

The Gabonese Republic

Positions for the General Assembly First Committee

I. Maintaining Peace and Security through Reforms to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

The Gabonese Republic is a major proponent of the *Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty* (NPT) and feels that this document provides the most substantial framework for the proper resolution of the challenges the international community faces regarding the threat of nuclear conflict. However, the underlying goals of the NPT have been unsuccessful in significantly reducing nuclear weapons stockpiles or undertaking general nuclear disarmament. To complement this framework, Gabon feels that the *Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty* (CTBT) must also be implemented and put into force to signify the progress of negotiations. For the goals of these foundational documents to be fully realized, it is of utmost importance for nations not party to these treaties, including Pakistan, India, Israel and others, to be brought into the fold. Another main position of Gabon is increased oversight both for nations party to the treaties and those who have yet to sign the agreements. Particularly members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, who have violated the NPT through military use nuclear technology and information sharing and substantive tactical nuclear weapons transfers amongst themselves. Additionally, Gabon halted uranium exports in 1999, which were primarily traded with France and Japan for safe nuclear energy production.

The nation of Gabon has been party to most of the instruments pertaining to nuclear disarmament including the NPT and CTBT, which the nation ratified in 1974 and 2000 respectively. Gabon also has been a main actor in the detection of nuclear test explosion in its region through the efforts of its seismological monitoring stationed at Masuku in northern Gabon. Gabon has also been an observer participant at the *Conference on Disarmament* (CD), contributing to negotiations and dialogue on disarmament and non-proliferation initiatives.

Gabon, as many other African Union nations, believes that all member states must be included in the dialogue of disarmament and non-proliferation. Additionally, Gabon sincerely feels that additional effort must be made to revitalize multilateral diplomacy in the disarmament realm. The relationship between disarmament and development and disarmament and the environment should no longer be disregarded. One of the most controversial issues on the agenda for NPT reform is the inclusion of more stringent details pertaining to the potential acquisition of nuclear materials by terrorist organizations. One of the primary tools which Gabon feels would be effective in bolstering prevention strategies is the establishment of fissile material cut off treaty. Amongst other things, this treaty would help in identification and quantification of nuclear materials and effectively reduce the chances of the production of smaller nuclear explosive devices and “dirty” bombs by non state actors. Additional oversight of non weapons grade plutonium and uranium exports by the International Atomic Energy Agency would also prove to be a critical enhancement of the NPT.

II. Reforming Peacekeeping Forces: Combating Cultural and Regional Barriers

Over the years, UN peacekeeping has evolved to meet the demands of different conflicts and a changing political landscape. Born at the time when Cold War rivalries frequently paralyzed the Security Council, UN peacekeeping goals were primarily limited to maintaining ceasefires and stabilizing situations on the ground, so that

efforts could be made at the political level to resolve the conflict by peaceful means. Today, however, U.N. peacekeeping is being conducted with unprecedented pace, scope, and ambition, and increasing demands have revealed ongoing, serious flaws. Specifically, recent audits and investigations have uncovered substantial problems with mismanagement, fraud, and corruption in procurement for the U.N. The nation of Gabon recognizes these flaws and hopes for a united, cooperative effort to reform the U.N. Peacekeeping framework in order to ensure peace and security in the future.

Concerned about stability in Central Africa and the potential for intervention, Gabon has been directly involved with mediation efforts in Chad, the Central African Republic, Congo-Brazzaville, Angola, and former Zaire. In December of 1999, through the mediation efforts of Gabonese President Omar Bongo, a peace accord was signed in Congo-Brazzaville between the government and leaders of the armed rebellion. Moreover, President Bongo has remained directly involved in the continuing Congolese peace process. Gabon has been a strong proponent of regional stability, and Gabonese armed forces played an important role in the UN Peacekeeping Mission to the Central African Republic (MINURCA).

Consistent with its foreign policy goals, Gabon believes the United Nations must overcome its regional barriers preventing successful peacekeeping, including the financial and logistical weaknesses of regional organizations, by improving peacekeeping capabilities around the world, particularly in Africa. The United Nations must support regional bodies in attempts to create Regional Standby Forces to execute UN Peacekeeping Missions, such as the African Union's planned African Standby Force (ASF). At the operational level, such forces need further development to enhance their capability to conduct mission planning, budgeting and mission management. These forces can only be effective if there is closer co-ordination and co-operation between the Region's defense and foreign ministries, and if a stable source of funding is found for the force. Moreover, to prevent the mass corruption that ran rampant in previous UN Peacekeeping Missions, The United Nations should develop much more specific guidelines for countries to contribute to such regional peacekeeping forces, including a code of conduct, and pledges by those countries to screen, train, and where necessary, discipline such troops, police or civilian employees. Contributing countries should agree to cooperate fully with U.N. investigations of conduct and to take rapid action to remove abusive members. Without fundamental reform, peacekeeping problems will likely continue and expand, undermining the UN's credibility. Let us use this opportunity to strengthen our peacekeeping system for the sake of our own interests and for those of the millions of people who look to us for protection.

III. Ending Internal Disputes for a Peaceful Future

In recent years great strides have been made in tackling internal disputes worldwide. Commissions and councils such as the newly established UN Peacebuilding Commission and the Peace and Security Council have been established highlighting the groundbreaking accomplishments the international community has made. However, civil war and violent internal disputes are still prevalent throughout the world. The vast majority of these conflicts are located in Africa. As a Central African nation, Gabon has seen firsthand the civil strife produced and the effects of hostilities and war in neighboring countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Chad, and the Central African Republic. Gabon realizes that the progress made amongst these conflicts and others must be furthered, and that the international community must not display complacency toward the brutal realities of internal disputes. Gabon's policy lies firmly with third party intervention by the United Nations, regional organizations, such as the African Union, and also by independent states.

Gabon itself has been a third party actor several times in facilitating negotiations between governments and rebel groups. This single state third party role was played in the Republic of the Congo and the Republic of Chad in their respective conflicts. Additionally, the Gabonese Republic has also participated in third party initiatives through

the United Nations and the African Union in conflicts in Côte d'Ivoire and most notable in Burundi. President Bongo was specifically commended by the Peace and Security Council of the AU for promoting the Regional Peace Initiative in Burundi in 2004. Further displaying the role Gabon continues to play in the maintenance of internal dispute resolution and prevention is its seat on the Peace and Security Council where it was elected as the Central African representative in 2007. Gabon's governmental and economic stability have given the nation substantial regional influence, attributing the sizeable role it plays in helping to resolve neighboring disputes.

The number of internal disputes, civil wars, and general conflicts is once again on the rise. After an encouraging number of conflicts from the 1990s were resolved, the resurgence of rebel groups, ethnic violence, and even genocide have once again, developed throughout the world. These conflicts require the revitalization of the General Assembly and a swift response by regional organizations throughout the world. Gabon feels that it is in the interest of resolving these disputes that intergovernmental organizations like NATO, the AU, and the Organization for American States (OAS) to develop, maintain, and enhance security bodies and subsidiaries to alleviate the nations undergoing civil unrest. These organizations may also collaborate to produce substantial results as was seen in the foundational hybrid force composed of peacekeepers from the United Nations and the African Union to promote stability in the Sudan. Conflict resolution, however is only the beginning of establishing a peaceful future for these conflict riddled nations. Peacebuilding, a vital component that is being further employed by the United Nations at a record rate is also a necessity. Infrastructural development, education initiatives, and poverty alleviation are all effective strategies to not only produce peace, but also to maintain it for generations to come. Similar strategies must also be utilized in states that may not necessarily be experiencing violent conflict. States with low levels of human development and low gross domestic products are all at a predisposition for potential internal dispute. Gabon calls upon all members of the international community to strengthen regional organizations and their mandates to effectively prevent and resolve internal conflicts within their spheres of influence and place an emphasis on post conflict development and reconstruction.