

**Press Release: First Angolan San Conference charts way forward.  
Issued by: OCADEC, SNV and WIMSA. Lubango 29 April 2007.**

On 26 April representatives of Angolan San communities, members of the provincial governments of Huíla, Kunene, Kuando Kubango, representatives from the USA Embassy, Netherland Embassy and South Africa Embassy, UN Agencies, San from Namibia, Botswana and South Africa, officials of national and international NGO's and civil society activists convened in Lubango, capital of Huíla Province, for the historic first Angolan San Conference.

The Conference was preceded by a 2 day pre-conference during which Angolan San leaders and San from Namibia, Botswana and South Africa shared experiences, hopes and visions for improving the conditions of their lives. Working in small groups and plenums the San of Angola and their Southern African colleagues reflected on hunger, lack of land rights, conflicts over water, lack of schools and clinics and lack of recognition for their leaders.

The most important recommendations produced by the pre-conference were presented to government officials and the public at the main Conference as a musical performance, whose lyrics stated,

“All of us are Angolans. We want to have the same rights as all other Angolans.  
We have the will to work  
We have the strength to cultivate fields  
We have the dream of a life without abuses  
We want training of our leaders  
We want respect for our communities and our leaders  
We want to be part of the new future of Angola  
We want schools, health posts and proper land rights  
We want a just price for our work  
We want good relations with out Bantu neighbours  
We want the same help that others receive.”

The Pre-Conference and Conference was organised by the Lubango based NGO, OCADEC together with SNV and further assisted by the regional network of San organisations, WIMSA. The Conference was co-hosted and facilitated by the provincial Government of Huíla through the provincial human rights committee of Huíla and the Municipal Administration of the City of Lubango.

In the opening speech of the Governor of Huíla Province, Francisco Jose Ramos da Cruz, delivered by Dionisio Marinheiro Emilio Epalanga, Provincial Delegate for Justice, it was stressed that the objective of the Conference was to exchange experiences in order to understand the needs of the Angolan San so as to sensitise the state authorities and development organisations. He stated that the government of Huíla was committed to integrate the Angolan San and to achieve food security through improved agricultural production.

In his opening message the Administrator of Lubango, Dr Vigílio Tyova, told the Angolan San that,

**“Your sons are also our sons and it is not possible for our sons to be slaves. ”**

He said that while the San were the first inhabitants of Angola they now find themselves on the lowest level of the social scale. Referring to Angolan government reports about the critical levels of hunger, illness, servitude, exclusion and illiteracy he spoke of the resignation of those that suffer and the ferociousness of those that exploit. And this, he said, needs to stop.

Armando Muleka, a delegate from Hoque, summed up his impression of the conference by saying, “Now the door is open. We see that the government is listening to us. We want the message of the governor to go down to the municipalities. Now we have to elect leaders and find solutions for our problems.”

San delegates to the Conference recommended that the creation of an Angolan San council should be discussed. They further recommended that San leaders on municipal, provincial and national levels be recognised to insure that problems of San communities can be addressed effectively. Given the lack of knowledge regarding government structures and procedures delegates recommended that San leaders receive training on the structure and functioning of the Angolan State.

Further recommendations heard by the conference were:

- Given highly reduced access to land and increasing conflicts over land use in some municipalities delegates strongly recommended that that NGO’s and government step in to protect land rights and to provide title deeds to San communities.
- Given frequent cases of conflict over limited water resources in Kunene province delegates recommend that NGO’s and government assist with negotiating better relations with Bantu neighbours and increasing access to water.
- Given high levels of discrimination regarding payment for services rendered, regarding access to schools and health posts delegates recommend that NGO’s and government assist with implementing advocacy interventions which will teach human rights provisions contained in Angola’s Constitution to Bantu neighbours and assist in negotiating affordable access to health and education services.
- Given the close proximity of San communities with and dependency of San communities on their Bantu neighbours delegates recommended that all assistance be implemented in an integrated manner which benefits needy inhabitants of all ethnic groups in an equal manner .
- Given the extreme reduction of game and prohibition of the right to hunt in some municipalities San delegates request the government to allow hunting within determined boundaries and according to determined regulations.