

**Briefings by the Chairpersons of Sanctions Committees and Working Groups--sanctions, Africa, peacekeeping operations –**  
**By Amb. Koonjul - 18 December 2002**

For the same reasons that Ambassador Kishore Mahbubani mentioned earlier, I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this meeting. I welcome this opportunity to provide a briefing on the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, over which I had the honour to preside for the past 10 months.

As members will recall, the Working Group was established following the public meeting on the situation in Africa held last January with the participation of His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy, Secretary-General of the then Organization of African Unity - now the African Union - and of several ministerial delegations, which led to the Security Council's adoption of presidential statement. That presidential statement requested the Council to give serious consideration to the setting up of an ad hoc working group to monitor the recommendations contained in the statement and to enhance coordination and cooperation with the Economic and Social Council - whose President, by the way, participated in a Council meeting for the first time on that occasion.

The Security Council subsequently established the Working Group in February with the following mandate: first, to monitor the implementation of recommendations contained in the presidential statement and in previous presidential statements and resolutions regarding conflict prevention and resolution in Africa; secondly, to propose recommendations on the enhancement of cooperation between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council as well as with other United Nations agencies dealing with Africa; thirdly, to examine, in particular, regional and cross-conflict issues that affect the Security Council's work on African conflict prevention and resolution; and fourthly, to propose recommendations to the Security Council aimed at enhancing cooperation in conflict prevention and resolution between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity as well as with other sub regional organizations.

The very first meeting of the Working Group, which was held at the ambassadorial level, provided an opportunity for a very rich exchange of views and a powerful brainstorming session, which in turn gave the Group a

general sense of direction and the broad parameters of its work. It was agreed that, in fulfilling its mandate, the Working Group would not duplicate the Security Council's work but would rather bring added value to it by looking at issues of importance to Africa, which generally are not adequately discussed in the Council.

In May, under the Singaporean presidency of the Council, I had the opportunity to present the Working Group's programme of work to the general membership at a public briefing presided over by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Singapore. The debate that followed confirmed the general membership's approbation of the relevance of the Working Group and of the work programme that I had outlined. Here, I should like to express my gratitude for the wide support and encouragement that my Working Group received from the general membership at that meeting. I am also thankful to the Singaporean presidency for the very succinct report that it presented at the end of the meeting.

After a number of meetings, my Working Group presented a first set of recommendations to the Security Council in August this year, they related to a group of friends, to cooperation with the African Union and to Guinea-Bissau.

In brief, with regard to the group of friends, the Working Group based its discussions on background information provided by the Department of Political Affairs on the work of the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General as well as on the experiences of Member States that had launched similar groups.

On cooperation with the African Union, the Working Group discussed extensively the question of enhancing cooperation between the Security Council and the African Union. In that regard, the Working Group heard the views of the Permanent Observer of the African Union in New York and formulated a number of recommendations. I am pleased to report that there is now general and greater awareness among Council members of the African Union's activities with respect to conflicts in Africa.

With regard to Guinea-Bissau, the Working Group had a rich exchange of views with the participation of the Permanent Representative of Guinea-Bissau, the President of the Economic and Social Council, the Department of Political Affairs, the United Nations Development

Programme, the International Peace Academy and the Permanent Representative of the Gambia, who acted as Chair of the Group of Friends on Guinea-Bissau. After discussing Guinea-Bissau's current peace-building needs and the obstacles that were being encountered by that country in addressing those needs, the Working Group made a number of practical recommendations.

A second set of recommendations, relating to the enhancement of the effectiveness of the Representatives and Special Representatives of the Secretary-General in Africa, were made by the Working Group on 9 December. While preparing those recommendations, the Working Group consulted with the Department of Political Affairs, the Office of the African Union and the Office of the Secretary-General. I should like to stress here that the recommendations concerning Representatives and Special Representatives of the Secretary-General do not in any way reflect the performance of existing Representatives and Special Representatives but are intended to suggest ways and means to enhance their effectiveness.

The Working Group also held briefing sessions on the New Partnership for Africa's Development and on the activities of the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division in order to provide the delegations of Council members with a better understanding of those issues while they deal with their work in the Council. In addition, the International Crisis Group was invited to brief the members of the Working Group on the Mano River Union prior to the workshop that the United Kingdom presidency organized in the month of July.

The most significant achievement of the Working Group has been the promotion of close cooperation between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. Indeed, there is a growing recognition that the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council should cooperate and coordinate their activities for lasting solutions to conflicts. It was in that spirit that the President of the Economic and Social Council was invited to participate in the public meeting of the Security Council on the situation in Africa in January and in the meetings that the Working Group held subsequently.

Likewise, the President of the Economic and Social Council invited me, in my capacity as Chair of the Security Council's Working Group, to participate in the Economic and Social Council's commemoration of the

tenth anniversary of the General Peace Agreement for Mozambique, which was held on 4 October 2002. More recently, at the invitation of the Economic and Social Council, I participated in the joint Security Council-Economic and Social Council mission to Guinea-Bissau with the Economic and Social Council Ad Hoc Advisory Group on African Countries Emerging from Conflict. We had a very constructive meeting in Guinea-Bissau, and later in Washington with the Bretton Woods institutions, and it is hoped that very useful recommendations will be made that will help Guinea-Bissau. Such joint activity illustrates the close cooperation that we have been able to establish between those two important organs of the United Nations.

As the Mauritius membership of the Council will be ending this month, and since the Working Group will come up for review in February next year, I should like, in my personal capacity, to make certain observations on the future of the Working Group. In our opinion, the Working Group's informal nature makes it an ideal forum for discussion of issues relating to Africa, especially because the Group invites speakers from various organizations to brainstorm on African issues. Although the Security Council spends most of its time on African issues, it hardly has the time to devote itself to in-depth discussions. The Working Group compensates for that shortcoming. With the events of 11 September 2001 and other pressing problems that the Council must address - combined with a number of positive developments in Africa - there may be a tendency to move the focus away from African problems. The Working Group, we feel, will greatly help in maintaining the focus on African issues.

The link that has been created by the Working Group with the Economic and Social Council will not, we believe, survive on its own. The cooperation between the two Councils is of vital importance, and the Working Group can provide the vital link for the continuation of such cooperation. The approach that the Working Group and the Economic and Social Council have taken with regard to Guinea-Bissau can also be applied to many other countries emerging from conflict, such as, for example, the Central African Republic, Burundi, Angola and even Liberia at some stage in the future.

The African Union and sub regional organizations in Africa are important partners of the Security Council with respect to dealing with conflicts in Africa. We believe that the Working Group can be of significant importance in strengthening the partnership among the Security Council, the

African Union and sub regional organizations in Africa. It is therefore our view that there is merit in maintaining and in strengthening the Working Group well beyond its current mandate. We also believe that the dialogue that was initiated with the African Union by inviting the Secretary-General of the African Union to participate in the Council's public meeting last January should continue. We certainly hope that next year the new Council will follow up on that.

Finally, I would like to thank all Council members for the support which they have given me in the Working Group. I would like, in particular, to thank the Department of Political Affairs Assistant Secretary-General Kalomoh and Ms. Vogt- as well as the whole Secretariat team for the continuous assistance that they have provided to the Working Group. I would like to make a special mention of the support that I received from Ambassador Gerry Corr, the Deputy Permanent Representative of Ireland, for the comprehensive paper that he presented on the New Partnership for Africa's Development, from the United States delegation, in particular Mr. Rick Mills, for their contribution on the role of Special Representatives of the Secretary-General. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of my own team, in particular Mr. Jingree, for their dedicated support, which made the work of my Committee easier, and for the recommendations which we have made in regard to the work of the Working Group. We certainly hope that Council members will give serious consideration next year to continuing the Working Group and even to strengthening it further.