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PROPOSAL FOR AN AFRICAN POLICY ON THE SUPPLY
OF ITEMS TO AU AND UN PEACE-KEEPING MISSION

(Item Proposed by the Federal Republic of Nigeria)

**PROPOSAL FOR AN AFRICAN POLICY ON THE SUPPLY OF ITEMS TO AU
AND UN PEACE-KEEPING MISSION**

1. As far back as the earliest United Nations' peace-keeping operations, many African countries have contributed troops and civilian personnel to support UN peace efforts in conflict areas, both in Africa and other parts of the world. Most of such African personnel have acquitted themselves creditably over the years. It is not surprising therefore that the trend has continued till today that African military and civilian personnel have not only headed a number of UN operations, but are also frequently sought after, especially with the reluctance of the developed countries to contribute troops to peacekeeping operations (PKOs) outside their regions.

2. While African nations have been in the forefront of troop contributions to UN and AU mandated PKOs, the continent has scarcely featured in the supply of materials and accoutrements to peacekeeping operations, even those undertaken within the continent. The trend has been that all manners of sundry items and equipment are contracted out to companies and businesses from the developed countries often at prohibitive costs. Granted that most African countries are not able to supply some of the sophisticated high-tech equipment required for certain PKOs, they have the capacity and indeed can readily supply most of the less technologically-dependent materials and food items that can sustain troops anywhere in the world.

3. For instance, there is no country outside Africa that can better prepare and supply the staple foods that African troops are used to, whether it is the mealie, garri, couscous, etc. Indeed, African peacekeeping personnel are known to have taken ill or suffered some disorientation on account of having to adjust to diets they are not familiar with. This has, in some cases, affected adversely their usually high performance.

4. Regarding the capabilities of African companies, there are companies in many countries in the continent that produce high quality boots, belts, blankets, uniforms, bottled water, processed and packaged food, drinking and storage vessels, plates and mess pans, medicines for minor ailments etc. These companies could on request readily supply such items to peacekeeping missions, anywhere in the world, and particularly in Africa, at less cost to the UN and/or the AU.

5. The relatively cheaper cost of labour in the continent will invariably make such food items and materials cheaper if procured and supplied in Africa. There is also the advantage of reduced logistics costs if the items for PKOs in Africa are procured from within and near the location of the operations. The logic of this is quite apparent that it needs no further elaboration.

6. In consideration of the principle of equity and fair play, it is proper that a continent that had made such sacrifice in terms of troops contributions to PKOs with the attendant risks, should also avail itself of any benefits accruing from such exercises in proportion to its contributions. Therefore, it is imperative that African companies and businesses should as a matter of policy be given the opportunity to bid for and win contracts to supply needed basic items as enumerated above to PKOs anywhere in the world. They should also be encouraged in the award of contracts for supplies to PKOs, especially AU-mandated missions in the continent, with special consideration for the areas where they have comparative advantage.

7. The engagement of African companies and businesses will not only encourage growth in the private sector and improvements in its operations, it will also contribute to capacity building. Moreover, it will contribute in some way to create jobs and open further opportunities for individuals and businesses in the continent.

8. Nigeria will also like to invite the attention of Member States to the fact that the Fifth Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, which deals with Administrative and Budgetary questions, has long commenced discussions in ensuring that African and other developing countries are able to bid for and win UN procurement contracts for PKOs and other operations. At this point therefore, it is time the AU came up with an African policy on the question of African companies and businesses participating actively in the supply of equipment and materials to UN and AU missions.

PROPOSAL

9. In the light of the foregoing, Nigeria will like to propose that:

- a) The AU considers an African policy that will ensure that African companies and businesses are given priority supply of materials for UN and AU peacekeeping operations in Africa. Such a policy should take into account the comparative advantage that the African companies will have in supplying food items and other less technologically-dependent materials, in terms of initial and the logistics costs;
- b) The AU should identify those items that could be procured from within Africa. In this regard, the AU Commission should organize an exhibition where African companies will showcase their products and services relevant to peacekeeping operations;

- c) Businesses from troop contributing nations should be given priority if and when they bid for supply of equipment and other materials, especially food items that will suit their personnel.

RECOMMENDATIONS

10. In order to properly articulate this policy, Nigeria suggests that the AU Commission should, set up a Working Group or Committee of Experts to study and examine the proposal in all its ramifications, including taking into account the views of our development partners. Thereafter, the report should be submitted for consideration of the appropriate organs of the Union.

2005

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