ACOA Statement on the "Rhodesian Agreement Preparing the Way for Majority Rule"

On March 3 the text of an "internal agreement" was signed by Ian Smith, Ndabaningi Sithole, Abel Muzorewa and Jeremiah Chirau. We call upon the United States government to reject this agreement, purported to be a solution to the conflict in Zimbabwe. Our position is based on the following considerations:

1. The agreement perpetuates white minority domination while only seeming to establish a framework for majority rule.
   a. The critical clause in the agreement (A8) states, "... entrenched provisions ... may only be amended by a bill which receives the affirmative votes of not less than 78 members." Only 22 votes in a legislative assembly consisting of 100 members are needed to block any constitutional changes for a period of at least ten years. In this legislative assembly there will be 28 whites.
   b. The institutions of power now existing in Rhodesia may remain unchanged for at least ten years. At present:
      - The judiciary is now completely white;
      - The defense forces are now entirely under white leadership;
      - The civil service is now largely white-led; and
      - The police force and the prison service are now led almost completely by whites.
   c. During the transition period, while important decisions will be made regarding the structure of an independent Zimbabwe, the present government's machinery will be largely maintained. Ian Smith will remain as the Prime Minister. An Executive Council of four includes Smith and the three black
leaders who signed the agreement, one of whom has been a Smith government appointee. The same white dominated parliament will continue to function.  

d. The power to accept or to reject the internal agreement rests solely with the present parliament. No formulation was established for a referendum or some other "test of acceptability" by the majority of the people, the Africans.

2. The agreement perpetuates confusion between protecting the minority rights (of whites) and continuation of special privilege (for whites). The agreement would accord on a racial basis special privileges to the minority who have already acquired grossly unequal status by suppressing the majority for the past ninety years.

- The pension rights of whites are not to be disturbed and may be paid overseas.
- Whites will be compensated for any land which is appropriated.
- Whites can be protected by continuing the system of dual citizenship.

There is no parallel protective clause for the rights of the majority of the people who have been deprived of land and who have been denied adequate education or health care during the decades of Rhodesian domination.

3. The agreement cannot lay the foundations for an effective ceasefire or an end to the armed conflict. The Patriotic Front which has organized and represents the Zimbabwe military force has not been a party to the agreement. Yet it has been their action which has been responsible for Smith's finally signing even this agreement. The black leaders who signed the agreement do not have independent military forces of their own. They will have to depend on the white-dominated Rhodesian security forces. This lays the foundation for a civil war.
4. The internal agreement is a basis for international conflict. The Frontline States oppose the agreement. The Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity strongly opposes the agreement. The Patriotic Front will have significant international support for its opposition to the agreement from a wide range of African states as well as other countries, big and small, in various parts of the world.

As happened in the struggle for power in Angola, so a civil conflict in Zimbabwe can involve international forces with South Africa possibly playing a critical role. The basis for a threat to international peace may very well exist if the internal settlement is accepted.

We call upon the United States government to continue efforts for a solution acceptable to Zimbabweans engaged in the liberation struggle. The Patriotic Front has made criticisms of the Anglo-American proposal. Its leaders, however, have indicated a willingness to continue the process of discussion started at Malta several weeks ago.

The Anglo-American proposal differs in significant ways from the internal agreement:

1. It calls for a return to legality by reestablishing the colonial relationship between the United Kingdom and Rhodesia during the brief transitional period.

2. It calls for Ian Smith to step down as the head of government.

3. It includes the Patriotic Front—the fighting force—in the agreement and therefore offers a possibility of achieving an effective ceasefire.

4. It is accepted by the Frontline States as a basis for negotiation.

5. It calls for elections with a possible role for the United Nations, a principle which has been accepted by the Patriotic Front.
6. It calls for the creation of the Zimbabwe National Army based on the liberation forces but with the possible inclusion of some elements of the Rhodesian security forces.

The internal agreement creates a facade of a new structure but not the reality. We do not believe it provides the basis for a truly independent Zimbabwe or hope for a peaceful transition to majority rule.