

Above all, Namibia's independence is a success story for the Namibians. They are emerging from over a century of German and South African colonialism. When given the chance to participate in free and fair elections, their enthusiasm for democracy knew no bounds. They walked great distances and waited peacefully under blazing sun in lines up to a kilometre long, in order to elect their Constituent Assembly. The turnout in that election was 97 per cent. The new Assembly, animated by a strong all-party commitment to reconciliation and cooperation, adopted unanimously in just 80 days an exemplary constitution. It provides for fully entrenched human rights, a presidency accountable to a bicameral Parliament, an independent judiciary, regular multi-party elections, and the absence of preventive detention and the death penalty. Namibians are justifiably proud of their new constitution, and they are determined to make it work in practice and not just on paper.

Lastly, Namibia's independence is a success story for South Africa, and a harbinger of hope for the future. South Africa has decolonized with dignity, and shown the world that it can be trusted to fulfill international agreements. South Africans can now look to Namibia for persuasive proof that fundamental political change can be achieved through a peaceful, negotiated and democratic process. Namibia, long a hostage to apartheid, is now leading the way for South Africa in dismantling apartheid, by showing what is possible when reason overcomes emotion and compromise replaces prejudice.

And so Africa's last colony later today takes its long-awaited and rightful place among the community of nations. We will welcome the Republic of Namibia as the 50th member of the Commonwealth and soon as the 160th member of the United Nations.

Canada is represented at the independence celebrations by my colleague, the Minister for External Relations and International Development. The delegation also includes Parliamentarians of all three parties - the Members for Waterloo, Haldimand-Norfolk and Windsor-St. Clair - who have a long standing interest in Namibia and Southern Africa.

Namibia will need the continued support of its friends. I am pleased to announce today that Canada is opening a High Commission in Windhoek.

Canada is also ending the application to Namibia of certain economic sanctions which were directed at South Africa when it was in control. The ban on new contracts for the toll-processing of Namibian uranium, is lifted with effect from March 21, 1990. I am confident that uranium can become a field of productive cooperation with Namibia and that new contracts can soon be secured. The ban on importing South African uranium remains in place and will be stringently and effectively monitored.