

## Angola

# Canada must take lead at the U.N.

The bloody routine of violence and suffering, endured by millions of Angolans for 30 years has yet again flared up with the resumption of all-out fighting last month.

The U.N. itself has 23 casualties from the recent downing of two of its planes.

Angola's descent into yet another round of blood-letting is a salutary lesson for the international community, particularly for the U.N. Security Council's five permanent members and for Canada, which was significantly involved in the 1992 peace-keeping effort.

For Canada — now a member of the Security Council — it offers an opportunity to further peace, justice and stability in Angola.

We, a group of Canadian non-governmental organizations working in Angola, have seen the deterioration of conditions last year ending in the breakdown of the U.N.-brokered 1994 Lusaka peace accords. We are disturbed by the declining interest of Western governments and donors in the struggles of ordinary Angolans for survival and peace. Like most Angolans, we do not accept the inevitability of war.

Seven years ago there was a real opportunity to help Angolans build a secure peace.

Margaret Anstee, then the U.N. representative to Angola, lamented that, "peace on the cheap was like flying a 747 with only the fuel for a DC3."

Investment in the peace process has increased since 1994, but still only a relatively small contingent of military and police observers was funded; severe limits were accepted on their mandate to act. Too many atrocities were overlooked "by mutual consent."

Now in an admission of failure, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan in his Jan. 15 report to the Security Council recommends that the U.N. Observer Mission in Angola withdraw upon expiration of its mandate on Feb. 26.

"History will, of course, pass judgment on the reasons for which this

unique opportunity was missed," Mr. Annan writes.

Indeed, this is not the U.N.'s war. The two warring parties — the government led by the Movement for the Popular Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and the National Union for Total Independence (UNITA) rebels — must accept responsibility, be urged to make peace, respect civilians' right to protection, and allow humanitarian access.

We support the Canadian government's position that the U.N. should maintain a significant presence for the purposes of monitoring human rights, negotiating humanitarian access, and facilitating possibilities of dialogue.

The Secretary-General intends to designate a senior official who would be based in New York as his special envoy for Angola. New York is too far away; the special envoy must remain in Luanda closer to both parties and to a humanitarian situation at risk of becoming a full-scale catastrophe.

The U.N. has been unable to disarm combatants effectively and has largely been impotent in preventing fresh arms from flowing into the country despite Security Council sanctions against UNITA over the last 18 months.

UNITA's recent intense well-armed assaults on towns crammed with refugees have surprised most

observers. For the people of Angola, the arms embargo is a mockery.

Canada now chairs the sanctions committee, it must ensure that sanctions are backed up by effective action on countries and corporations that break the embargoes.

As a first step on arms control, the U.N. should agree to a binding code on arms transfers so as to limit the flow of arms into Angola. Canada's reputation from the land-mines campaign and its interest in the international control of small arms should help a campaign which we strongly support.

Effective humanitarian response in Angola depends on gaining access to vulnerable people. The U.N. Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UCAH) reporting to the special envoy has been instrumental in negotiating access to war-affected areas in the past. For humanitarian assistance to be possible, this infrastructure needs to be maintained. We urge the Canadian government, historically a major supporter of UCAH, to use its position in the U.N. to ensure this.

The crisis in Angola demands an international response to reduce the suffering of the Angolan people. Given our long-standing commitment to peace, we expect the Canadian government to provide the leadership in the U.N. and the international community to ensure that Angola is not a forgotten war.

We look to an early end of war and resumption of negotiations; the U.N. must be there.

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