

## Background

### CANADA'S POLICY ON SOUTH AFRICA

#### The Issue and Its Setting

Apartheid in South Africa was a system of institutionalized racism that remains reflected in all aspects of everyday life: social, cultural, political and economic.

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, held in Vancouver in 1987, authorized the creation of the Commonwealth Committee of Foreign Ministers on Southern Africa (CFMSA). The Committee is chaired by Canada's Secretary of State for External Affairs and includes the foreign ministers of Australia, Guyana, India, Malaysia, Nigeria, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. It oversees the management of both Commonwealth sanctions against South Africa and programs to provide support for the victims of apartheid, and it provides support for the negotiation process.

In response to important steps taken by the Government of South Africa in 1990, the CFMSA met in London, in February 1991. At that meeting, the Foreign Ministers adopted a "Programmed Management Approach" to sanctions, wherein changes in the application of sanctions against South Africa would be contingent upon genuine progress toward the dismantling of apartheid, as opposed to mere statements of intent. The Committee agreed that trade, investment and financial sanctions, being the most effective measures against apartheid, should be maintained until evidence of constitutional reform was irrefutable.

The CFMSA met again in September 1991 in New Delhi and recognized that some progress had been made in South Africa. The Foreign Ministers recommended that Commonwealth Heads of Government, meeting in Harare the following month, endorse the immediate lifting of "people-to-people" sanctions and link the eventual lifting of trade and investment sanctions to progress in negotiations. Financial sanctions would remain until agreement is reached on the text of a new democratic constitution. The Foreign Ministers felt that this staged approach to the dismantling of sanctions gives credit where it is due and sustains the pressure for further change in South Africa. In the meantime, the United Nations arms embargo would be continued.

Several important steps taken by the South African government have encouraged a return to the negotiating table: the main apartheid laws were repealed; security legislation was reformed to bring it more in line with international norms; agreement was reached with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to facilitate the repatriation and reintegration of exiles; and most, though not all, political prisoners were released.