1. **General Comments** United Nations Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar visited Namibia this week. His trip gave a much needed boost to UNTAG's effort to implement UN Resolution 435. Mr. De Cuellar stressed that the catch words for the independence plan are "impartiality and non-intimidation." He urged the Administrator-General to meet his obligation to ensure the impartiality of his administration and the good conduct of forces charged with maintaining law and order. Participants in a meeting at the Human Rights Centre at Ongwediva gave de Cuellar high marks for his familiarity with the issues under discussion, but many local observers felt he did not take a strong enough stance on overall security concerns and certain aspects of the registration and electoral laws.

Enthusiasm for the Secretary-General's visit was further dampened by the extremely heavy SWAPOL security presence at each of his northern stops. Hundreds of uniformed ex-Koevoet SWA Police were mobilized - over a dozen of whom searched the Human Rights Centre offices for "explosives" before the meeting, and remained on the grounds to frisk blacks, but not whites, in the area. Demonstrators held placards outside the HRC noting the irony of the UN calling for Koevoet's withdrawal from SWAPOL while relying on them for the security of their highest official.

2. **Overall Security Situation** The AG has persistently rationalized the presence of Koevoet in SWAPOL by arguing that Koevoet is needed to ensure against future SWAPO invasions. In what many observers viewed as an attempt to bolster this argument on the eve of the SG's visit, the AG alleged that 1,900 PLAN fighters were poised on the northern border prepared to attack. He went so far as to call an emergency meeting on UNTAG, Security Council and FLS representatives. High-ranking UNTAG and SWAPO officials sent to investigate the charge, however, found no evidence to support Pienaar's allegation. Even SWAPOL northern
district commander General Hans Dreyer failed to substantiate charges of an imminent SWAPO incursion.

Despite the erroneous allegations, SWAPOL forces in northern Namibia are reliably reported to have been placed on war alert and, according to UNTAG police monitors, conducted large-scale military exercises along the Angolan border last week. Lawyers' Committee ground staff learned that two mobile registration points in western Ovamboland were disrupted by heavily armed SWAPOL ex-Koevoet members in Casspirs. Anglican Bishop James Kauluma reported that on Friday, residents of Oshaandi were approached by a convoy of 11 Casspirs bearing armed troops. Furthermore, a returnee center at Odibo, several hundred meters from the Angolan border near Oshikango, was harassed by a three-Casspir SWAPOL patrol on Sunday. In a letter to UNTAG regional director Mr. Rwambuya, Bishop Dumeni of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN) raised concern over UNTAG's limited monitoring of SWAPOL in remote northern areas. He reported that SWAPOL members were conducting a house-to-house inquiry in these areas asking people about the whereabouts of PLAN guerrillas and returnees. He made special mention of the need to better monitor the borders.

Security concerns were further exacerbated by reports from SWAPO Head of Mobilization Hidipo Hamutenya that 26 bodies, allegedly of PLAN fighters who had been detained, were discovered in a mass grave outside Oshakati. However, these reports have not yet been independently confirmed.

As these reports suggest, the SG departed Namibia with the Koevoet and overall security problems far from resolved. Though he called for the "total elimination" of Koevoet from the police force, the AG offered only to re-deploy Koevoet members to non-Ovambo areas, making particular mention of the southern parts of the country. To re-deploy Koevoet in the South is to risk creating additional security concerns in an already highly polarized and isolated part of this country, which is disproportionately lacking in UNTAG police monitors.

3. Political Prisoners

On Thursday, July 20, 24 political prisoners were released by the AG. They emerged from the prison singing freedom songs and were greeted by a large crowd of SWAPO supporters shouting "Viva SWAPO Viva." At a press conference following their release, the prisoners urged their supporters to replace the military war with political mobilization. The prisoners' release was widely seen as a calculated attempt by the AG to gain favor with the SG during his visit. In addition, at least eight prisoners remained behind bars in Windhoek prison. Local lawyers estimated that between 28 and 30 should have been released.

4. SWAPO Detainees

Controversy over SWAPO detainees
continues. A conservative West German human rights organization this week accused SWAPO of maintaining a network in southern Angola of a "hundred prisons, camps and torture facilities in which more than 1,000 dissidents are being held." The Political Consultative Council (PCC), a recently formed organization of ex-SWAPO detainees, released a list of 38 SWAPO members allegedly involved in their mistreatment and torture. In addition, the Parents' Committee, a group which claims to represent children in SWAPO detention, released a list of 439 names it alleges must be accounted for.

The various reports are disturbing, as are occasionally contradictory explanations offered by different members of the SWAPO leadership. However, the authenticity of the allegations has yet to be proven. Several individual Namibians have noted discrepancies and inaccuracies in the Parents' Committee list and many have deplored the manipulation of this issue for obvious political gain, most notably at DTA rallies. Tension over the political exploitation of the detainees issue came to a head this week when eight editors of the Times of Namibia resigned over an advertisement printed in the paper (The Times was recently purchased by the DTA-controlled Die Republikein Press) calling for "retribution" against the "SWAPO Gestapo." In their opposing editorial, which The Times refused to print, the resigning editors noted "we have sympathy for the real parents on the Parents' Committee and sorrow for their children. For the political vultures who feed on their misfortune we have only contempt." Both the SR and the SG pledged to look fully into this as well as other issues pertaining to political prisoners and detainees.

5. Repatriation As of July 17, 22,163 returnees (a bit over half of those registered) had been repatriated. Flights into Namibia resumed on July 18, following a two week delay caused by crowding in the primary reception centers. Apparently this clogging has been eased as repatriates have begun to feel more comfortable about returning home. From now on 3R staffer Emmanuel Dumeni expects the flights to come in regularly and Onesimo Silveira, the UNHCR official in Angola, perhaps prematurely predicts that the process will be completed on schedule.

6. Voter Registration UNTAG voter registration officials continued to report impressive numbers during the third week of the registration period, but some nagging problems persist. At the Okongo mobile registration center in northern Namibia, for example, the UNTAG team leader reported that "errors" by South African registrars had spoiled 25 percent of the registration cards turned in during one day last week. Similar though less numerous errors are also being reported from the southern regions of Namibia.

Compounding these perhaps unintentional errors are several
disturbing reports of deliberate attempts at registration fraud. Four young people and two church officials have been jailed on suspicion of registration fraud in Ovamboland. Three of the youngsters were found guilty of altering birth dates on identity documents and were released after receiving suspended sentences. However, the two adults who are charged with falsifying birth or baptismal certificates, are still being held without bail awaiting trial. A further fraudulent registration scheme has apparently been uncovered in the Ondangua area. A former 101 Battalion member, Voito Kasera, who is also a member of the Namibia National Democratic Party, has reportedly induced 35 people to sign NNDP cards and told them that by registering with the party they would not need to register at the official registration centers. Kasera told investigators that party boss Tara Imbili had asserted that 100 other NNDP members were also engaged in the "registration" effort.

In general, UN voter registration officers are pressing for a halt to imprisonment of persons accused of registration fraud. Tentative agreement has apparently been reached to no longer arrest or charge persons for such offenses. In addition, it has reportedly been decided that birth and baptismal certificates will not be considered proof of identity or eligibility for registration. Applicants must now submit an affidavit or other form of identity with a birth or baptismal certificate.

Although UNTAG officials insist that "technical" registration errors will not disqualify voters in November, South African control of the cumbersome and time-consuming voting procedures renders that assurance suspect. Fraudulent and faulty voter registration cards could prove statistically significant. Thus, UNTAG supervision of the South Africa registration teams is crucial. A spot check by staff at the Onandjokwe mobile registration center last week found the UNTAG team leader physically absent and the UNTAG police monitor engaged in conversation with his SWAPOL counterpart with his back to the registration tables. No UNTAG translator was present. UNTAG registration personnel are noticeably over-extended in southern Namibia. One UNTAG official estimated the ratio of UNTAG to AG registration staff at 1 to 5.

7. Operation Namibia The single largest and increasingly controversial problem facing the voter registration process is now-confirmed reports that South Africans, and other residents of neighboring countries, are coming over the borders of Namibia to register for the coming elections. One bus and 23 cars were counted coming over the southern border post at Ariamsvlei on July 22, all of which came from Transvaal. A UN official announced that of the 2,000 people registered at the temporary registration points on the South African border since July 14, approximately 1,250 were residents of South Africa. An unofficial spokesperson for this past weekend's group said the buses
would be coming every weekend until the close of the registration process.

Although many Namibians and some political parties have raised serious questions about the practice of registering voters in a country where they are not resident, UNTAG maintains that the practice (on certain conditions) is within the law. UNTAG electoral director Hisham Gamyad stresses that anyone meeting the qualifications of being over 18 years old, born in Namibia, having one parent born here or being resident for four consecutive years prior to registration, is deemed eligible to vote, regardless of intention to reside. In addition to raising serious political questions, this influx of external voters, combined with other factors (like technical registration errors), might significantly affect the final election results.

8. **Budget** On Thursday, July 20, the AG released his first (and perhaps last) budget for fiscal year 1989-90 in Namibia. It notes a projected expenditure of approximately R2,240 million and a projected revenue of about R1,970 million, engendering a R270 million or approximately 10% deficit. The shortfall in part reflects a drastic reduction in South Africa's contribution to Namibia's budget which fell from R225.8 million to R80 million this fiscal year. However, it also reveals strains on the economy caused by rampant government spending, due in part to the costs of over-developed infrastructure engendered by the grand apartheid division of the territory into 11 semi-autonomous ethnic administrations. 92% of the budget goes to the current account, leaving a paltry amount for capital expenditures which might enhance the country's overall productive capacity. In a statement which might well appear ironic to the majority of Namibians experiencing sub-standard living conditions, the AG concluded that "the country is enjoying a standard of services it cannot afford."

The AG pledged not to generate additional revenue by raising taxes. He suggested a) applying to the international community, b) asking South Africa to increase its contribution or c) seeking more loans. However, the South African government has recently refused to guarantee any further long-term lending and Namibia is already R700 million in debt, R500 million of which is owed to South African institutions. R115 million in current short-term loans comes due this year.

For more information contact:
Gay McDougall
Lorraine Eide
(202) 371-1212