



# Security Council

Sixty-third year

*Provisional*

**5960**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Tuesday, 19 August 2008, 1.55 p.m.

New York

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<i>President:</i>	Mr. Grauls . . . . .	(Belgium)
<i>Members:</i>	Burkina Faso . . . . .	Mr. Kafando
	China . . . . .	Mr. Li Kexin
	Costa Rica . . . . .	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia . . . . .	Mr. Skračić
	France . . . . .	Mr. Renié
	Indonesia . . . . .	Mr. Natalegawa
	Italy . . . . .	Mr. Mantovani
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya . . . . .	Mr. Elgannas
	Panama . . . . .	Mr. Suescum
	Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Kravchenko
	South Africa . . . . .	Mr. Kumalo
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . . .	Mr. Bayley
	United States of America . . . . .	Mr. DeLaurentis
	Viet Nam . . . . .	Mr. Bui The Giang

## Agenda

Peace and security in Africa

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08-46536 (E)



*The meeting was called to order at 1.55 p.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **Peace and security in Africa**

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Mauritania, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

*At the invitation of the President, Mr. Ould Hadrami (Mauritania) took a seat at the Council table.*

**The President** (*spoke in French*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

I now give the floor to the representative of Mauritania.

**Mr. Ould Hadrami** (Mauritania) (*spoke in French*): First of all, Mr. President, I would like to express my sincere thanks to you for giving me this opportunity to provide the Council with a clarification of the situation resulting from the corrective change that took place on 6 August 2008 in Mauritania. I would like also to thank the Security Council for its interest in stability and democracy in Mauritania.

The Security Council, which is entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security in line with the purposes and principles of the United Nations, is an important organ to which Mauritania has always expressed its commitment. We also reiterate our commitment to the Charter of the United Nations and our respect for all the agreements, treaties and conventions concluded on behalf of the Mauritanian State.

Today's consideration of the situation in Mauritania requires us to update the Council on that

situation and the conditions under which the 6 August 2008 changes took place. I must recall that, in August 2005, the Military Council for Justice and Democracy (CMJD) put an end to 21 years of a despotic regime that had brought the country to the brink of explosion. In less than two years, the CMJD had brought about a democratic transition that was welcomed by the international community, led by the United Nations.

The culmination of this transition came in 2007 with the universally accepted and transparent election of the first democratically-elected President of the Republic in the history of the country, who garnered almost 53 per cent of the vote. The new President was fully enabled to carry out the electoral programme for which he was elected and for which the people had great expectations, specifically in terms of economic and social development in the fight against poverty and insecurity.

A presidential election alone is not a sufficient criterion, however, to measure the degree of success of democracy in a country. Among other things, it is particularly the way in which those in power carry out their missions and how the executive power ensures the performance of the institutions of the Republic and how it responds to the expectations of the population regarding security and economic and social well-being.

Instead of attempting to realize the aspirations of the Mauritanian people, the former President of the Republic found himself held hostage by a political entourage, which diverted him from his most important mission. Dangerous abuses and a series of terrorist acts, previously unknown to Mauritania, marked the presidency of the former President of the Republic.

It was during this time that four French tourists were murdered in cold blood near Aleg on 24 December 2007 by operatives affiliated with Al-Qaida, who then fled abroad but were stopped with the cooperation of friendly countries. They were imprisoned in Mauritania and then escaped, but were subsequently recaptured. The ambush and murder of three Mauritanian army officers by operatives of Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb or ex-GSPC occurred a few days later in the north of Mauritania. On 1 February 2008, the Israeli embassy in Nouakchott was the object of an attack with automatic weapons, leaving many injured among passers-by and patrons of a nearby restaurant.

This rampant insecurity has injected fear and distress into the hearts of the Mauritanian people, who are known for their love of peace and tranquillity and their rejection of all forms of violence, and for whom this situation is completely unfamiliar. The economic and social situation of the country was not very good, much like the security situation. The prices of basic foodstuffs kept mounting from day to day, making these provisions inaccessible to the most vulnerable sectors of the population. Corruption, underhanded dealings, vote-buying, nepotism and the diversion of public funds were an everyday occurrence.

Instead of managing the country's real problems, the former President of the Republic entered into an outright dispute with the majority party in the Mauritanian Parliament, which had only asked him to allow it to carry out its duties without constraint, as recognized by the Mauritanian Constitution. For example, the majority of the Parliament had requested the convening of an extraordinary session in order to carry out an investigation into certain public institutions. The former President of the Republic categorically refused this request, thus calling to into question the principle of the separation of powers, one of the foundations of democracy.

Mauritania, a moderate Islamic country, has never allowed the creation of Islamic political parties, as Islam is the religion of all Mauritians and no group has the right to take over the religion of an entire people. It was under the former President's weak exercise of power that Islamic political parties were authorized for the first time in the country. To top off this series of mishaps, failures and blockages, the former President of the Republic, without informing those concerned in advance, recklessly fired all the country's military leaders by means of a communiqué read out over the radio during the early morning of 6 August 2008. Taking into account the importance of the military in our country, the way the military command was eliminated constituted a useless provocation. This action could have led to incalculable consequences, which those who do not well understand Mauritania and its tribal, ethnic and regional complexity, cannot possibly comprehend.

The situation which I have just briefly described led to the corrective change which occurred on 6 August 2008. This change was supported by two-thirds of the parliament, by the majority of the mayors in Mauritania and by broad populist movements

throughout the country. It has also been denounced, however, by a minority of Mauritians, each of whom have every right to voice their opinions, since fundamental liberties are guaranteed by the High State Council.

The parliament of Mauritania has not been dissolved, the institutions of the Republic are functioning as normal, we have a free press, legal political parties continue their activities without restriction and human rights are protected. In sum, the High State Council has quickly proven that it is more than capable of preserving and strengthening democracy in Mauritania.

The situation in Mauritania is stable and calm, life is normal and the people occupy themselves with their daily affairs. The administration is functioning normally and there are no political prisoners. Only the former President of the Republic, for reasons of security, is under house arrest. Nevertheless, he has access to press and television reports, his doctor does not leave his side and his dietary needs are dutifully satisfied — he has fresh camel's milk delivered daily to his residence.

The corrective change of 6 August cannot be qualified as a coup d'état because all the institutions of the Republic are functioning normally and fundamental liberties have been preserved. Rather, the present state of affairs is the consequence of factors which had put the country's peace and social cohesion in danger. I can therefore assure members of the Council that Mauritania has not turned its back on democracy.

On the contrary, the hope, born out of the democratic transition prior to April 2007, is still alive. Mauritania reconfirms its commitment to democratic values and remains convinced that democracy is the key to development. It is important, however, to understand that each country is different and will reach the true realization of democracy at its own pace. It is useless to impose a schedule which does not take these differences into account. Such an approach is counter-productive and will not be understood by peoples who have their own specific methods. This current stage is simply a phase in the development of the country's democratic foundations. The people of Mauritania have already begun to enjoy the benefits of democracy and will no longer accept restrictions upon their free will. This is why, being fully cognizant of the interests of

the country, the people of Mauritania fully supported the corrective change of 6 August 2008.

Taking this into account, we believe that the Security Council should fully understand the situation and its realities in Mauritania. It should carry out an objective evaluation, on the ground, of the conditions in which the corrective change of 6 August took place, taking the country out of an inertia which was leading it inexorably to an uncertain future.

Indeed, a choice was made between the continuation of a weak and unpopular regime and a future of a country, faced with challenges of underdevelopment, poverty and insecurity. The President of High Council of the State, General Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, did not hesitate for an instant to make the choice. He has already named a civilian Prime Minister who has, on behalf of the Government, quickly arranged to hold free and transparent elections, among other actions. The international community should help Mauritania to place its young democracy on a solid foundation in order to combat underdevelopment. Do not side with a power that has demonstrated its limitations and thereby effectively open the door to a world of uncertainty.

We wish wholeheartedly for the Security Council to contribute to the rectification of the situation in Mauritania, taking into account the hopes of the majority of its people and supporting the corrective change of 6 August 2008. This would contribute to the development of stability and prosperity of the country and to international peace and security.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): Following consultations among members of the Security Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on behalf of the Council.

“The Security Council condemns the Mauritanian military’s overthrow of the democratically elected Government of Mauritania and welcomes the statements condemning the coup by the African Union, the European Union and other members of the international community.

“The Security Council opposes any attempts to change Governments through unconstitutional means.

“The Security Council condemns the actions of the State Council, in particular its move to seize the powers of the presidency.

“The Security Council demands the immediate release of President Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdallahi and the restoration of the legitimate, constitutional, democratic institutions immediately.

“The Security Council recognizes the important role played by the African Union as well as the support of regional and international partners, including the United Nations Secretary-General through his Special Representative for West Africa, Mr. Said Djinnit, and calls on all to assist in restoring constitutional order in Mauritania.

“The Security Council will monitor developments in this situation.”

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2008/30.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on the agenda.

*The meeting rose at 2.10 p.m.*