

STATEMENT

by

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Republic of Mauritius to the United Nations**

**at the Public Meeting
on
The Report of Panel of Experts on Liberia**

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Madam President,

I wish, first of all, to thank Ambassador Mahbubani, Chairman of the Sanctions Committee on Liberia, for introducing the Report of the Panel of Experts on Liberia and for his most pertinent remarks. Let me also welcome the members of the Panel of Experts and congratulate them for the elaborate, detailed and probing report they have submitted in accordance with the mandate given to them under paragraph 19 of the Security Council Resolution 1343.

Madam President,

The Report of the Panel of Experts brings to the attention of the Council a mixed bag of good news and bad news out of Liberia. The good news is that the Government of Liberia has taken some positive measures to implement some of the demands of Security Council Resolution 1343. It has grounded all the Liberian registered aircraft, and the Civil Aviation Authorities in Liberia are pursuing their efforts of identifying and localizing Liberian registered aircraft. Investigations are under way to establish the full extent of the problem of fraudulent registrations before a new registration list is opened. We also note that since May this year when an embargo was imposed on Liberian diamonds, there has been no official export of diamonds from Liberia and this was confirmed by the Central Bank statistics. The Government of Liberia has also expressed its readiness to establish an internationally acceptable and transparent certification regime in Liberia for the export of diamonds. As for the travel ban which the Panel considers to be the most effective sanction, it appears that it is working quite well. We encourage the Government of Liberia to pursue these efforts and to strictly comply with the other measures imposed by Security Council Resolution 1343.

Madam President,

Turning to the bad news, my delegation, and I am certain indeed the Security Council as a whole, remains deeply concerned over the continued relationship between the Government of Liberia and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone. Despite the reassurances of the Government of Liberia that it has curtailed all relationship with the Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone, the Panel of Experts reports that this is not the case. RLTF units are involved in the fighting which continues in Lofa County in Liberia. Sam Bockaric, the prominent RUF leader, freely travels to Liberia.

Madam President,

Liberia today stands among the World's poorest country. 80% of the population lives in abject poverty on less than a dollar a day. Under-development, war and the inability to re-establish political and economic stability in the post-war period have left Liberia at the bottom of the human development index, it in fact ranks 174th on a total of

175 countries. Given this situation, we note with concern that the natural resources of Liberia continue to be plundered to provide for the comfort and luxury of the Liberian leadership. 34% of the budgetary allocation under the 2000 - 2001 budget went towards "the Government of Liberia Special Commitments." Most of the funds under this item were utilized for defence expenditure on account of the war in Lofa County. It is important for the Government of Liberia, along with the steps it has taken to implement Resolution 1343, to also uphold the principles of accountability and good governance. We believe that adherence to these principles would garner international support to assist Liberia in addressing its economic difficulties.

Madam President,

The Report of the Panel of Experts has in a lucid and elaborate manner exposed how despite a general and complete embargo on all deliveries of weapons and military equipment to Liberia under Security Council Resolutions 788 and 1343, a steady flow of new weapon continues to enter Liberia. The situation is compounded when the linkage is established between irregularities with respect to Liberian registered aircraft and violations of arms embargo. In most of the arms trafficking cases, the Panel has demonstrated that air transport has been a crucial element, and in all the cases the planes that were used, had in one way or another, been subject to document fraud, forgery of flight plans and irregularities with respect to the registration of aircraft.

Another serious aspect related to the violation of arms embargo is the practice of using under cover agents to effect payments for the procurement of weapons. Timber companies as well as individuals have been identified by the report to be involved in arranging payments for arm shipments to Liberia. In several case studies, the Panel of Experts demonstrates in great details how end-user Certificates have been forged by a

network of brokers to export weapons to Liberia. These facts indeed cause some disquiet. This situation reminds us of the urgent need for all States to fully implement the Programme of Action adopted by the United Nations Conference on Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects held in July this year. We also welcome the recommendation by the Panel of Experts that the ECOWAS Moratorium on small arms should be broadened to include an information exchange mechanism for all weapons types procured by the ECOWAS member States.

Madam President,

It is most unfortunate that at a time when Liberia is showing poor prospects for sustained economic development, the leadership of the country is exploiting all avenues for self-enrichment. The revenue derived from the timber production has also been utilized for sanction busting and this has been well exemplified in the report. We welcome the recommendations of the Panel for the commissioning of an independent detailed report on revenue for the timber concessions for the period January 2001 to July 2002.

Madam President,

We are pleased to learn that the travel ban has generally worked successfully. However, we remain concerned over several violations of the travel ban, and we urge countries in the region to fully implement the provisions of Resolution 1343 in this regard. My delegation supports the Panel's recommendation that the Travel Ban list should not be set in stone and a constant update is required.

Madam President,

The Panel of Experts has made a number of valuable and constructive recommendations. These recommendations are well-intended and are meant to assist Liberia to recover from the economic deprivation it finds itself in. It is crucial that all the parties concerned undertake the necessary efforts to implement these recommendations so that Liberia and its people can enjoy a better and more peaceful life.

Madam President,

It has been eight months since we adopted Resolution 1343 and six months have passed since the sanctions have been in place, it is important at this juncture for Council to take stock of the success or otherwise of its actions with respect to Liberia and peace and stability in the West African sub-region. Although the sanctions have generally worked and are giving the desired results, it would appear that lateral damage and harm have been caused to the Liberian population which even prior to the imposition of the sanctions were living in dire conditions. It is therefore necessary for Council to have a fresh look at the most effective and least damaging way of applying sanctions in the spirit of the Bonn-Berlin Interlaken process. Any new measures taken by Council should be so designed to target exclusively the Liberian elite, have a clearly defined time-frame and should spare the Liberian civilian population of any further hardship. We also believe that

it is important for the Council to give careful consideration to alternate tracks that could lead to a political solution to the problem in the region. We call on the international community to continue their support and assistance to the Liberian population.

Madam President,

Recent political developments in the Mano River Union augur well for the region. We welcome the efforts of ECOWAS aimed at improving relations between the Government of Liberia and its neighbours as well as restoring confidence and stability in the sub-region. We look forward to the Regional Summit of the Leaders of the Mano River countries in January 2002 and we hope that the outcome of the meeting will produce results that will impact positively on the region and its people.

Madam President,

Before I conclude, I would wish to bring to the attention of the Council that under the subtitle "Diamonds" in Part III of the Report, it is reported that Leonid Minin, a businessman with close connections with President Charles Taylor, had in his possession, at the time of his arrest in Italy in August, 2000, documents of a Mauritian diamond company called Black Stella Diamonds and letters showing Minin's attempts to set up a diamond exporting chain from West Africa, through a polishing plant in Mauritius to Russia and China. I would wish to bring to the attention of Members of the Council that the Chairman of the Panel of Experts had written to my Mission on 11th May seeking information on the import and export of Diamonds from Mauritius and the company Black Stella Diamonds. In a letter dated 26th June, I provided to the Chairman of the Panel of Experts all the information he had requested and informed him that all import of diamonds were carried out through legal channels and that according to records available, the company Black Stella Diamond Ltd. had not been involved in the import or export of any diamonds. I also offered to provide any additional information that the Panel wanted to have.

I thank you, Madam President.