

Toure Assesses Government's Performance

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[Speech by Prime Minister Younoussi Toure in Bamako on 10 April—recorded]

[Excerpts] Malian women and men, on 26 March 1991, the Malian people stood up as one body and decided to break the chains of dictatorship which have been stifling them for more than 23 years. In a patriotic move, the forces of change, civilians and soldiers alike, took over the destiny of the country with a view to building a democratic society and establish a state where there is the rule of law, freedom, and social justice.

Political transition in Mali has been cited as a success case in contemporary Africa. It ended on 8 June 1992 with the investiture of the first president of the Third Republic. The president of the Republic then honored me by asking me to form the first government of the Third Republic.

The government, formed on 9 June, immediately set to work and fixed itself the following major targets: consolidation and continued enrichment of the gains of 26 March; establishment of a rule of law and respect of human rights; consolidation of peace in the north through dialogue; fight against insecurity in towns and the countryside; implementation of the decentralization policy; modernization of the administration; reorganization of the Armed Forces and security forces; search for appropriate solutions for the social problems caused by 23 years of dictatorship; bringing sanity into public finances; revamping of the national economy, with the private and rural sectors playing a greater role, in order to reduce poverty; reform of Malian education system; fight against youth unemployment; pursuit of national policy of solidarity, social justice, and health for all; pursuit of credible diplomacy; and support for subregional economic integration process.

Obviously, the task was enormous for it was a question of bringing the country out of a deeply entrenched economic, social, cultural, and political crisis. The social legacy from the former regime was cumbersome. The social legacy took a still more serious turn after the destruction of the economic fabric to such a point that it became more difficult to meet the workers' grade demands.

However, in spite of countless and altogether (?binding) constraints, the government relentlessly strove to achieve its objectives. So, there was progress in several sectors with the assistance of all democrats.

Dear countrymen, certain Third Republic institutions are already operational, others are in the process of being

established. The National Assembly, who meets regularly, is functioning normally. National Assembly relations with the executive are along strictly traditional republican lines. The legislative texts for the organization of the remaining institutions, namely, the Constitutional Court, the Economic, Social and Cultural Council, and the High Council local communities have been adopted or are in the process of being adopted. This also applies to the legal provisions guaranteeing equal access to state media and press freedom.

In contemporary Mali, the building of a state where there is rule of law and respect for human rights is becoming a reality everyday. There has been increasing judicial independence during the past months, the best illustration of this was given during the organization of the trial of Moussa Traore. This trial, whose importance was known to all, once again, made our country an example for the Third World. [passage omitted]

We should, however, not lose sight of the fact that the task of restoring peace and security cannot be achieved in one day. This is a long-term process. Time is needed to heal the wounds and overcome the skepticism of some people and the rancor of others. Our people have enough moral resources and political will to overcome these difficulties. Malian should look around them to rightly appreciate the return of peace to the country.

Dear countrymen, since the beginning of the Third Republic, actions have been taken to ensure the in-depth reorganization of the Malian public administration. This started with the elaboration of a new salary structure. A new impulse was given to training and recycling of senior civil servants notably through the organization of courses and seminars. For its part, decentralization was given another push thanks to the creation of decentralization missions and the adoption of a law determining the principles of free administration of local communities.

Reconciled with the people, the Armed Forces, conscious of their noble traditional mission of defending the territorial integrity of our country, have been reorganized and they, henceforth, want to be at the service of the republican order. Appropriate legal provisions, which define the status of soldiers, have been adopted. Also, measures are under way to modernize the Army and improve its efficiency. A law for military programming will be promulgated in this respect. As for the police, the legal provisions devoted to its demilitarization have been adopted and measures taken to facilitate effective implementation.

On the economic situation, as soon as the government was set up, it showed its desire to redress public finances, reorganize the parastatals, boost agricultural and industrial production, and improve basic infrastructure. To achieve this, the government first relied on internal resources and later called for the support of partners in development as part of the increased structural adjustment relief measure. The government took a series of

courageous measures which, in the long run, should facilitate economic revival. These mainly concern the suppression of minimum tax in favor of the rural world, continuation of price liberalization, including fuel prices, and adoption of a new trade law which has significant changes that favor women traders and new self-employed graduates.

Also, economic revamping should be promoted through the adopted statutory or structural measures including the amendment of the fiscal and customs taxation system to ease the fiscal burden and to ensure a better protection of national production and decreasing development tax, protection tax, and recurrent taxation on imports.

The total reorganization of the Treasury to ensure greater transparency in the management of state finances: On the annual basis, the 1992 economic and financial performances are generally satisfactory in spite of the fact that this year is a turning-point, marked by the end of the transition and the beginning of the Third Republic. [passage omitted]

Finally, regarding the student crisis, right after its installation, the government settled down to examine the Association of Malian Students and Pupils memorandum. In this connection, between 1991 and 1992, scholarships and subsidies were increased by 75 percent. Very recently, social cases in the secondary education benefited from a monthly aid of 8,750 CFA francs through the mediation of the National Union of Malian Workers. But, as time went on, the whole nation realized that the demands of pupils and students were no longer educational but rather political. The student situation particularly worsened on 5 April 1993 as shown by many acts of violence against people, private residences, and symbols of the state, including the National Assembly, the Ministry of Mines, and the national headquarters of the economic affairs. These same acts were committed against the headquarters of political parties that are taking part in the government: Alliance for Democracy in Mali and Sudanese Union-African Democratic Rally.

The emotion created by these events reveal that the danger point was reached. There was a real risk of break in social cohesion that could lead to direct declaration of civil war. In the face of such a situation, since the security forces could not keep pace with the situation, the government was forced to call in an Army reinforcement. We are at a decisive turning point in the life of our young democracy. It is time for all the patriots and sincere democrats to unite their forces to bar the way to those who are decided to use violence in all its forms to achieve their political objectives.

By approving the Constitution, our people marked their willingness, once and for all, to hand over power only through the polls. Every act of goodwill should be geared toward the ultimate objective, which is safeguarding the democratic gains that our people conquered at the expense of their blood.

It is after a thorough analysis of the prevailing situation, the identification of all the threat that is weighing on the stability of the republican institutions and the very future of the democratic process in Mali owing to the political stalemate created by the student situation that I decided to present the collective resignation of my government on 9 April. This resignation only stems from our desire to contribute to solutions that can ensure the return of social peace in our country and consolidate reconciliation and national unity. It is not the result of any pressure nor political calculations. Our only ambition is to work for the superior interest of our country and contribute to the reinforcement of democracy and a state that subscribes to the rule of law. Thus, the president has the possibility to take a new initiative in favor of the democrats and patriots so that they can participate, in recovered unity, in the work of nation building.

Dear countrymen, the work of a government is not assessed in terms of how long it has been in office but rather in terms of obstacles avoided, traps and tests overcome, and challenges taken. It is the sum of more real than spectacular actions, advantages geared more toward the achievement of a sure future than the punctual solution of a problem.

Dear countrymen, generations pass by, governments change, but the people remain. The government that I had the honor to head worked throughout its existence toward answering the expectations and deep aspirations of our people. That was surely a stake that was all the more complex as the survival of our democracy depended on it, all the more immense as the immense needs are numerous, varied, and sometimes divergent, all the more difficult as the state of poverty of our country is a cruel reality and the international context particularly unfavorable.

Dear countrymen, the merit of my government has been to guide the first paces of the state's action after the restoration of democracy, that is to say after, the emergence of new constraints and new hopes. It seems to me that the success of a democratic regime also depends, above all, on the respect of certain intangible principles: excluding education from the political game, keeping the Army clear of political and partisan struggles, respecting the rule of the majority, and recognizing the rights of the minority.

I thank all those who, from far and near, helped my government and me in the accomplishment of our job. Long live democracy! Long live the Republic! Long live Mali! Thank you.