

CANADA AND THE COMMONWEALTH RESPONSE TO APARTHEID

Canada has played a prominent role during the past five years in strengthening the position of the Commonwealth and the West against apartheid. Few Western countries have moved as far on sanctions. Equally, few countries offer as high a level of aid to the victims and opponents of apartheid. Our list of voluntary as well as mandatory sanctions, numbering over 30, touches on all aspects of our relations with South Africa. They have formed the genesis for many, if not most, of the Commonwealth and UN sanctions. With the exception of the Nordic countries, the Commonwealth sanctions represent the most extensive and meaningful package of measures instituted by any country, institution or geographical region.

Prompted by Canada, the Commonwealth introduced a program to counter apartheid in 1985 at the Nassau Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). Commonwealth Heads, excepting Britain, expressed the belief that economic and other sanctions are an effective means of pressuring South Africa to change and must remain an essential part of the international community's response to apartheid. As described below, the Commonwealth, during the subsequent five years, added greatly to the 1985 sanctions.

NASSAU, OCTOBER 1985

Against the backdrop of political violence in South Africa, concerted Commonwealth action was first taken during the Nassau CHOGM. The Commonwealth Accord on Southern Africa, which the CHOGM adopted, introduced the first Commonwealth sanctions, including a tightening of the arms embargo, an end to government support for trade activities, a voluntary ban on the sale of Krugerrands and a voluntary ban on new loans to the Government of South Africa and its agencies. The Nassau Accord also provided for the establishment of the Commonwealth Group of Eminent Persons (EPG).

Canadian Response:

In addition to these sanctions, Canada also launched a significant program of bilateral assistance for victims and opponents of apartheid. Additional Canadian sanctions, introduced in July 1985, included a ban on air links, and restrictions on official contacts with South African Government officials.

LONDON, AUGUST 1986

Nassau was followed by a mini-CHOGM held in London. At this meeting, with the exception of the United Kingdom, all governments present (Canada, Australia, Bahamas, India, Zambia