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DEVELOPMENT

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Ms Ana Gomes MEP
European Parliament
Rue Wiertz 60
1047 Brussels

Dear Ms Gomes,

Thank you for your letter dated 4 July 2014 regarding the Angolan authorities' decision to revoke the work permit and consequently the visa of Ms Maria Concetta Tirzi, coordinator of the European Development Fund (EDF) financed programme PAANE (Program to support Non State Actors).

The EU Delegation was made aware about the Angolan authorities' intention to expel (as persona non grata) Ms Tirzi at the end of April 2014. Since then, the EU Delegation has followed the issue closely, keeping in mind the best interest of Ms Tirzi and the PAANE programme. Numerous actions were undertaken with the Angolan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Planning to request further explanation and avoid irreversible decisions being taken.

At the explicit request of Angolan interlocutors and to preserve Ms Tirzi's position as coordinator of the PAANE programme, it was considered desirable to keep these discussions discreet. At the time, the Delegation received indications that the authorities might avoid an expulsion and were considering alternative solutions that would preserve Ms Tirzi's status and the continuation of the project. The meeting of the PAANE Steering Committee took place on 8 May in a constructive atmosphere in the presence of the Deputy National Authorising Officer and Ms Tirzi.

From the beginning, the EU Delegation has spared no effort to seek full clarification about the motifs or allegations that led to this decision. The Head of the EU Delegation in Luanda has, on several occasions, formally requested a meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Planning (National Authorising Officer for EDF funds). He expressed his concern over the situation and requested transparency and an explanation of the decision taken by the Angolan authorities to expel Ms Tirzi. Taking into account that Ms Tirzi's situation is also a consular matter, the Italian Ambassador in Luanda has been associated with these efforts. In Brussels, EEAS services have also been in contact with the Angolan embassy.

While not yet receiving an adequate explanation for the cancellation of Ms Tirzi's work permit, which we continue to seek, the EU has received reassurance that neither the PAANE project nor EU cooperation in general are targeted by this decision. Like you, we consider this project very important for its action in support of political space, democratisation and the role of civil society in Angola. These have been important areas of cooperation with Angola until now and are included in our programme under the XI EDF.

Rest assured that our services will continue following this matter closely in order to obtain full clarity by the Angolan authorities and the continuation of the PAANE project in the best possible conditions.

Yours sincerely,

Catherine Ashton

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Andris Piebalgs