

By DENNIS PASSA

CANBERRA (CP) - EIGHT COMMONWEALTH FOREIGN MINISTERS AGREED TUESDAY TO ASK BANKS TO PUT PRESSURE ON SOUTH AFRICA BY IMPOSING TOUGH REPAYMENT TERMS ON THE BILLIONS OF DOLLARS THE COUNTRY OWES THEM.

THE MINISTERS SAID BANKS SHOULD EXERT AS MUCH PRESSURE AS POSSIBLE WITHOUT MAKING SOUTH AFRICA DEFAULT ON ITS LOANS. THE PROPOSALS WERE MADE IN LIGHT OF SOUTH AFRICA'S NEED TO RESCHEDULE ITS FOREIGN DEBT BY JUNE 1990.

THE COMMONWEALTH COMMITTEE OF FOREIGN MINISTERS ON SOUTHERN AFRICA DISCUSSED THE POSSIBLE MEASURES AS PART OF AN ATTEMPT TO FORCE PRETORIA TO END APARTHEID.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER JOE CLARK; CHAIRMAN OF THE MEETING; SAID THE COMMONWEALTH WILL PROPOSE MEETINGS WITH SENIOR OFFICIALS OF THE BANKS INVOLVED IN RESCHEDULING THE DEBT.

"THE WORLD KNOWS THAT THE RESCHEDULING QUESTION IS URGENT," CLARK TOLD REPORTERS. "WE THINK THAT IT'S POSSIBLE FOR SOME OF OUR PEOPLE TO GET IN TOUCH WITH BANKS IN THE UNITED STATES AND EUROPE SO THAT PERHAPS WE CAN HAVE SOME EFFECT ON THESE FINANCIAL LINKS."

THE MINISTERS ALSO SAID BANKS SHOULD IMPOSE THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE INTEREST RATES AND NOT ALLOW SOUTH AFRICA TO EXTEND DEBT REPAYMENT OVER 10 YEARS.

THE MINISTERS ALSO SAID THEY WOULD LOBBY GOVERNMENTS TO STOP GRANTING CREDIT TO SOUTH AFRICA FOR TRADE DEALS; WHICH THEY SAID CUSHIONED PRETORIA'S BALANCE OF PAYMENTS.

DETAILS SOUGHT

BANKS SHOULD ALSO DEMAND FROM BORROWING COMPANIES OUTSIDE SOUTH AFRICA THE DETAILS OF ANY SOUTH AFRICAN OWNERSHIP LINKS AND INSIST THAT THE LOAN NOT BE USED TO CIRCUMVENT SANCTIONS.

THE MINISTERS ALSO AGREED TO CONSIDER AN INDEPENDENT REPORT THAT SUGGESTS IMPOSING MORE SANCTIONS AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA.

THE SCOPE AND TIMING OF ECONOMIC SANCTIONS DOMINATED THE MEETINGS; AND THERE WERE DIFFERING VIEWS ON WHETHER INTENSIFYING SANCTIONS MEANS THERE SHOULD BE NEW ONES.

SPEAKING AS CANADA'S REPRESENTATIVE; CLARK SAID HE COULD NOT FORESEE NEW CANADIAN TRADE SANCTIONS "IN THE SHORT TERM" AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA. BUT HE ALSO SAID "IT'S ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL TO KEEP SANCTIONS IN PLACE UNTIL REAL REFORM HAPPENS."

NIGERIAN FOREIGN MINISTER MAJ.-GEN. IKE NWACHUKWU TOLD REPORTERS; "I SEE THAT WE NEED TO HAVE NEW SANCTIONS IN ORDER TO CONTINUE TO SHOW SOUTH AFRICA THAT WE MEAN BUSINESS."

'NO CONFUSION'

BUT CLARK SAID THERE WAS NO CONFUSION ON THE TERMINOLOGY; AND ANY NEW TRADE SANCTIONS WOULD FIRST HAVE TO BE DISCUSSED AT THE COMMONWEALTH SUMMIT IN OCTOBER IN MALAYSIA.

HE SAID "WE ARE BETTER ADVISED AT THIS POINT IN TIME TO SEEK BROADER ADHERENCE IN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO SANCTIONS THAT ARE ALREADY IN PLACE IN THE COMMONWEALTH."

THE INDEPENDENT REPORT SAYS THE CURRENT SANCTIONS HAVE ONLY PARTIALLY SUCCEEDED; AND THEY ARE NOT ENOUGH TO MAINTAIN PRESSURE ON SOUTH AFRICA. IT SAYS MORE SANCTIONS SHOULD BE IMPOSED.

THE REPORT SAYS THAT FIVE OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS SHOULD BE ADOPTED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. THEY INCLUDE A BAN ON IMPORTING ALL SOUTH AFRICAN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS; ALL NON-STRATEGIC SOUTH AFRICAN MINERALS; INCLUDING COAL; IRON ORE AND URANIUM; AND ALL SOUTH AFRICAN MANUFACTURED GOODS.

BUT SOUTH AFRICA URGED THE MINISTERS TO REJECT THE REPORT. IN A LETTER TO CLARK RELEASED ON TUESDAY; FOREIGN MINISTER PIK BOTHA SAID SURVEYS HAVE SHOWN THAT MOST BLACK SOUTH AFRICANS REJECT ECONOMIC SANCTIONS AS A POLITICAL TOOL.

SOUTH AFRICA'S CURRENT RESCHEDULING AGREEMENT WAS INITIALLED WITH FOREIGN CREDITOR BANKS IN 1987. IT REQUIRES FULL REPAYMENT ON LONG-TERM LOANS BUT ONLY TOKEN PAYMENTS ON SHORT-TERM DEBT; WHICH WAS FROZEN UNDER A 1985 MORATORIUM.

ASIDE FROM CLARK; THE FOREIGN MINISTERS OF AUSTRALIA; GUYANA; INDIA; NIGERIA; TANZANIA; ZAMBIA AND ZIMBABWE ARE ATTENDING THE THREE-DAY MEETING THAT ENDS TODAY.