

areas which demanded further study on our part and further consultations with various parties. Certain of the provisions required clarification or improvement in drafting. This process of clarification was an extremely complicated one, and required numerous exchanges between our capitals, with the principal parties through embassies, with some African states, and with the Secretary General. Our proposals were finalized at the end of March and were presented to the interested parties on March 29 and 30. They were circulated as Document S/12636 of the Security Council on April 10.

Mr. President, I have taken the time to describe this process in order that all should understand the measure of intense diplomatic activity that has been involved in this consultation process. We wish to pay tribute to the seriousness and conscientiousness of the participation and the constructive attitude which has emerged on the part of all with whom we have dealt. Whatever their initial hesitations, they have, for the sake of Namibia's future, suspended to a degree their suspicions and have sought to identify, in practical terms, their concerns and the means by which those concerns might be met while taking account of, though not necessarily accepting, those of others.

In terms of substance, initially each of the parties was preoccupied by the conflicting legal and political positions on this issue. At the outset of the initiative the five were only too well aware that, as it was these contradictory legal positions which had for more than 30 years impeded any progress towards the resolution of the Namibian situation, it was essential to neither endorse nor challenge the position of any party but rather to seek, without prejudice to that position, a practical means of implementing the provisions of Resolution 385. Our proposal, therefore, at no point takes any stand which prejudices a long-held legal or political position, rather it moves between questions of legality as the only effective way to bring about a resolution of the issue.

The positions of South Africa and SWAPO have evolved substantially since April 1977. South Africa, originally unwilling to contemplate any alternative to the Turnhalle concept, has come to accept in the context of an internationally acceptable solution far-reaching measures involving United Nations involvement in a manner as to guarantee the impartiality of the electoral process and the necessity of full arrangements to ensure that there will be no intimidation from any source during that process. In the proposals which it put forward in December 1977, South Africa acquiesced in the general concept, and in many specifics, of the approach embodied in our proposal. Up to the present time there have remained some crucial areas of disagreement, including the number and location of the residual element of the South African forces.