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other principal parties. The importance the five governments attached to these "proximity" talks, which eventually took place on February 11 and 12, was reflected in the participation in them by my colleagues, the foreign ministers of France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Britain, the United States of America, and myself. At the ministerial-level meetings, the Government of South Africa was represented by its Foreign Minister, Mr Botha, and SWAPO by its President, Mr Nujoma. I might add that the SWAPO delegation to those talks, for the first time, included representatives of the internal Namibian branch of SWAPO.

Apart from the talks with the principal parties, ministerial-level consultations also took place with the Secretary-General and his officials. We also held discussions with the foreign ministers of the "front-line" states present in New York — Mr Mwale of Zambia, Mr Mkapa of Tanzania, Mr Mogwe of Botswana — and with senior representatives or ambassadors of Angola, Mozambique, Nigeria, Mauritius and Gabon. Also, during this period, delegations from other Namibian parties travelled to New York and were received by officials of the five governments. The exercise was discussed with them in considerable detail and their views and concerns were presented to my colleagues and myself.

At the conclusion of the February talks, our five governments were convinced that the proposal that had been put to the parties during the talks embodied in its elements a very reasonable means of implementing Resolution 385 in a manner that took into full account the real and the perceived concerns of each, and in a manner that could bring about in the very near future a resolution of the Namibian question. There nonetheless remained certain areas that demanded further study on our part and further consultation 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.

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 that 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, each of the parties was initially preoccupied with 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 that had for more than 30 years impeded any progress towards the resolution of the Namibian situation, it was essential neither to endorse nor to challenge the position of any party

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