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UNP 062/80

PART 1 OF 2

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MY TELNO 1364 AND YOUR TELNO 557: RWANDA

SUMMARY

1. Belgian hyperactivity irritates Council members. Ghana and Bangladesh indicate readiness to maintain their contingents. NAM want UNAMIR to remain in place at its current strength. Americans refuse to countenance any Council decision other than withdrawal, but acknowledge that for the moment the NAM's preferred outcome does not require such a decision as UNAMIR is already authorized. NAM and most other Council members feel strongly that the Council should nonetheless take a decision in the matter, to resolve uncertainty and send an appropriate political signal. I suggest suspension of UNAMIR's deployment and retention of the Secretary-General's Special Representative in the field, with appropriate support, to continue efforts to secure a cease-fire. Key players (US, France, Nigeria) agree to my suggestion. But Nigerians fail to persuade all of the rest of the non-aligned, and Secretariat indicate that it would be difficult for a scaled down UN presence to remain without a cease-fire. After long discussion attempt to reach a decision is abandoned, which means UNAMIR stays for the moment, minus the Belgian contingent. Agreement to Presidential statement to the press that its mandate and force levels will be kept under constant review. How long solution by stealth holds will depend on developments on the ground.

2. Secretariat report that small Italian force has landed at Kigali airport and been asked to leave by UNAMIR.

DETAIL

3. Keating (New Zealand, Council President) opened informal consultations of the Security Council on 15 April by drawing Council members' attention to a letter he had received from the Foreign Minister of Belgium outlining his concern at the risk to UNAMIR in staying on in Rwanda. The Belgian contingent would be withdrawn over the weekend. For any UN personnel to remain after Sunday risked very grave consequences for their safety and security. Claes had also telephoned Keating to make the same point. The Belgian Mission had lobbied this and other missions heavily in the same sense during the course of the morning.

4. Riza (ASG, DPKO) gave an update on the current situation. The level of fighting was fluctuating. The Force Commander and Special Representative (SRSG) were continuing their efforts to negotiate a cease-fire. The Force Commander was moving to establish a strong presence at the airport in advance of Belgian withdrawal. The Belgian evacuation force would leave on 16 April and their UNAMIR contingent within 48-72 hours. A small Italian armed company had arrived without notice at the airport, where they remained. This was a worrying development since it had led to allegations that mercenaries were arriving. The Force Commander had asked them to leave.

5. Riza said, in commenting on the previous night's suggestion that the Council set a period of five days to see whether a ceasefire was established before reaching a decision on UNAMIR's future, that the Force Commander and the SRSG preferred that any timeframe for achieving a cease-fire be set by themselves, and not the Council. A public ultimatum would be unhelpful. They had also said that any message from the Council should address both the parties, and not single out one for blame.

6. Gambari (Nigeria, speaking for the NAM caucus) said the time had come for the Council to take a decision. He understood the concerns of the Belgians. The NAM caucus deeply regretted the loss of life suffered by their contingent. He also recognised the special relationship which had existed and continued to exist between Belgium and Rwanda. But however important Belgian views on the future of UNAMIR, they could not tell the Council how to respond to events in Rwanda. The Council should not be planning a withdrawal at this stage.

Both sides wanted UNAMIR to stay. It was playing a stabilising role in a chaotic situation. Except for the perfectly understandable Belgian decision, no other troop contributors wanted to go. (Keating subsequently confirmed that he had had discussions with Bangladeshis and the Ghanaians and both were content to stay on in Rwanda). The level of fighting was low. UNAMIR was encouraging the parties to agree a cease-fire. The OAU had offered to play a pro-active role in trying to relaunch the peace process and had called for UNAMIR to remain. The NAM caucus would be sending a message to the OAU Secretary-General asking him to use his good offices together with leaders from neighbouring states, in particular Mwinyi and Museveni. Neither the Secretary-General nor his Special Representative wanted UNAMIR to leave. The question therefore was what tasks were appropriate for UNAMIR in current circumstances, and what force level would be best to carry them out. Gambari identified the tasks as being to help the civilian population of Rwanda; to help obtain a cease-fire; to promote the creation of a climate conducive to achieving a peaceful settlement; and to liaise with the OAU. A cease-fire was obviously critical to the success of the UN presence in Rwanda. The NAM believed a cease-fire was possible. Their preference was a modified version of Option 1 (para 5 of first TUR). The modification was that the force level should be what it was before the Belgians left, i.e. there should be a replacement contingent. They were flexible as to how long this option should be allowed to run to see if a solution could be achieved.

7. Walker (US) said that the US believed the Rwandan armed parties bore full responsibility for the continued violence and instability. The US did not believe that there was a role now in Rwanda for a United Nations peacekeeping force. They supported the decision of the Belgian Government to withdraw immediately, given the unique circumstances facing their contingent. The US did not believe the warring parties in Rwanda were likely to respect UNAMIR's mandate, or capable of guaranteeing the safety of UN peacekeeping personnel in Rwanda. There might be a role for the UN in facilitating negotiations among the warring parties, but that was for the SRSG not UNAMIR. The US would support a political initiative by the Secretary-General to promote reconciliation among the parties. But experience suggested that any serious negotiations amongst the parties would take place outside Rwanda. UN security forces would not be required. Walker underlined that US

opposition to retaining a UNAMIR presence in Rwanda under current conditions was firm. It was based on a conviction that the Security Council had an obligation to ensure that peacekeeping operations were viable and capable of fulfilling their mandates, and that peacekeeping personnel were not knowingly put in an untenable situation. When the parties demonstrated that they were willing and able to work towards a peaceful settlement the US would be willing to reconsider whether renewed UN peacekeeping could facilitate lasting peace.

8. After Walker's intervention Gambari called for suspension of the meeting. His suggestion was not however immediately taken up, and a long and inconclusive discussion ensued. Keating pointed out that, if no decision was taken to withdraw the force then the status quo would continue, giving the Force Commander a little longer to see what he could do. At the end of the discussion I said that failing to take a decision would keep UNAMIR on the ground in a dangerous situation when we already knew it could not carry out its mandate. Furthermore we would be giving no signal to the parties or guidance to the Force Commander. A decision might be difficult to achieve given the NAM preference for the Secretary-General's option 1 and US insistence, that if a decision were to be taken today, it should be for total withdrawal. I thought it unlikely that UNAMIR was sustainable on the ground over time without the Belgians. If there was to be a withdrawal, it was essential that it should be an orderly one. Option 1 was most unlikely to prove a durable one. Option 2, on the other hand, should be sustainable. Careful consideration should again be given to the option of suspension of UNAMIR's mandate, leaving the Special Representative plus support and protection personnel in place. Vorontsov (Russia) agreed.

9. After the informal consultations Keating invited Gambari, Albright (US), Ladsous (France) and myself to discuss the way forward. Albright said that the US had been convinced by the Belgians. But they were also concerned that a wrong turn now in Rwanda would put an end to any possibility of US support for expanded peacekeeping elsewhere in Africa, particularly after the Somali experience. I argued again for a downsized presence, essentially to protect the SRSG. I circulated language which would have provided for the suspension of UNAMIR's deployment and maintenance of an interim UN presence, headed by the SRSG and including sufficient UN military

personnel to ensure its protection, to continue UN efforts in collaboration with the OAU and neighbouring states to resolve the Rwandan crisis in the framework of the Arusha Peace Agreement. I also proposed (and secured agreement to) language, based on the OAU statement, to replace those parts of the resolution which tilted against the RPF. Gambari confirmed that Nigeria wanted a resolution. He did not want the day to end without Council action. He undertook to commend my "middle way" to the NAM caucus. Ladsous said that he too could support it, though he would want it to be understood that the "suspended" UNAMIR might be deployed to a neighbouring country temporarily rather than being dispersed altogether. Albright spoke to Christopher, and indicated that she too could go along with it. Gambari however later told Keating and myself that he had been unable to convince all of his NAM colleagues (Djibouti and Rwanda itself are the hardest line in the caucus) to do so.

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PART 2 OF 2

10. Informal consultations finally resumed again late on 15 April. Riza reiterated the Secretary-General's view that an abrupt and total withdrawal of UNAMIR was neither feasible nor advisable. It was important to consider the impact on the ground if such a decision were taken. He also argued that both of the options for UNAMIR put forward by the Secretary-General had been predicated on a cease-fire. If the Council announced the suspension of UNAMIR's mandate it might set off panic and renewed military action. Both parties would scramble to seize the strategic positions currently held by UNAMIR, notably the airport. Riza said that a first meeting had taken place today face to face between the parties who had exchanged ideas. This was a positive step. He urged the Council to consider the Secretary-General's "third option", which was to agree option 1, with a deadline which, if not met, would lead to option 2. This would give time for the force to prepare withdrawal.

11. Keating said that the informal contacts he had held earlier in the afternoon had demonstrated there was still a wide divergence of opinion. We now had the advice of the Secretary-General, which was at odds with the views of a number of Council members. I said it was true that we had not reached a clear-cut conclusion on the question of force levels and mandate. But we had managed to agree on almost all of the rest of the resolution. It contained a (much needed) political statement of the Council's views on the need to return to the Arusha peace process. I suggested we adopt the text as agreed, simply noting that the force level and mandate would be kept under review. Walker (US) said he would be unable to get agreement on the adoption of such a resolution without overnight consultations with Washington.

12. Keating then circulated a non-paper, for possible use as the basis for remarks by him in his capacity as President to the press. He believed that it was essential - if there was to be no Council decision - for there to be at the very least a press statement, given the length of time the Council had spent discussing the issue. After further discussion it was agreed that the Council would postpone a decision on Rwanda. This would give more time for the situation on the ground to stabilise and allow the Force Commander and SRSG to continue their efforts to bring about a cease-fire building on contacts already made. Keating's text was agreed, with some amendments (see MIFT) He spoke to the press on the basis of it.

COMMENT

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13. [REDACTED]

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