



Mission Permanente  
République d'Angola  
Genève

**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY MANUEL  
DA COSTA ARAGÃO**

**MINISTER OF JUSTICE OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
ANGOLA**

**AT THE OCASION OF THE HIGH LEVEL  
SESSION OF THE 7<sup>TH</sup> HUMAN RIGHTS  
COUNCIL**

**GENEVA, 3<sup>RD</sup> OF MARCH 2008**

Mr. President:

Madame High Commissioner:

Distinct Delegates:

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is for me a great honor to address this high level session of the Human Rights Council, and to be able to share the position of my Government on human rights in the world – a subject so sacred for its inherence to the human dignity, and for being a keystone of the social harmony in each of our States and in the world, in general.

This session is particularly significant as it takes place at a time of a historical turn around - this year we celebrated 60 years of the United Nation's adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, an instrument that represented the international community's bestowal of its responsibility of human rights protection as a permanent obligation for the first time in history.

This is also an occasion to reflect upon the advances and failures of this global fight that has throughout generations mobilized millions of people of all origins and social extracts, most of whom paid the ultimate price. This is an occasion to evaluate, with regards to the past and the present, if the future will bring us a better perspective of respect to human rights and to the international humanitarian law, or if we head to an abyss.

The previous years were characterized by events of impact to human rights and to the international humanitarian law; the greatest international tragedies prompted the legislation of important areas of the international humanitarian law, for instance, the adoption of the International Criminal Court statute, and the strengthening of national regional and international mechanisms of human rights protection. In the

specific case of Africa, we created the Commission on Human and People's Rights, which works under the umbrella of the African Union.

Nonetheless, there were also negative events: new armed conflicts and terrorist plots that mostly victimized innocent civilians, and severe humanitarian crisis that mainly affected the most vulnerable. The involved parties in these conflicts not always observed the international norms that govern conduct in hostilities, and most of the perpetrators of serious violations were never brought to justice.

Racial discrimination, particularly against communities of African descent, religious intolerance, xenophobia, the abuse and premeditated discrimination against migrant workers and members their families have reached worrying levels, especially in Western Europe, according to the most recent report by Mr. Doudou Diéne, Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

All of this should lead us to review where in fact the more severe cases of systematic violations of the fundamental rights and liberties occur, while adopting an impartial perspective rather than a selective approach, and to end the apparent silence of the international community.

It is up to the Council members to address this issue in a realistic and transparent way, without the rhetoric that often follows this debate. There is no transparency when there is opposition to certain situations of severe abuses of human rights, but there is a silence in other cases in which economic interests or ideological affinities might be at stake. Similarly, there is no transparency when the regional and international institutions – or civil society, even – are manipulated to promote unilateral interests.

The cases of massive and systematic violations of human rights, which are still witnessed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, besides destroying the dignity of the victims they wound the international judicial conscience, and contribute to the disenchantment of the international security system and the United Nations' human rights machinery. The resort to force in international disputes has caused the most serious situations of human rights abuse. However, the disrespect of the people's rights by some States and non-government institutions creates and fosters conflicts, thus hindering the re-establishment of the international security.

The member States of the United Nations have recently restructured the organizations' human rights machinery, namely the establishment of a Human Rights Council that is dependent upon and elected by the General Assembly; and it has added powers such as to scrutinize the human rights situation in every Country, by means of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism. Another outstanding reform was the reinforced capacity of the Human Rights High Commissioner for an improved fulfillment of its mandate.

This way, the role of the United Nations was granted a new perspective regarding human rights, though it should not be mistaken with the provision of authority for its structures to interfere in issues related to the inter-governmental organs, namely the Human Rights Council, nor as a mandate to meddle in issues under the authority of the national institutions of the States.

The strengthening of this central role of the United Nations is compatible with a greater scrutiny and supervision of the operation of the High Commissioner, by the States. In this context, it is fundamental that the Council ensures, for instance, that the presence of the High Commissioner on the ground does not have underlying political motivations, and that it encompasses in fact the most sensitive territories

in terms of abuse, including the failed States, and the most affected by racism, xenophobia, and other forms of discrimination. Consequently, it shall be urged to question the High Commissioner's policy to install offices only in developing countries, and under criteria that lack better explanation.

Angola supports and reiterates the request of the African States to include the High Commissariat's strategic management plan for the biennial 2008-2009 in this session's agenda.

Mr. President:

Excellences:

I speak today, from this tribune, not only as a representative of my Government but also as a citizen of a Country that is proud of its attachment to and tradition of fighting for the people's fundamental rights and liberties.

When, in a not so distant past, many sectors that paradoxically claimed to be consequent defenders of human rights showed sympathy and support to those that oppressed and denied the human rights of the people, Angola was already strongly fighting such an injustice and defending all human beings' rights to live free, with no exception.

These principles continue to guide the conduct of my Government, thus allowing us to offer the people of Angola and the international community a politically stable Country, united and reconciled after years of profound divisions and conflict, and whose democratic process is being consolidated in a gradual and secure manner.

In only 5 years of peace, the Angolan Government has implemented with its own resources and imagination a set of policies that have radically changed the course of the country, placing it among the successful cases in the world.

This success would obviously be impossible if it was not subjacent to the special attention that we have been dedicating to the issue of human rights respect.

The strengthening of the State's sovereignty; the adherence to the main international legal instruments; the production of adequate domestic legislation, for instance the new press law; allied to the ongoing judicial and legislative reforms are the principal elements of the governmental policy for human rights.

The results of this policy have been positive and encouraging. Today, Angola has an ever open society; one of self-initiative, great freedom of political, syndical, civic association, with a vibrant and pluralist press, active and dynamic civil society, and where the administration of justice is ever more extensive to the access of its citizens.

The same way we won the battle for peace, we are totally assured that we will win the battle for building an advanced, stable, and prosperous democracy in the southern part of the African continent. To those who are still skeptical I want to reassure them that Angola will for sure find its own path into prosperity.

Thus no prejudice and negative stereotype vis-à-vis Angola embedded still in some sectors, fruit of our past of conflict whose spectrum was already eliminated is justified. The existing reality in Angola has turned obsolete this kind of mindset.

Angolans will soon go to the ballots to choose their leaders with total freedom and conscience. This is a strongest message to the world, that peace and democracy in Angola have taken an irreversible course.

Thank you.