

In my discussions I found that South Africans appreciated the fact that Canadians -- unlike some others -- do not seek to prescribe our own constitutional system, or any other. Instead, it is our belief that a political settlement must be secured through a process of peaceful negotiations and ratified through free and fair elections. Political questions can seldom be divorced from questions of economics and the issue of Commonwealth sanctions was a matter of great interest with the people I spoke with, especially since my visit coincided with the decision by the European Community to lift its embargo on oil.

In all of my meetings, I stressed that the Commonwealth policy on sanctions linked the lifting of sanctions to real progress in the negotiations. Only when there is agreement on "appropriate transitional mechanisms which would enable all the parties to participate fully and effectively in negotiations" would we consider lifting our trade and investment sanctions.

I also emphasized that we do not want to keep our sanctions on any longer than necessary. I sincerely hope that the agreement on transition mechanisms will be achieved at the forthcoming plenary session of CODESA, scheduled to start tomorrow, and that we can then take another step in the normalization of our relations.

Because if there was one concern -- among many -- expressed while I was there, it was that the capacity of the economy to revive will depend on international investment, international trade, and only that will give life to the new democracy for the majority of South Africans.

In addition, the lifting of sanctions will not in and of itself restore economic confidence in South Africa. I go back to the question of violence for a moment.

There are many Canadian businesspeople eager to explore opportunities for trade and investment with South Africa. But political stability, most especially an end to the violence, must come before South Africa can, with the help of the outside world, begin to rebuild its economy and be in a position to really attract that outside capital, that business investment, the travel and the interchanges that are so important as well, to address the many inequities left by four decades of apartheid.

The apartheid system had made South Africa a pariah to its neighbours, even though the trade and transportation links established during the colonial period that went on for so long were very hard to break. With recent developments in South Africa, new links are being forged and we can hope for a new era of regional co-operation.