

SAS/Notes, Tuesday, 25 August 1998

Note for the Record: Developments in the DRC

Telephone Conversation with President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe

President Mugabe is the Chairman of SADC'S Organ on Politics and Security. This position has been one of the bones of contention and President Mandela who feels that as Chairman of SADC he should also chair this important organ of politics and security. He was from June 1997 to June 1998 the Chairman of the OAU. I had worked very closely with him during this period.

President Mugabe had convened a Victoria Falls Summit (with the participation of Presidents Kabila of Congo, Museveni of Uganda, Bizimungu of Rwanda, Mkapa of Tanzania, Nujoma of Namibia and Chiluba of Zambia). That Summit took place on August 8, 1998. Harare also hosted a meeting of SADC Defence Minister on 19 August when some SADC Member States including Zimbabwe and Angola agreed to provide military assistance to the Government of President Kabila.

Given all these factors, I felt it was important to personally consult with the Zimbabwean Head of State on the unfolding events in the Congo and in particular the initiative which is now under way to send a delegation to Angola and Congo. I spoke with President Mugabe over the phone from 1015 to 1015 hours.

I recalled the Pretoria communiqué and also recalled my conversations with Presidents Mandela, Nujoma, Chissano and Chiluba. I particularly apprised him of the proposed mission to Angola and Congo and my expected participation as Secretary General of the OAU.

President Mugabe was rather dismissive of the need for such a mission and described it as a publicity stunt. He was clearly irritated by the South African position. He expressed full understanding for my role and indeed maintained that as far as he was concerned only the OAU which is neutral in this whole affair can play a decisive role. He felt, like his Foreign Minister (in my discussion with him yesterday) that a Summit Session of the OAU Central Organ was what was required to address this issue. I told him that we shall be consulting on that and that the NAM Summit in Durban provided a unique opportunity for such consultations.

President Mugabe did not in any way oppose the proposed mission but it was clear from our conversation that he was not going to do anything to facilitate it.