

Mr. President,

I cannot fail to take note of the wide range of political confrontation and open warfare that so lamentably haunts this planet from Asia, to Central America to the Middle East. We will have ample opportunity to approach these issues as this Assembly goes about its business. In my view, however, South Africa presents a situation which challenges the world community like no other. It is the most striking example today of what can happen to a country when human rights are systematically violated and abused. It is not the only country where discrimination takes place on the basis of race; much less is it the only country to deny the great majority of citizens access to the political process.

But it is the only country where racial discrimination is a first principle of state policy. Human rights violations are written into the Constitution, and the majority are denied their political rights because of the colour of their skin. We are all cast down by the lives lost and the people injured, by the repressive measures undertaken by the authorities and by the harsh and callous pressure applied to those who campaign against Apartheid.

The pity and shame is that this rich country of enormous human and natural potential could contribute so much to the continent of which it is part. Instead, its unconscionable violation of fundamental human rights does not stop at its borders.

But the South African monolith has been shaken. Demonstrations, strikes, and acts of resistance against the regime are widespread. Economics have proven to be an engine of change. A wave of disinvestment has taken place and the exchange rate on the Rand has dropped significantly.

The message in all this is clear: 40 years after the U.N. Charter came into existence and 35 years after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was promulgated, change must come to South Africa, apartheid must be dismantled. Measures to make all South Africans equal within their state must be pursued to the end.

Nor can we ignore Namibia. Not only does South Africa hold this territory in gross violation of United Nations wishes and international law, and use it as a springboard for attack on its neighbours, it perpetuates its oppressive practices in that emergent land. Such contempt and continued denial of justice cannot be tolerated by the international community. The community of nations must continue to pressure South Africa to change its offensive policies.