

ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY



ORGANISATION DE L'UNITE AFRICAINE

Fax: 51 78 44/51 93 21 P. O. Box 3243 Addis Ababa Ethiopia Tel: 251-1) 51 38 22

**Eighty-First Ordinary Session
of the Central Organ of the OAU
Mechanism for Conflict Prevention,
Management and Resolution
at Ambassadorial Level**

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
28 February 2002**

**Central/Organ/MEC/AMB/(LXXXI)
Original : French**

**REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL ON THE DEPLOYMENT
OF AN OAU MILITARY OBSERVER MISSION TO THE COMOROS
WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE STRENGTHENING OF
SECURITY DURING THE PERIOD OF ELECTIONS**

**REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL ON THE DEPLOYMENT
OF AN OAU MILITARY OBSERVER MISSION IN THE COMOROS
WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE STRENGTHENING OF
SECURITY DURING THE PERIOD OF ELECTIONS**

I. REMINDER

1. At its 78th Ordinary Session at Ambassadorial Level, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 27 November 2001, the Central Organ of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution authorized the deployment, as a matter of urgency, of an OAU Military Observer Mission (MIOC), composed of 16 officers, to supervise arms collection in Anjouan within the purview of the implementation of the Framework Agreement for Reconciliation in the Comoros of 17 February 2001. The Mission, which comprised 14 officers from South Africa, Mauritius, Mozambique and Togo, was deployed on 20 December 2001, and concluded on 7 February 2002.

2. The Central Organ would recall that, in its decision authorizing that deployment, it had fixed the duration of the arms collection operation to a minimum of three weeks, starting from 1 December 2001. However, the operation was only actually launched on 20 December 2001 because of the late arrival of the Officers appointed for that mission. Furthermore, following a letter addressed to the General Secretariat by the Commander of the Mission, Lt. Col. Charles Payne of South Africa, regarding the difficulties for the Mission to carry out its tasks within the timeframe laid down by the Central Organ, the Assistant Secretary General in charge of Political Affairs, Ambassador Saïd Djinnit, sent a letter on 8 January 2002, to the Chairman of the Central Organ, copied to all the members of the Central Organ, to update him on the progress made in the operation of arms collection and request his understanding and that of the Central Organ about the need to extend the duration of the Mission for an additional period of three weeks, starting from 15 January 2002, in order to enable the Mission to conclude its task. A letter was also addressed to the contributing countries to inform them about the extension and to request them to allow their Officers to remain until the end of the Mission. In its Note Verbale of 17 January 2002, the Embassy of the Republic of Mauritius in Addis Ababa informed the General Secretariat that the Government of Mauritius

expressed its understanding and support for the extension of the mission. On their part, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs/External Relations of the countries of the Region and the Troika of the OAU, meeting in Pretoria on 18 January 2002 reiterated their total support for the Mission and expressed their gratitude to the Central Organ for its understanding about the need to extend the duration of the said Mission in order to enable it complete its task successfully.

3. According to the end of mission report submitted by the Mission Commander, Lt. Col. Charles Payne, the Mission collected and inspected 346 weapons, that is 83%, of the 415 weapons estimated to be in circulation by the Anjouanese authorities. Those weapons were handed over to the Authority of Anjouan, Col. Mohamed Bacar, on 4 February 2002. I would like to seize this opportunity to congratulate the Officers, who participated in that Mission, for their excellent performance and their contribution to the restoration of a climate of confidence in Anjouan. I would like also to express my appreciation to the countries of the Region and the OAU Troika, which contributed to the success of that operation by placing their Officers and non-commissioned Officers at the disposal of the OAU for that operation.

4. I would like to inform the Central Organ that in spite of the success of the OAU Military Observer Mission for arms collection in Anjouan, the security of the Archipelago during the transitional period and, particularly, with the prospect of elections in March and April 2002, remains a source of concern for all the Comorian Parties engaged in the ongoing process. That issue was discussed at length at the Ministerial meeting of the countries of the Region and the OAU Troika on the Comoros, held in Pretoria, South Africa, on 18 January 2002. On that occasion, the Ministers were informed about the request submitted by the Comorian Government to South Africa for military equipment that would enable the Comorian security forces to build their capacity in law enforcement.

5. The Central Organ will recall that, at the end of the deliberations, the Ministers adopted a number of decisions, including the dispatch to the Comoros, at the soonest of a team of military and security experts of the countries of the Region and the OAU Troika, to assess the security situation in the Archipelago and make recommendations on the best way to help the

country meet its security needs and build its capacity, with a view to establishing the conditions conducive to the smooth electoral process and promoting security and trust among the Parties during the transitional period and beyond.

6. On that basis, the delegation of military and security Experts of the countries of the Region and of the OAU Troika carried out a mission to the Comoros from 29 January to 5 February 2002. It comprised, in addition to a Senior Military Officer of the Political Affairs Department of the General Secretariat, six (6) Senior South African Officers (one military and 5 policemen) and one (1) Togolese Military Expert.

7. In the meantime, in a letter addressed to me on 23 January 2002, in his capacity as a signatory to the Framework Agreement, Mr. Abbas Djoussouf, one of the leaders of the Comorian Opposition, strongly wished for the establishment of a security arrangement meant to guarantee peace, security and the smooth functioning of the electoral operations. To that end, Mr. Abbas requested the OAU to consider the possibility of sending a contingent of Military Observers with the major mission of ensuring security during the electoral process.

8. That request was reiterated by seven of the nine candidates to the Presidency, namely, Dr. Mtara Maecha, Messrs Moustoifa Saïd Cheikh, Abdallah Halifa, Saïd Hassan Hachim, Saïd Ali Kemal, Mahamoud Mradabi and Youssef Saïd Soilihi. In a collective letter dated 21 February 2002, and addressed to the Coordinator of the International Community, the signatories requested the OAU, which ensures that coordination, to deploy a military force in the Comoros. In that letter, those candidates pointed out that their request was justified by the need to ensure the security of the ongoing process, which they considered to be fragile, particularly through the protection of the borders and to ensure that the candidate-elect would be the one to be inaugurated at the end of the ballot. For them, "the deployment of a military force in the Comoros is a sine qua non condition for the organization of free, fair and democratic election".

9. Furthermore, in a letter dated 25 February 2002, and addressed to the international community, six representatives of the notability of the Island of Grande Comore, after "congratulating the Organization of African Unity on everything it has done for National Reconciliation in the Comoros, particularly the significant progress made in the electoral process" requested the Organization "to kindly place at the disposal of the Comoros a security force, capable of ensuring the protection of the borders of the country and ensure that the candidate elect will be sworn in". According to those notables, "the dispatch of this force constitutes a necessary condition for organizing free, democratic and fair elections."

II. OUTCOME OF THE MISSION

10. The Experts held talks with the Prime Minister of the Transitional Government of National Unity, Mr. Hamada Madi Bolero, and with various Comorian leaders, civilians as well as military, in Grande Comore, Anjouan and Moheli. The meetings and talks made it possible for the military and security Experts to make the following observations and recommendations:

A. Security Situation

11. The political situation in the Comoros seems to stabilize after the attempted coups in Anjouan and Moheli in November and December 2001, respectively. The reconciliation process has been strengthened with the adoption, by 76.99%, of the draft Constitution after the referendum of 23 December 2001. The preparations for the general elections aimed at the establishment of the new institutions are proceeding according to the schedule adopted by the Follow-up Committee.

12. However, the military and security Experts noted that the security situation is still vulnerable, owing to the acts of destabilization carried out from outside which had marked the history of the country, as well as to the possibility of public disorder in the country, due particularly to the presence of a minority which is still hostile to the on going process and unhappy with the result of the constitutional referendum of 23 December 2001. According to the Experts, this situation constitutes a threat to the smooth conduct of the elections and the stability of the country after the vote. Therefore, a

mechanism to strengthen the security of the country is needed during the period of elections.

B. Capacity of the Defence and Security Forces

13. The Comorian army, known as the National Army for Development (AND), is composed of two main elements: the Comorian Defence Force (FCD) and the National Gendarmerie, which are under the command of the same Chief of Staff. The army has a strength of about 1070 men, including 600 military personnel, 400 Gendarmes, 50 security Officers for the protection of VIPs and 20 medical staff. The Police force of about 400 Officers is not very well developed and is under the command/control of the Ministry of the Interior.

14. As regards its mission, the AND is in charge of the defence of the national sovereignty against external aggression and the protection of territorial integrity. The Police force, supported by the Gendarmerie, is to enforce law and maintain public order.

15. In September 2001, several protests took place against corruption, salary arrears, poor living conditions and poor rationing of electricity. They resulted in the arrest of about 400 persons. On 19 December 2001, there was an attempted coup in Moheli, perpetrated by foreign elements in collusion with former Comorian dignitaries residing in Europe. That invasion was repelled successfully by the Moheli detachment, supported by a reinforcement from Grand Comoros.

16. It is nonetheless true that the capacity of the AND to face possible internal or external threats is only apparent, due, in particular, to its own internal problems, indiscipline and unhappiness poor working conditions, salary arrears and conditions under which promotions are given. These factors continue to impede the effectiveness of the AND and its capacity to face internal and external threats. It is for these reasons that there are still serious concerns among the Comorian people as a whole, and among the representatives of the Parties involved in the ongoing process in particular, about the reliability of the electoral process and the viability of the New Comorian Ensemble.

C. Preparations for Elections

17. Furthermore, the Police force and the National Gendarmerie, which are to protect election materials, polling stations and the records of the different ballots, as well as the transportation of the ballot boxes, do not seem to be adequate either in number or in quality, to carry out correctly their assignment. However, it should be noted that the former Government presided by Colonel Azali Assoumani had then made a request for equipment to maintain law and order over the entire Archipelago. A copy of that request was handed over to the delegation of military and security Experts.

18. The different meetings, which the delegation of Experts held with the electoral officials, particularly the Secretary General and spokesman of the National Independent Electoral and Validation Commission (CNEIH), as well as with the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces and the UNDP and the Chief Technical Adviser of the Electoral support project in the Comoros (APEC), made it possible for the Experts to note that the CNEIH has no security plan to enable the smooth organization of elections. Furthermore, there is no coordination between the security forces and the CNEIH.

D. Recommendations of Experts

19. In the light of the foregoing, the military and security Experts, at the end of their mission, made the following observations and recommendations.

20. As regards the security of the electoral process and election materials, and considering the limitations and shortcomings of the different organs involved in the preparation of the elections, the Experts suggested the establishment with the CNEIH of a Consultative Committee on Security, which would be responsible for all security issues during the electoral period and whose mandate would be to strengthen the CNEIH through a coordination mechanism. This Committee should be chaired by a representative of the CNEIH and should comprise the representatives of the following organs: local security forces, UNDP and the OAU security team.

21. As for the security of the Archipelago as a whole, it is important to note that there is no consensus between the islands on the need to deploy an OAU military force during the period of elections. Colonel Azali and his allies, as well as the authorities of Moheli, informed the Experts that they would not accept such a deployment, while those of Anjouan and the Comorian National Opposition, as well as most candidates to the Presidential election, expressed the wish for that deployment.

22. Considering the foregoing, and in view of the fact that the present security forces on all the Comorian islands are not in a position to ensure security during the elections, the Experts recommended that an external force be deployed to establish a climate of confidence, monitor the Comorian territorial waters and ensure the safety of the electoral staff (UNDP, CNEIH) and voting materials. That force could also serve as a deterrent, if necessary.

23. Considering also the opposition shown by Grand Comoros and Moheli to the deployment of a security force, the Experts recommended that political pressure be exerted on the Transitional Government of national unity and the authorities of the two Islands so that they accept the deployment of that force over the entire Archipelago for a period spanning from two weeks before the primary elections to two weeks after the Presidential election, that is, a period of approximately two months.

24. According to the Experts, if the proposal for the deployment of a security force is accepted, its composition could be as follows:

- A Headquarters for the security force (14 military personnel) to advise the CNEIH on issues related to security and to ensure an effective coordination and communication between the islands;
- An infantry company of 166 elements, with its Headquarters, which should be self-sufficient and have the appropriate means of transport; it will be composed as follows:
 - A section of 36 men per island and a section of 30 men as a reserve section based in Moroni;

- A mobile team for air operations composed of 3 light helicopters and one medium tonnage helicopter;
- A ship to support the peace force and two warships to guard the Comorian coasts and territorial waters;
- A medical team of 6 members for emergency cases;
- A communication section of 8 men to ensure inter-island communication (HF) and VHF communication inside each island.

25. According to the Experts, and considering that this force of 166 members should be self-sufficient, the OAU contribution should be limited to the payment of a subsistence allowance of US\$90.00 per day. That would amount to US\$896,400 for only the contingents to be deployed in the country. This amount does not include the marine and air elements whose needs could not be quantified because of the absence of a pilot and a navy Officer among of the members the delegation of experts.

26. It should be stressed that in their mission report, the Experts considered an alternative to the security force in case the Transitional Government of national Unity and the authorities of the islands maintained their refusal. In this case, the Experts recommended the deployment of a Military Observer Mission composed of 60 men and a technical assistance team of 20 men, to monitor the situation in each island and serve as an observation outpost for all threats against the country. The Experts also recommended that, in that case, measures should be taken by the countries of the Region for the establishment of a standby force which would be based in a country of the Region and which would be capable of intervening immediately in the event the life of OAU Observers and the Comorian people is threatened.

III. CONCLUSION

27. At the time of finalizing this Report, my Special Envoy to the Comoros, Mr. Francisco Madeira, informed me that during subsequent discussions with

the Comorian authorities, the latter informed him that they would accept the deployment of an OAU Observer Mission, composed of military personnel in uniform but unarmed. My Special Envoy has been requested to contact the Prime Minister of the Transitional Government of National Unity in order to clarify the position of the Government of National Unity on the matter, so as to enable the Central Organ to take a decision in full awareness.

28. Considering the foregoing, the following options are submitted to the attention of the Central Organ:

Option I

The deployment of a security force of 166 members as proposed by the Experts. This option has the advantage of having a force capable of ensuring total security during the electoral period and serve as a deterrent against internal and external threats.

However, consideration should be given to the fact that the 1994 Cairo Declaration establishing the OAU Mechanism for Conflict, Prevention, Management and Resolution, authorizes only the deployment of civilian or military observers missions of limited size and duration.

Additionally, and more significantly, Colonel Azali and his supporters in the Transitional Government of National Unity, as well as the authorities of Moheli, clearly pointed out that they were not in favour of the deployment of armed military personnel.

Furthermore, the OAU would not be in a position to meet the very high costs of such a deployment. If such an option was to be chosen, the troop contributing countries to the operation should bear the expenses related to such a mission which, nevertheless, would be deployed with the approval of the OAU.

Option II

The deployment of a Military Observer Mission, composed of 60 officers and/or non-commissioned Officers and 20 technical personnel in the

2002-02-28

Report of the Secretary General on the Deployment of an OAU, Military Observer Mission to the Comoros within the Framework of the Strengthening of Security during the Period of Elections

African Union

Peace and Security Department

<https://archives.au.int/handle/123456789/8261>

Downloaded from African Union Common Repository