

Downgraded.
27.09.2024

Note for the Record

Question of UNSG: Working Luncheon with H.E. Mr. Salah Omar Al-Ali,
Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations at the Le
Perigord Park Restaurant - Tuesday, 17 June 1980

1. At the invitation of the Permanent Representative of Iraq, Mr. Salah Omar Al-Ali, I attended a working luncheon today at Le Perigord Park. Also present was Dr. Burhan Wasfi Hammad, Senior Adviser (Political and Legal Affairs) of the United Arab Emirates. Burhan is a Palestinian by nationality who has been at the United Nations for over a decade.
2. Even before I attended the luncheon, it was made clear to me that its purpose would be discuss the question of the Secretary-Generalship. Indeed, more than six months ago, while I was still presiding over the thirty-fourth session of the General Assembly, the Permanent Representative of Iraq, accompanied by Dr. Hammad, had come to see me in my office behind the General Assembly hall. At that time they tried to raise the question of my possible candidature for the Secretary-Generalship of the United Nations. They did so indirectly and were on the verge of discussing it openly when I politely and discreetly made it known to them that it was not propitious to discuss the subject. To their suggestion that we should meet, I told them we would do so in the future. From that time, Dr. Hammad, at the specific request of the Iraqi Ambassador, had constantly been asking me when we could have that meeting. This then is the background of today's working luncheon.
3. The Ambassador of Iraq first raised the question of my visit to Iraq and I told him that I had planned to do so on the 13, 14 and 15 July to which he responded that he would really appreciate if I was in Baghdad on 17 July

so that I may take part in the Revolutionary celebrations. He was particularly emphatic on this. I told him I would adjust my programme accordingly.

4. Then came the main point of the luncheon. The Ambassador of Iraq explained that for several months they have wanted to talk to me on the question of my possible candidature for the Secretary-Generalship. He said that I had all the credentials for the post and that I represented a unique opportunity for the third world to achieve that post in the coming elections in 1981. He went on to say that it was his judgment that my candidature and possible election to the Secretary-Generalship would be in the interest of the international community as a whole. But more immediately, it would be in the interest of the third world countries, the non-aligned countries, African countries, the Arab countries and Islamic countries since I enjoy the respect and admiration of all those countries.

5. At times the Ambassador was speaking in Arabic and Dr. Hammad provided the interpretation. Both Ambassador Al-Ali and Dr. Hammad stated that they have been conspiring for the last several months to try and get me to react positively to the possibility of my candidature. They have been doing so in the belief that my candidature was most viable and that my prospects for getting elected were extremely good.

6. The Ambassador also explained that one of the main reasons that he wanted me to go to Baghdad was because of Iraq's importance, both in the context of Arab politics, as well as within the general context of third world politics. He explained that it is a matter of historical fact that the two most important powers in the Middle East have always been Iraq and Egypt. He further stated that currently Iraq has the unique position in that, in addition to its considerable resources, it is not subservient to any of the super powers. It is pursuing

a truly non-aligned policy based on Iraq's own interest, the interest of the Arab world and the interest of the third world. Baghdad, has, in the last few months, for example, seen a number of important visitors from all over the world. Within the period of the last six months alone, Iraq has received more than 20 African Heads of State.

(NB: This perhaps was a way to demonstrate how significant Iraq's support is in terms of my possible candidature. They could also have added two other important elements. Firstly, Iraq, next year, in the person of Ambassador Al-Ali has already been endorsed by the Arab Group and is expected to get the endorsement of the Asian Group for the Presidency of the thirty-sixth session of the General Assembly. This, incidentally, is the session which will elect the Secretary-General upon the recommendation of the Security Council. In addition, Iraq will be the venue for the next Summit Conference of Non-Aligned States in 1982 and thus for three years from the day of the Summit, Iraq will be the Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement).

7. The Ambassador and Dr. Hammad therefore requested me to give them my own reaction to such a possibility.

8. I told them that firstly I appreciated the Ambassador's gesture of hosting this luncheon and their gesture in showing such a sympathetic interest. I assured them that if I had refrained from making any comments in the past, it was not because of a lack of appreciation for their support and interest. Rather, I have, on the basis of my own experience in the Organization, always preferred to take a more cautious path. Furthermore, when they first approached me, I was not sure myself of how to approach the problem. In the last six months however, there has been considerable manifestation of support for my possible candidature. A number of Ministers and Ambassadors and other diplomats from different regions, have intimated to me, either directly or through third parties, their enthusiastic interest that I should consider seriously presenting my candidature.

9. Taking all this background into consideration, I could now tell them in all honesty that if circumstance were right, namely if I felt that there is genuinely and truly considerable support for my candidature, I would certainly look positively to that possibility. I also told them that in that connection I had the full support of my Government and my President.

10. The Ambassador and Dr. Hammad then went on to expound on how best to approach the problem. The consideration of an OAU statement in support of a third world candidate was mentioned. I stipulated that I did not expect that the OAU in the forthcoming session in Sierra Leone would take any initiative one way or the other. Furthermore, it was my considered judgment that what was important was not so much to begin endorsing this or that candidature. Rather, it was the movement towards a perverse feeling that there should be a third world candidature. If this movement gains ground, then the possibility of my candidature, among others, would be taken seriously.

11. Dr. Hammad, at this juncture, wondered whether it would not be advisable in the forthcoming Ministerial meeting of the Non-Aligned countries (now billed to take place most likely in New Delhi in January 1981) for a resolution or a statement of sorts to come out of that meeting indicating a preference for a third world nominee. My reaction was that what was important was to have a situation where Ministers attending the meeting would begin to seriously address themselves either publicly or privately to the idea of a third world candidate. If that were to happen, then it is bound to have a snowballing effect.

12. Both the Ambassador and Dr. Hammad thought that it was important to start spreading the word on the importance of having a third world candidate and in their assessment such a third world candidate should be from Africa and

on the basis of their own estimation they considered that such an African would be myself.

13. Both the Ambassador and Dr. Hammad reiterated several times that this was a unique opportunity for an African to assume the Secretary-Generalship and they were hopeful that the situation would turn to that effect. Both pledged their support and the Ambassador of Iraq said he was going to communicate with his Government and when I was in Baghdad perhaps they will raise this matter with me. He asked me to speak frankly with Mr. Ismat Kitani who is currently Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs and for quite some time had worked in the United Nations, at one time even as Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General's office.

14. Finally, Dr. Hammad suggested that the time has come to constitute a small group of trusted colleagues who would constantly advise me on the matter. I did not react to this suggestion.

SAS/amg

New York, Tuesday, 17 June 1980