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RHODESIA

Text of Statement in Explanation of Vote on Question of Rhodesia to be delivered in the Fourth Committee by the Canadian Representative, Mr. Gordon Cox, on Monday, November 1, 1965

Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the Canadian Delegation I would like to comment on the resolution before us in order to make a brief explanation of our vote on it.

I should first emphasize the very deep and anxious concern about the situation in Rhodesia which the Canadian Government and people share with virtually all members of the United Nations. Canada has made its attitude on this question very clear in this Committee and in the General Assembly. We have also made it very clear directly to the Rhodesian Government. In a message delivered to Mr. Smith earlier this month the Prime Minister of Canada, the Right Honourable L. B. Pearson, stated and I quote, "The Commonwealth Heads of Government have twice declared that they were irrevocably opposed to any unilateral declaration of independence by the Rhodesian Government, an action which can only be considered by them as illegal. I share sincerely the views held by other Commonwealth leaders that independence for Rhodesia should only be recognized if based on the principle of majority rule. Any other course will inevitably have consequences which can only be very unhappy for your country. You should know that Canada would join other members of the Commonwealth in refusing to recognize a unilateral declaration of independence and would also join in certain practical measures that would inevitably follow."

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We are, however, unable to support the resolution before us for two related reasons. The first relates to timing. We stated before and we still consider that a resolution in these terms by the General Assembly will not serve a constructive purpose, in pursuing the objectives we all share. Important discussions on Rhodesia's future are continuing at the highest level. We consider that we must be in a position to make a responsible assessment of the positions of the Rhodesian Government, of the African nationalist leaders - indeed of the leaders of all the major groups in Rhodesia - in the light of the current developments. Nor does it seem to us appropriate or constructive for this Committee to pass a resolution calling on Britain to take various actions, some of them of a far-reaching nature, at a time when the British Prime Minister, having gone personally to the territory, is still pursuing vigorously the objective of obtaining a constitutional settlement acceptable to the people of Rhodesia as a whole.

We also find it difficult to accept a number of provisions in this resolution. In operative paragraph 1 the resolution endorses all the conclusions and recommendations contained in the reports of the Special Committee of Twenty-Four. Since my delegation is unable to accept some of these conclusions we would not be able to support this paragraph. We share the reservations which have been expressed by a number of delegations concerning the advisability of the General Assembly calling for the United Kingdom to use military force while these efforts to find a peaceful solution of the problem continue.

As regards preambular paragraph 4 and operative paragraph 13, we do not think it desirable for the General Assembly to make judgments of this kind. It is clearly set forth in the Charter that it is the responsibility of the Security Council to make such judgments. Moreover, we believe that the wording used is an overstatement of the situation.

In accordance, therefore, with the belief we have expressed in this Committee before that our actions here should be designed to have a constructive influence, and for the important reasons already mentioned in this discussion by many members of the Committee, we also regret we cannot support this resolution.