

THE OKANAGAN STATEMENT ON SOUTHERN AFRICA AND PROGRAMME OF ACTION

We continue to recognize the situation in Southern Africa as one of the major challenges facing the world community today. We reaffirm our shared international responsibility to work together for the total eradication of apartheid and the brutalities that it continues to inflict on its victims within and in the neighbourhood of South Africa.

2. We consider that the crisis engendered in the region by apartheid has seriously deteriorated since our last meeting in Nassau. Repressive measures resulting in more suffering and loss of life have been intensified within South Africa, and the toll taken by acts of war and destruction directed against South Africa's neighbours in an attempt to sustain and defend apartheid has continued to rise. Southern Africa desperately needs regional peace and stability.

3. It is therefore our collective view that the urgency of international action against the intolerable situation that exists in Southern Africa has heightened and that as Commonwealth members we have the continuing obligation to make an effective contribution towards the ending of apartheid and relieving South Africa's neighbours of the burden of being forced to devote much of their resources to their resolute and determined efforts to defend their security and advance the cause of freedom and independence in their region. We recognize that these states are making intolerable sacrifices in a cause that concerns all countries and peoples.

4. We have reviewed developments in Southern Africa since our Nassau Meeting which produced the Accord on Southern Africa and reaffirmed our shared commitment to its objectives. We also recall the London Review Meeting in August 1986 which considered the Report of the Eminent Persons Group (EPG), 'Mission to South Africa', established under the Nassau Accord. The EPG was to initiate, in the context of a suspension of violence on all sides, a process of dialogue across lines of colour, politics, and religion, with a view to establishing a non-racial and representative government.

5. Meeting for the first time in full Session since the publication of the Report, we warmly commend the work of the EPG and agree that the EPG mission offered a real opportunity for the South African Government to initiate a negotiating process between the Government and the true representatives of the black majority, leading ultimately, to a peaceful resolution of the problem of apartheid and to a break in the cycle of violence in the region. Pretoria's rejection of the 'Negotiating Concept', submitted by the EPG, which was underlined by its brutal attacks against Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe on 19 May 1986, was nothing less than a tragedy for the region.

6. At Nassau we appealed to the authorities in Pretoria to take a number of steps in a genuine manner and as a matter of urgency if the crisis of apartheid was not to end in even greater tragedy. In spite of the Pretoria regime's increased intransigence since Nassau, we remain convinced that only through negotiations can catastrophe be averted. We are encouraged in this by the obvious yearning for peace with justice which is evident amongst South Africa's peoples of all races as was dramatically highlighted by the recent Dakar Meeting. Accordingly, we again call on the South African Government to accept the 'Negotiating Concept' of the EPG which remains as valid today as it was when