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REPORT ON THE 6TH MINISTERIAL MEETING OF THE ZONE OF PEACE AND COOPERATION OF THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

The 6th Ministerial Meeting of the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic was held at the Talatona Conventions Center, in Luanda, Angola, from 18 to 19 June 2007. It was attended by all 24 member states of the organization namely, Angola, Argentina, Brazil, Benin, Cape Verde, Congo Brazzaville, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Namibia, Nigeria, Sao Tome & Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Togo and Uruguay. Six countries were represented at the level of Ministers and Five at the level of Deputy Ministers. The rest were represented at the level of Permanent Secretaries, Ambassadors and Directors of relevant ministries. The AU was represented by the AU Regional Delegate to SADC.

The meeting was opened by the Angolan Prime Minister Fernando da Piedade Dias dos Santos who in his statement among other things emphasized the preservation of the South Atlantic region as a peaceful zone, economic space and a Trans-Atlantic bridge. He also stressed the need for the creation of national and sub-regional capacities to improve the monitoring and assessment of the climate, living marine resources and the environment at coastal regions, as well as the prevention of and combat of piracy and illegal fishing.

The afternoon session of the first day was devoted to general debate. The Chairperson of the session, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Angola, recognized with appreciation the presence of AU representative. The interventions from the member states during the session consisted first of commendation of the Angola government on the "Luanda Initiative" that led to the draft "Luanda Final Declaration of the 6th Meeting of the Member States of the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South

Atlantic” and the “Luanda Plan of Action”. Second, interventions addressed the need to strengthen cooperation and commitment of the member states to the implementation of decisions and plan of actions. Third, it will be noted that the Zone was created in 1986 by the countries of West African coast and those bordering the South Atlantic. The aim was to broaden the area of cooperation in scientific and technical matters, address environmental protection issues and deal with denuclearization and conflict resolutions. More importantly the Zone had the blessings of the United Nations General Assembly through Resolution 41/11 of 27 October 1986, which solemnly declared the Atlantic Ocean, in the region between Africa and South America, the “Zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic”. Several interventions emphasized the other related international concerns that transcend national borders including, trade, poverty eradication, investment, tourism, human rights, drug trafficking, crime prevention, terrorism, illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, and money laundering while not losing sight of the original objectives of the Zone. There was call on the more developed South American member States to assist the economically weak countries. Also, there was recognition of the role of other intergovernmental bodies such as the OAS, AU, ECOWAS, ECCAS, SADC, CEMAC and the UN for the successful attainment of the objectives of the Zone. There must be increased promotion of exchange of experiences and better practices to address the social and economic issues that hinder development in the Zone.

The second day was devoted to the adoption of the documents. Both documents, draft “Luanda Final Declaration of the 6th Meeting of the Member States of the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic” and the “Luanda Plan of Action”(an annex to the former) were unanimously adopted.

The Final Declaration among other things, with regard to peace, stability and security, including conflict prevention and peace consolidation within the Zone, decided that Angola should set up modalities for a more efficient and harmonic cooperation with regional and sub-regional organizations. Paragraph 43 commended the AU for the establishment of the Standby force and the need to fully implement the 10-year Plan for capacity building of the AU as stated in UN 2005 World Summit Outcome.

The meeting enjoined the Chair to forward the Declaration to the forthcoming UN General Assembly in September 2007 in New York.

The next Seventh Ministerial Meeting would be hosted by the government of Uruguay in 2009.

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