

**CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE BY H.E. DR. SAM NUJOMA, FOUNDING
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA AND FATHER OF THE
NAMIBIAN NATION, ON THE OCCASSION OF THE 45TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE ORGANIZATION OF THE PEOPLE'S OF AFRICA, ASIA, AND
LATIN AMERICA (OSPAAAL)**

January 2011

**HAVANA
CUBA**

I am deeply pleased to send congratulatory words and my felicitations to the Organization of the People's of Africa, Asia, and Latin America (OSPAAAL), on the auspicious occasion of its 45th anniversary. This occasion is both opportune and fitting to look at the glorious history of this organisation and to chart a course towards a brighter future and common destiny of the entire membership of OSPAAAL.

Indeed, it has been nearly five decades of solidarity with the struggles waged by the peoples of the developing regions of the world for dignity and equal treatment on the global stage. Such desires are worthy of a retrospective assessment, an analysis of present circumstances and, above all, a call for perspective reflection. Thus, it is fitting and proper that an international meeting is held in January, 2011 in Havana, Cuba under the auspices of OSPAAAL.

The OSPAAAL was born out of the Tri-continental Conference in Havana, which Mehdi Ben Barka was preparing before his October 1965 assassination. Its predecessor, the OSPAA (Organization for Solidarity for the People of Africa and Asia) had met itself for the first time in Cairo, Egypt in 1957.

Over 500 delegates from 35 countries represented national liberation movements and parties rather than states. It was led by Ismaël Touré, the brother of Ahmed Sékou Touré, president of Guinea. Ismaël Touré presided over the board responsible of the solidarity funds, assisted by two vice-chairmen- Mehdi Ben Barka of Morocco and Chu Tzu-chi of China.

At that time, AAPSO (Africa Asian People's Solidarity Organization) was debating the inclusion of Cuba and the rest of the Caribbean and Latin America into the group, a question posed again in Cairo, Egypt in June 1961 by the new Commission on Neo-colonialism, which Ben Barka presided.

Until Boumédiène's 1965 coup in Algeria, Algiers was the capital of anti-imperialist movements. It was thus appropriate that the landmark UN Resolution 1514's 50th anniversary on decolonisation and "granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples" took place in Algeria in December 2010. In exile, Ben Barka resided there for a period of six months in 1964. Likewise, other revolutionary such as Amilcar Cabral, Malcolm X, Frantz fanon, and Ché Guevara lived in the city around that time.

In the case of Namibia's struggle against colonialism and imperialism, it is worth noting that, our first weapons in preparing for armed liberation struggle, namely two PPSH sub-machine guns and two TT-pistols were obtained from the Algerian Government under the leadership of the then elected as Prime Minister of Algeria in 1963, Ahmed Ben Bella who offered them to me and also assured me of his support. That same year, I had the honour to attend the OSPAA conference in Tanzania.

Originally, Ben Barka planned to publish an anti-colonialist magazine titled *The African Review*, but he decided to enlarge the union to Latin America. Indeed, the triumph of the Cuban Revolution on January 1st 1959 reinforced the resurgence of revolutionary movements in Latin-America and buttressed the development of solidarity which was vital to sustain the momentum of anti-imperialist forces around the world. The Fourth Congress of the OSPAA, in Accra-Ghana from 6th to 9th May, 1965, finally agreed on including Latin America and to take in account the founding January 1966 conference in Havana.

In July, Medhi Ben Barka, who presided over the preparatory council defined the objectives of the new organization and, summed them up as "total liberation", comprising: aid to national liberation movements, intensification of armed and peaceful struggles on all three continents, support to the Cuban Revolution, destruction of foreign military bases, support of the nuclear disarmament

options, and opposition to the white minority apartheid and racial segregation. In September that year, Ben Barka went to Havana to prepare for the start of the Conference on January 3, 1966. But on October 29, 1965, he disappeared in Paris, abducted by secret agents. Thus the Havana Conference where the OSPAAAL was officially founded took place without him.

Cuba's relations with African liberation movements began as early as the 1960s, shortly after the triumph of the struggle against the Batista dictatorship in Cuba and the triumph against the failed invasion of the Bay of Pigs known as Playa de Girón. Members of the Cuban leadership travelled to Algiers to build formal relations with the Algerian National Liberation front. Ché Guevara's sojourn around the African continent in 1963 was a significant turning point in strengthening Cuba's relationship with liberation movements around the continent.

In early 1987, SWAPO's leadership in exile under took a tour to South America and the Caribbean to express our appreciation for the support we have received over the years from progressive governments, organisations and individuals in the region and to brief them on the progress on the political and military situation on the ground as the liberation struggle began to near its end. In April 1987, our delegation was received heartily by the Commander and Chief Fidel Castro, one of our closest allies, from whom SWAPO received political, diplomatic and military support. I spent an hour with El Comandante Fidel Castro in a meeting, when he afterwards referred me to the then Minister of Defense and Second Secretary of the Party, Army General Raúl Castro.

With the late Comrades Moses Garoeb, SWAPO's Administrative Secretary and Peter Tsheehama, our then Representative based in Havana, without delay we went into a six-hour meeting chaired by General Raúl Castro, Now President of the Republic of Cuba. Together, we critically analysed the political, diplomatic and military situation in Southern Africa and I also briefed General Raúl Castro on all the enemy movement.

In particular, I informed General Raúl Castro that it was extremely urgent for the Cuban Government to reinforce its internationalist forces on the ground in Angola, and especially to provide them with effective air cover of MiG 23 jet-fighters to take on the South African war planes. President Fidel Castro then agreed and approved SWAPO's proposal to reinforce Cuban Internationalists Forces in Angola, including with MiG 23 jet-fighters.

This turned out to be critical in the final battle against the white minority South African apartheid forces, spearheaded by the South Africans' 82nd Battalion, the so-called P.W. Botha's Presidential Regiment which tried to capture and destroy Cuito Cuanavale in an attempt to take over the FAPLA bridgehead between Cuito and Lomba rivers approximately 320 km north-west of Jamba with their French manufactured Mirages jet fighters as well as the British Buccaneer and Impalas assembled in South Africa providing air cover to their foot soldiers. El Comandante en Jefe Fidel Castro personally commanded the troops from Havana, including using detailed information I provided to General Raúl Castro.

With an estimated 4,000 soldiers cut off in the marshy country near the confluence of Lomba and Cuito rivers and which could not move south-east and cross the Kavango River with their artificial bridge destroyed, The white minority South African troops were in their worst plight with no air cover after their war planes were knocked out by the Cuban and Angolan MiG 23s. In classical conventional war, once you no longer have air cover it is inevitable that your infantry will be wiped

out. As such, the whole South African war machine was in imminent danger of annihilation by an estimated 15,000 combined forces of Cuban Internationalists and Angolans' FAPLA, including SWAPO's military wing, PLAN units.

This resulted in the attack on Cuito Cuanavale bringing about the white minority apartheid South Africa's ultimate defeat forcing them to the negotiating table and to eventually sign the tripartite and bilateral agreements on 22 December 1988 with Angola and Cuba, followed by another agreement with SWAPO on March the 21, 1989 for the implementation of the UN Resolution 435 on April the first 1989 for the independence of Namibia and the end of the minority white apartheid regime when the African National Congress (ANC) won the April 1994 first democratic elections in South Africa. Thus, the battle of Cuito Cuanavale signalled the end of the minority white apartheid colonial regime in Africa and the total liberation of the African Continent.

We are extremely grateful and remain indebted to the Cuban Internationalist forces that fought side by side with us, including shedding their precious blood for the total liberation of Africa. We are equally grateful to the Government and peoples of the Republic of Cuba for their material, diplomatic and logistic support including offering scholarship to thousands of our students that were trained as doctors, lawyers, engineers, nurses, teachers etc and now contributing to the development of Africa in General. In solidarity with our Cuban brothers and sisters, we thus demand the removal of the inhumane blockade on the Cuban people and the immediate release of the imprisoned Cuban five by the American Government.

During the past four decades, OSPAAAL have played a key-role, in advancing and supporting the common cause of revolutionary movements around the world. Based on a revolutionary ethos and loyal to the Tri-continental Conference's mandate, the organization has sustained its role in favour of the fairest causes of the developing world.

In this era of globalisation which has assumed prominence in the international economic system, it has come to mean that no nation is an Island unto itself; and that each nation is influenced by decisions on global trade, finance, investment and information flow and satellite-based information and communications systems taken in distant capitals and markets.

In this regard, OSPAAAL is even more relevant today and should sharpen the skills of its members, strive to promote South-South cooperation and reject the imperialists policies of aggression, the so called 'regime change' doctrine and the occupation of our people's land for the purpose of stealing their natural resources.

In conclusion, please convey our heartfelt and sincere thanks to El Commandanté Fidel Castro Ruz and His Excellency the President of the Republic of Cuba, El General Raúl Castro Ruz and all our Cuban revolutionary brothers and sisters for their unwavering support to the cause of Namibia and Africa in particular and humanity in general. I wish you fruitful deliberations and a successful conference.

Long Live the Organisation of Solidarity between the People of Africa, Asia and Latin America!

I thank you.