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115/23/37

Your file: 914/3/3

Our file: 29/1/1

19:38 (5194)

700/GVA/00000/00000

\$230.23

FROM: GENEVA C00598/GV1 06-May-1994
TO: WELLINGTON WGTN UNSC Priority
CC: NEW YORK LONDON Priority
PARIS OTTAWA Routine
WASHINGTON Routine

MFAT (HRU, UNC, MEA, ISAC, LGL, EUR, DP3, DSP1, EAB)

Subject

RWANDA: HUMAN RIGHTS

Your C22967 and New York's C04417 refer.

SUMMARY

In the following message we report on a call by the Permanent Representative on the High Commissioner for Human Rights (HCHR) and respond to questions posed in reftel.

ACTION REQUIRED

Information.

REPORT

Bisley and Fearnley called this afternoon on the High Commissioner for Human Rights and raised the inter-linkages between UNSC consideration of the situation in Rwanda and any action which might be taken by the UN's human rights bodies and mechanisms. They voiced your support for HCHR's initiative, including his decision to visit the region and his call for a special session of CHR, noted that there were opportunities for UNSC and CHR actions to be mutually reinforcing, highlighted relevant elements of the UNSC statement of 30 April and ran over the ideas outlined in your para 4.

Lasso said the call was fortuitous. He had held a press conference earlier in the day, at which he set out a plan of his intended actions (his office is sending us a text, which we shall fax to you on receipt). He hoped that his statement might precipitate a decision by a member or members of the CHR to request a special session. He had suggested that the session might appoint a Special Rapporteur for Rwanda and possibly establish a mandate for a permanent human rights presence, either in the region or in Rwanda itself.

Lasso mentioned that he had received indications that a

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cease-fire had been agreed between Government and RPF forces this morning (06 May), to come into force on Saturday 07 May. He wanted to ensure that his words and actions in no way jeopardized any emerging improvement in the situation. Explicit reference at this stage to pursuing the punishment of members of either the government or RPF forces responsible for international crimes would, in his view, only serve to alienate those he was seeking to influence.

We said we entirely understood that he might want to be cautious about the way in which he spoke about the issue of punishment at this juncture, but suggested that the Special Rapporteur, if one was appointed, could in fact carry out a range of tasks, which could include investigation of human rights abuses. Lasso agreed, and added that he had referred to the question obliquely, through his references to the human rights obligations Rwanda had accepted.

Lasso thanked us for our call and said he very much appreciated any opportunity to pursue a strategy which linked in with what the Security Council was doing.

On the procedure for convening a special session, as flagged in our C00590, a member (or members) of CHR must request it. On receipt of a request, the Secretariat would circulate it to all members of CHR. The written support of a simple majority of the Commission is required. In theory a session could be convened within a week of receipt of a request. However, we note that Lasso himself believed that time was needed for the necessary ground work to be laid and suggested that 24 May would, in his view, be the earliest suitable date. This would follow immediately on his return to Geneva (23 May).

Those we have spoken to in WEOG accept that any request should come from the region, and if such a request is forthcoming, no-one would want to be seen to be standing aside from it. The US is the most enthusiastic supporter we have come across. Spiegel (USPR) is worried about African reluctance to initiate a request, and the possibility that the US may be blamed if it seems inactive here by comparison with Bosnia. We said we thought that it was highly desirable that at least one African should be associated with the request, perhaps as part of a wider group. He agreed.

As of this afternoon, no request has been received by the Secretariat. We understand that when the idea was first considered by Africa group, the response was muted. Subsequently, Nigeria has become an enthusiastic supporter and we understand that other members of Africa group are now more open to the proposal, but are waiting for Cameroon (for the reasons set out in our C00590) to take a lead. Cameroon is awaiting instructions.

We shall report again as further information comes to hand.

End Message