

Excellencies,

The National Council of the People of Cabinda (Nkoto - Likanda), a supreme organ of the Front for Liberation of the State of Cabinda (FLEC), is an unmistakably legitimate representative of the people of Cabinda, which comes humbly in name of the people to salute the friendship and the existing cooperation between the two nations: Portugal and Angola.

The occasion of this magnitude presents an opportunity to the people of Cabinda to voice out their challenges and aspirations. There is no better chance than the visit of the head of state of Angola, the Excellency, Mr. President Jose Eduardo Dos Santos, in Portugal, to highlight the plight of the people of Cabinda.

The end of civil war in Angola meant peace, development and prosperity. This episode signifies that finally the people of Angola can determine their own future in an open and free society. In other words, the freedom which Angola obtained in November 1975 is beginning to bear some fruits.

Despite that the 18th Province of Angola, Cabinda, paints a different picture from the achievement and enjoyment characteristic of the Angolan mainland. When Portugal handed over governance to Angola in 1974 through Article 3 of Alvor Treaty, which unaccountably and unreasonably included Cabinda as part of Angola, strife began for the people of Cabinda.

The military and political conflict began between Angola and the State of Cabinda concerning the Cabindan people, their land and political aspirations. Angola failed to comprehend the nature and complexities of this affair and decided to impose her authority. Instead of Angola applying the thorough analytical and diplomatic tools on the matter, the people Cabinda witnessed deployment of Angolan authority and troops without their knowledge.

A plethora of horrendous and savage activities immediately took place. Anyone who was perceived to be canvassing for self-determination was brutally killed. Some were deported to the south of Angola, to Bentiaba Prison, where they faced the harshest of harsh treatments without access to tribunal or any legal forms of arbitration. Many of which never returned to their loved ones. They died there! Others escaped to the neighbouring countries such as Congo Brazzaville and Zaire (DRC) have remained refugees until to-date.

Repression escalated in Cabinda; human rights abuse mounted; concentration camps mushroomed; and destruction of villages and churches became the order of the day. Many people lost their lives. Women were sexually abused and suffered terribly in the hands of the Angolan soldiers. Children lost their parents and

became orphans. The normal life of the Cabindan people recognised by the Portuguese authority got disturbed in such a way that it became impossible for the Cabindan people to exercise the right which they acquired under the Portuguese Crown.

We perfectly understand that Cabinda shall continue to be the Portuguese Protectorate, and that the 1885 Treaty of Simulambuco established this undeniable principle. Peaceful means to resolve the conflict went begging because Angola (the Portuguese Protectorate) could not understand the principle which created friendship between the people of Cabinda and Portugal. Angola compelled Cabinda to obey her laws. It is puzzling because Angola was not present when relationship between Portugal and Cabinda was concluded.

By virtue of the principle of Protectorates, the Treaty of Simulambuco of February 1885 is the law. Portugal is still bound by the international statutes to conclude her legal responsibility as the master on the issue of Cabinda. Silence which Portugal awarded to the issue of Cabinda is a cause for concern. It simply encourages Angola and her allies to act as they please – to sustain the unwarranted repression and further the subjugation of the people of Cabinda.

Simulambuco constitutes the point of departure to the Cabinda people to strive for the recognition of their imprescriptible and inalienable right before the international law. The right of self-determination is a fundamental principle recognised by the international law. Article 1 (1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, according to John Dugard (2005: 104), states that “All peoples have the rights of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development”.

In this line of thought, the National Council of the People of Cabinda would like to implore Portugal and Angola to persuade and engage one another to explore the amicable ways to rescue the State of Cabinda.

Excellencies,

It is of paramount importance that we cite a good example of how the British protectorates were rescued in southern Africa. Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland, after the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, many leaders from Pretoria including Jan Smut demanded the rulers of British Empire to allow the above mentioned three (3) territories to form part of the union. In reply, the authority of Britain maintained that this was a private matter concerning Britain and the traditional rulers of the territories (i.e. King Moshoeshoe of Lesotho, King Sobhuza of Swaziland and the King of Batswana).

In this regard Britain showed leadership and responsibility. Today, the three (3) protectorates are not under the “aspirant” South African rule. Effectively, Cabinda and Portugal signed the Treaty of Simulambuco in equal footing i.e. in recognition of their status as two states. Portugal has a responsibility and an undisputable right to reverse the process of amalgamation of Cabinda into Angola, as it is, before the international institutions such as South African Development Community (SADC), African Union (AU), European Union (EU) and United Nations (UN).

Thus, the National Council of Cabinda through FLEC humbly requests Our Excellencies to consider our sufferings, deaths, imprisonments and persecutions both in Cabinda and the foreign lands.

The Excellency, Mr. President Jose Eduardo Dos Santos, is aware of the challenges faced by the people of Cabinda. Since 1979, after the deceased First President of Angola, Agostinho Neto, in numerous occasions, has received and listened to our petitions, which continued to call for a serious, honest and transparent dialogue between Cabinda and Angola. Instead, Cabinda has continued to thrive under the congesting military occupation by Angolan authority and her Armed Forces Angolans (FAA). As a result, the people of Cabinda have been denied human rights and all freedoms – freedom of association, freedom of trade, freedom of speech, freedom of movement and freedom of choice.

Our proposition for dialogue has never been taken seriously. Angola meticulously manipulated the process of dialogue by equaling it to reconciliation with few individuals in Cabinda. It totally discredited and disregarded the aspirations and vision of the entire subjugated nation.

The Cabindan people firmly believe that the conflict in Cabinda can be resolved by peaceful means. They have through FLEC continued to call for dialogue and appointment of an international interlocutor to voice out the aims and aspirations of the people of Cabinda.

Our Excellencies,

We are delighted that Cabinda has been selected as part of African states jointly with Angola to host the 2010 African Cup of Nations (CAF). This will certainly put Cabinda on the world map.

We also recently witnessed a reconciliatory gesture and shift in the mood whereby President Jose Eduardo Dos Santos invited Mr. Antoine Mbemba Nzita, the son of the legendary Nzita Tiago who is the leader of FLEC State. We hope that their meeting will conclude with the realisation of the dreams of the people of Cabinda.

However, we need to emphasise that President Nzita Tiago who has led the FLEC State since 1963 has been sidelined. FLEC State is a legitimate custodian of the struggle for the liberation of the people of Cabinda. This has not been a struggle for gratifications!

Mr. Antoine Mbemba Nzita plays no role in the structures of FLEC State. He is representing the Group of Five expelled by the Nkoto - Likanda (the National Council of the People of Cabinda). He is no way whatsoever representing the majority people of Cabinda.

The attitude of the Head of State and government of Angola proves the unwillingness of and absence of seriousness in opening the corridors of peace and prosperity in Cabinda. President Eduardo Dos Santos is using Mr. Antoine Nzita as a propellant to divide the Cabindan family led by President Nzita Tiago.

We have seen such blunt maneuvering and shoddy tactics employed on Mr. Bento Bembe who signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Angolan government, which has neither the support of the international community nor the bearing on the children in the streets of Cabinda.

Fortunately, Cabinda has hope because the legend and the living ancestor, President Nzita Tiago, remains a mountain that shields and safeguards the Cabindan children against the Angolan storms of repression and execution.

Although President Eduardo Dos Santos continues to divide Cabindan family, the people of Cabinda are still united and focused. To defend their human existence and territorial integrity against the tyranny of Angolan occupation the people of Cabinda led by the Unified Armed Forces of Cabinda (FAC-U) have demonstrated determination, when necessary, to engage militarily the Angolan troops deployed in Cabinda.

We, therefore, send our deepest condolences to the Angolan mothers who have lost their flamboyant and determined youth in the Cabindan soil. If only can these honourable and respectable mothers invoke similar sentiments expressed by mothers in the United States of America and Great Britain who called upon a cease fire in Iraq when they realised that their children are dying unnecessarily on foreign soil where they have not privilege to close their children's eyes in dignity.

Our Excellencies,

The National Council of the People of Cabinda, Nkoto - Likanda, believes firmly that if Kosovo is recognised as an independent nation by Portugal and United States of America Cabinda deserves also the right to self-determination.

The path to self-determination can only begin if Portugal, Angola, FLEC State, Cabindan civil society, individuals and churches come together and determine the future state of Cabinda. This momentous task should occur under the supervision of European Union (EU), African Union (AU), South African Development Community (SADC) and United Nations (UN).

Effectively, it is with great sense of humility, humanity and dignity that Nkoto – Likanda (the National Council of the People of Cabinda) requests Portugal and Angola to apply their minds when discussing the issue of Cabinda – in absence of the people of Cabinda – for they are dealing with a delicate issue that concerns human life and political aspirations of the people of Cabinda.

In closing, Albert Steyn, a very eminent jurist, provides a clear perspective when he says, “We can’t solve problems using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them”.