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STATEMENT OF  
CONGRESSMAN CHARLES C. DIGGS, JR.

AT  
PRESS CONFERENCE ON AFRICA  
Tuesday, February 25, 1975

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I have called this Press Conference today to report to you on my recent study mission, as well as give my perspective of the recent structural changes in the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

I would like to stress here that throughout my visits in Africa to many of the world's poorest countries, major emphasis was placed on the continent's severe economic crises which, to a large extent, result from the overwhelming increase in fuel and fertilizer prices coupled with decreased food production following droughts, as well as depleted foreign exchange reserves. Severe health and malnutrition problems are faced by many of these countries, in addition to the challenge of accelerating efforts toward agricultural and infrastructure development. All of us are aware of the economic problems facing our own country, but this study mission brought into sharp focus the crippling issues of starvation and food shortage, which are matters of survival for Africa.

The study mission included, at various points, Representatives J. Herbert Burke (R.Fla.) and Cardiss Collins (D.-Ill.), Members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Our first stop was Lisbon, where we met with Members of the Portuguese Government including Foreign Minister Mario Soares and the Minister for Interterritorial Coordination, Almeida Santos. Their assessment of the economic and political situation in Mozambique, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, and Cape Verde, the Sao Tome and the Principe Islands, and of the progress towards independence in each area, proved invaluable background for the rest of the trip.

After Portugal, we arrived in Kinshasa, Zaire, to participate in the Conference of African and American Representatives, sponsored by the African-American Institute and attended by eleven Members of Congress and representatives from 18 African countries, including several foreign ministers.

It was here that, for the first time, President Mobutu publicly declared his opposition to the nomination of Nathaniel Davis as Assistant Secretary of State for Africa. I would like to point out that criticism of the Davis nomination was similarly voiced by African leaders throughout the course of the study mission.

Following last week's unprecedented formal expression of concern over this nomination by the Organization of African Unity, it is my hope that the Administration will heed my earlier call to withdraw the nomination, realizing that Mr. Davis will find it virtually impossible effectively to work with African countries now. As I indicated in an earlier cable to the President, from Zaire, insisting upon this nomination would be additional indication of U.S. insensitivity and indifference to African concerns and would even risk further detriment to U.S. relations with Africa - a continent with vast resources of growing importance to the U.S.

The Kinshasa conference proved to be a frank exchange, bringing greater awareness and understanding of African issues and priorities to the American representatives in attendance. Discussions focused on the liberation process in Southern Africa and on the economic issues of interdependence.

From Kinshasa we travelled to Angola for talks with the three liberation movements, and for a visit to the Cabinda Gulf installation. I left with the firm conviction that the three movements (MPLA, FNLA and UNITA)\* while recognizing some political differences, are determined to work towards the success of the coalition government. Following the visit to Cabinda Gulf, I immediately cabled the President of Gulf Oil asking that the company at least be on record in support of Angolan independence and the provisional government. I am happy to report this was followed by a message in which Gulf pledged its commitment to a united Angola, and cooperation with both the provisional and permanent governments. I hope this means Gulf is starting down the right road.

In Mozambique, talks were held with Frelimo\*\* officials through which a thorough analysis of the area's problems - primarily economic - as it approaches independence on June 25, was given. I noted that Frelimo is very much in control of the political situation there.

From Mozambique, I travelled to Zambia where I met with President Kaunda and members of his government. These meetings focused on Zambia's development needs, economic problems - especially the impact of declining copper prices and increased energy prices, and that country's role in the liberation of Zimbabwe. Regarding the latter, talks were also held with ANC (African National Council - Zimbabwe) representatives in Lusaka.

\*MPLA - People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola

FNLA - National Front for Liberation of Angola

UNITA - National Union for the Total Liberation of Angola

\*\*Frelimo - Front for the Liberation of Mozambique

In Botswana, I met with President Seretse Khama and his government, including the responsible officials for Foreign Affairs, Economic Development, and Agriculture. I was most impressed with the Botswana Meat Commission Abattoir - the only abattoir in Africa which meets international health standards - which I also toured.

In Swaziland, I met with the Prime Minister and officials of the government and especially noted the encouraging new possibility that country has of sending its exports through the ports of an independent Mozambique.

From Swaziland I travelled to Tanzania where I held talks with key government officials. Particular emphasis was placed on that country's severe economic problems - in particular, the impact of the drought and of increased energy prices on the development and assistance needs and progress towards liberation in southern Africa. I am greatly concerned to learn that the U.S. Government still has not favorably responded to Tanzania's request for PL-480 - Title I food resources, although Title II grains have been granted.

In Kenya, discussions centered primarily on the economic problems resulting from the drought and increased energy and fertilizer prices.

At the last stop on the African Continent, in Somalia, talks were held with President Siad Barre and his government regarding Somalia's food and development needs, self-help schemes, the status of refugees, and possible U.S. aid. Since the President is also the current Chairman of OAU, general issues involving African political problems were discussed.

In Rome conferences were held with representatives from the Food and Agriculture Organization, World Food Council, and the Office of Sahelian Relief Operations on the projects each has planned or underway, with specific reference to food problems in Africa. While in West Germany, focus was placed on that country's policy towards Namibia, as well as its aid policy to Africa.

As indicated in the press statements before I left for Africa, and at various stops along the way, the South African government had, not only denied my request for a visa but refused me even the usual courtesy of allowing me to stay in the Holiday Inn just outside Jan Smuts airport. However, upon actual arrival at the airport, I found that the indignities imposed by the South African government were multiplied severalfold by the action of our own government in this respect. Not only then had the South African government denied my request to have a press conference, but this was actually

supported by the U.S. Government which issued orders to our Embassy in South Africa not to distribute any press releases from me. That the United States should stoop to supporting South Africa's arbitrary and discriminatory practices is utterly indefensible. It is for this reason that I am repeating my earlier call upon our Government to assure that:

1. South Africa's practices in the issuing of visas be reciprocated by the U.S.; and,

2. no new U.S. Ambassador is sent to South Africa, following the expiration of Ambassador Hurd's term, thereby reducing the level of U.S. representation in South Africa, as a signal to that government of U.S. abhorrence of that country's apartheid and discriminatory practices.

In this connection, I wired several Members of the House and Senate urging their opposition to the appointment of a new Ambassador to South Africa until that government takes concrete steps leading to the participation of the majority in that country's political system. Since all avenues of political participation are closed to the African majority, such action by the U.S. and other major powers indicating that they will no longer accept South Africa's denial of political rights to the majority is the only alternative to a violent upheaval in South Africa.

Regarding the recent reorganization of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, I would like to emphasize that Africa will continue to be a priority consideration. In my new role as Chairman of the Subcommittee on International Resources, Food and Energy, I will identify and work on issues in these categories now facing African countries. These developmental concerns were considerably highlighted by my recent study mission.

Moreover, a March 21 seminar, entitled "Changing Vistas in U.S.-African Economic Relations," which I am jointly sponsoring with American University, signals this new emphasis.

I fully expect this seminar, in which Members of Congress, along with representatives of international agencies, the African diplomatic community, private business, academia, and African interest groups will participate, to signal the beginning of an increased awareness both in and outside of Congress of these pressing economic concerns.

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