

# United Nations

## Press Release

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TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS CONFERENCE BY SECRETARY-GENERAL, BOUTROS BOUTROS-GHALI,  
FOLLOWING DIPLOMATIC PRESS CLUB LUNCHEON IN PARIS ON 14 JANUARY

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- \* Revised to correct the number of Security Council resolution 678 (1991) in the second paragraph.

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QUESTION: Do you approve of yesterday's raid against Iraq?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: The raid was carried out in accordance with a mandate from the Security Council under resolution 678 (1991), and the motive for the raid was Iraq's violation of that resolution, which concerns the cease-fire. As Secretary-General of the United Nations, I can tell you that the action taken was in accordance with the resolutions of the Security Council and the Charter of the United Nations.

QUESTION: The Arab countries are now accusing the United Nations of having a double standard, of taking action against Iraq but not against Israel. What are you doing for the Palestinian deportees?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I had a mandate under Security Council resolution 799 (1992), which requested me to dispatch a special envoy to negotiate with the Israeli Government in order to ensure the deportees' return. I sent a first special envoy, [James] Jonah, and then I sent a second envoy, Ambassador [Chinmaya] Gharekhan. Yesterday afternoon, I met with the Israeli Minister for Foreign Affairs, this morning I had a telephone conversation with the Israeli Prime Minister, and I am continuing to negotiate with a view to the implementation of Security Council resolution 799.

QUESTION: Do you know if any Government other than those of the United States, France and the United Kingdom took part in the raid against Iraq?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: To my knowledge, only those three States participated, but my information is from the press.

QUESTION: How do you assess the position taken by the Iraqis?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I have been in contact with the Iraqis for almost 12 months, in an attempt to convince them that it is in their interest to implement the resolutions of the United Nations. It is in their interest, through implementation of the resolutions of the United Nations, to bring the embargo and the situation they are in to an end. Unfortunately, I have not been successful and have not managed either with respect to the cease-fire or the other relevant resolutions, to convince the Iraqis that it is in their interest, more particularly in the interest of the Iraqi people, to implement the resolutions they have accepted.

QUESTION: How do you explain Saddam Hussein's refusal?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I have no explanation for it; I have met with [Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister] Tariq Aziz several times, I have met with Iraqi leaders, I have explained to them that it is in their interest that this period of supervision should come to an end, and that it is in their interest to respect the resolutions and not complicate things for us every fortnight or every month, whether with regard to humanitarian assistance, transport of humanitarian assistance, or the United Nations presence for the purpose of protecting the non-governmental organizations, which will not provide assistance unless they are protected by the United Nations. The Baghdad

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Government has caused us one problem after another, all of which I have endeavoured to solve in a peaceful manner.

QUESTION: What would the political consequences of Saddam Hussein's fall be?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I have no idea, I implement the decisions of the Security Council. I have no opinion on that.

QUESTION: Are you going to strengthen the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM)?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: That is a matter that must be dealt with in the context of a resolution to be discussed by the Security Council. If the Council decides to strengthen the UNIKOM forces, we shall strengthen them.

QUESTION: Were you informed of the raid against Iraq in advance?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: We are, of course, in contact with the Americans, the French, the British, and all the members of the Security Council, both through the statements made in the Council and the negotiations held in the context of the Council.

QUESTION: On the issue of "Operation Restore Hope", in Somalia, could it be said that the United Nations has abdicated its responsibilities to the United States?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: No. First of all, it took me 11 months to convince the international community of the seriousness of the situation in Somalia. I convened an initial meeting early in 1992 in New York, to which I invited the representatives of the League of Arab States, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Islamic Conference, to request them to help me alert and mobilize international public opinion with respect to the Somali tragedy. Having done that, I obtained a mandate. The Security Council gave a Unified Command a mandate to carry out an initial operation; when that operation has been completed -- that is to say, once security has been restored in Somalia -- we shall proceed to the second stage, which will consist in handing over the entire operation to the United Nations. We are in the process of negotiating with the Unified Command, which is in a hurry to leave; as Secretary-General, I am responsible for the next operation, and I want the Unified Command to remain in Somalia as long as possible, since it has resources that the United Nations does not have. In any event, we shall cooperate and coordinate our action, and once we have reached agreement the United Nations will continue the action undertaken by the Unified Command.

I should like to add that we are also trying to help bring about a national reconciliation of the various factions, which are currently meeting in Addis Ababa. I was told this morning by telephone that there were a number of difficulties, but that there was reason to hope that they would be overcome. I have obtained the support of the Ethiopian Government, the Government of Djibouti and the Government of Eritrea. At the informal meeting

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that took place at the beginning of January, I brought together for the first time in Addis Ababa the Secretaries-General of OAU, the League of Arab States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the representative of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, with a view to achieving maximum mobilization to bring about national reconciliation. I should add that in February we shall hold another conference to obtain material assistance so that refugees can return home and Somalia can be reconstructed. The operation will be a long, drawn-out and difficult one. The real question is whether I shall be able to continue to count on the international community's support. The question in my mind is whether the international community, which is concerned about the Somali tragedy right now, will continue to be concerned about it over the coming six months.

QUESTION: How much time will you give yourself to solve the Palestinian deportee crisis, before asking the Security Council to deal with it?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I believe my mandate is very clear: to ensure the deportees' return, in accordance with resolution 799, adopted unanimously by the Security Council. I am in contact with the Israeli Government. If I see that these contacts are positive and constructive, that we are finding ways of dealing with the matter, and that there is some progress, I shall conclude that we can wait. On the other hand, if I note that we have not achieved the expected results, I shall be obliged to submit a report to the Security Council on my mission, and the Council will have to assume responsibility for the implementation of resolution 799.

QUESTION: What do you recommend?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: Right now I cannot recommend anything. Everything depends on the negotiations that are taking place.

QUESTION: You are aware of the ultimatum: the European Community is giving the Bosnian Serbs six more days to accept the Geneva compromise.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: My advice to the Security Council is that, since we have already waited months, we can wait another six days to see what the outcome is. My contacts with my personal representative, Cyrus Vance, give me the impression that he is optimistic and that we shall be able to maintain a certain amount of momentum in the negotiations, despite the difficulties encountered, the errors made and the atrocities committed.

If the Bosnian Serbs do not respond in any way within the six days, I shall report on the matter to the Security Council, and it will then be for the Council to decide on appropriate measures in view of what could then be referred to as the failure of the Geneva Conference.

QUESTION: You are going to meet with the Greek Minister for Foreign Affairs. What will you say to him about Macedonia?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: The only "scoop" that I can give you is that this afternoon I am meeting with the Greek Minister for Foreign Affairs, and that

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tomorrow morning I shall meet with the President of the Republic of Macedonia. My role is to try to find a peaceful solution to each given conflict. I am unfortunately not always successful in doing so, but I shall do my best to find a solution to this problem.

As to the procedure for admitting a State to membership in the United Nations, that is a matter that is decided by the Security Council and the General Assembly, not the Secretary-General.

QUESTION: Have you obtained assurances in Paris with respect to how France intends to follow up on the statement made by Roland Dumas last Sunday, which appeared to come as a surprise to you with regard to bilateral action involving France in Bosnia?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I feel that clarifications have been provided on this matter. France, which is a permanent member of the Security Council and an extremely important Member of the United Nations, intends to act only within the context of the United Nations. In fact, one of the goals of French diplomacy has always been to strengthen the role of the United Nations.

QUESTION: What do you think of the proposal by Roland Dumas regarding the establishment of an international tribunal to try crimes committed in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and do you think that the United Nations will adopt a resolution on the matter?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: There is, in fact, already a Commission set up pursuant to the relevant Security Council resolution, which has five members and whose purpose is to consider crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia and to recommend action to be taken in that connection. That is the first point I wish to make. Secondly, for a number of years, the International Law Commission has been working on the establishment of an international criminal court to deal with war crimes and genocide. We have thus been working on this matter for a long time.

QUESTION: In southern Africa, what is the situation regarding peace in Angola and what is the United Nations position in that connection?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I am in contact with my Special Representative in Luanda, Margaret Anstee. Moreover, I am personally in contact with the two leaders, the President of the Republic, Jose dos Santos and Jonas Savimbi, [leader of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA)] who 25 to 30 years ago took refuge in Egypt. I know them both personally and am trying -- through personal contacts, through my Representative, and through contacts with friendly countries in a position to influence the two protagonists in the conflict -- to set a dialogue in motion. Tomorrow, the representatives of the two parties are going to meet in Addis Ababa in order to try to find a cease-fire formula. We are continuing to make a major effort to find a solution to this problem.

QUESTION: The party led by President dos Santos won the elections, however. Should you not be talking to him?

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The SECRETARY-GENERAL: What I am seeking is dialogue. If we confine ourselves to legal arguments -- Mr. X is good, and Mr. Y is bad -- we shall never get anywhere. We must enter into a dialogue: it would have been helpful if this dialogue could have taken place in Geneva, with the agreement of both parties. But, since there has been no such agreement, we are willing to hold the dialogue in any other part of the world. I had suggested Geneva, as I was in Geneva at the time. That would have facilitated my personal mediation. But that was not possible. However, that is no reason for not pursuing our efforts to find a solution to the problem.

QUESTION: I should like to have your personal view on which direction Bosnia is heading in: towards more war or more peace?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: In all honesty, I must tell you that I do not know. All I know is that we must try at all costs to maintain the dialogue. This is an extremely complicated matter that is not confined to Bosnia. There are potential conflicts between Croatia and Serbia, there are potential conflicts in Macedonia, and there are potential conflicts in Kosovo. So it is an extremely complex problem. As to the goal of the United Nations -- despite the fact that the United Nations is sometimes accused of being insufficiently active -- it is to continue to try to negotiate and to try, through dialogue, to find solutions. This will be a long, drawn-out, difficult operation, requiring a great deal of political creativity. In the meantime, the negotiations must continue. And then, if we conclude that nothing more can be done, as I said, the Security Council and the States Members of the United Nations will have to assume responsibility for the matter following the failure of the negotiations.

QUESTION: In Bosnia, there is a new phenomenon: the rape of Muslim women and girls. What approach do you intend to take to this?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: We have two Commissions that deal with such cases. Firstly, we have a Special Rapporteur appointed by the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva; secondly, we have another Commission, to which I have already referred, set up under a Security Council resolution.

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