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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL ON
THE SITUATION IN COTE D'IVOIRE
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1. At its 70th Ordinary Session, held on 2 October 2000, the Central Organ was briefed by the Secretary General on the outcome of the meetings held by the Heads of State of the OAU Committee of Ten in Lome on 24 September, 2000, followed by their visit to Cote d'Ivoire to meet the then-Head of State, General Guei, and other political leaders of the country on 25 September. During the Committee's meetings in Lome and Abidjan, proposals were made with a view to ensuring that the Presidential elections scheduled to be held in Cote d'Ivoire would be all-inclusive, so as to help defuse the escalating tension, promote understanding and pave the way towards an early return to normalcy in the country. At that time, the Committee of Ten was concerned, inter alia, about the possible exacerbation of the political crisis in Cote d'Ivoire by the then-imminent ruling by the Ivorian Supreme Court, which could restrict the number of candidates eligible to stand in the Presidential election.

2. The Central Organ, while welcoming the efforts of the Committee of Ten in Lome and Abidjan, expressed support and encouragement for the latter's efforts, aimed at promoting a peaceful solution to the crisis in Cote d'Ivoire; and in this regard, urged the Government of Cote d'Ivoire and the political parties to cooperate fully with the Committee of Ten.

3. For their part, ECOWAS Foreign Ministers, meeting in Abuja, Nigeria on 4 October, 2000, in the context of the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council, expressed, inter alia, grave concern and anxiety over the tense atmosphere in Cote d'Ivoire and drew attention to the repercussions of the crisis in that country on the entire region. In that connection, they expressed their concern, also, over the anticipated exclusion of some Presidential candidates by the Ivorian Supreme Court which could lead to
increased tension. The meeting "lauded the Committee of Ten of the Organization of African Unity for its mediation efforts and urged Ivorians to accept its contribution as a demonstration of the collective will of the continent to promote peace, security and good governance in a Member State."

4. The ruling of the Supreme Court which was made on 6 October, excluded Mr. Alassane Ouattara, the candidate of the RDR, and Mr. Emile Bombei, that of the PDCI, in addition to twelve other candidates. Of the original 19 Presidential candidates, only five were, therefore, declared by the Court to be eligible to contest the election. They were General Robert Guei who stood as an independent candidate; Mr. Laurent Gbagbo of the FPI; Mr. Francois Wodie of the PIT; Mr. Theodore Mel-Eg of the UDCI and Mr. Nicholas Dioulo, also an independent candidate.

5. In reaction to that development, the OAU Current Chairman, who is also Chairman of the Committee of Ten, condemned the exclusion of the candidates in question by the Supreme Court. The United Nations Secretary General also expressed regret about the exclusions, pointing out that the choice of the electorate had been reduced. The United States and the European Union announced their suspension of financial assistance for the organization of elections. On the other hand, France, while expressing its regrets about the decision of the Supreme Court said it was legal.

6. The reaction of the opposition parties, whose candidates had been excluded by the Court's ruling, was to call for a boycott of the Presidential election. While the PDCI, said and that it would focus rather on the legislative elections, the RDR of Mr. Ouattara said that any election excluding the participation of the two major political parties, namely the RDR and the PDCI could "not be credible." For his part, also, Mr. Gbagbo
called on other parties to unite behind his candidacy in order "to erase the memory of military power" from Cote d'Ivoire.

7. Following the court ruling, the ECOWAS Current Chairman, President Konare of Mali, as well as the Heads of State of Guinea and Nigeria, President Conte and President Obasanjo, met in Abuja on 9 October to discuss regional issues. At the end of their meeting, the three ECOWAS leaders issued a Communiqué in which, inter alia, they "expressed grave concern at the ongoing transition in Cote d'Ivoire", and called on the Ivorian Government to "conduct elections in a free and fair atmosphere in order to ensure peace and stability in the country."

8. An informal meeting of Ministers of Member States of the Committee of Ten, was convened by the Secretary General, on 11 October, in Beijing, on the margins of the Africa/China Forum. The meeting reviewed the situation in Cote d'Ivoire. Regarding the issue whether the OAU should send observers to the presidential elections, the meeting agreed that it was not appropriate to do so.

9. On 12 October, 2000 an informal meeting of the Ambassadors of the Members of the Committee of Ten was also convened in Addis Ababa by the Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs. At that meeting, the Ambassadors took note of the decision of the informal meeting of the Ministers in Beijing, to the effect that the OAU should not send an observer team to the election.

10. On 19 October, 2000 the Secretary General issued a press release stating that the Government of Cote d'Ivoire had invited the Organization of African Unity to send observers to the elections; and adding that the OAU had, indeed been "planning to do so". However, "in view of the
evolution of the situation" in that country and "the circumstances" in which the elections were going to be held, the Organization would "not be in a position to send observers to monitor them." The statement underlined that the OAU remained "committed", nonetheless, and would "spare no effort in doing everything within its means to help the people of Côte d'Ivoire and their leaders to overcome the crisis in the country"; and that in the meantime, the Organization was appealing for restraint and calm.

11. For its part, the UN stated that it would no longer "provide coordination of international observers" for the election because many countries and organizations providing monitors and funding for the polls had withdrawn their support. The UN would, however, continue to provide limited technical assistance to the National Electoral Commission to help strengthen its structure and enhance its capacity to organize future elections. Other members of the international community such as the United States and the Francophonie also decided not to send observers to the polls. As for the European Union, while it did not withdraw its team of observers, it reduced the original number it had intended to deploy.

12. The election went ahead on 22 October, as planned. As the elections progressed, election officials reported a low turnout in the areas where votes had been counted. By the morning of the following day, 23 October, early returns showed that with 8% of the vote counted, Mr. Gbagbo had won 51.3 per cent of the vote and General Guei, 40.4 per cent, according to the National Electoral Commission (CNE).

13. However, on Tuesday, 24 October, it was reported that soldiers, apparently acting at the behest of the Government, ordered a discontinuation of the counting of the votes by the CNE.
14. Subsequently, the Ministry of Territorial Administration proclaimed General Guei the winner of the election and, further, announced the dissolution of the CNE, which it described as "malfuctioning and of long and slow system", and as having instituted a system rendering the results unuseable."

15. For his part Mr. Gbagbo declared that he had won the presidential election, with 61% against 21% scored by General Guei.

16. On 25 October, violence erupted when protesting crowds in the streets tried to march to the President's residence. The then-Government of Cote d'Ivoire declared a State of emergency and imposed a curfew amid reports of demonstrations in other towns and cities. In the ensuing violence, many people were killed and others wounded as a result of the high handed reaction of the security forces.

17. Condemnation by the international community came from the United States, European Union and France, accusing the Government of General Guei of attempting to trample on the will of the people by trying to legitimatize rule through an "illegitimate" election.

18. On 24 October, while in Paris on a visit to UNESCO, the Secretary General appealed for calm in Cote d'Ivoire.

19. Following the spontaneous demonstrations of 24 October, Mr. Gbagbo called for mass action and "more organized" protests to take place the following day, in order to "paralyze the country until Guei's stand down".
20. In the meantime, on 25 October, some members of General Gueï's Government, including the Minister for Information, resigned from the Government, acknowledging Mr. Gbagbo's victory. On the same day, reacting to the pressure of the popular protests, General Gueï fled Abidjan. In the course of the demonstrations, the security forces, including the army, joined in the demonstrations.

21. The following day, 26 October, there were fresh demands for a rerun of the presidential election by the supporters of Mr. Ouattara, to include him and the other candidates who had been excluded.

22. Subsequently, fighting erupted again in Abidjan, this time between the supporters of Mr. Gbagbo and those of Mr. Ouattara. It was alleged by the RDR that the security forces had sided with Mr. Gbagbo's supporters to attack suspected members of the RDR who had been stripped naked and beaten. There were reports also that churches and mosques were targeted in the violence by the respective Muslims supporters of Mr. Ouattara and the Christians supporters of Mr. Gbagbo, reflecting the increasing religious, ethnic and regional divisions in the country. Clashes were also reported in several cities in the south and centre of the country.

23. With the intensification of the tension and the exacerbation of hostilities between the contending parties in the political crisis in Cote d'Ivoire. The Secretary General issued a Statement on 26 October in which he underlined that the OAU's apprehensions had been heightened by the situation of uncertainty created after the elections, which situation had been aggravated by the ongoing violent confrontations. He called on the people of Cote d'Ivoire and their leaders to exercise maximum restraint and ensure calm in the interest of peace, security and stability in the country. He also called on the leaders of Cote d'Ivoire to create the
appropriate conditions conducive to the speedy restoration of the
democratic institutions in the country. In the meantime, he remained in
touch with the Current Chairman of the OAU and members of the
Committee of Ten, with a view to charting the way forward.

24. On 26 October, Mr. Gbagbo was sworn in after the Supreme Court
confirmed that he had won 59.4% of the vote, as compared to General
Guei's 32.7%. On 27 October, a new Government of national unity was
announced by President Gbagbo. It included representatives of the FPI
who were given the portfolios of defence, interior and foreign affairs, as
well as those of the PDCI and the Labour Party. The RDR, led by Mr.
Ouattara, declined President Gbagbo's offer to join the new Government.
After meeting with President Gbagbo, Mr. Ouattara stated that he regarded
Mr. Gbagbo as the de facto President, adding that the RDR would consider
whether to join the new government after the parliamentary elections on

25. In the meantime, members of the international community including
the United Nations, United States and some members of the OAU, asked
for a re-run of the election.

26. For its part, the new Government of President Gbagbo undertook
certain actions with a view to fostering national reconciliation. In that
context, the new Government responded to the demands of the RDR for a
probe into the killings of supporters of the RDR whose bodies were
discovered in a suburb of Abidjan after the violence had ended. Further,
the Government designated 9 November, as a national day of mourning
and state funeral for the dead. In addition, the Government set up a
Committee for National Reconciliation with the aim of building confidence
between the political parties, their activists and security forces. The
Committee is composed of representatives of civil society, religious leaders, the President of the National Union of Journalists and the Army Chief of Staff.

27. In the meantime, however, officials of the RDR joined those of the FPI in appealing to their respective constituents for calm.

28. On 13 October, the national mediator, who is the Chairman of the National Reconciliation Committee, arranged a meeting between President Gbagbo and General Guei at Yamoussoukro. After the meeting, General Guei called on the Ivorian soldiers to return to their barracks and "to put themselves at the disposal of their country to avoid pointless confrontation". For his part, President Gbagbo said after the same meeting that what was "important" was that "the country was gradually entering a process of reunification and reconciliation".

29. On 4 November, President Alpha Oumar Konare of Mali, Current Chairman of ECOWAS met President Gbagbo at Korhogo, the capital of Northern Cote d'Ivoire. At the end of their meeting, President Konare "congratulated" President Gbagbo and wished him "success in the accomplishment of his exalted mission". The two Heads of State affirmed their adherence to the relevant provisions of the revised Abuja Treaty, which stipulates the promotion and consolidation of a democratic system of government in each ECOWAS Member State.

30. President Konare expressed the hope that the changes brought about on 26 October would herald a Cote d'Ivoire that would continue to be a country open to all; a land of dialogue, a democratic and plural Cote d'Ivoire which would resolutely participate in the progress of the history of
the Western sub-region and in the implementation of the objectives of African integration.

31. The two Presidents stated that they were "comforted" by the measures taken by the authorities and various sections of Ivorian society to restore calm and end the violence. President Konare also urged Ivorians to pursue their efforts to build national unity and launch a constructive process of national reconciliation.

**OBSERVATIONS**

32. As events and developments in Cote d'Ivoire have shown, the process of national reconciliation in that country, is underway. It is therefore important for the OAU and its Member States to continue to encourage all Ivorian leaders to move towards a further consolidation of the process of establishing peace and stability in their country. It is also important for all the political forces in Cote d'Ivoire to continue to exercise maximum restraint and to avoid taking any action that could lead to an exacerbation of the kind of crisis that was experienced in the county.

34. It is in that regard that the forthcoming Parliamentary elections in Cote d'Ivoire will be critical for maintaining the stability of the country and for healing the wounds that resulted from the recent crisis. Consequently, the OAU should seek to ensure that those elections take place in conditions that are transparent and credible, to afford the people the opportunity to elect those who will represent them in Parliament. In order to ensure that the OAU is in a position to support the efforts of Ivorians in this respect, plans are underway to field an Election Observation Mission to observe the conduct of the Parliamentary elections.
35. Given the role that the OAU played before and during the crisis, the Central Organ may wish to:

a) **encourage** the Government, the political leaders and the generality of the people of Cote d’Ivoire, to work together in order to enhance the consolidation of peace and national reconciliation in the country;

b) **Support** the proposal of the Secretary General to despatch an OAU Observer Team to monitor the conduct of the Parliamentary elections and to assist the Ivorian authorities in ensuring that the people of Cote d’Ivoire are afforded the opportunity to elect their representatives in conditions that are free, fair and transparent.