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POLICIES OF APARTHEID OF THE GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH AFRICA

Letter dated 23 March 1988 from the Permanent Representative of
Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the document issued by the Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of the Republic of Cuba, in which an explanation is given of the substantial change that has occurred in the situation of Angola and South African aggression during the past three and a half months (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this document distributed as an official document of the General Assembly under item 36 of the preliminary list.

(Signed) Oscar ORAMAS OLIVA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* A/43/50.

ANNEX

Communiqué dated 17 March 1988 from the Ministry of the
Revolutionary Armed Forces of Cuba

A substantial change has occurred in the situation of Angola. During the past three and a half months, South Africa, using infantry of the counter-revolutionary organization UNITA, troops of the so-called South West Africa Territory Force and regular units of its own army, has been seeking in vain to occupy the town of Cuito Cuanavale, situated west of the river of that same name in south-east Angola. Cuito Cuanavale is 200 kilometres south-east of the town of Menongue, which lies at the far left of the lines defended by Cuban troops in southern Angola. In the face of the massive South African attack launched in October 1987 in order to prevent the defeat of UNITA in the area of Mavinga, some 150 kilometres south-east of Cuito Cuanavale, a group of Angolan brigades retreated in November as far as Cuito Cuanavale, which possesses an airport.

The South Africans intervened deploying a large body of infantry, tanks, long-range, heavy artillery and aircraft. Their ultimate objective was to annihilate the group of Angolan troops in Cuito Cuanavale who had taken part in the offensive towards the south-east.

In Cuito Cuanavale there were no Cuban advisers, no combat units and no military personnel whatsoever.

At the request of the Government of Angola, Cuban advisers, artillery and tanks as well as some artillery and tank specialists, were sent by air to Cuito Cuanavale beginning in early December to assist the infantry brigades of the People's Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola (FAPLA).

Almost at the same time, the Cuban air force in Angola was reinforced by a group of our most experienced pilots.

In mid-January, in the face of South Africa's dogged pursuit of its objective of occupying Cuito Cuanavale, Cuban mechanized infantry units, tanks and artillery were sent to that point in order to back up the heroic combatants of FAPLA, who, with the collaboration of a limited number of Cuban advisers and specialists, were defending the position.

Since the beginning of December until today, 17 March, all the enemy attacks have been stopped dead by the unyielding Angolan-Cuban resistance.

During this period, South African large-calibre, long-range artillery pumped over 20,000 155-mm shells into the area surrounding Cuito Cuanavale without causing the tenacious resistance of the defenders to yield in the slightest.

Each attempt by the South African troops and their allies to occupy Cuito Cuanavale was, in turn, met with a hail of artillery fire and air strikes. The Cuban-Angolan aviation played a brilliant and heroic role in the course of the fighting. The pilots accomplished true feats, attacking the enemy columns and groups tirelessly and without ceasing. Their actions were decisive.

South Africa came to a dead stop against the iron resistance of Cuito Cuanavale, whose capture had been announced by the enemy on 23 January, almost two months ago.

The Angolan soldiers behaved with commendable valour. On them, as the main body of defending forces, fell the heaviest burden of the clashes.

Their units suffered several hundred casualties, both dead and wounded. Between 5 December, when the first Cuban elements arrived in Cuito Cuanavale, and 17 March, the Cuban forces suffered 39 casualties, both dead and wounded, and their families have been duly informed. These losses occurred primarily during the last two months.

According to data taken from their own communications and estimates by the Angolan and Cuban chiefs, the enemy has suffered considerable losses, both dead and wounded, including hundred members of the so-called South West Africa Territory Force and of the regular white forces of South Africa. For the past 16 days, no new South African attempt has been made to occupy Cuito Cuanavale.

The South African racists have been taught an unforgettable lesson. By bringing the troops of racism and apartheid to a grinding halt, the heroic Angolan and Cuban combatants of Cuito Cuanavale have already become an extraordinary symbol of the dignity of the peoples of Africa and the world.
