

GOVERNMENT STATEMENT ON DR Congo

Following a number of press reports in the Democratic Republic of Congo claiming the alleged occupation of a part of Congolese territory by members of Angola's national police, a meeting between ministerial delegations from the two countries was held in Kinshasa on 13 March 2007.

Headed by their respective Foreign Ministers, João Bernardo de Miranda and Antipas Mbusa Nyamwisi, the delegations noted that there had been no change in the previous situation and decided to set up a joint technical commission to identify the 112 border markers on the 2,511-kilometre common frontier and establish ways of facilitating joint patrols of the frontier.

The commission visited the border between Lunda Sul Province and DR Congo, by land and by air, from 25 March to 11 April and, with the help of some traditional and military authorities and using the Global Positioning System, identified in situ 22 of the 32 border markers that delimit the frontier between the two countries in that region, which continues to be an imaginary line.

The technical team noted in its report that most of the border markers require urgent reconstruction, since some have been damaged by the elements and others by deliberate acts of vandalism, and border markers 3 and 4 were never even built.

The bilateral commission also noted that the Angolan population living on the border uses the health and education services in Congolese health centres and schools, while some Congolese grow crops, hunt and fish in Angola, which is proof of the peaceful co-existence and good neighbourly relations between them.

In its conclusions, the commission recommended that the deteriorated border markers should be rebuilt, that access routes should be improved and that three frontier markets should be built, in Itanda, Chissanda and Fortuna, in order to facilitate trade between the two peoples.

The government of the Republic of Angola considers that the statements of some civil and political circles in DR Congo who continue to claim that part of Angolan territory belongs to that country are therefore made in bad faith for ulterior motives and strongly repudiates the expansionist pretensions inherent in them.

The government of the Republic of Angola reaffirms its full respect for the immutability of the frontiers inherited from colonialism, stresses its constructive and friendly attitude towards the Congolese people and wishes to continue to maintain its excellent relations with the authorities in DR Congo, expressing its readiness always to resolve situations that are likely to damage or jeopardise them by peaceful means.

Luanda, 3 May 2007