OAU

1. After preliminary greetings, the Prime Minister inquired about the general situation in Africa.
 - 1.1 The Secretary General provided a detailed briefing on the situation in the DRC, in which he described the situation to be 'messy'. However, he pointed out that to have a better understanding of the evolution of events it is appropriate to take into account the history of the events of which he noted that:
 - 1.2 Both sides have made a number of mistakes;
 - 1.2.1 President Kabila has not been sensitive to the concerns of other parties, both within the country and also to the legitimate security concerns of his neighbours, despite the advise given and the goodwill and assistance offered by many;
 - 1.2.2 He has also failed to build an inclusive government;
 - 1.2.3 He has also failed to understand the concerns of the international community;
 - 1.3 The SG underscored the need to understand the limitation of President Kabila particularly the short experience he has had on matters of state governance,

and also his dramatic accession to helm of power;

- 1.4 Some of the mistakes committed by Rwanda and Uganda include:
 - 1.4.1 The attempt to 'tele-guide' the Government of DRC;
 - 1.4.2 Failure to take into account the sensitivity of the ordinary Congolese, particularly in asserting their sovereignty and national pride;
 - 1.4.3 The tendency to manifest a conspicuous presence in DRC
 - 1.4.4 Imprudent statements such as the one made by Prime Minister Kagame;
- 1.5 The Region fail to handle the situation at the time it could be handled, perhaps because of a perception in some quarters that President was beyond redemption;
- 2.0 The SG raised concern that the region is now embroiled in a fully fledged crisis;
- 2.1 While it is difficult to provide verifiable evidence for confirmation, there is a generally held belief that Rwandese troops are somehow involved in the Congo, and there is also a general inclination that the Government of Uganda is somehow involved in the side of the rebels;
- 3.0 The situation is further complicated by the lack of harmony between Harare and Pretoria;
- 3.1 It was a mistake not to involve South Africa in the Victoria Falls initiative; it is inadvisable to take a major initiative without involving South Africa;
- 3.2 Unfortunately even OAU was neither formally informed nor invited to the Victoria Falls and the Harare meetings;
- 3.3 The SG explained to the PM the sequencing of the two meetings (Victoria and Harare);

- 3.4 Eventhough by the last contact made by the SG the report of Ministers of Foreign Affairs had not been issued, he was informed that the general conclusion confirms the involvement of Rwandan troops in the conflict. Nevertheless, it is not certain how this issue will be presented in the report;
- 3.5 The situation as it stands now is almost a regionalization of the conflict, whereby Rwanda and Uganda seem to be on the side of the Rebels, and Zimbabwe and Angola are on the side of the Government;
- 3.6 The tragedy of the situation is that all these countries represent the new AFrica;
- 3.7 The SG further briefed the PM on a discussion he has this morning with President Mandela on the outcome of a 'regional ' summit held in Pretoria yesterday;
- 3.8 The SG gave a copy of the Communique issued from that summit of which the SG has obtained from his 'own sources';
- 4.0 The Minister of Foreign Affairs inquired whether South Africa declined to attend the Victoria Falls meetings or that it was not invited? According to his information, SA not only refused to attend, but she also convinced President Kabila not to attend;
- 4.1 In as far as the SG knows (as informed by Dep. President Mbeki) South AFrica was not invited, allegedly because President Kabila has no confidence with SA's involvement;
- 4.2 The Foreign Minister inquired further on the objective of the South AFrican contact with Kampala and Kigali.
- 4.3 The SG indicated that it could be a search for a possibility of a diplomatic solution;
- 4.4 The scenario evolving last week that would entice Kabila to attend the South African initiated meetings rotated around two options;

- 4.4.1 The first involved South African condemning Uganda and Rwanda;
- 4.4.2 The second entailed asking Rwanda and Uganda to issue statements calling for a cessation of hostilities. While Rwanda issued the statement, Uganda did not;
- 4.5 By all accounts, South Africa has stopped short of saying that Rwanda and Uganda are involved in the conflict, but they have given all indication to that effect;
- 5.0 The Prime Minister pointed out that the crisis says a lot not only about the Congo, but also about the SADC region;
- 5.1 He affirmed the assessment of the SG on the causes of the crisis, and he shared the view that both sides have made mistakes;
- 5.2 In the view of the PM, Kabila was unsure of himself, not sensitive to his neighbour's interests, failed to institutionalize the system of governance;
- 5.3 He indicated also that Uganda also was not sensitive to the respect to which DRC has to be accorded;
- 5.4 The PM indicated his doubt if the role Uganda really plays an important role it is attributed to have; In fact, sometimes, even Rwanda has misgivings about Museveni's posturing;
- 5.5 The 'packing order' given by DRC had a lot to do with the causing the crisis;
- 5.6 In his view, things could be done differently; If Kabila was treated properly and accorded some respect, he might have been amenable to addressing the security concerns of Rwanda and Uganda;
- 5.7 He summed the situation by saying that, "there is a lot of blame to go around".
- 5.8 The position of Angola is explainable, though not justifiable; but the position of South Africa (?) and Zimbabwe is disturbing;

- 5.9 He wondered if it is a question of packing orders again? If that is the case, this is very disturbing. Is the situation of the Great Lakes replicating itself in the Southern region?
- 6.0 The PM also wondered, how long is Africa going to remain at the bottom of the heap? Instead of struggling to get up the ladder, we are stuck in the gutters.
- 6.1 The PM raised concern to the fact that some people feel that Congo is one big mine without an effective owner, in which people stake claims, just a carcass people are fighting for. Congo should be considered to be an asset that can help the rest of the region to develop;
- 6.2 It is also disturbing to view the relationship between Rwanda and Uganda Versus Congo, and Zimbabwe Versus South Africa. It is becoming a madhouse in which everyone is shouting louder than the other to be recognized leader; This needs to be understood and rectified;
- 6.3 Unfortunately, the so-called 'international community' has also contributed to the problem:
- 6.3.1 It has accorded a sainthood to President Mandela that has contributed to irritation;
- 6.3.2 The role of President Museveni has also been exaggerated;
- 6.3.4 The problem is that those of us who are engaged in the process seem to be missing the point that all of us are in the bottom of the heap, and the basic issue is how to get out of it;
- 6.3.5 It is important that the 'old man' has to understand this and do something about it;
- 7.0 The Communique has good ideas, and it is a good basis to start with;
- 7.1 But are all actors prepared to play the game, both local and external;

- 7.2 Would President Kabila be prepared to address the rights of Banyamulenge and the security of others in the country? Will there be something substantive to encourage those opposed to Kabila, when he is still yielding power? Is he beyond repair or he can deliver the minimum? This does not entail only a change of heart, but may require assurances and guarantees;
- 7.3 Will Kabila feel comfortable with all these qualifications and assurances? Will he see this as an hedge or stalling tactic? He also needs reassurances;
- 7.4 How is the rivalry between South Africa (with Botswana) Versus Zimbabwe and Angola going to play out in the implementation of the package?
- 7.5 How is Zimbabwe, Angola, Uganda, Rwanda responding to the communique?
- 7.6 It may be easier for Museveni to be part of the solution than for Rwanda;