

INTERNATIONAL

UNICEF: War imperils Angolan children

LISBON, Portugal (AP) — Angola's civil war, food shortages and human rights abuses have killed hundreds of children and many more will die unless the fighting stops, the U.N. Children's Fund warned Wednesday.

Thousands of Angolan children have been recruited as fighters in the former Portuguese colony's civil war, which flared anew last December after four years of tenuous peace under a U.N.-brokered pact, according to the statement.

"Today, UNICEF's Child Risk Measure ranks Angola

as the country whose children are at the greatest risk of death, malnutrition, abuse and development failure," UNICEF chief Carol Bellamy said in a statement received Wednesday in Lisbon.

"The conflict in Angola (is) the single greatest determinant of this sad reality."

The civil war between the government and UNITA erupted after the country won independence from Portugal in 1975. UNITA is a Portuguese acronym for the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola.

Before the resumption of fighting in December, the country's mortality rate for children under five stood at 292 per 1,000 live births — the world's third-highest rate. No figures were available for the current child mortality rate.

Angola has a population of around 11 million. The fighting has displaced some 1.7 million people and devastated the country's infrastructure.

Starvation and malnutrition currently cause 200 deaths each day among Angolans, mostly among

vulnerable groups like infants and the elderly. Diseases also are spreading rapidly and are a major threat to people weakened by malnutrition. Some 1,000 people have died from polio this year.

UNICEF and relief agencies expect to vaccinate 2.7 million children in an anti-polio campaign launched in April which is due to continue later this month.

Bellamy urged donor countries to respond to a U.N. appeal for \$106 million this year for aid to Angola. So far, only 38 percent of that amount has been received.

Nigerian writer returns with message of hope

LAGOS, Nigeria (AP) — Nigerians must be vigilant to ensure a successful transformation from military to civilian rule, newly arrived Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe said in an interview shortly after his return from nine years in self-imposed exile.

Achebe was quoted in last Wednesday's edition of Lagos' *Guardian* newspaper as saying that after 15 years of military rule, the west African country is on the road to democracy.

"It is a matter of celebration, but I won't say we have achieved democracy yet," said the 69-year-old author of "Things Fall Apart" and other novels. "One mistake we must not make as a people is to drop our guards."

Nigeria has been ruled by the military for all but 10 years

since independence from Britain in 1960. Successive governments have pillaged the economy and abused human rights, driving many Nigerians into exile.

Civilian rule was restored in May when Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar handed over power to President Olusegun Obasanjo, who was elected in February.

Achebe, who arrived Monday night in Lagos with his wife and son, said he had come for a brief visit to "touch base with my country and test the ground." Achebe left Nigeria in 1990 to seek medical treatment in the United States after a car accident left him partially paralyzed.

"I am glad to be back," he said. "I feel it is like a ritual of a sort, and I must make contact with the soil of Nigeria."

United Nations to deploy liaisons to Congo

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The United Nations expects to deploy its first military liaison officers in and around Congo this week as part of efforts to end the civil war in the Central African nation, a U.N. spokesman said Monday.

In a step that will clear the way for the deployment, rebel leaders gathered in Lusaka, Zambia, Monday to sign onto a peace deal already agreed

to by Congo's government and other warring parties.

Fifty-one founding members of the rebel group, Congolese Rally for Democracy, were to sign the document Tuesday, ending a six-week dispute within the group over whose names should appear on the agreement.

In August, the U.N. Security Council authorized the three-month deployment

of 90 military liaison officers to the region to help pave the way for a peacekeeping operation in Congo.

U.N. deputy spokesman Manoel de Almeida e Silva said the first group of 17 liaison officers and advisers will arrive in the capitals of Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and possibly Zambia by Saturday.

U.N. officials estimate a peacekeeping force would require a minimum of 25,000

soldiers.

The cease-fire accord was signed July 10 by Congolese President Laurent Kabila and his allies — Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia — and by Rwanda and Uganda, who are backing the rebels. The rebel Congolese Liberation Movement has also signed. A complete cease-fire comes into place within 24 hours after the Congolese Rally for Democracy signs on.

Rediscovering connections with Brazil, Bahia

John William Templeton
Special to Sentinel-Voice

The city with the largest Black population in the Western Hemisphere is not in the United States. It is in Brazil.

Salvador de Bahia is partying because this year marks its 450-year anniversary as the country's first port and capital. Because the major import to Brazil was Africans, the city of 2.2 million has perhaps the closest retention of African culture in the Americas.

If you're looking for a distinctive place to visit, you could not want for a richer experience. The love/hate relationship that Brazil has had with its 160 million people of African descent (59

percent of the population) has clouded our vision of Bahia.

In the past 10 years, a Black consciousness movement reminiscent of the 1960s or even the Garvey days, has begun to take hold. In Salvador, more than anywhere else in the country, the African influence in the makeup of Brazilian culture is readily visible.

It is displayed in everything from the spicy dishes still called by their African names (caruru, vatapa, acaraji), to the ceremonies of candombli which honor both African deities and Catholic holidays, and the capoeira schools where a unique African form of ritualistic fighting is taught. Despite being in the majority,

Blacks have been denied access to political and economic power under a Brazilian ethic of a so-called multiracial democracy.

Only athletes like Pele have stepped onto the worldwide stage.

But a new magazine called *Raca* is demonstrating that change is in the offing. The

first printing of 250,000 was eagerly snapped up by readers and an additional 150,000 added to the press run.

The emergence of this Black Brazilian market offers an opportunity for U.S. Black entrepreneurs to participate as service providers and manufacturers in this country, (See Brazil, Page 16)

WORLD BRIEFS

MALIAN PEACEKEEPERS PULL OUT OF SIERRA LEONE

FREETOWN (IPS) — A contingent of Malian troops, who arrived in Sierra Leone six months ago as part of the West African peacekeeping force ECOMOG, have pulled out at a time when many here say their services are needed most. Their decision to pull out comes one month after the July 10 peace deal between the rebels and Sierra Leone's government. The contingent of 428 troops bid farewell to President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah before attending a reception organized by the ECOMOG High Command in Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone. During the farewell meeting, Kabbah thanked the Malians, who completed their withdrawal this week, for joining ECOMOG operations "at a very crucial time and for their exemplary performance in their area of operations." "On behalf of my government and people, I wish to thank you for your brotherly support, in helping bring peace to our country. I hope and pray that this fraternal solidarity will continue," Kabbah said.

MILITARY OBSERVERS: U.N.

PEACEKEEPERS OVERPAID MILLIONS

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) — The United Nations has written off more than \$5.4 million through "overpayments" in salary allowances to U.N. military observers assigned to a peacekeeping mission in the Middle East. After a series of investigations, which began in 1996, the Secretariat decided to write off the loss — suffered by the U.N. Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission — and declare the money non-recoverable. The only amount the Secretariat managed to retrieve from military observers was about \$122,573. The decision to write off the overpayments still must be approved by the 185-member General Assembly later this year.

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT TAKES IN NEW MEMBERS

GENEVA (IPS) — The Conference on Disarmament compensated, at least in part, for nearly one year of inaction by adding five new members: Ecuador, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Malaysia and Tunisia — bringing the membership total to 66. The expansion of the CD, with one new member state for each region, was proposed last year by Erwin Hofer of Switzerland, the coordinator. Until now, opposition by three-member countries — Iran, Pakistan and India — seemed to indicate the initiative would suffer the paralysis that tends to trouble all conference negotiations. This multilateral negotiating forum is passing through a period of stagnation that some of its members attribute to the irritable international climate caused by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's attack on the former Yugoslavia, and of India and Pakistan's nuclear testing. Expansion of membership was the last of the agenda items for this session, which has yet to make progress on other remaining issues because delegates are unable to agree on a work plan.

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