

Jan 27: Statement by H.E Mr. George Rebelo Chicoti, Vice Minister for the External Relations of Angola at the Security Council Open debate on Peace, Security and Development in the Great Lakes Region



Madam President,

I would like to congratulate Tanzania on its assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of January and to express satisfaction at the attention devoted to Africa. This is in the best tradition of Tanzania's dedication to the most worthy causes of our continent.

May I also commend Mr. Ibrahima Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, for the key role that he and his team are playing in the implementation of the Great Lakes agenda.

Madame President,

During Angola's two-year term as a nonpermanent member of the Security Council, this body, as well as the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, held meetings on the same issue.

My delegation is therefore very appreciative to you, Madam President, for keeping alive the interest of the Security Council, and, through it, the interest of international community in the problems affecting this important region.

This is also the right place to thank the international Community in general and in particular the members of the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes region for their moral and material support to the Conference. We therefore appeal for the continuation of this support.

The holding of the first Summit Conference and the adoption of the Dar es-Salaam Declaration constitute a turning point in the history of the region. The full

participation in the Conference of all States concerned is a clear demonstration of the regional dimension of the problem and also an expression of the capacity of our peoples to overcome differences when vital common interests are at stake.

Madame President,

The Great Lakes region, considered in the past as a disastrous and conflict-ridden area, is gearing up for an overdue revival that has brought hope back to our peoples.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo held a constitutional referendum successfully an important step towards the consolidation of the transitional arrangements before the forthcoming elections.

In neighbouring Burundi, the holding of presidential elections in August 2005 ended the transitional period and opened a new era of national reconciliation and economic recovery.

In the Central African Republic, constitutional order has been restored. The United Republic of Tanzania has held successful general elections, while Angola, Zambia and Uganda are preparing for elections. The peace process in the Sudan is under way, in spite of the instability in Darfur, the consequences of which should be adequately addressed.

Those are clear signs of the commitment of the countries of the region to reach peace, democracy and development, in conformity with the goals of the International Conference on the Great Lakes.

My delegation is deeply concerned, however, by the continuation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo of atrocities committed by criminal groups responsible for hundreds of summary executions, rapes, beatings and hostage-taking of civilians. The national army of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has taken action against those criminal groups.

We commend that action. In our view, it represents a sound lesson for the concept of United Nations peacekeeping operations, as it gives a clear indication of the measures to be taken against criminal groups that choose to challenge the international community and the will of a nation to live in peace.

The sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must be respected and preserved.

Madame President,

In that regard, I want to reiterate the commitment of my Government to continue to train the Congolese national army, together with other partners, particularly Belgium and South Africa.

In my own country, in the three and a half years of peace and the post-conflict era that we have experienced, the strategic priorities of the Government of Unity and National Reconciliation have been directed towards the social and productive reintegration of demobilized soldiers and people displaced during the war, towards improving the delivery of basic social services to people throughout the country, and towards macroeconomic stabilization.

As a result of those efforts, the climate of tolerance and democratic cordiality between the political parties has been re-established and the country is rapidly proceeding with the organization of free, fair and transparent elections following the approval by the National Assembly of the electoral package in July 2005 and the establishment of the National Electoral Commission.

In the economic and social fields, considerable improvements have been achieved.

Since the end of the conflict, the share of the budget allocated to the social sector has increased from 12 per cent to 60 per cent. That has enabled, among other actions, the reintegration of four million displaced people in their areas of origin or choice, while we continue with the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme.

Angola needs the support of the international community in order to improve its landmine clearing programme and the rehabilitation and reconstruction of economic infrastructures destroyed during the war.

Angola is committed to sharing its experiences of post-conflict recovery and to contributing to the materialization of the main objectives of the International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region.

In that connection, in September 2005 the Republic of Angola hosted in Luanda the meeting of the Regional Preparatory Committee of the Conference on the Great Lakes region. The Luanda meeting dealt with such issues as the joint security management of common borders, combating transnational crime and terrorism, the development of border zones and human security, as well as non-aggression and mutual defense.

Madame President,

The deployment of four United Nations missions in States members of the International Conference on the Great Lakes - Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and the Sudan — should be duly used to address the cross border issues and other challenges, including monitoring of the arms embargo in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

By working out a protocol against the illegal exploitation of natural resources, the members of the International Conference on the Great Lakes region have shown that they are committed to dealing with that crucial issue.

However, the efforts of the region should be complemented by the implementation of the relevant provisions of Security Council resolution 1625 (2005), in particular those regarding the illegal exploitation of and trafficking in natural resources and high-value commodities.

Madame President,

In our view, finding long-lasting solutions to African conflicts is also a development challenge, considering the devastating impact of conflict on development. That should also be the approach of the international community towards the problems affecting the region.

Bearing that reality in mind, the countries of the Great Lakes Conference are in the process of negotiating an important legal framework to promote development, including a protocol on a specific reconstruction and development zone, as well as a special fund for the reconstruction and development of the Great Lakes region.

Madame President,

The adoption of Security Council resolution 1631 (2005) opened a new era of cooperation and coordination between the United Nations and regional organizations. The African Union and sub regional organizations may play their role if an effective response is given to the problems of the lack of resources and of how to make partnerships between the two mechanisms as efficient as possible.

Useful lessons on the negative impact of the lack of resources should therefore be drawn from the deployment of the African Union's missions in Burundi and the Sudanese region of Darfur, while reflecting on the improvement in cooperation between the Security Council and regional organizations.

Madame President,

Before I conclude, allow me to stress that the coordinated conduct of the process of the International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region by the United Nations and the African Union offers a good example of cooperation and coordination between the two Organizations.

For my delegation, the newly established Peacebuilding Commission should also benefit from the experience and expertise developed in the Great Lakes process. Finally, my delegation expresses its full support for the draft resolution before us.

I thank you, Madame President