

**Central African Republic**  
**23 January 2001**

**Mr. Gayan** (Mauritius): I wish to express my appreciation for your kind words of welcome addressed to me at the beginning of this meeting, Mr. President. I note also that you are conducting the Council's deliberations in a masterly manner.

My delegation would wish to thank the Secretary-General for the report dated 11 January on the situation in the Central African Republic. My delegation also wishes to convey its appreciation to Mr. Cheikh Tidiane Sy, Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Mats Karlsson, Vice-President for External Affairs and United Nations Affairs of the World Bank, and Mr. Frederick Lyons, Acting Deputy Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa of the United Nations Development Programme, for their comprehensive briefings this morning. My delegation also wishes to welcome The Honourable Agba Otikpo Mezode, Minister for the Promotion of Civic Responsibility in charge of Relations with the Parliament of the Central African Republic, to the Council.

The situation in the Central African Republic remains a matter of serious concern for the Security Council and the region in particular. The political tension between the ruling party and the opposition is unabated. The national reconciliation process seems never to get under way. The absence of dialogue between the Government and the opposition has exacerbated the socio-economic crisis faced by the Central African Republic.

The conflictual relations between the ruling party and the opposition and the boycott of the meetings of Parliament by the opposition constitute a serious setback to the democratic process, which is itself relatively new. Immense efforts have to be undertaken by the political leaders and major stakeholders to consolidate the democratic institutions that have been established. It is therefore imperative that the political leadership start, without delay, a process of dialogue with a view to bringing peace and stability to the country. But it is equally important that the opposition respond favourably to any such initiative.

The democratic process, which must be an inclusive process, depends upon the existence of institutions that alone are capable of ensuring that the fundamentals of a modern State are observed.

The political instability in the Central African Republic has been a major cause of the economic hardship suffered by the people for the past four years. The non-payment of salaries to the military and civil servants has resulted in social unrest and impoverishment

of the population. As long as State employees are not paid their salaries, there can be no reliable public administration. Institutions essential for the smooth running of Government will be undermined. The rule of law will disappear and the resulting environment will lead to corruption and other illegal practices. Such an environment will destroy good governance and will give rise to abuses and injustices, as well as social and political crises.

This situation cannot therefore be allowed to prevail. Despite the great economic potential afforded by highly unexploited natural resources, the Central African Republic continues to face a fragile social, political and economic situation. Although there have been several attempts by the international community to help the Central African Republic out of its crisis, the outcome is, to say the least, disappointing.

The Bretton Woods institutions are of the view that the challenges of maintaining macroeconomic stability remain phenomenal in the Central African Republic. I think this requires no further comment.

My delegation considers that it is important that the request of the Government of the Central African Republic for debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative be approved as early as possible, in order to enable it to address its economic challenges.

It is also important that the situation in the Central African Republic be viewed in the broader context of what is taking place elsewhere in the African continent. It is a matter of grave concern that at the start of the twenty-first century, several countries in Africa are still plagued by conflicts as a result of — and here we, as Africans, have to be honest with ourselves — the absence of good governance, nonrespect for democratic institutions, persistent violation of human rights and the lack of transparency on all fronts.

I had the honour of participating in the France- Afrique summit, which was held last week in Yaoundé, in the Republic of Cameroon. The theme of the summit was globalization challenges and opportunities for Africa. While the summit was preparing to address these fundamental issues, which are highly critical for the future of the African continent, the news of the assassination of the late President Laurent Kabila of the Democratic Republic of the Congo filtered in. Such acts unfortunately underscore the magnitude of the problems which we face in Africa, and particularly in the Great Lakes region.

But not all news out of Africa is bad. We need to welcome the peaceful and democratic transition of power in Senegal, Benin and Ghana. The mindset is changing, and the leaders in Africa are working towards the restoration of peace, stability and security by

engaging all parties in conflict situations with a view to promoting regional economic integration.

Instability and insecurity are the greatest impediments to development and progress in Africa. At this time, when the challenges facing Africa are so daunting and when the negative impact of globalization has yet to be assessed, it is opportune for Africa to look at the larger picture and concentrate on a path of development which avoids conflicts, tension and war and which enhances people-centred development strategies.

We welcome the efforts of the Security Council in the Central African Republic, and we wish also to inform the Council that the Organization of African Unity (OAU) leaders are working hard to defuse potentially explosive situations throughout the continent.

In the aftermath of the recent tragic events in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the current Chairman of the OAU, President Eyadema of Togo, has taken the initiative of convening an urgent meeting of the Central Organ of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. This initiative is welcome, and, together with whatever the Council undertakes, the OAU proposes to accompany the Council's efforts and attempt to seek African solutions to African problems.

We have to acknowledge that the conflicts in Africa have become a source of instability not only within the countries but also for other countries in the region. These conflicts have had damaging consequences, and they have already adversely affected the future of generations of Africans that are yet unborn.

Indeed, the predicament of the Central African Republic cannot be dissociated from the dire conditions prevailing in the Great Lakes region. The illegal circulation of, and trafficking in, small arms and light weapons; the use of mineral and other resources for financing paramilitary and organized rebel groups; and above all, the wrong utilization of human resources are some of the issues that need to be tackled urgently. We at the level of the OAU are engaged in getting African countries on a course dictated by harsh realities and pragmatism rather than ideology.

In conclusion, my delegation would wish an early return of political normalcy in the Central African Republic as well as a rapid economic recovery. My delegation also wishes to underscore the importance of viable regional cooperation to avert future conflicts. **T**