

# Inclusive Dialogue Is Only Angola Solution

MUCH is being said about Angola but less has been done to address the root causes of its long-running problem. The so-called peace-loving countries have not alleviated the situation but have aggravated it by fuelling the war with the supply of arms to warring parties, sometimes based on blind loyalty.

To put it briefly: after the unceremonious withdrawal of the Portuguese colonialists in Angola, there was an historic meeting in Portugal. The three nationalist movements, Movement for the Popular Liberation of Angola (MPLA), the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (Unita) and the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) signed the Alvor Accords on January 15, 1975.

The Alvor agreement provided for a joint interim government and integrated national army. However, as the date for military integration neared, the agreement broke down. By mid-1975 the three groups were at war and the US and Russia rushed to involve themselves.

On May 31 1991 the Bicesse Accord was ratified, calling for the Government and Unita forces to integrate into a 50 000 strong military force. The Accord contained a 'Triple Zero' clause which prohibited either party to the conflict from purchasing new weaponry, while the MPLA remained the legitimate government, holding responsibility for running the state during an interim period.

Russia had been one of the three observing 'Troika' members in the peace process. But it has also long been a supplier of weapons to Angola. The Angolan Government had until 1998 a \$6 billion debt to Russia, all of it due to weapons purchases. After negotiations in 1998, such debt was reduced to about \$1,5 million. Because of the outstanding debt, the deal had to be funded mainly through diamond joint venture arrangements, as

well as some oil and mining concessions and fishing rights. Kazakhstan has admitted that in 1998 it transferred Russian military equipment to Angola.

Portugal remains tied to Angola by its history. It is that country's main non-oil trading partner. The Portuguese government has always been partisan, supporting only the MPLA in spite of its position as a member of the observing 'Troika'. (Portugal, Russia and US form the Troika).

Under the Lusaka Pro-

TOCOL concluded on November 30 1994, neither President dos Santos nor Unita's Jonas Savimbi signed the agreement, leaving it to their subordinates to do so, a sign of their continued lack of confidence in the peace process. The abuse of human rights contributed to the collapse of the Lusaka accord in 1998. Serious violations of the ceasefire increased in 1997, the majority of which were civilians. Human rights issues remained a sub-text to the agreement.

For lasting peace in Angola, pro-active disarmament should place a constructive role. At the end of the day, the political will of the government and Unita will be required to end this war and to build trust between the warring parties and the people they represent, both rural and urban.

Conflict resolution mechanisms should be implemented to provide the means for the historically conflicting groups to improve communication and gain better under-

standing of each other's point of view. By doing so, it would reduce mistrust, fear or tension, and facilitate the resolution of the conflict.

Neither the Bicesse nor Lusaka peace processes made provisions for the role to be played by civil society actors. Churches, NGOs, trade unions and community based organisations wish to and must play a role in ending this conflict.

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