

GOVERNMENT STATEMENT ON NATIONAL HERO DAY

17 September 2006

Today the Angolan people commemorate 17 September, the day enshrined as National Hero Day in tribute to Dr António Agostinho Neto, Angola's first President, who was born on 17 September 1922 in the village of Kaxicane, municipality of Icolo e Bengo, Bengo Province.

A prestigious leader, a physician of great human sensitivity and a renowned poet, Dr Agostinho Neto was a faithful interpreter of the people's needs and aspirations, who provided masterly leadership of the struggle against the fascist colonial regime for national independence, immediately followed by the fight to defend the country against internal and external aggression to preserve sovereignty, national unity and territorial integrity.

The gigantic tasks of national reconstruction and defending the country and his unequivocal determination to raise the living standards of the neediest sectors of the population were always the priorities of Agostinho Neto's agenda, his statement that 'the most important thing is to solve the people's problems' having remained a legacy that lives on.

President Agostinho Neto, a tireless fighter with extraordinary mobilisation and leadership abilities, found in the country's social, cultural and multi-lingual diversity a source of inspiration and the driving force to unite all Angolans, from Cabinda to Cunene, without discrimination of any kind, in the struggle to win national independence.

Internationally, President Agostinho Neto always denounced situations of neo-colonial domination and fought tenaciously for the freedom and independence of oppressed peoples the world over, particularly in Africa, for the establishment of just relations between North and South and for the achievement and maintenance of peace, the indispensable precondition for the development of nations and the wellbeing of peoples.

In addition to his political activities, President Agostinho Neto was a prestigious intellectual and poet who always opposed all forms of obscurantism and prejudice. He left a legacy of literature and essays that continues to be a major source of reference in our culture.

In celebrating 17 September, National Hero Day, we must reaffirm our firm determination to remain true to his teachings and ideas, participating with enthusiasm and patriotism in all activities related to the date and contributing to the consolidation of peace throughout our country, from Cabinda to Cunene, to national reconciliation, rebuilding the country and strengthening democracy and the rule of law.

**'WITH NETO IN OUR THOUGHTS, LET US REBUILD OUR BELOVED
COUNTRY'**