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NOTE BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

1. On 22 January and 6 February 1976, respectively, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of South Africa addressed letters to the Secretary-General on the question of assistance to Angolan refugees and displaced persons. At the request of the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations, who transmitted these letters, they were circulated as documents of the Security Council (S/11938 and S/11970).

2. In reply to the above-mentioned letters, the Secretary-General, on 11 February 1976, addressed the following communication to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of South Africa:

"I wish to acknowledge receipt of your two letters dated 22 January and 6 February 1976 respectively on the question of assistance to Angolan refugees and displaced persons.

"It is noted from the information provided that the persons concerned fall into two groups, namely the group which is to be found in four camps located in Southern Angola near the border with Namibia, and the group consisting of those who had arrived by boats at Walvis Bay.

"With regard to the first group, it will be recalled that the communication of 22 January referred 'to more than 2,800 refugees at three locations near the South West African Border'. The precise location of the camps was not given in the communication of 22 January, but it is noted from your letter of 6 February that these three camps and a fourth one are all located on Angolan territory. This being the case, I am sure you will appreciate that the United Nations will not be able to respond to a request from South Africa for assistance to camps set up on Angolan territory. In this regard we have learned that a representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross has visited the area and that arrangements are in hand for the dispatch by that organization of urgently needed humanitarian supplies.

"On the question of those persons from Angola who sought entry at the Port of Walvis Bay, it will no doubt be recalled that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and I immediately appealed that humanitarian considerations apply and that the group be allowed to disembark pending a solution to their problems. Contact was, inter alia, established through the ICRC representative in Namibia.

"Further, the Office of the UNHCR was in continuous contact with the South African Mission in Geneva. In fact, the South African Ambassador in Geneva informed the UNHCR on 30 January that all persons on board the vessels had been permitted to disembark and that those of Portuguese nationality would return to Portugal. It was also indicated that some 324 Angolans returned of their own volition to Angola. On the strength of these reports, it was assumed that the problem of the group in Walvis Bay had been satisfactorily resolved. However, on 6 February the UNHCR in Geneva received indications that some 100 Angolans were still on boats in Walvis Bay. I understand that, at the request of the UNHCR, the South African Ambassador in Geneva is seeking a clarification of this matter.

"As I have frequently indicated, I am deeply concerned about the humanitarian aspects of the Angolan conflict. But, as is known, it has not been possible so far to institute a United Nations programme of humanitarian assistance. As soon as conditions permit, the United Nations system will certainly do whatever it can to meet the needs of the situation.

"In view of the circulation of your letters of 22 January 1976 and 6 February 1976 as documents of the Security Council (S/11938 and S/11970), instructions are being given to have my reply also circulated as a Security Council document."
