

ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT JOSÉ EDUARDO DOS SANTOS
ON RECEIVING NEW YEAR GREETINGS FROM THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS

Luanda, 12 January 2007

I would like to thank the dean of the diplomatic corps for the kind words he expressed on behalf of his peers, which encourage us to continue on the course set out by the Angolan government to meet forthcoming challenges.

The start of every year is always a time for renewing hope. Those who achieved successes last year seek to improve the results this year. Those who were unsuccessful renew the hope of a better future. For us, the year that has ended was frankly positive. We are now consolidating the progress made in national reconciliation and ensuring peace, at the same time as carrying out mine clearance and major public works that will enable us to recuperate or build the indispensable facilities for economic recovery and national development.

We are also on the way to the complete normalisation of political life and voter registration has started. The government is firmly committed to guaranteeing the strict fulfilment of all the stages leading to the holding of the next legislative and presidential elections with transparency and fairness, in 2008 and 2009 respectively.

In all these processes, the understanding shown by the governments you represent has been important. Bilateral agreements have been signed with some governments providing Angola with financial facilities that have contributed to national reconstruction or establishing mutually advantageous business partnerships.

This cooperation enables our government to muster more resources and capabilities to tackle the major priorities of its domestic political agenda, namely, peace and security, combating poverty and social exclusion, improving the health and education services, investing in productive sectors to generate more wealth and jobs and the reconstruction and development of economic and social facilities.

We are thus open to the international community's participation in the effort to rehabilitate and modernise Angola, since we are aware of the fact that our country has abundant natural resources and a population interested in learning and constant betterment, as part of a process of fair globalisation enabling it to achieve progress and wellbeing.

We know that Your Excellencies still face difficulties in your day-to-day lives. They are inherent difficulties in a young country that, for various reasons, stagnated for many years. Those who have been with us longer have witnessed the improvements that have, however, gradually been taking place in many services, in enhancing the quality and appearance of towns and, in general, in organising social life. I thank you for your

understanding and agree with those who are optimistic and believe that everything will continue to improve in the future.

The start of a new year is also an opportune time to reflect on the continued imbalances in the world and on how more just and fraternal relations among peoples and nations can be brought about.

The international situation continues to provide us with contradictory examples, with extraordinary progress in science and technology and worrying setbacks in relations between states. This situation promotes longstanding and complex conflicts in the Middle East, many parts of Africa, Latin America and Asia, which nearly always become more acute because dialogue and negotiation are subordinated to the use of force.

In the case of Africa, we have fortunately seen progress in conflict resolution, the expansion of democracy and the consolidation of good governance. The successful elections recently held in the Democratic Republic of Congo can serve as a model for other transitional processes in the continent in which the international community also participates.

At the same time, Africa has registered about 5% economic growth, and efforts to fight HIV/Aids and other endemic diseases have been stepped up. Africa's leaders and the African Union, in particular, are seeking to establish peace and stability within the frontiers of every state, and consider that this priority can be achieved only by ensuring fewer sacrifices, in a spirit of dialogue, good sense and realism.

The tremendous political, economic and cultural transformations shaking the world of today require intensive cooperation and new forms of understanding and solidarity among nations.

Only the commitment of all countries and the sharing of responsibilities can help to solve the problems that still affect humankind, like the preservation of international peace and security, the fight against terrorism, drug trafficking, illegal immigration and so forth.

There is therefore an urgent need to reform the United Nations Organisation, making it more up to date and in keeping with our times, giving new shape to its status as the only force capable of guaranteeing a safe future for the world, our planet.

I am sure that you share this ideal and therefore wish all those present, their families and the peoples of the countries they represent a new year of peace, prosperity and personal happiness.

Happy 2007!