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QUESTION OF NAMIBIA

Letter dated 20 November 1970 from the Permanent Representative of  
Zambia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I am addressing this letter to you in connexion with the urgent need for the appointment of the United Nations Commissioner for Namibia.

The President of the South West Africa People's Organization appeared before the Fourth Committee three weeks ago and suggested that the General Assembly should decide on the appointment of a full-time United Nations Commissioner for Namibia during its current session. The Government of Zambia considers this to be an important and urgent question if the United Nations Council for Namibia is to function as effectively as we think it should. Under the terms of resolution 2248 (S-V), the United Nations Commissioner for Namibia is responsible for the discharge of such executive and administrative tasks as the United Nations Council for Namibia shall entrust to him. He is, in effect, the executive arm of the United Nations government of Namibia and, as such, would presumably be expected to take charge of the day-to-day administration of Namibia when the Council is enabled to discharge its responsibilities in the Territory.

In the meantime, he is the executive of a Government of Namibia in exile. In this capacity the Commissioner is responsible for: (a) any executive and administrative tasks created by the Council; (b) representing the Council, as its executive, vis-à-vis third parties, as, for example, Government, international organizations such as the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the specialized agencies, non-governmental organizations, such as the World Council of Churches,

the Anti-Apartheid Movement, etc., or the Namibian people and their representatives; and (c) undertaking long-term planning in preparation for the day when the Council gains entry into Namibia and effectively takes over the administration.

It is obvious that the executive administrative functions of the Commissioner's Office will increase significantly in 1971. First, he will be responsible for issuing travel and identity documents to Namibians through the regional office to be established in Lusaka, Zambia. This will entail negotiations with Governments of countries of residence and with OAU not only on individual applications but also on questions of policy, which will undoubtedly arise. The United Nations Council for Namibia has so far entered into formal agreements with Zambia and Uganda for the issuance of travel documents, but agreements still remain to be finally concluded with Kenya and Ethiopia. The Commissioner will be required to continue the negotiations already under way with the United Republic of Tanzania and Botswana and to initiate negotiations with additional States, particularly in Africa, but also in other parts of the world. In addition, he will be required to make efforts to obtain the recognition of travel documents by other States.

Secondly, if the Council's request for a \$200,000 appropriation to establish a separate education and training programme for Namibians is approved, it will be the Commissioner's task to administer the programme. This will entail considerable additional work and close co-operation with the OAU Bureau for the Placement and Education of African Refugees.

Last year, the Council established a basis for close co-operation with OAU. Logically, the conduct of liaison on an executive level rests with the Commissioner and will depend largely on how actively he pursues it. The Council has proposed that an international conference on Namibia be held early in 1971. The organization of this conference, which will not be easy, should, in our opinion, be largely the responsibility of the Commissioner. Representation is an important function of the Commissioner. As the Executive of the Council, he represents it in dealings with Namibian organizations and with third parties, it is therefore necessary for him to devote a good part of his time to this.

The Commissioner's representative function is made particularly important by the fact that the Council has no permanent president. The Commissioner is therefore the only permanent senior official of the Council to which Namibians and others can

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address themselves. For the same reason, he also fulfils an anchor role within the Council itself. He should, in my opinion, attend all meetings of the Council and its three subsidiary committees, in order to help them in maintaining consistency of policy and action. The creation of two standing committees in 1970 has greatly increased the scope of the Council's work, as can be seen from the report of the Council to the General Assembly at its twenty-fifth session. There is now greater emphasis on long-term studies and technical problems requiring preparatory work by the Commissioner's office, i.e., the legal studies and the planning of a development programme and a co-ordinated programme of assistance to Namibia in the event of South Africa's withdrawal.

For all the reasons I have mentioned above, the Government of Zambia is anxious that a permanent Commissioner for Namibia be appointed to undertake, on a full-time basis, these important tasks.

I should be grateful if this letter could be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly.

(Signed) Vernon J. MWAANGA  
Permanent Representative of Zambia  
to the United Nations

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