



Sixteenth session.

SUPPLEMENTARY LIST OF ITEMS FOR THE AGENDA OF THE SIXTEENTH  
REGULAR SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY: ITEM PROPOSED BY  
THE CONGO (LEOPOLDVILLE)

PROBLEM RAISED BY THE SITUATION OF ANGOLAN REFUGEES IN THE CONGO

Note dated 7 September 1961 from the Chargé d'Affaires of the  
Republic of the Congo (Léopoldville) at the United Nations  
addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of the Congo (Léopoldville) presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and, with reference to its letter of 14 August 1961 (A/4846) concerning the problem raised by the situation of Angolan refugees in the Congo has the honour to forward herewith the explanatory memorandum.

The Permanent Mission requests the Secretary-General to have the explanatory memorandum circulated as a United Nations document.

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

1. The military operations carried out by Portuguese forces against the Angolan nationalists, particularly in the north of Angola, have given rise to a mass exodus of the civilian population inhabiting this area towards the Republic of the Congo (Léopoldville).
2. Before April 1961 there were only about 10,000 Angolan refugees in the Congo, but since that time their number has steadily and rapidly increased, and according to information supplied by the League of Red Cross Societies, reached a total of 131,000 on 1 September 1961. They are mainly women and children who were forced to leave the country while the men remained to work. It can reasonably be expected that the number of refugees will increase by about 10,000 before the end of the year. Estimates for 1962 are difficult to make because the border areas have been almost entirely depopulated. Angolans must now cross more than 100 kilometres of bush to reach the border. The rainy season, which will be starting shortly will affect not only civilian operations but also the departure of civilians.
3. Relief work was started in April under a co-ordination committee which was itself responsible to the Red Cross Societies. Since that time, various public and private agencies have assisted in implementing the emergency relief programme. Thanks to the collections which these agencies have organized in various countries, and also to the supplies held by the United Nations in the Congo, it has been possible to provide substantial assistance. By 1 September, 4,000 tons of food-stuffs had been distributed; large quantities of articles of primary necessity such as blankets and cooking utensils have also been supplied. Dispensaries and hospitals have been established; twenty-three doctors and about 100 medical assistants provide the refugees with essential medical care. Nevertheless, their needs remain considerable, in the matter of transportation, for instance, and above all where education is concerned. Children under ten years of age constitute 60 per cent of the total number of refugees. To ensure their education, it is essential that teaching programmes be speedily put into operation.

4. The relief organizations have been engaged for several weeks in drawing up a long-term programme not only to safeguard the refugees from hunger and epidemics but also to enable them to provide for their own basic needs. Land has been distributed to them through the Congolese Ministry of Agriculture, as have tools and the seeds needed for farming. Thus, from January 1962, when the first crops will be ready, the relief agencies will cease to intervene in all but needy cases.
5. The Republic of the Congo has granted the right of asylum to all Angolan refugees. Yet it must be recognized that their legal status is inadequately defined. The Congo can offer only temporary solutions to the problem raised by the presence of Angolans on its territory. The final solution can only be a political one - the granting to the Angolans of the right to manage their own affairs and the accession of Angola to independence. At the present moment the Republic of the Congo is not in a position to ensure the integration of the Angolan refugees. The Congolese Government is nevertheless prepared to study, in co-operation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the best means for ensuring the international protection of the Angolan refugees.
6. In conclusion, the Congolese Government reaffirms its confidence in the action taken by the organizations helping to furnish material relief to the refugees. It also solicits the aid of friendly countries in the matter of establishing a teaching programme for the young Angolan refugees and asks for the United Nations intervention for the purpose of finding a final solution to the problem of Angolan refugees in the Congo. Accordingly, it requests that the problem raised by the situation of Angolan refugees in the Congo should be placed on the agenda of the sixteenth session of the General Assembly.

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