

Mr. President,

The Canadian Delegation wishes to express appreciation to the Government of Nigeria and to pay tribute to its commitment to the cause of human justice in hosting this World Conference for Action Against Apartheid. The leadership of Nigeria, the most populous state of Africa and one of its most economically powerful, is an essential element in efforts to promote racial justice in South Africa and in Southern Africa as a whole.

Apartheid is an evil abhorrent to us all. By its very nature it engenders gross violations of the rights of the great majority of South Africans. It is true that South Africa is not the only nation which employs violence against its citizens or disregards their basic human rights. There are unfortunately many others that do so. However, South Africa is in a category by itself. It is the sole state which by means of a complex body of legislation has guaranteed that the political, economic, and social possibilities of a person are determined by the colour of his skin. Apartheid, like the system of slavery eradicated more than a century ago, aims to perpetuate a high standard of living for white South Africans through an economy based on the exploitation of non-white labour. The realities of life for a black South African are cruel. He receives a salary as little as one-tenth of that received by a white countryman doing essentially the same work, he is denied the right to live in the city where he works, and often he is not allowed even to bring his family to the African township where he lives. His possibilities for advancement are severely limited by reservation of the most desirable occupations and levels of responsibility for whites, the future of his children is similarly limited by the inferior and unjust Bantu education system.

South Africa's scheme of Bantustans, allocating 13 per cent of the land to 80 per cent of the population who lose their right to South African citizenship, is a hypocrisy which has been condemned by the international community. The so-called independence of the Transkei has been rejected, as will be that of any other Bantustan.

The past two years have witnessed a blossoming of determination of the South African majority to achieve full equality. This determination, particularly among youth, to demand of their society opportunities no less than those available to any other citizen, cannot be suppressed. It will continue to grow, and if full-scale racial war is to be avoided, the Government of South Africa must begin now, in co-operation with all its citizens, to restructure South African society. It is a formidable task but one which must be achieved before bitterness and disillusionment so deepen as to poison the well of hope for future racial harmony.