

STATEMENT
by
H.E. Mr Jagdish Koonjul
Permanent Representative of the
Republic of Mauritius to the United Nations

at the
Public Meeting
on
The Situation in Somalia

19 October 2001
New York

Mr. President,

My delegation would like to extend a very warm welcome to H.E. Mr Galayadh, Prime Minister of the Transitional National Government (TNG) of Somalia and to the members of his delegation. We sincerely hope that today's meeting will provide the opportunity to have a thorough exchange of views of the situation in Somalia and pave the way for a vigorous renewal of the LJM relationship with the Transitional National Government in the large interest and welfare of the Somali people at large. I also wish to thank David Steven, Special Representative of the Secretary General for his useful briefing this morning.

The report of the Secretary General comes at a very opportune moment especially since the last one was issued in December last year.

During this period we have witnessed quite a few developments in Somalia some very positive and others not quite so.

Since its installation, the TNG has been confronted with the enormous and daunting challenge of political reconciliation, reconstruction and development of Somalia. We are all aware that for ten years, Somalia was devoid of any formal national institutions, the TNG inherited an extremely poor legacy, and it had to start from ground zero.

Today the problems faced by Somalia and the TNG remain mainly two-fold:-

- a) the national reconciliation on the political front while respecting the sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity of Somalia and secondly
- b) the socioeconomic reconstruction of the country.

It is encouraging to note from the report that the TNG has begun to set up national institutions - Ministries have started to function, a judiciary is gradually coming into place, militia are being demobilized and reintegrated. We also find that the TNG is doing the needful to have a police system in the capital. These are all indications the TNG is proceeding, slowly but surely, in the right direction in the reconstruction process. The progress so far achieved may not be quite to the expectation of the International Community. But we need to ask ourselves whether the International Community has remained sufficiently engaged to help and support the TNG as it committed itself following the conclusion of the Arta process. In accordance with the Transitional National Assembly constitution, democratic elections are scheduled for 2003. The TNG therefore needs to address the basic political problem particularly the national reconciliation, economic and development challenges of the country in anticipation of the election. The humanitarian situation in Somalia continues to remain very precarious. 750,000 people are today in need of assistance to cover food shortfalls stemming from past harvest failures. Furthermore, the report mentions that in the current year, programmes linked to the TNG received virtually no assistance from international donors. It also mentions that in the year 2000 from the US\$115.5 million resulting from international donor assistance, 42%, went to projects in Somaliland and Puntland areas, 31% went to the "South" and the remaining 27% was spent on programmes implemented on a country wide basis. These facts give the impression that the efforts made by the TNG are not being given full and due recognition. Unless, there is a clear, genuine engagement by the International Community to help the TNG in moving ahead in this perilous endeavour, we feel it will be difficult to see the results expected from the TNG.

Mr President,

The TNG has made several calls for a greater involvement of the International Community in Somalia in the form of a Peace-building Mission. It has so many times been said in this Chamber that post-conflict peace-building seeks to prevent the resurgence of conflict and to create the conditions necessary for a sustained peace in war-torn societies. This is extremely relevant in the case of Somalia. My delegation considers that the TNG should be given maximum support to sustain its current policies of administrative rehabilitation in the country. This will in turn enhance its ability to initiate dialogue with the other factions in the process of national reconciliation.

There is another important security aspect that has become particularly significant after the September 11 incident. Para 56 of the Secretary-General's report refers to the Somali-based organization Al-Itihad Al-Islamiya and its suspected terrorist links. Past events have shown to us that failed States are more prone to be the breeding ground for terrorist activities. We have even seen reports alluding to the possibility of some notorious terrorists seeking other safe havens. We welcome the actions taken by the TNG to combat terrorism. It is in the common interest of all to have a strong, stable Government in Somalia specially when the World is showing its commitment and is getting fully geared to combat terrorism. This is an additional reason why today, the TNG should be given all assistance and help it deserves.

Mr President,

Following the conclusion of the Arta process the LJM declared its intention to assist in the peace-building process of Somalia with the possible deployment of a peace-building mission. Unfortunately in view of the negative security assessment it has so far not been effected. My delegation believes that the security situation in Somalia since the installation of the TNG has improved in many ways. We note for example that some countries have opened up resident mission in Mogadishu and we believe that the LJM should consider opening an office in the country. The incidents of October 14, almost at the eve of our debate here, in my delegation's view, are not coincidental and are designed to affect the credibility of the TNG. My delegation support the appeal to the Secretary General to arrange for a thorough security assessment by an interagency team from the LJM Headquarters from New York, so that the much-awaited peace-building mission could be deployed in a near future. We also feel that such a mission should work closely with the TNG Government.

On the political front, we believe that the completion of the Arta Process remains the most viable option for a lasting peace in Somalia. We once again call upon all the political groups in Somalia to engage in peaceful and constructive dialogue with the TNG. The TNG was formed last year with the blessing of -the United Nations, the OAU and several other countries in the region, and we strongly condemn any other force or so called-alliance which attempts to supplant the TNG. We believe that the people of Somalia are now more willing to move away from clan-based groups; we encourage the TNG to win the confidence of more Somalians and faction leaders. However, the TNG should be fully committed and determined to achieve its goals of bringing peace, reconciliation and economic prosperity in Somalia. To attain these objectives, the TNG cannot afford to bring any split within its rank and file.

In this process the cooperation and collaboration of the countries of the region, in particular, the neighbours of Somalia, will be of utmost importance. We call upon them to have in mind, above all, the interest of the Somali people and the importance of regional peace and stability in framing their policy vis-a-vis their neighbour.

Mr President,

We support the proposal of considering the establishment of a 'Committee of Friends' for Somalia. But we must ensure that this does not result in a greater proliferation of initiatives which can further impede the search for a comprehensive solution.

Finally, before ending my delegation would like to once again reiterate the respect of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity of Somalia.