

**STATEMENT BY MR. KAMALESH SHARMA, PERMANENT  
REPRESENTATIVE ON THE SITUATION IN AFRICA IN THE SECURITY  
COUNCIL ON JANUARY 29, 2002**

Mr. President,

I would like to express our appreciation to you for calling an open meeting on this important issue. Mr. Minister, I would also like to extend to you a welcome to New York. It is indeed a great pleasure to see you presiding over the meeting. Your personal presence throughout this meeting is a testimony to the importance you attach to the subject. India has an abiding connection and concern with Africa. With the waning of the colonial era, we did not regard the liberation of Asia as complete without the liberation of Africa and we have fought for African causes since becoming a founding member of the UN. For instance, the item of apartheid was had inscribed by India on the agenda of the United Nations. Indeed, we have considered the destiny of independent nations of Asia and Africa as linked in the quest for an equitable world order. This focused debate in the Council therefore on a continent with which we have historic ties of solidarity and an emotional bond is one which we particularly welcome. We would also like to thank Ambassador Koonjul for the guidelines prepared for this meeting to stimulate a more focused debate. While the questions posed in the list are all very pertinent, we will dwell only upon a few.

Mr. President,

Let me start with the last question which, in our view, goes to the heart of the matter. Though not within the remit of this Council, poverty alleviation encompassing development and growth, which is another way of providing the wherewithal for a life of human dignity and freedom from want and the stresses of deprivation, is the key to any viable long-term strategy for conflict prevention. This has to be at the core of any coherent strategy for the renaissance of Africa and the essential perspective within which issues pertaining to Africa posed before the Council are viewed. The speed with which this goal is met is inseparable from the preoccupation which the Council will have with developments in the area of peace and security requiring the Council's attention. The curse of endemic poverty and wasted prospects of a dehumanised life anywhere are a blight on hope, community solidarity, growth of traditional and formal institutions, political stability, social harmony and feelings of self-worth and self-belief, without which the foundation for the edifice of peace and order cannot be laid. We empathise with the African striving from our own experience. Persisting over a period of time the consequences of not moving forward are regression, as the dynamic of history does not stand still: movement is either in the direction of harmony and order or its opposite. However, Mr. President, enough has been said and written on this holistic challenge. What is

required is an act of faith not only by Africa, which it has demonstrated in the New Partnership for Africa's Development, but by its partners to ensure the massive infusion of resources for targeted development and strengthening of the supportive financial and trading environment on a sustained basis. Collaboration in human resource development is pertinent for South-South cooperation. Rather than dealing only with the symptoms of stagnation in the area of peace and security, sustainable results would invariably depend upon simultaneous advance in the area of socio-economic advances and reconstruction. More than peace-keeping, this march of progress would be the real keeper of the peace. Mr. President, it is clear that the political challenge in its entire complexity has to be addressed with a will by Africa and that the economic challenge is not the whole story: but it is equally true that the bedrock of stability is the fulfillment of the social agenda which we have identified and a climate of progressive gainful employment which we have to create. We cannot allow the symptoms of helplessness to gain ground. Implementation of the Millennium Summit goals - and going beyond them to complete the challenge - provides a launching platform which the world community must not fail. We have necessarily to draw a long breath as there are no shortcuts. But we also cannot afford to slacken in meeting this test of history.

Mr. President,

Africa, by available evidence, is the birthplace of humanity. It has been a cradle of many proud and important civilizations. It has made significant contribution to human development. In an historical perspective, its tribulations are of a recent origin and not of its making. The problems it faces in substance are not unique, or an 'African problem', as is often projected. Similar problems have bedevilled young countries born out of prolonged disempowerment or turmoil elsewhere. In fact, to Africa's credit, within decades of gaining freedom, it has collectively endorsed the firm principle of participative governance and the democratic norm has already been established in the continent. The dynamics and fundamental freedoms of democracy are the antidote to repression, injustice, and social, economic and political marginalisation. Democratic processes nurture a culture of reason and accommodation and work towards balance in resource allocation and distribution; they ensure openness and transparency in decision-making and imparts a sense of all-embracing participation and ownership and your country is a shining example of it. They give a shared stake to all in a society's future. It is a tribute to African leadership and wisdom that it has taken collective action to invest belief in this process, strengthen it and not allow any regression by deciding to stigmatise regimes usurping power through force and unconstitutional means. On this issue, Africa is leading by example. It is something that the United Nations should draw lessons from. The obligation is now on Africa's partners to strengthen African resolve by their actions in every way and to ensure its success by supportiveness, by an engagement of effective solidarity.

Mr. President,

Your question regarding the record of the international community in preventing intra-State instability and other conflicts in Africa is very pertinent. Some honest soul-searching would bear out that, at best, it is mixed. There have been some success stories, but we cannot seek solace in those. Even one failure is bad enough and in Africa there have been many. In Angola, the conflict would not have taken place or continued with so much of avoidable suffering and loss but for the misguided involvement of the international community; in Rwanda, it was clearly tragic neglect and dereliction of a required course of determined action; and in the Democratic Republic of Congo, engagement, as this Council was reminded in an earlier debate, is far short of what is required. One could add to these examples but that would not be necessary. Clearly, there have been failures on the part of the international community. We need to draw lessons from them for future engagement.

Mr. President,

There is a feeling among African countries, shared by many others, that peace-keeping in Africa does not receive the priority it deserves. Often the response of the international community is a case of doing too little too late. A recent example is the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The UN has been extremely cautious in expanding MONUC's operations. While a degree of caution is certainly justified, and indeed should infuse our decision-making, it is imperative that the international community dispel any misgivings regarding neglect of African needs compared to the promptness with which it can respond to crises in other parts of the world, of which Kosovo and East Timor are notable examples. The reluctance of developed countries to participate in any meaningful manner in operations such as MONUC gives further credence to such a view. The Council, by its Resolution 1376 (2001) of 9 November 2001, had supported the Secretary General's recommendations regarding the launching of phase III of the deployment of MONUC. Almost three months down the road, Member States still await a revised concept of operations for phase III. Caution should not assume the aspect of neglect.

It is also argued that there is a limit to how much the international community can do. The fact is that, even in comparative terms, the quantum, speed and magnitude of response of the international community to African crises has not been the same as for Kosovo or East Timor. This too is a sore point. An example: Kosovo has 40,000 peacekeepers, the Democratic Republic of Congo, larger than Western Europe in area, has around 2,000. We should be chary of inviting the charge of 'humanitarian favouritism'.

Mr. President,

Much has been made of enhancing Africa's peacekeeping capacity. While creditable efforts have been made at the bilateral level, unfortunately, there has been little progress to report on the ambitious efforts initiated by the Secretariat in

August 1998 in this regard. Such assistance should be carefully tailored to the requirements of Africa and based on solutions articulated by the countries of the continent, rather than imposed from outside as prescriptions. In this context, we support the ongoing cooperation between the UN and the OAU as also with sub-regional organizations in Africa. A number of African countries have emerged as major troop contributors to UN peacekeeping operations, particularly in Africa. However, many lack the resources to provide fully equipped and self-sustained contingents. The General Assembly and its relevant bodies should expeditiously approve proposals by the Secretariat to build up strategic stocks in the UN Logistics base in Brindisi to assist such troop contributors. Another important element is training and in this regard we are happy to note that the Secretariat has begun taking initiatives to qualitatively improve training standards in Troop Contributing Countries.

While, on the face of it the idea of building an African peace-keeping capacity looks attractive, some caveats would be in order. First, it should not imply or lead to the onus for peace-keeping in Africa being left to Africans. The maintenance of international peace and security is first and foremost the responsibility of the United Nations through the Security Council. There should be no dilution of this by shifting the obligation to regional organizations or to coalitions of the willing. Within this framework, cooperation with the regional organisations should, of course, be welcome. Second, building peace-keeping capacity involves building military and related logistics capacities. These are expensive to build and maintain. It would also not easily be reconciled with the message received by African countries to reduce their defence expenditure.

Mr. President,

The important role that regional and sub-regional organizations play with regard to conflict resolution, peace-making and peacekeeping is widely acknowledged. Regional and sub-regional organizations indeed can and do play a useful role, as OAU has done in Ethiopia and Eritrea or Burundi. We support encouraging their efforts and capacity-building. However, we notice a tendency, particularly evident in Africa, of the international community transferring its responsibility and sub-contracting initiatives to regional and sub-regional organizations, for which they may not necessarily be prepared. This tendency needs to be arrested and in certain situations where regional and sub-regional organizations can play a meaningful role, they should be backed both politically and, more importantly, through an infusion of the resources required.

Mr. President,

The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes are often an important ingredient in sustaining the peace. Experience has shown that for the DDR programme to be successful, there should be strong international peace-keeping deployment and adequate financial resources. The UNIDIR study

**convincingly demonstrates that this was the lesson learnt in Liberia which, unfortunately, was ignored in neighbouring Sierra Leone and had to be re-learnt at a high cost later. We congratulate the Government of Sierra Leone on the successful conclusion of the disarmament programme earlier this month. We hope that the UN and the international community will distill lessons learnt carefully from its various DDR programmes to avoid costly mistakes.**

**Mr. President,**

**Much killings and wanton mayhem has been inflicted, often on innocent civilians, women and children, leading to the spread and exacerbation of conflicts, due to the easy and ready availability of small arms and weapons. But most of these arms and weapons are not manufactured in Africa and are often supplied illegally. On its own initiative, Africa is doing a great deal to address this problem. The Declaration of a Moratorium on Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa and the Declaration concerning Firearms, Ammunition and other Related Materials in the Southern African Development Community are some examples. But by itself, the action taken by African countries will not be enough; it needs to be reinforced and supported by matching restraint and action from the international community. We have two suggestions. First, as with conflict diamonds and drugs, the control should be exercised where it is most likely to work: at the source of production. It is, therefore, important that effective controls be exercised by the countries of the manufacturers and exporters of arms and weapons. Second, as is well known, once weapons enter the grey market it is almost impossible to control their movement. It is, therefore, important that the international community accept an obligation not to supply weapons to non-state actors. This would ensure that the Savimbis and the Sankohs would be deprived of their means to wage wars.**

**Mr. President,**

**Post-conflict peace-building, in intra-state conflict, as is often the case in Africa, by definition, is a multi-disciplinary approach integrating, inter alia, institution-building, justice, economic progress and social development. While of pivotal importance, these fall outside the mandate of the Council. Neither is the Council equipped to handle such activities. These activities are the responsibility of the General Assembly, which is where these should be discussed and dealt with.**

**Mr. President,**

**India has an unmatched record in peace-keeping operations in Africa, having participated in some capacity in each and every UN PKO established in the continent, including in some of the most difficult ones as in the Congo, Somalia, Angola, Sierra Leone and now in the DRC. A large number of Indian soldiers have made the supreme sacrifice for the cause of peace in Africa, and there can be no better testimonial to our enduring commitment to peace in this brotherly continent.**

**This commitment has been further strengthened through bilateral cooperation programmes with individual African countries. A large number of African military personnel attend professional courses in staff colleges and other training institutions in India, including at the recently established Centre for UN Peacekeeping in New Delhi. But more importantly, in keeping with our firm belief that a key ingredient of long-term solution to conflict is economic progress, we have attached the highest priority to technical and economic cooperation with Africa. About 15,000 foreign nominees, primarily from Africa, have received training in India in diverse fields, including banking, foreign trade, communications, water resource development, electronics, satellite imaging, agriculture, small and medium industries, software and other areas. We provide around 1350 training slots every year in some of our best education institutions for foreign trainees of which nearly 60 percent are from Africa. Thousands of students from Africa receive heavily subsidised education in Indian universities every year. For us, cooperation with Africa is not just sound policy, it is an article of faith.**

**Mr. President,**

**It is our sincere hope that today's deliberations will contribute to crafting better solutions to Africa's problems but, more than that, galvanising the Council and the international community's will and determination to address the challenges to peace and security in Africa more resolutely and promptly, and demonstrating effective solidarity with it. Africa deserves nothing less.**

**Mr. President,**

**Before I conclude, let me place on record our deep appreciation of the outstanding contribution to the Council's work by Ambassador Koonjul and his dedicated team.**

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