

B. POLITICAL AND SECURITY QUESTIONS

Southern Africa

1. Policies of Apartheid of the Government of South Africa

At each session of the United Nations General Assembly there is a debate on the policies of apartheid of the Government of South Africa. Canada has consistently registered its rejection of the policy of apartheid which denies to the non-white majority of South Africans their fundamental rights. Canada considers the situation in South Africa unique; in no other state is racial discrimination institutionalized.

Ambassador Pierre Charpentier, representative of Canada, delivered a statement to a Plenary session of the General Assembly on November 21, 1977.

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Once again we are debating the question of apartheid in this Assembly. It seems that each year the debate takes place against the background of some new outrage in South Africa - Sharpeville, Soweto, and this time the death in police custody of Stephen Biko, the serious new wave of repression against legitimate dissent which began on October 19, and the arrests of 626 Africans including 198 children on November 10. In the face of this roll-call of tragic events, it is important to reflect soberly on the reasons why the General Assembly has had on its agenda constantly since 1948 the question of the policy of apartheid of South Africa.

The Charter of the United Nations, to which South Africa is a signatory, and to whose terms it is bound under international law, defines the promotion and encouragement of respect for human rights and for fundamental freedom for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion as one of the purposes of this organization. Moreover, it is an accepted fact of international law that the treatment of individuals within a country, when patterns of gross violation of human rights develop, ceases to be a matter of purely domestic concern.

In this general context, I would note Canada has actively supported all efforts within the United Nations Human Rights Commission and elsewhere to obtain investigations into situations where a pattern of abuse is evident and where international attention might result in improvement. As for the specific item before us, there is no doubt in our minds that it is appropriate and important for the United Nations to focus on the apartheid policy of South Africa.