

**STATEMENT BY H.E. THE SECRETARY GENERAL**  
**ON THE**  
**SITUATION IN THE COMOROS TO THE EXTRA-ORDINARY**  
**SESSION OF THE CENTRAL ORGAN OF THE OAU**  
**MECHANISM FOR CONFLICT PREVENTION, MANAGEMENT**  
**AND RESOLUTION, AT AMBASSADORIAL LEVEL**  
**HELD ON 5 OCTOBER 1995 IN ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

**Madam Chairperson,**  
**Excellencies,**  
**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

We have all followed the unfortunate and bizarre developments in the Comoros very closely, with great indignation and concern. You will recall that when the coup took place, I was away in New York, but I immediately issued a strong statement condemning in unequivocal terms, the invasion of Comoros and apparent replacement of the government of that country through unconstitutional means, by a group of mercenaries. While in New York, I addressed the United Nations Security Council on developments in Comoros, among other issues. In particular, I underscored the fact that the OAU rejected the destabilization of one of its Member States by mercenaries and called for an early restoration of the legal and constitutional order in the Comoros.

As you are also aware, the current Chairman of our Organization, as well as some other leaders and countries both within and outside Africa, have issued statements condemning the staging of a coup d'etat in the Comoros. Generally, the reaction of the International Community, has been to condemn in the strongest possible terms the unconstitutional change in Comoros and a demand for the rapid restoration of normalcy to that country.

### **Excellencies,**

In order to put this recent development in its proper perspective, it is important to recall that this act of aggression by the French mercenary Bob Denard, is not his first in that country, but rather dates back to 1979, when he moved to instal the late President Abadallah in power in the Comoros. His second coming was in 1989. But really what makes this latest act of aggression most worrisome, is the fact that the action of Bob Denard and his bunch of mercenaries, as well as their collaborators in the Comoros, constitutes an old fashioned and unacceptable development in this day and age of democratization on the Continent.

You will, I am sure, be interested in knowing that at the instruction of his Government, the French Ambassador in Ethiopia, requested to see me on 3 October 1995. I eventually received the Ambassador in my office yesterday 4 October. Essentially, he explained the circumstances surrounding the French military intervention in the Comoros, which action was based on a request made

by the Prime Minister of Comoros in his capacity as Acting Head of State, as provided for by Article 27 of the Comoros relating to the incapacitation of the President. Additionally, I was informed that the French intervention was undertaken within the framework of the Defence Agreement between France and Comoros, which provides for French assistance in the event of an external invasion of the Comoros.

I was also reassured by the Ambassador, that the main objectives of the French military intervention was to bring about the removal of foreign mercenaries from Comoros and pave the way for a restoration of constitutional order in that country.

It is also pertinent at this stage, to point out that according to a preliminary assessment by the French, only about one dozen mercenaries, as against the one hundred reported by the media, took part in the invasion. However, they were reported to have received assistance from some Comoran citizens, including some members of the National Defence Force, some members of the opposition Parties and politicians, who were disenchanted with the rule of President Djohar.

According to the French Ambassador, the main ring leader of the mercenaries Bob Denard, was still under judicial control in France and it was not yet known how he managed to leave the country, to undertake his latest expedition and exploit to the Comoros.

My own reaction to the French action, was informed by the nature of the developments in the Comoros. In the first place, the invasion of an African country, in this particular instance the Comoros by mercenaries, is an unacceptable affront and a humiliating experience for the people of that country and an embarrassment for the French Government. Secondly, being unacceptable and universally condemned by all, it was inevitable that some urgent action needed to be taken to bring about an African military intervention or foreign intervention to restore normalcy in the country. It is within this context that I have expressed understanding for the action undertaken by France. I will therefore continue to underscore the fact that a situation in which a bunch of mercenaries can invade any of our Member States and change the government unconstitutionally, remains totally unacceptable to the OAU.

Indeed as it is very well known, the OAU does not normally welcome foreign military intervention in Africa, but given the particular situation in the Comoros, there is need to show understanding for the French action, especially as it is anticipated that it would lead to an early return of peace and normalcy to that country, as well as create propitious conditions for the installation of a genuine civilian government in the Comoros.

As part of the continuing efforts to evolve an African initiative on Comoros, the African Group in New York which examined the need to act at the level of the United Nations, have expressed the view that the Central organ

should offer the leadership in formulating an African response to the situation in the Comoros before the matter was taken to the Security Council.

It might also interest you to know that prior to the convening of this Extra-Ordinary Meeting of the Central Organ at Ambassadorial Level, I had undertaken preliminary consultations with the Ambassadors of the Indian Ocean States yesterday here in Addis Ababa. In fact, they were also invited to this session in the hope that being closest to the problem, they would be in a position to enrich our deliberations with specific proposals on how best the OAU could approach this latest crisis in the Comoros.

**Excellencies,**

As to expected outcome of this Extra-Ordinary Session, it is my considered view that the Central Organ must unequivocally condemn the invasion and coup d'etat in the Comoros in the strongest possible terms. As a matter of principle, the time seems appropriate when we must clearly send very strong signals, that Africa will no longer accept unconstitutional removal of governments, especially by mercenaries, as well as begin to look into what must be done in very concrete terms to prevent such occurrences in the future.

In this connection, I believe the Central Organ has a responsibility to demand and support all efforts aimed at the removal and punishment of all those mercenaries who participated in the destabilization of the Comoros. It is my

sincere hope, that even while expressing understanding for the French action in the Comoros, France itself would recognize the fact that it has a particular role to be as helpful as possible, in curbing the activities of Bob Denard and his collaborators.

Finally, it goes without saying that part of the problem that had exacerbated tension in the recent past and contributed to the instability in the Comoros, relates to the economic situation in the country. Apart from calling for the restoration of constitutional order in the Comoros, the Central Organ must appeal to the International Community to act expeditiously with development and other forms of assistance to improve the economic well-being of the people of the Comoros.

I sincerely hope that at the end of our deliberations today, we shall emerge with action oriented decisions which will reflect our serious concerns over the unfortunate developments in the Comoros.

Thank you.