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Sent: Saturday, January 23, 1999 10:06 AM
To: PACT
Cc: MAF Angola; OXFAM Angola; Kate Ashton; CAA; Andrew Couldridge; DW; ELEANOR; Nordic Africa Institute; Steve Kibble; Human Rights MONUA; Dos Santos - Ottawa; TROCAIRE-Luanda; Inge Tvedten
Subject: Update on NGO lobbying position on Angola

Greetings Colleagues

From: Allan Cain -Development Workshop - Luanda

Date: 23 January 1999

This is the latest update which represents a consensus of opinion from key national and international NGOs in Angola on the future role of the UN in Angola.

Regards

Allan

Briefing note on current situation in Angola
(A humanitarian perspective)
23 Jan 1999 (updated)

Background

With the escalation of fighting in Angola since the beginning of December 1998 the future role, if any, of MONUA has become a central issue. This has been accentuated by the fact that both sides to the conflict are highly critical of the role of MONUA. At the same time MONUA fears it has lost 22 colleagues in 2 air crashes, causing stress and grief to the entire humanitarian community.

The impact of a MONUA withdrawal on the potential for any new peace negotiations, as well as on the human rights and humanitarian imperatives posed by the war, are crucial for the future of thousands of Angolan citizens.

The current situation in Angola effectively makes the MONUA role of peace monitoring related to the Lusaka Protocols redundant. However the UN still has a crucial role to play in 3 key areas:

- organising humanitarian response and negotiating humanitarian access
- human rights monitoring and capacity building
- facilitating dialogues between the combatants.

A restructuring of MONUA within the country to ensure the capacity and intent to undertake these functions is essential at this point in time.

Key issues

- a) Maintenance of Humanitarian Structure and Upgrading Capacity To prevent the current political and military crisis from becoming a humanitarian disaster, sufficient support needs to be maintained for UCAH (Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs) in its current form and for WFP (World Food Programme in Angola). This is particularly to ensure that they have the necessary resources in terms of food and non-food items, transport and logistics, finances and capacity to negotiate access, to monitor, and to respond appropriately to the situation.

UCAH has been mobilising humanitarian assistance since 1993, building on its experience since that time. This has involved building the capacity of Angolan partners, both

governmental and non-governmental, to assume greater responsibility for the co-ordination of humanitarian response.

From the start of the current crisis, UCAH has proven itself to be both committed to co-ordination of activities with the entire humanitarian community and capable of providing that co-ordination. By developing a culture of partnership with NGOs, it has become the best source of reliable information essential both for security and effective humanitarian response. The risks posed by the crisis underscore the need to strengthen the position of UCAH, as a focal point for the co-ordination of international humanitarian assistance.

b) Human Rights

The risk of human rights abuses increases with the deterioration of the security situation. To guard against this we believe that the capacity for human rights monitoring and capacity-building should be increased to meet the immediate threat and build for the future. Ideally human rights work established in Angola should be backed with sufficient commitment in time and resources to meet the challenge. A Human Rights Unit presence should be sustained in as many provinces as the security situation allows. The human rights presence needs to be maintained at a scale, sufficient to carry out its important mandate of :

- building capacity with government and civil society partners
- maintaining its role of fact-finding and investigation
- promoting public awareness.

We believe that the best option would be a mission of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, provided agreement of the Angolan Government is secured. Failing this, a strong human rights capacity by MONUA should be maintained against all hazards or, at the very least, its present level of human rights capacity in MONUA needs to be assured without a break in the continuity of its present programme.

c) MONUA's Role in Dialogue

While responsibility for the failed Angolan peace process lies primarily with the combatants, MONUA's withdrawal from Angola would signify an abandonment by the UN of a situation for which it bears at least some responsibility. A restructured MONUA should therefore maintain a political office in Angola to support the work of a resident Special Representative in using new opportunities to facilitate dialogue. This office could also work in negotiating humanitarian access to all parts of the national territory in support of the existing, respected UN humanitarian agencies in Angola, specifically UCAH (Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs) and PAM (World Food Programme).

A closer articulation with UCAH and, through it, to NGOs and other humanitarian agencies would allow for better information flow to the UN and thereby contribute to more effective analysis of the situation. Equally important, this linkage with NGOs could strengthen communication between MONUA and the parts of Angolan civil society represented by the Angolan NGOs. This could support a significant strengthening of the Angolan constituency for peace.