

I would like first to introduce the Ministers present I would like to thank General Obasanjo for coming to help us in our deliberations.

It is a great pleasure to welcome you, colleagues, officials, and a number of very special invited guests to Canada.

Prime Minister Mulroney chaired the Conference which created the Committee and has asked me to convey this personal message to you:

"In Vancouver, the Heads of Government determined that continued high level impetus was required to meet the challenges posed by the system of apartheid in South Africa. They asked you to assume this task. I know that you made a very useful beginning in Lusaka.

South Africa continues to shock us all in its disregard for equality. Its thorough and systematic violation of the fundamental principles of human rights is totally unacceptable. It is the antithesis of everything for which the Commonwealth stands.

The Government of South Africa has given further clear evidence that it has not taken the fundamental decision to abandon apartheid. It still refuses to sit down with black leaders to forge a new South Africa. Like Nelson Mandela, the majority of the population remains in a kind of prison. Pretoria is unwilling even to let church leaders deliver letters to the President calling for political freedom. In this deteriorating situation, your Committee's task is ever more urgent.

The people of South Africa are looking to the Commonwealth, through you, to combat apartheid with vigour. My commitment, and that of my Government, to maintain this vigil and to press for an end to apartheid is resolute and unqualified. I wish you success in your endeavours to bring us closer to that objective."

At Vancouver our Committee was charged with pursuing Commonwealth goals to reach into South Africa to aid the victims and opponents of apartheid, to promote dialogue, and counteract South African censorship and propaganda: we were to widen, tighten and intensify sanctions to make them more effective: we were to increase our support to South Africa's neighbours in the face of destabilization by Pretoria: and we were to press for Namibian independence.