

Speech to National Council

**ABI 20700 Abidjan Domestic Service in French 1930 GMT
11 Nov 83**

[Speech by President Felix Houphouët-Boigny on 11 November 1983 at the closing session of the National Council meeting in Abidjan — recorded]

[Excerpts] This meeting has afforded us the opportunity to discuss issues in a brotherly manner. After deliberating at the level of the various socioeconomic classes, you have exposed your pertinent thoughts and made suggestions about the three major problems preoccupying us.

First among these problems is security, a prerequisite for any development. Security means peace; peace means justice. Unfortunately, there is insecurity, and I understand the unhappiness felt by most of my fellow countrymen, their anxiety in particular. You asked me to order border patrols, and patrols within the country in order to limit the immigration of bad elements. But we must look at the problem rationally. There are some measures that we have to take immediately whose beneficial consequences would reassure the people and minimize their fears. However, if such measures exist, what are they?

We are not like the United States, which is certainly a big country; neither are we a big island which can only be reached by boat or today by plane. The Ivory Coast is a very small country with a small opening onto the sea that we cannot patrol due to the inadequate means at our disposal. We have three big borders on the east, in the north and in the west.

Our resources are inadequate, and we must admit this because we need time to train worthy policemen, and these policemen cannot be stationed at the borders alone. They must also be in large numbers within the country. Of course we must in the face of this serious danger which threatens our future — insecurity

— coordinate the activities of the policemen with those of the gendarmes and if need be with those of our Army, and our Armed Forces.

We will do it. We will therefore patrol our borders. We will have policemen to control inside the country the influx of immigrants. However, we will advance more quickly if we are able to give them the appropriate means in addition to their devotion. That is why we have released large sums of money for their use before the end of this month so that they may equip themselves with efficient means of transport and inspection which will make it possible to ensure the security that our courageous Ivorian people are aspiring for. [applause] They need cars. They will be provided with some. They will be given enough fuel to run them. [applause] They will be armed, more than armed. [applause] To start with, I will ask the assistance of the police, the gendarmerie, and the Armed Forces — because I must make decisions that are in accordance with the country's interests. I have just spent 5 months abroad. You gave me the luxury, it is a very rare luxury in Africa [applause], the luxury of finding the seat with which you entrusted me unoccupied. [applause] Therefore in the same way, I ask you, and I will make sure that it becomes a reality, I give you 5 months to put an end to banditry in Ivory Coast. [applause] Security is the concern of all. I ask — and I will make sure that this is emphasized in the next government — I call for the mobilization of all the people. All those living in our country must be mobilized not to engage in denunciations. It is a task of public salvation. They must help the police. Ivorians and non-Ivorians living in this country and benefiting from the haven of peace that is the Ivory Coast must all condemn all that is likely to disturb this climate of peace which we treasure so much in the Ivory Coast. You, the leaders, must go from district to district, talk with everyone, tell everyone — as I said on 3 November — that the tree of prosperity of the Ivory Coast is for all, both the shade and the fruit. They must help you to heal this tree like we would our eyeballs. [as heard] They will do it, but on condition that you yourselves have enough faith in the future of this country to be able to transmit this faith to all Ivorians by birth and naturalized Ivorians. Can you believe, my brothers, that in 50 years — I will come back to that later because before concluding I will talk to you this morning not as the president but as the big brother of some, the father of others, and even grandfather of others — I say that in 50 years — what is 50 years in the life of a people when the world was born millions of years ago — you will understand. All of you, Ivorians by birth and naturalized Ivorians, do you believe that those who left the desert to come and settle here and are earning a good living, do you think that they will go back to their hamlets? No! Whether you like it or not they are brothers that God has given you and sent to you. Therefore, we must all strive to consider ourselves as brothers, and we must fight together to prevent the criminals from destroying the climate of peace the Ivory Coast enjoys. We will succeed.

Therefore to summarize the problems of security, in the end we will have trained enough policemen to patrol the borders and the country itself. But, in the short term, what is important is that the criminals have been warned that they must disappear, and I repeat that they must disappear within 5 months. [applause] I have told you that my friends and I, the leaders of the party, are very proud, satisfied, and morally reassured. What have we

observed after listening to everyone with a growing interest? I can say that after listening to reports by the different speakers, we have observed that Ivorians, who are represented here by the speakers, unanimously agree on the major problems. We agree on the problem of security and on the problems of economic and financial redress initiated since the reorganization and the dissolution of state companies and on the scandal of leased houses.

Concerning the issue of leased houses, I will not come back to what I stated on 3 November. Thanks to the national commission headed by the young man — relatively young compared to others — called Robert Ba, we know today that there were 17,000 leased houses, at least 17,000 houses for which the state made payments by giving the Ministry of Construction the appropriate funds. Unfortunately, part of the money was not handed over to the landlords. Out of the 17,000, we have already checked 12,000. The remainder will be checked at the latest by the end of this month. We shall (?accelerate the process).

However, there are some brothers who live only on rents of their houses and who have not been paid. It is painful to pay them twice what we owe them, what the state owes them. But the monies which were provided for the payment of these leased houses were diverted from their purpose. The Logemad [the office in charge of the management of government houses] complicated things. One wonders how Logemad decided to triple the cost of rents. Houses of 100,000 were rented at 300,000, even 400,000, a month. You can understand that when we presented the budget to the National Assembly, we took account of the real price of these houses. People increased the rent for these houses. We did more than that. We gave grants for repayment within 1 or 2 years, not to small people — the small people have nothing — but to the big men. This is bad. Then we granted loans with the sums destined to pay for the leased houses. A total of 4 billion CFA francs have disappeared. This money passed through the hands of officials who up to now — they will make their statement before the court — do not know what this 4 billion was for or to whom they gave this 4 billion. Will we have to wait until these people are tried and sentenced? You asked for so many things, like seizing their properties. It is the duty of the judiciary to determine all this.

In the same manner that I made the decision concerning security by providing policemen with the necessary means, in the same way, despite the current difficulties which you and I know very well, we have provided a sum to enable the payment of back rent owed by the state by December at the latest. [applause] We also have the problems of scholarships. We have all agreed that they should not continue to be granted automatically. Our means do not allow it, and will never allow it. We cannot grant scholarships to all our children who are attending the secondary school and the university. This does not exist in any part of the world. These are mistakes we must correct, but we must take certain realities into consideration. There are some children who have had scholarships at the level of the university for 1, 2, or 3 years and more if they are medical students. Those who have these scholarships will continue to hold them until the end of their course if they have not had their scholarships withdrawn following two successive failures. This means that the previous scholarships will be maintained. [applause] However, beginning next year 1984, an extended commission, whose composition will

be decided by you, will review this issue at the national as well as the regional levels, once the state has determined the amount of assistance it can give for this purpose. In other words, if our means enable us to grant scholarships to half of the students — I cannot say how many recipients there will be — it is within the framework of this effort by the nation that you will grant — according to the criteria you will determine — scholarships to those who are entitled to them.