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**REPORT OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMISSION
ON THE SITUATION IN THE COMOROS**

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its 87th meeting held on 13 August 2007, Council considered the situation in the Comoros. In the communiqué adopted at the end of its deliberations, Council endorsed the recommendations and conclusions of the Ministerial Committee of the countries of the region on The Comoros, as adopted by its meetings held in Cape Town and in Pretoria on 19 June 2007 and 8 - 9 July 2007, respectively. Council regretted that the efforts deployed to resolve the Comorian crisis did not receive the expected positive response from the *de facto* Anjouanese authorities.

2. Council decided, on the basis of the recommendations of the Ministerial Committee, to review the mandate of the African Union Electoral and Security Assistance Mission (MAES) and the strength of the Mission, to ensure the effective implementation of the institutional framework as provided for in the Constitution of the Comoros. In this respect, Council requested the Commission to work closely with the Ministerial Committee of the countries of the region, with a view to submitting, within one month, concrete proposals, without excluding any option, for the consideration of Council, regarding the implementation of the Cape Town and the Pretoria framework, including the imposition of targeted individual sanctions against the *de facto* Anjouanese authorities. In the meantime, Council decided to extend the mandate of MAES until 31 December 2007.

3. At its 93rd meeting, held on 27 September 2007, Council received a briefing on the outcome of the meeting of the Ministerial Committee of the countries of the region on the Comoros and the MAES Troop Contributing Countries, held in Cape Town, on 18 September 2007. Council agreed to reconvene at the appropriate time to consider the recommendations of the Ministerial Committee and to decide on the way forward.

4. The present report is submitted in implementation of these decisions. It provides an account of the reactions of the Comorian parties to the decision of Council, covers the activities undertaken in the follow-up of the communiqué of Council of 13 August 2007, and provides recommendations on the way forward for the definite resolution of the crisis facing the Archipelago.

**II. REACTIONS OF THE COMORIAN PARTIES TO THE COMMUNIQUE OF
THE 87TH MEETING OF COUNCIL**

5. In my report to the 87th meeting of Council, I indicated that the Comorian Government had accepted the recommendations submitted by the countries of the region during their meeting held in Pretoria, as well as the relevant decisions of Council, while the *de facto* authorities of Anjouan rejected these recommendations. The reactions of the Comorian parties to the communiqué of Council of 13 August 2007 were the same as had been expressed previously.

6. More specifically, the Government of the Union welcomed the communiqué. In particular, it appreciated the decision to increase the strength of MAES and to revise the mandate of the Mission, as well as the determination of Council not to exclude any option with a view to resolving the Anjouanese crisis. Furthermore, the Assembly of the Union of the Comoros, through a resolution adopted on 3 September 2007, condemned the intransigence of the *de facto* authorities of Anjouan and supported the position of Council.

7. On their part, the *de facto* authorities of Anjouan, through a communiqué of 3 September 2007, indicated, among other things, that they received the communiqué of Council with profound disappointment. They reiterated their rejection of the conclusions of the meetings of Cape Town and Pretoria, linking any resolution of the crisis in Anjouan to a number pre-conditions, particularly the holding of an inter-Comorian round table that would bring together all the socio-political and religious stakeholders in the country and discuss the way out of the crisis, including the malfunctioning of the current institutional arrangements.

III. FOLLOW-UP ON THE COMMUNIQUE OF THE 87TH MEETING OF COUNCIL

8. In follow-up to the communiqué of the 87th meeting of Council, a meeting of senior officials of the countries of the region and the Troop Contributing Countries of MAES was held in Addis Ababa on 4 September 2007, under the chairmanship of South Africa, Coordinator of the regional efforts on the Comoros. The Commission was represented at that meeting by a delegation led by my Special Envoy for the Comoros, Francisco Madeira. In response to the invitation addressed to it, the Government of the Union of the Comoros dispatched a delegation to Addis Ababa. The delegation informed the participants of the evolution of the situation in the Archipelago, but did not take part in the actual deliberations of the meeting.

9. After having noted the persistent rejection by the illegal authorities of Anjouan of the conclusions of the two meetings of the Ministerial Committee and the relevant decisions of Council, the meeting, in conformity with the decision of Council, elaborated a number of recommendations for the resolution of the crisis. These recommendations revolve largely around individual targeted sanctions and other measures that would further the implementation of the decisions of the meetings of Cape Town and Pretoria, the revision of the mandate of MAES and the mechanism to put in place with a view to facilitating the implementation of these recommendations.

10. The Ministerial Committee met again in Cape Town on 18 September 2007, under the chairmanship of the Foreign Minister of South Africa, to examine the recommendations put forward by the meeting of senior officials. Senegal and the Sudan participated in the meeting in their capacity as MAES Troop Contributing Countries. The Commission was represented by a delegation led by the Commissioner for Peace and Security. The Government of the Union of the Comoros, as well as the illegal authorities of Anjouan, were invited to the meeting, for consultation. The Anjouanese delegation was led by Colonel Mohamed Bacar, the self-proclaimed President of the Island.

11. At the end of its deliberations, the Ministerial Committee, having made some minor adjustments, endorsed the conclusions of the meeting of senior officials. The Committee decided to submit the conclusions, a copy of which is herewith attached, to Council for it to take an appropriate decision on the situation in the Comoros.

12. It is necessary to underline that, during the meeting, the Ministerial Committee held in-depth consultations with the delegations of the Government of the Union and the illegal authorities of Anjouan. The Committee presented the recommendations made to Council and requested, once again, the reaction of the Comorian parties to the proposals put forward during the Pretoria meeting of July 2007. The Government of the Union of the Comoros reiterated its acceptance of these proposals and its support to the envisaged measures against the illegal authorities of Anjouan in order to put an end to the current impasse. On their part, and despite the persuasive efforts deployed by the participants to the meeting, the illegal Anjouanese authorities again rejected the proposals of the Pretoria meeting. They submitted a counter-proposal, herewith attached, which subordinates the possible holding of elections in Anjouan to the convening of an inter-Comorian round table, which would, with sovereign authority, agree on the way forward for the resolution of the crisis in the Comoros.

13. Subsequently, the Government of the Union issued a press statement indicating that, following the decision of the Ministerial Committee endorsing the recommendations of the meeting of senior officials, it is now up to Council to ensure the implementation of the recommendations. On his part, Colonel Bacar, during an interview with the local radio station in Anjouan, reiterated the position of Anjouan as expressed in Cape Town. Furthermore, he indicated that he was satisfied with his visit to Cape Town and that it was hence forth clear that there would not be a "military action" in Anjouan.

IV. OBSERVATIONS

14. Since Council's meeting of 13 August 2007, no progress had been made in resolving the crisis facing the archipelago. In spite of the efforts made by the countries of the region, the urgent appeals of Council and the repeated exhortations of the AU partners in the international community, the illegal Anjouanese authorities still persist in their rejection of the proposals made to end the present impasse. Even after they had been informed by the Ministerial Committee of the risk of having sanctions imposed, if they persist in their intransigence, the Anjouanese delegation attending the Cape Town meeting did not change its position.

15. In my report of 13 August 2007, I recalled that the Comorian crisis has been on the agenda of our Organization for ten years now, and that on the fundamental issue of the return of Anjouan to the fold of the Union and the restoration of the State authority on that island, no significant progress has been made. That state of affairs is all the more regrettable as the AU has left no stone unturned to facilitate the resolution of the crisis and promote lasting reconciliation in the Comoros; very few African conflicts have mobilized so much attention and energy of the AU as the situation in the archipelago. In my above-mentioned report, I also stressed the dangers of that situation and its implications both for the unity and cohesion of the country and its socio-economic development.

16. Since then, the developments that have taken place in the Comoros have confirmed those worries. On the one hand, every passing day without progress in the search for a solution only strengthens the status quo in Anjouan and reinforces the illegal authorities of the Island in their defiance. There is real risk of extremist elements taking advantage of the situation to destabilize the legal institutions of the country, make the unity of the country more fragile and raise community tensions.

17. On the other hand, the present impasse literally prevents the authorities of the country from devoting all the necessary energy to the priority issue of socio-economic development. It complicates the relations with the regional and international financial institutions, as well as the implementation of the cooperation agreements signed with the bilateral partners of the Comoros. In a letter addressed to me a few weeks ago, President Ahmed Abdallah Mohamed Sambi pointed out that the meeting of the partner countries and institutions of the Comoros, that was scheduled in Paris at the beginning of September, to consider the cancellation of the debt of the Comoros to the African Development Bank, had to be postponed to a later date because of the persisting crisis in Anjouan. Similarly, the presentation of the file of the Comoros to the International Monetary Fund could be compromised. It is in this context that the growing frustration of the Comorian authorities in the face of the stagnating efforts of the international community aimed at resolving the crisis through negotiations, as well as their urgent appeals for assistance, including an intervention in Anjouan, should be situated.

18. The recommendations submitted by the Ministerial Committee of the countries of the region are particularly appropriate. They would involve the immediate imposition of individual and other sanctions (travel ban, freezing of funds, other financial assets and economic resources, and restriction of air and maritime links from and to Anjouan), which would penalise the illegal authorities of Anjouan. At the same time, the mandate of MAES would be revised to enable it to support the implementation of the sanctions, while the necessary initiatives would be taken to mobilise the support of the international community. Those measures would be applied for an initial period of 45 days, it being understood that if the objective is not attained at the end of that period, Council, as recommended in paragraph 19 of the conclusions endorsed by the Ministerial Committee in Cape Town, would meet to adopt further measures.

19. If urgent action is not taken to overcome the impasse in which the archipelago finds itself, it is feared that the situation could seriously deteriorate in a short time, which would compel the AU to deal with the Comorian problem within a different, more complicated and difficult framework, that would necessitate more robust means than those required presently. It is, therefore, imperative that the recommendations of the Ministerial Committee be endorsed and implemented with the full support of our partners.