

In just six hours Namibia will become fully independent from South Africa. There has not been an independence celebration anywhere in the world for nearly six years. This event is particularly momentous as Namibia is the last colony in Africa.

Namibian independence is, in the first place, a success story for the United Nations. The UN, which for ten years previous had no new peacekeeping operations, has launched no less than five in the last two years, of which by far the largest was UNTAG, the UN Transition Assistance Group in Namibia. UNTAG was nearly stillborn last April when a tragic final outburst of fighting broke out between nationalist guerrillas and South African-controlled forces on the very day of the formal ceasefire. But reason prevailed and the transition process was accomplished without a hitch: military withdrawals and demobilizations, amnesty and repeal of apartheid legislation, repatriation of refugees and release of detainees, and finally registration of voters and the election of a Constituent Assembly in November. UN Special Representative Martti Ahtisaari and UNTAG now leave the country with the great satisfaction of having accomplished their mission - in full, on time, and within budget.

Namibian independence is also a success story for Canada. In 1977, Canada - with France, FRG, UK and the USA - took the lead in negotiating a settlement plan for Namibia that came to be universally accepted as Security Council Resolution 435. Several years of negotiations followed, with Canada centrally involved in what was called the Contact Group, to overcome obstacles to the implementation of Resolution 435 through a parallel agreement on constitutional principles and UN impartiality. The final obstacle - linkage to Cuban troop withdrawal from Angola - was resolved in the fall of 1988 through an American-mediated regional agreement.

Canada then pitched in to implement the plan it had helped to devise. We advanced 80 per cent of our UNTAG assessment of \$15 million to get the operation off to a fast start. Over 500 Canadian Forces personnel served in UNTAG in two rotations, later joined by 100 Royal Canadian Mounted Police members, 50 election supervisors from the federal and provincial electoral institutions and the national political parties, and 12 fingerprint and computer experts. The government established a diplomatic observer mission in Windhoek while our UN mission remained active in the search for solutions on the Security Council. Four Parliamentary observers went to Namibia last September for the elections, as well as a Canadian member of a Commonwealth group and a number of independent NGO observers throughout the process. Some \$3.9 million of development and humanitarian aid was provided, including \$2 million for the UN refugee repatriation. 4000 ballot boxes were supplied for the election.

Canada has invested over \$22 million to help Namibia secure its independence, and over 700 Canadians have participated and contributed personally. I know I speak for all members of the House in saying that we are very proud of, and grateful to, every one of them.