

Mr. President, Secretary-General, Colleagues, Distinguished Guests:

Thank you President Kaunda. You have set the stage for our meeting here in Lusaka with, as always, a clear and stirring statement of the moral imperatives which must guide and drive our efforts. I am extremely pleased that we are here in Lusaka, in Southern Africa. It is a particularly appropriate location given your constant leadership along with that of the leaders of the other front line states on the questions with which this committee is charged. Thank you for your kind hospitality.

The Commonwealth Foreign Ministers Committee has a clear mandate from the Vancouver Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting to provide impetus and guidance in furthering the objectives of the Okanagan Statement on Southern Africa and Programme of Action. This is a serious responsibility.

The overall conditions in South Africa remain as before. A minority of the population pretends to operate a representative democratic political system while blatantly denying political rights to the overwhelming majority of the population. That double standard is based on race and is totally repugnant. Racial discrimination which is codified in law is absolutely intolerable to people who believe in freedom.

While the system of apartheid remains intact, the Government of South Africa has stopped trying to justify apartheid, either to South Africans or the rest of the world. Instead it has tried to pretend that apartheid no longer exists. But the majority of the population is still without political rights, the Government of South Africa continues to press the fiction that large numbers of South Africans are not South Africans, controls on where people can live remain, and gross social and economic inequities dominate the realities of daily life.

Social and political unrest are the natural result of apartheid and the Government of South Africa has responded with systematic repression. Instead of negotiating with those who seek change, the government jails them. That cannot continue. Nineteen months ago the Eminent Persons Group warned that "there could be little doubt that the alternative to a negotiated solution would be appalling chaos, bloodshed and destruction". The issue is not whether change will come, but when, and how, and at what cost in additional suffering.