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**Africa and the Security Council**  
Comment on "Africa and the Security Council"  
to a Meeting of Africa Amicale  
UN Headquarters, November 1996

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(The following text is an edited version of the Ambassador's remarks)

Only last December, Nigeria left the Security Council as a non-permanent member from Africa after serving two years.

In my view there are three sets of pressures which impinge on African members of the Security Council. They are very real pressures and I believe we should, as Africans, be aware of them.

First is the pressure on African members of the Security Council to have policy positions on issues that are far away from Africa. Members of the General Assembly don't have to develop specific policies on Cambodia, or Georgia or Haiti or El Salvador. But if you are a member of the Security Council from Africa you are expected to participate, not only in issues of concern to you as an African but also in other areas, otherwise you lose your credibility. The Security Council is a body that works as a whole and it has the primary responsibility for maintenance of international peace and security globally. So you cannot accuse others of not paying attention to African issues if you yourself, as an African member of the Security Council, have no opinion whatsoever when they come to talk about other problems. This is a hard pressure on us because because Africa for the time being occupies much of the agenda of the Council.

Second is the pressure to join consensus. This wonderful world works on consensus, when the Security Council has agreed there is to be no vote. But

consensus works in two ways. On the one hand, it facilitates agreement, so that the resolution has the widest possible support among Council members. But on the other hand, it results in weak resolutions -- the least common denominator. I am afraid that we, the Africans find that we are supporting a consensus which is really an empty resolution in terms of really addressing the issues of concern to Africa and the hemisphere.

Third, I'd like to mention the pressure of double standards on the part of the major powers. Amb. Legwaila already mentioned this. But let me just illustrate very quickly with a resolution on Liberia. All members of the Council except one country -- you can guess what that country is -- agreed that they were ready to vote on the resolution on Liberia, in order to take advantage of what appeared to be positive developments then. But that member said "No" and held up the resolution for two weeks. Boy it was bad! On the other hand, when a 15-page resolution of the same nature on Bosnia came up, we got the text the day before and they told us that tomorrow we must pass this resolution. Which we passed by the way. But we could compare this to the passing of the resolution on Liberia -- less than one page long -- which was to identify and support the positive developments in that conflict area.

Now what is the answer? The answer to the double standards facing African members lies in at least one permanent African member of the Security Council. The advantage of having a permanent seat is not just the prestige and the veto, but then you have a bargaining tool with the permanent members which you don't have right now. You'll be able to tell them: "Look, if you don't deal with our issue we are not going to deal with yours." That is the tool that is missing. I think it is very important to all of us and it is not only the duty of the African members of the Council, as Amb. Legwaila has said, but a pressing issue for every one of us who wants fairness, equity, and an even-handed approach to all problems facing the Security Council.

[Ed. note: Nigeria is seeking a permanent seat in the Security Council, a step which most other African countries do not support.]