

## 4<sup>th</sup> Committee

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**11 October 2005 - Statement by H.E. Ambassador Ismael A. Gaspar Martins, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Angola to the United Nations, at the Special Political & Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) on Agenda Items 26, 34, 35 36 and 37**

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation fully endorses the statement made yesterday by the Ambassador of Botswana on behalf of the SADC. I would also like to join my voice to those who have congratulated you for your well deserved election. I am convinced that under your able and wise leadership, we will make progress in the work of this Committee. I would also like to take this opportunity to assure you, Mr. Chairman, my delegation's readiness to cooperate with you during this session for a successful outcome of our discussions.

Mr. Chairman,

You will agree with me, that for a country like Angola, whose long decolonization process succeeded, thanks to the efforts of many delegations present in this same Committee, our contribution to the work of this body is a matter of a moral obligation. In our point of view, decolonization remains an issue of central importance to which the international community should continue to pay a special attention.

The outcome document of the World Summit clearly reiterated the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. In this connection, the Heads of State resolved to rededicate themselves to support all efforts to uphold, among other principles, the right of self-determination of peoples which remain under colonial domination and foreign occupation. These principles should continue to guide our action and not become a dead letter.

Mr. Chairman,

Concerning the question of Western Sahara, my delegation would like to commend the Secretary-General for submitting a report which summarizes the reports of the Security Council from 1 July 2004 to 30 June 2005 when my country was a Non-Permanent Member of the Security Council.

The main conclusion to be drawn from those reports is that no progress has been registered in the political field since the adoption by the Security Council of Resolutions

1495 (2003) and 1541(2004) in which the Council expressed its support to the Plan for the self-determination of the People of Western Sahara. We could see light at the end of the tunnel when the Secretary-General submitted the aforementioned Peace Plan in 2003. The same resolution called upon the Parties to work with each other towards its acceptance and implementation of the main recommendations of the Plan.

The Plan was consequently accepted by the Frente POLISARIO. However, the non-acceptance by one of the Parties has resulted in a deadlock, a situation that can only be changed with political will and commitment of the Parties and the international community in order to end this long conflict and suffering of the Saharai people.

Angola has maintained friendly relations with all the countries in the Magred as we are interested in promoting peace and stability throughout this entire Region of our continent.

We therefore call upon the Parties to cooperate with the United Nations, in particular the Security Council, the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy and Representative. The appointment of a Personal Envoy and a Personal Representative of the Secretary-General constitutes an important step and an opportunity that should be fully explored by the Parties. In this connection, my delegation encourages the Personal Envoy to pursue his efforts in assisting the Parties to find a long lasting solution to the conflict.

Mr. Chairman,

The presence of the United Nations Mission for the organization of a referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) continues to be a clear demonstration of the commitment of the United Nations and the international community, a stabilizing factor and a guarantee for the respect for the cease fire and a vital tool for confidence building.

MINURSO's involvement in activities such as patrolling and demining, have assisted in building confidence. The logistical and technical support activity carried out by the UNHCR has facilitated family visits and telephone links between the territory and the refugee camps which have tended to alleviate the humanitarian plight of the population.

We therefore fully share the assessment of the Secretary-General according to which the reduction of the size of MINURSO would not be advisable.

However, the presence of MINURSO can only be productive if concrete and positive changes are brought into the political process.

My delegation commends the liberation of former Moroccan prisoners by the Frente POLISARIO. This should positively be explored by the Parties as a contribution towards a peaceful solution to the conflict in Western Sahara. The liberation of Saharai political prisoners demanded by the Frente POLISARIO is an issue which deserves particular attention.

We appeal to the international community to continue providing its humanitarian assistance to the Saharai People.

Mr. Chairman,

During the committee meeting of Friday, 7 October 2005, one of the petitioners, the representative of "Freedom for All", Ms. Tany Warburg, made reference to a so-called deportation of Saharai children to Angola, Cuba, Mozambique and Libya by the Frente POLISARIO.

My delegation learned with great surprise about this information which the petitioner could only but fabricate. This could only be the source of imagination which is not acceptable and a sign of clear lack of respect to this august body. This statement constitutes therefore an insult to the government and people of Angola.

Finally, my delegation fully supports the draft resolution submitted by Algeria. We appeal to other delegations to join the consensus since this is an already agreed language of the General Assembly resolution 58/109 of 17 December 2003.

**Statement by H.E. Ambassador Ismael Gaspar Martins, Permanent Representative of Angola to the United Nations at the Special Political and Decolonization Committee General Debate on Agenda Item 27 "Assistance in Mine Action"**

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made earlier by the Ambassador of Botswana on behalf of the SADC. I would also like to thank the Assistant Secretary General for the comprehensive report presented to us yesterday.

Mr. Chairman,

Anti-personnel landmines and explosive remnants of war cause death and injury around the world. The presence of mines and explosive remnants of war also cause serious social and economic drawbacks. Mines prevent refugees and other displaced persons to return to their homes and constitute an obstacle to humanitarian aid operations and to reconstruction and economic development.

Although recognizing that resources allocated to mine action activities have increased in recent years, there is a clear need to mobilize additional financial and technical resources especially to those countries emerging from long armed conflicts to assist them not only in mine clearance but most of all in other aspects of mine action.

The upcoming Sixth Annual Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention to be held in Zagreb, Yugoslavia, from November 27, to December 2, 2005, represents a momentous

event to assess the enormous progress made in ending the suffering caused by anti-personnel mines since the Convention was established in 1997.

In effect, a lot of mines have been cleared, the number of new victims has fallen significantly in some countries and more attention is focused on assistance to landmine survivors. However many challenges remain. Therefore the Sixth Meeting should not only focus on the progress so far achieved, but also review the critical issues mine affected countries still face.

In Zagreb, all stakeholders should demonstrate their collective commitment to move forward with a clear agenda and objectives on the ongoing challenges.

Like other delegations, Angola is also of the view that the Universalisation of the Ottawa Convention is a crucial part in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and therefore we are particularly satisfied to see that 147 countries have acceded to the Convention. Moreover, all countries should do their utmost to respect the call, at the world Summit 2005, for States Parties to the Ottawa Convention to implement their obligations under it.

Mr. Chairman,

In Angola, one of the worst mine-affected countries in the world, landmines are impeding humanitarian and development Work. They continue to endanger the lives of the civilian population and hinder the economic recovery. However, recent government actions with support of UNDP and the international community, including NGOs, there have been important steps towards tackling the problem.

The Government of Angola has taken three major steps to address the landmine problem:

It ratified the Landmine Ban Treaty (Ottawa Convention of 1997);

The national mine-action institution are being constantly restructured; to take in account the new strategies and programmes. Last week, a new Executive Commission for Demining was created;

And above all, substantial funds for mine action have been allocated out of the state budget.

All these are aimed to make the system more efficient and effective.

During the 27 years of civil war, over seven million landmines had been laid; No or at best very poor records were maintained as to their whereabouts. Most villages are not accessible due to mined roads and broken bridges; as a consequence, local farmers are not able to transport their produce to the markets. For these reasons, the price of banana, for instance, can be ten times higher in one part of the country than it is just a hundred kilometres away.

The presence of landmines on key roads and in villages is affecting the return of refugees, as demonstrated by the tragic incident that killed four Medecins Sans Frontiers workers in November 2002. Should mine action not be speeded up, this will have negative impact on important activities such as reconstruction, and Internally Displaced Persons/refugee return as well as the upcoming elections in 2006.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me now turn to some specific and statistical data relating to the work that my Government and all the partners have been doing in Angola with a view to relieving the suffering of many. From 1996 to June 2005:

demining programmes have surveyed 13.605 Km;

42.018.773 m<sup>2</sup> of affected areas have been demined;

There have a destruction of 52.221 of anti-personnel mines as well as 8.304 anti-vehicle mines and 632.169 unexploded ordnance;

1.572 mine fields have been marked, while 20.100.489 m<sup>2</sup> have been recognised.

As far as the education related to the risk of mines is concerned, there has been an increase on actions aimed at enhancing the awareness of people on the danger of all types of mines.

In relation to assistance to mine victims, the Angolan Government has put a lot of emphases on physical rehabilitation.

Mr. Chairman,

Recognizing that landmines and other explosive remnants of war (ERW) pose grave threat to live and livelihood in each of our countries both in humanitarian and development terms, a group of almost 30 countries, including Angola, speaking with a single voice on discussion of this issue of common interest, created, on November 3, 2004 in New York, the Forum of Mine Affected Countries, (FOMAC).

The group pledges to work together to identify ways through which we can enhance our own efforts to address the landmine crisis, whilst at the same time, working with the United Nations, the donor community, and civil society to promote cooperation, improve partnerships, and increase synergies.

Mr. Chairman,

The report of the Secretary General, on Assistance in Mine Action A/59/284, again demonstrates the amount of tasks yet to be accomplished as we are to continue to enhance the efforts of the international community to combat these deadly weapons.

Furthermore, the report stresses that although donors continue to fund mine action primarily through humanitarian or emergency budget lines, there is increasing recognition of the importance of supporting mine action from development and reconstruction budgets as well. It is our belief that this should continue to be the way forward.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, despite these efforts and accomplishments there are still a lot to be done in this area.

Angola would like to thank all for the generous support, in particular the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) for its crucial coordinating role. As matter of fact, effective coordination and increased national ownership is a fundamental factor for the success of the mine action activities. We take this opportunity to reiterate our commitment to these endeavours.

For this reason, Angola has participated in a series of informal consultations on a draft resolution under this agenda item "assistance in mine action". We, therefore, thank all delegations for the efforts made and their flexibility and look forward to seeing it adopted by consensus for the benefit of all.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman