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REPORT FROM THE ROUNDTABLE ON ANGOLA

November 26, 1999
Ottawa

On November 26, 1999, Alternatives and the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development organised a one day roundtable on Angola. The roundtable brought together NGOs, experts, academics, as well as government officials. It benefited from presentations by the Hon. Maria Minna, Minister for the Canadian International Development Agency, Robert Fowler, Canadian Ambassador to the UN and Allan Cain, Honorary Consul in Luanda. Four guests from the Angolan NGO community were also present. The purpose of the discussion was to assess Angola's current situation, examine peace-building opportunities, identify strategies for Canada and Canadian NGOs to help bring about peace, and to think about the future of Angola.

1. Summary of Key Themes

- i. The perennial question surrounding the causal link between security (peace) and development came into focus many occasions during the discussion. While some argued no development can take place amid armed hostilities, others pointed out that peace can not "break out" without considerable peace-building/capacity building initiatives, especially in the area of education. The security/development dilemma influences issues including disarmament, the role of Angolan civil society and priorities for governments.
- ii. Most participants acknowledged the important role civil society has in bringing about peace and democracy. In Angola, women and churches are especially well positioned to initiate change at the community level and press for peace at the government level. Spaces have been opening in the recent past for state-society dialogue as well as increased NGO engagement.
- iii. The international dimension of the Angolan civil war was stressed. Diamonds and other natural resources are sold primarily to the North. Meanwhile, weapons are made and sold to Angola from abroad. We should not underestimate the role of the rest of the world in the longevity and intensity of the Angolan civil war.
- iv. While sanctions are, in some instances, effective as a tool of influence, the