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3) has been asked to seek clarification from Fall. 25/7/01

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Note to the Secretary-General

INTER-AGENCY MISSION TO BRUSSELS AND WASHINGTON DC ON THE UN REGIONAL PROGRAMME FOR WEST AFRICA (Rec'd 25/7)

1. I led an Inter-Agency Mission to Brussels (13 July 2001) and to Washington DC (17 and 18 July 2001) to discuss the implementation of the recommendations of the Inter-Agency Mission to West Africa with the European Commission, the Belgian Government, as the current President of the European Commission, the IMF, the World Bank, the United States Government and USAID. I also seized the occasion, while in Washington DC to brief the UN family.

DPA

Meetings in Brussels

2. The mission was briefed of the conclusions of the EU mission that was sent to the Mano River Union countries and to Mali, being Chair of ECOWAS. The general assessment of that mission is that the security situation in West Africa is worse than it was ten years ago. The mission was informed that the EU is very interested in a regional, comprehensive approach, and especially welcomes the establishment of a UN Office for West Africa; they believe that this is the right way to go and the EU looks to it as a framework for cooperation and interaction. The EU had decided to appoint Ambassador Dahlgren, the Swedish Minister of State for Foreign Affairs as the EU Representative for West Africa. The EU Special Envoy will continue to dialogue with ECOWAS and to coordinate strategies with the United Nations. The EU is reviewing its action plan for West Africa; this is expected to be concluded sometime next year. In addition, the EU plans to establish a regional office in Abuja in addition to four other sub-regional offices.

3. The EU is already engaged with ECOWAS and UEMOA on the implementation of micro-economic plans for the region and to enhance plans for economic and monetary integration. In addition, the EU is designing a programme of support for the implementation of the ECOWAS Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution and for Peacekeeping. One of the organs, the Council of Elders, was established in June 2001. The EU intends to: 1. Place greater emphasis on regional economic integration; 2. Improve the effectiveness of intervention in activities that are truly regional and 3. Support civil society. The draft of the EU's regional strategy of support to ECOWAS will be submitted for review with other donors in September 2001. The EU will make capacity-building and governance hard-core aspects of programming rather than an appendage to technical support. They plan to establish some programmes and institutions that are regional, for example, regional schools of public accounting; certain programmes would be run on a larger scale.

4. The Sierra Leone peace process was discussed extensively. There was a optimism about the progress being made and expectation that elections can be held soon. I emphasised the need for appropriate funding of the DDR process. I pointed out that at the present rate of disarmament and demobilization of the combatants, any shortfall in funding might have a damaging impact on the peace process. I noted that often, the

I remember well our discussion at SML on the West Africa regional office. What does reference to the "inter-agency character of the proposed office" mean. What did we say to the Council? #1 26 July 2001

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reintegration and reinsertion aspects of the DDRR are poorly funded. We agreed that funding support should match the pace of the disarmament and reintegration processes. On Liberia, the mission was informed that the EU plans to open consultation with Liberia under the framework of the Cotonou Agreement; this would serve to define a framework for definition of the terms of reference of their engagement with Liberia in the future. On Côte d'Ivoire, we were informed that the EU plans a gradual re-launch of cooperation; progress will be predicated on the result of the careful monitoring of the political situation, the establishment of the rule of law, human rights and fight against xenophobia.

5. We were informed by the Belgian Presidency that they intend to organize two round tables later in they year, one on Conflict Prevention and the other on Humanitarian Issues. We expressed the interest of the United Nations to participate at these meetings.

Meetings in Washington DC

Views of the IMF and the World Bank

6. In its discussion with the IMF and the World Bank, the mission was informed that these two institutions have already developed their own regional programmes for West Africa. IMF has extensive interaction with BCEAO and UEMOA on the development of the monetary policies of their members and on the development of trade policies. IMF's relations with ECOWAS are not as close, though this is growing. ECOWAS's plan to create a common monetary union with UEMOA is still problematic, even with the fast-track approach adopted by Ghana and Nigeria. It would be necessary for both Nigeria and Ghana to converge their economies first, before a move to a monetary union. Even then, the integration with UEMOA would raise several difficult questions, such as the currency on which such union would be based, for now UEMOA is guaranteed by the French Franc and the Euro. As for a regional presence, IMF maintains representatives in each country.

7. As for the World Bank, they are in the process of developing an integrated regional programme. (The advanced copy of the Bank's plan was shared with me). They strongly support the UN approach and suggested that the UN West Africa Office would serve to engage the World Bank in discussions on how responsibilities should be shared by various organizations. The World Bank places high premium on working through regional organizations, especially ECOWAS. In the same vein, the World Bank has concluded a Memorandum of Understanding with the ADB in order to minimize duplication. On the issue of the Round Table on Guinea, we agreed that an initial discussion should be planned with the Government of Guinea in the margins of the UN General Assembly to explore the full dimension of the problem and to provide the basis for a needs assessment and report. It was also agreed that NGOs in Guinea should be included in the Round Table. The World Bank believes its new country strategy could serve as a source of assistance to address the issue of Internally Displaced Persons and refugees, which have serious security and developmental implications for Guinea. A general recommendation was the need to focus specifically on local NGO groups in the region, especially women. I had also raised the need for a similar Roundtable on Guinea-Bissau, unfortunately, they were non-committal on this issue. On Côte d'Ivoire, both the

World Bank and IMF appreciated the fact that the EU was finally joining them in their positive approach towards developments in that country. We discussed the peace process in Sierra Leone at length. The Bank was happy that they had decided to send their representative back to Sierra Leone. We agreed on the importance of appropriate funding for demobilization and especially reintegration programmes. It was noted that there is a need to take into consideration activities being conducted through bilateral programmes and directly through international NGO groups.

Views of the US Administration:

8. The State Department (the Department of International Affairs and the Africa Department) expressed an unqualified endorsement of the adoption of a regional approach for West Africa and especially of the establishment of a UN Office for West Africa. The view is that ECOWAS has done a tremendous job of forging a regional approach to developments in the region; they appreciate the complexities and conflicting pressures on both ECOWAS and the States of the region. The United States feels a UN Office can serve as a neutral ground and catalyst towards consensus; they believe that there can be no substitute to a sensible diplomatic deployment that can act preventively. To the United States, the personal attributes of the Head of the Office would be important. The person must be first rank, insightful, capable of seeking a path when none appear to be readily apparent.

9. We learnt that the US, in looking at the regional issues in West Africa more broadly, might designate one of its Ambassadors in the region as one with over-sight for West Africa. This approach is already the practice in SADC, where the US Ambassador for Botswana is also the Ambassador to SADC, with close working relationship with that organization.

10. USAID adopted a regional approach, as a complement to their bilateral programmes a long time ago. The USAID Regional Office for West Africa, based in Bamako, is the newest of three such offices and the least staffed. (Bamako was selected because the office had the largest capacity to house such a programme, at a time when they were withdrawing from Côte d'Ivoire). USAID finds that apart from implementing programmes with a regional perspective, such offices provide entry points to the discussion of difficult issues without offending political sensibilities. The West Africa Office of USAID has the largest concentration of issues.

Conclusion

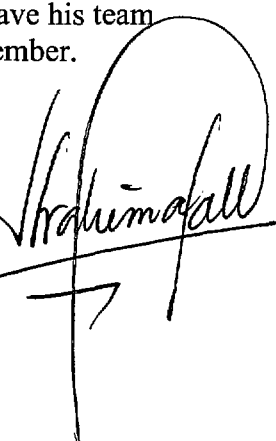
11. Our interlocutors appreciated the decision to consult with them on these issues and proposed that such discussions should become a practice, to be repeated from time to time on important issues. Your decision to develop a regional approach to West Africa and to establish a UN Office for West Africa has overwhelming support. The thinking is that it is timely and should be comprehensively implemented. Our emphasis on the Inter-Agency character of the proposed office was highly appreciated, as was the fact that the office would not duplicate existing regional programmes. On the issue of the Round Table on Guinea, there was consensus that initial discussions should be held before

finalizing the report to be tabled at the conference. On Sierra Leone, our concerns for the proper funding of the reintegration and reinsertion aspects of the DDR programme was well received, though the United States warned that care should be taken not to over-load the normal functions and responsibilities of a peacekeeping operation with long term development functions. We agreed that there is always a fine line between emergency response and development as between peacemaking and peacekeeping; the important issue being to ensure that each aspect of a peace operation is well attended to at all times.

12. On Guinea-Bissau, the response was at best non-committal. The World Bank called for continued dialogue with all stakeholders while the United States noted the need for some countries to be interested enough to step in. On Côte d'Ivoire, the idea of constructive engagement was generally considered to be the prudent way to go. On Liberia, the same approach, of constructive engagement, was not accepted as the workable. The European plan to engage that country in dialogue is highly conditional and predicated on a whole range of conditionalities. USAID noted to us that they have continued their support for civil society activities at the grass-roots level, but even this is predicated on their ability to operate without government intrusion. All admit that the general climate that has been created by the imposition of sanctions makes it more difficult to justify to their own national political constituencies major financial support for Liberia. The State Department did however express their readiness to support programmes aimed at internally displaced persons and host communities in Liberia as long as detailed assurances were given by humanitarian agencies on the effectiveness of the programmes.

13. On a final note, we were unable to undertake our consultations with ECOWAS in Lusaka in the margins of the OAU Summit because Mr. Kouyate did not have his team with him in Lusaka. We therefore hope to consult with ECOWAS in September.

Ibrahima Fall
20 July 2001

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ibrahima Fall', written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and includes a large loop at the end.

cc:
DSG
Mr. Riza
Mr. Prendergast
Mr. Guehenno
Mr. Oshima