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WASHINGTON OFFICE ON AFRICA

110 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, DC, 20002 (202) 546-7961

June 1990

Arranging and Conducting a Meeting with a Member of Congress

Before the Meeting:

1. Give yourself and the Congressional office sufficient advance time; be persistent. Call your Representative's or Senators' local office or ask for the Washington office through the Capitol switchboard, (202) 224-3121. Frequently an office will also require a written request describing who will be attending and the purpose of the meeting. Let the appointment secretary know you represent the Washington Office on Africa (WOA), and that you are a constituent from the Congressperson's home district/state. If the Member is unavailable, request a meeting with the congressional staff person handling southern Africa issues. Quickly confirm the appointment with a letter.
2. Plan ahead. If others are attending the meeting, have an organizational meeting prior to meeting with your Member. Plan the points you will stress and what materials you will bring; limit the number of subjects you will cover. Agree on specific questions you will ask and who will take the lead. If possible, research in advance the current status of legislation, the pros and cons of the argument and the Member's voting record and committee assignments. Call WOA if you need assistance.

During the Meeting:

1. Begin by thanking the Member for previous votes in support of peace, justice and development in southern Africa, if applicable. If your Member is new to office, discuss any stated campaign positions in favor of your position. Keep to the main purpose of your visit and state that purpose. Explain your position, state your arguments and make specific requests of support or opposition.
2. Be polite, but persistent. Don't let Members evade the issue or change the subject, and try to get a commitment on his or her position. Let your Member know that you will follow Congressional votes on the issues.
3. If the Member is hostile to your position, try not to be threatening. If you can't answer a substantive question, tell your Member you will get back to him/her. Promptly send information which addresses the question. Again, call WOA if you need assistance.

After the Meeting:

1. Please summarize the meeting and send a short report to WOA. No matter how inconclusive, such follow up may provide information crucial to our legislative efforts
2. Write a letter thanking your Member of Congress for the

meeting. Reiterate your position and your understanding of any commitments made during the meeting.

3. Follow up your visit by sharing the Member's comments with other constituents, writing letters to the editor and "op-ed" pieces for your local newspapers. Encourage other constituents to write and call, follow votes on the issues and develop an ongoing dialogue with the Congressperson and staff.

Lobbying Tips

There are many ways to lobby your Members of Congress, including letters, telegrams, phone calls, and personal visits.

When lobbying your Members of Congress by mail, by phone or in person remember:

- Identify yourself as a constituent.
- Be friendly, but persistent.
- Be concise, although do explain your political stands.
- Handwrite letters, use your own words, and ask a thoughtful question that demands a reply.
- Focus on only one issue or bill, if possible.
- Recruit local and state elected officials to sign on to your letters or accompany you on group lobbying visits.
- If your Member remains undecided for a period of time, initiate a follow-up letter or phone call to renew your message.
- Write a follow-up letter or make a follow-up call to express your thanks or disappointment after a vote.

Here are some additional finer points on the art of lobbying:

- Don't overlook the value of lobbying Congressional staffers. It's easier to schedule a meeting with them and, more likely than not, your message will still reach the Congressperson.
- Don't ignore the importance of visiting your local Congressional office. Ask them to pass your message on to Washington. Local offices are, understandably, more responsive to constituent pressure than are Washington offices.
- Use the media in your lobbying campaign as much as possible. Write letters to the editor of your local newspapers and encourage others to do the same. Send copies to your Congressional office and to the Washington Office on Africa. Also, notify your local media of any planned Congressional meetings and, then later, of their outcome.
- Conduct a voter registration drive, tell your Members of Congress about it and update them regularly on your successes.
- Analyze past election results and identify the communities within your congressional District or state that voted against the Member in the last election. Encourage your friends and contacts from those areas to make their views and place of residence known to the Congressional office.

THE WASHINGTON OFFICE ON AFRICA

110 MARYLAND AVENUE, N.E.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20002
PHONE (202) 546-7961
FAX (202) 546-1545

26 June 1992

Dear Friend,

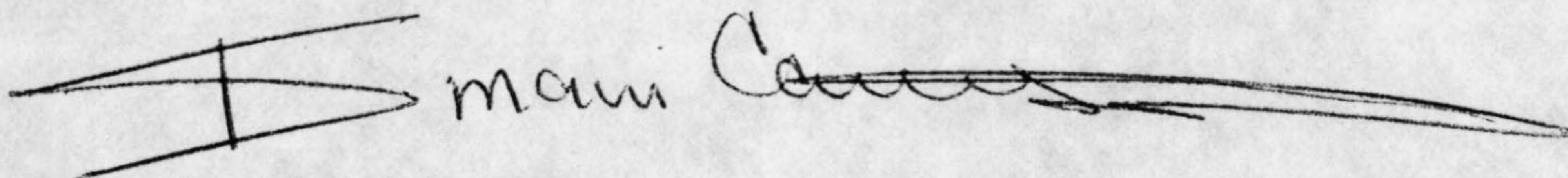
Enclosed is an Action Alert regarding the drought affecting Southern Africa--one of the most devastating yet least talked about natural disasters in this century.

The Southern African drought, which began with the failure of rains in January, directly affects 18-million people with the threat of starvation or severe malnutrition. An additional 100-million-plus, according to UN estimates, will be hurt through the loss of crops, livestock, and employment. South Africa and Zimbabwe, the breadbaskets of the region, have experienced crop failures ranging from 50 to 90 percent. Furthermore, economic restructuring requirements imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have exacerbated the magnitude of the drought since they have required farmers to plant either cash crops or crops which were not as drought-resistant as traditional staples. Moreover, IMF policies have required the export of the area's grain reserves to earn much needed foreign exchange.

The response from western donors has so far staved off total disaster but the drought will continue through at least next April (assuming the rains come as needed).

We are asking Congress, in considering the 1993 budget, to increase aid to the region to facilitate the distribution of drought relief supplies as well as to help farmers acquire seed and fertilizer. The Senate will begin consideration of the 1993 Appropriations bill in July. We encourage you to write your Senators and contact your local media to call attention to this crisis and how the United States should respond to it.

Sincerely,



Imani Countess
Acting Director

Enclosures:

Action Alert

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The Washington Office on Africa

ACTION ALERT

110 Maryland Avenue, NE, Suite 112 • Washington, DC 20002 • 202/546-7961 • FAX 202/546-1545

SUPPORT ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA DROUGHT RELIEF

July 1, 1992

The ten nations of Southern Africa, Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, are in the midst of the worst drought to hit the region in this century. The United Nations estimates that 18-million people are directly at risk of starvation or severe malnutrition. Furthermore, over 100-million people will be affected by the loss of crops, livestock, and employment. International relief efforts, including transport support have prevented a disaster, so far. However, the region's estimated food needs have not been met. The shortage of water supplies are literally forcing the evacuation of entire cities, such as Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second largest city. Moreover, the effects of the drought will continue at least until April, 1993, assuming the rains come in November.

It is urgent that the United States:

- **Increase funding for the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) to \$100-million and raise the borrowing authority of the OFDA to \$100-million.** This will allow some of the infrastructure-rebuilding needs to be met.
- **Increase the funding level for the Southern Africa Development Coordinating Conference (SADCC) to \$75-million.** This is the regional body which has been helping Southern African nations free themselves from import dependency on South Africa.
- **Retain the \$80-million one-time appropriation earmarked for drought relief.** The House authorized OFDA to direct these funds toward SADCC, church organizations, and other Non-Governmental Organizations for miscellaneous costs associated with the transportation and storage of food supplies.
- **Increase funding for Title II PL 480 to \$810-million.** This law enables the U.S. to respond to food-shortage emergencies around the world, either natural or man-made.

The first three measures are shortly to go before the Senate Appropriations Foreign Operations subcommittee and have been approved by the House though at somewhat lower levels. OFDA funding was set at \$69-million with a borrowing limit of \$50-million. SADCC funding was set at \$50-million.

The Title II appropriation is under the jurisdiction of the Agriculture subcommittee which has recommended a funding level of \$763-million and was approved by the House. It, too, will now be considered by its counterpart within the Senate Appropriations Committee.

BACKGROUND

The planting season for the 1992 crop, was one of the best ever seen in Southern Africa. Rains during November and December were plentiful. Farmers planted at record levels and agricultural officials throughout the region predicted bumper crops. The rainy season in Southern Africa typically lasts from late October through early March, with harvests beginning in mid-April. However in January of this year, the rains stopped. The timing could not have been worse since the predominant crop, maize (corn), was just entering its tasseling phase, the time when the kernels start to form on the ears. When the rains ended prematurely, almost none of the maize had formed kernels and was therefore useless as a food crop. The best that could be done was to plough the crop under and wait until next year.

A crop failure ranging from 50 to 90 percent has now occurred. Especially hard hit is Zimbabwe. Even South Africa, long considered the supplier of last resort in region, will need to import food this year. Overall, according to the United Nations,

more than 11-million metric tons of food will need to be brought into the region. The U.N. has estimated the need for over \$830-million dollars worth of relief assistance, which would include funds for transportation and warehousing along as well as the food itself.

While the response from northern donors has been considered adequate to prevent mass starvation, the region still faces two challenges: transporting the food and providing seed for next year. The staggering amount of food aid involved represents four times the volume ever carried on Southern Africa's transportation network. South Africa itself has the best port and railway infrastructure, however, it will need much of that for its own needs. Port facilities in Mozambique and Angola are damaged by years of war. Even ports as far north as Dar-es-Salaam have been considered but will be far from adequate. Overall, the region is not prepared to handle the volume of food which is now being shipped from the north. Additionally, the U.N. believes that the impact of the drought will be so severe that the region will take several years to recover, even if the rains are good in 1992-93.

The economic structural adjustment policies--or structural adjustment programs (SAP)--of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are also increasing the severity of the drought. Over the years, nations such as Zimbabwe and Zambia have accumulated large debt to the northern financial community. In order to service this debt, the IMF typically calls for "restructuring" of national economies to enable countries to maximize exports, thereby earning the foreign exchange necessary to pay down external debt. Such restructuring often results in the reduction of health care, educational, and public works expenditures to avoid the use of precious foreign exchange. Furthermore, the IMF encourages the production of export-oriented crops, like maize, at the expense of drought-resistant crops like sorghum and millet. In other words, Southern African farmers were encouraged to plant crops which were not the most suitable for drought conditions. Finally, IMF policies discourage keeping stockpiles for use in the event of drought. In fact, Zimbabwe was told to dispose of its 1.1-million ton surplus only a few weeks before the drought was declared. To be fair, no one was predicting a drought in the rain-soaked months of November and December. Nevertheless, part of the crop shortfall must be ascribed to IMF policies which seek to maximize short-term foreign currency payback at the expense of prudent long-term planning, allowing for no contingencies such as droughts.

SAP policies traditionally hit the poor the hardest. In Zambia, for example, the price of 50-kg bag of maize meal, the basic staple for most of the population, the price has steadily risen with the removal of government subsidies. While economists argue subsidies do not benefit national economies in the long run, they do not have to feed hungry families. Too often, the IMF demands a "take it or leave it" approach to restructuring national economies with the result that those least able adapt to abrupt change the most affected.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

The Senate will deliberate the 1993 Appropriations bill in early July. First, the appropriate subcommittees will make recommendations based on the House version of the bill. The committee will, as a whole, issue a recommendation to the full Senate, which can amend the bill as it desires. After it passes the Senate, discrepancies between the Senate and House versions will be resolved by a joint committee of the two chambers. Finally, Congress will approve the bill and forward it to the President. Hence we are at the beginning of a long process.

Within the bill to be taken up in the Senate are additional appropriations for southern African drought relief to help build infrastructure so food can be delivered and seed can be purchased for next year. The fragile economies of this region need the help if they are to become stable and start to grow.

1. Write or call the chairs of the relevant Senate Appropriations Committee Subcommittees:

Agriculture:

Quentin N. Burdick, Chairman, SH-511 Hart Senate Office Bldg./Thad Cochran, Ranking, SR-326 Russell Senate Office Bldg.

Foreign Operations:

Patrick J. Leahy, Chairman, SR-433 Russell Senate Office Bldg./Robert W. Kasten, Jr., Ranking, SH-110 Hart Senate Office Bldg. Washington, DC 20510

2. When the measure reaches the Senate Floor, write or call your Senators.

3. Organize a letter-writing campaign in your community and organize visits to the district offices of your Senators when the Appropriations bill reaches the Senate floor. Call the Washington Office on Africa for more information.

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Writing Letters to Members of Congress

Many people feel intimidated about writing a letter to their representative and senators, or wonder if one letter can make a difference. Yet letters are easy to write and are important in guiding our elected leaders as they make decisions.

In congressional offices, your opinions will usually receive consideration proportionate to the personal attention you have given them. A personal letter as opposed to a preprinted postcard or a form letter will draw greater attention. A personal letter shows that you care enough to have thought about the issue and have taken the time to write.

When you and others write letters about southern Africa, you will be adding your voices to many others who are calling for peace, social justice and an end to hunger and misery in that region.

Congressman Kweisi Mfume (D-MD) has introduced a non-binding resolution, H.R. 126, on South Africa sanctions that WOA urges you to support. The resolution urges the President to maintain sanctions against South Africa until the provisions of the 1986 sanctions law have been met and progress toward a

nonracial democracy is ir-

reversible. The resolution also calls on the South African government to:

- repeal all racial legislation that maintains apartheid;
- terminate the policy of detention without trial;
- cease all executions of political prisoners;
- grant all exiles the opportunity to return home;

and urges President Bush, through the Secretary of State, to:

- investigate the role of the South African government in township violence.

LETTER WRITING TIPS *

BE CONCISE. Express clearly and briefly what action you would like. One or two paragraphs should be enough.

REQUEST SPECIFIC ACTION. Ask your Representative and Senators to work to pass House Resolution 126 introduced by Representative Mfume.

The Senate has not introduced similar legislation. Write your Senator, ask him to sponsor a bill similar to H.R. 126.

If your Members of Congress have already cosponsored the legislation, thank them and encourage their active support of it. Be supportive of your Members of Congress. If possible thank them for support on southern Africa issues.

EXPLAIN WHY THIS LEGISLATION IS IMPORTANT. Such an explanation may include that while change has been significant in South Africa, repressive laws remain on the books, all political prisoners have not been released and South African exiles have not been issued amnesty to return home. Rather than lift or modify sanctions now the U.S. should maintain the current law.

Your Address Here

Date

Representative _____
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Rep. _____:

Please cosponsor H.R. 126, introduced by Representative Kweisi Mfume (D-MD), which urges President Bush not to ease or lift sanctions against the government of South Africa.

Change has come to South Africa, but apartheid still remains firmly in place. The de Klerk government continues to show a deep-seated unwillingness to address key political issues that are pre-conditions to negotiations. The release of political prisoners and ending violence in which both the police and Inkatha have been implicated are two of the most important issues.

U.S. sanctions remain a vital pressure on the regime to continue the process toward the establishment of a nonracial democracy.

Sincerely,

Your signature