

With the end of the debate on the Libyan incident on January 11, attention was once again focused on Namibia. Debated at length was the direction to be given to the Secretary General in preparing his report on the implementation of UNSC 435. The Permanent Five demonstrated uncommon solidarity in their quest to seek reductions in the costs of the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) which was to implement UNSC 435. They argued that the original budget for UNTAG had been inflated and did not reflect recent developments in southwestern Africa such as the Tripartite Agreement which had improved the climate for the successful implementation of the plan. In contrast, the NAM, FLS, SWAPO and African member states sought to maintain and even augment the size of UNTAG to counter increases in the police and para-military forces in South Africa since 1978.

Canada acknowledged that the high costs of the exercise could strain the UN's resources, already burdened by the demands of new peacekeeping operations, and possibly threaten the UN's ability to respond to future peacekeeping requests. Nevertheless, we maintained that priority had to be given to the effectiveness of the operation at whatever cost. In an effort to offset the growing rigidity of the negotiating positions of the Permanent Five and the FLS and NAM, Canada sought to provide language that would meet the concerns of both parties and end the deadlock. Finally, on January 16th, Resolution 629 calling upon the Secretary General to prepare his report on the implementation of UNSC 435 was adopted by consensus.

The Secretary General presented his 22 page report (S/20412) on the implementation of UNSC 435 on January 23rd. It recommended a number of changes to the original plan, including increases in the size of the police force (from 360 to 500) and military observers (from 200-300). The most controversial change was the consolidation and streamlining of UNTAG operations to allow a reduction in the number of infantry battalions from seven to three. The Secretary General explained that the actual reduction in the number of infantry personnel was less than would at first appear since the three battalions would be larger than those envisaged in 1978 and would have a higher ratio of operational troops to headquarters and administrative staff. He also noted that the original total of 7,500 military personnel would remain the upper limit with reserve battalions to be deployed if deemed necessary.

Representatives of the NAM, FLS and SWAPO raised a number of concerns with the report and Canada sought further clarification from the Secretariat. For example, we expressed our concern with the decision to fund UNHCR activities separately, in view of their central importance to the success of the plan. (Canada subsequently provided a donation of 2 million dollars to UNHCR for this program). We also encouraged the Secretary General to provide assurances on the size and tasks of UNTAG and on his