



# Statements and Speeches

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## THE FUTURE OF NAMIBIA

Statement by Stephen Lewis, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations, to the Security Council at the Fortieth Session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, November 15, 1985.

Mr. President. Thank you for the opportunity to address the Council. Canada, as a non-member, does not often speak before this body. We do so today because of the issue before the Council. This is not *pro forma* intervention: Namibia is of deep and abiding concern to us.

Since the Council last considered this question in June, the government of South Africa — alas, predictably — has continued to defy the international community. Events inside Namibia however, can give South Africa no cause for satisfaction. The illegal regime, installed without free and fair elections, has failed to gain legitimacy and has fulfilled our collective original prophecies by proving utterly ineffectual.

It could not of course be otherwise given the regime's patently unrepresentative nature. We are compelled to ask: how many times must the experience be repeated before South Africa learns the lessons of history; lessons starkly illuminated by the experience of decolonization in Africa?

Coincident with this debate, the Council has been presented with a note from the so-called "Transitional Government of National Unity", under covering letters from South African authorities, indicating a preference for an electoral system of proportional representation. Since this must be considered as the position of the South African government — begrudging though the language in which it is couched may be — it is welcome. But as always, as my colleagues from Denmark and the United Kingdom have so swiftly pointed out, South Africa encumbers every marginal step forward with the shackles of regression. In this case, we have a not-so-veiled attack on the impartiality of the Contact Group, and a re-assertion of linkage. Neither tactic is acceptable, and South Africa knows it.

In any event, there is a more immediate consideration. Now that South Africa has found an electoral system to its liking, where are the elections themselves? Why should they not now take place? What further reason could possibly justify delay? We don't ask these rhetorical questions to lend credence to an illegal regime; we ask them in order to suggest, as all countries around this table know, that every supposed advance must be measured against the duplicity which it may conceal.

When the Council considered Namibia earlier this year, it recommended a number of measures to governments to which Canada reacted with concrete steps. Our response is aimed at demonstrating the depth of Canada's opposition to South Africa's continued illegal occupation of Namibia, and at maintaining the pressure on South Africa to set a date to implement Resolution 435.

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More specifically, our Secretary of State for External Affairs announced on July 6 that Canada had decided to terminate all toll-processing of Namibian uranium imported from South Africa. This action was taken in accordance with Security Council Resolution 283, which had recommended that countries end commercial activities related to Namibia, carried out by agencies under government control. I might note that this measure was adopted notwithstanding the economic costs to Canada which could approximate \$5 million. The processing had been carried out under contracts between Eldorado Nuclear, a crown corporation, and commercial parties in third countries. We hope that those countries — and others — will also re-examine their policies in light of Resolution 283.

Canada did more. Following the adoption of Resolution 566, a ban on *Krugerrand* gold coin sales was introduced in co-operation with Canadian banks. In addition, the question of transportation was reviewed. As a result, an embargo on air transport between Canada and South Africa was instituted. It covers both cargo and passenger flights. It will end all charters, and rule out any prospect of concluding a bilateral air services agreement. We think these actions demonstrate that Canada takes the recommendations of this Council seriously.

But quite apart from such specific initiatives, we also recognize that Namibia continues to be an issue involving self-determination, regional peace and security, regional economic development, and the role of the United Nations. As we said in June, Namibia's right to independence is rooted, inextricably, in the very principles on which the UN was founded.

At the recent Commonwealth heads of government meeting in Nassau, Canada's prime minister, the Right Honourable Brian Mulroney, joined other leaders from all continents, representing 49 countries with one quarter of the world's population, in declaring grave concern over the continued delays in achieving Namibian independence. As you know, Commonwealth leaders categorically rejected South Africa's attempts to link Namibia's independence to extraneous issues. They reaffirmed resolution 435 as the only acceptable basis for an independent Namibia. Finally, they agreed that action directed against *apartheid* should be directed equally towards ensuring South Africa's compliance with the wishes of the international community on the question of Namibia.

In other words, Namibia remains front and centre for the Commonwealth, and the Commonwealth conveyed to South Africa, with unmistakable clarity, that independence is an immediate imperative. This Council, too, has a crucial role to play — the crucial role to play — in reminding South Africa that its previous commitments to Namibian independence under UN auspices must be honoured. That would best be done by a strong resolution, reinforcing measures already recommended. It should also be a unanimous resolution. This is no time to send a mixed signal to Pretoria.

The Council must continue to reject the implausible security considerations invoked by the government of South Africa. By rough calculation, it is at least 900 kilometres at the nearest point between South Africa's northern border and the northern border of Namibia. What takes place or does not take place 900 kilometres from South Africa's borders can hardly be considered a direct security threat. The linkage argument will not wash.

We have listened with interest and care to the statements delivered in this debate. The representative of Zambia spoke with quiet and persuasive eloquence of the right of Namibians to self-determination and the tragic consequences of further delay.

The Secretary-General of the South West African People's Organization, Mr. Andemba Toivo ja Toivo, made equally telling points about the nature of his people's struggle for self-determination. It was a moving experience for us to hear this reasonable man, at long last free in person, and as ever committed to the freedom of his people. Could we have foreseen his presence among us even two years ago? Are there not larger lessons to be drawn by South Africa? What might happen if South Africa also released its own political prisoners — the Mandelas and the leaders of the United Democratic Front? Might South Africa not find that they, too, are reasonable men, open to rational discussion and rational argument if dialogue is given a chance?

South Africa's continued refusal to set a date to implement the UN plan, is a wilful breach of good faith and of the assurances given to members of the Contact Group and to the UN itself. Canada, for one, has stated clearly that this behaviour will contribute to the widening gap in our bilateral relationship. As we said last June, the Contact Group may still have a role to play during the actual implementation of Resolution 435, as well as a role in bringing about an agreement to set a date to implement the UN plan. Canada, therefore, continues to be frustrated by the Contact Group's inactivity and sense of immobility. This is a situation that we might want to consider further, in co-operation with our friends from the front line states and Contact Group partners.

We expect that the resolution which emerges from this Council meeting will set the stage for renewed diplomatic efforts. Canada is ready to assist. In the meantime, we support, with full heart, the UN's unrelenting determination to achieve independence for Namibia on a just and equitable basis.

There is one other matter we would wish briefly to raise. In the face of the present military and diplomatic impasse, we must constantly remind ourselves of the aggravated plight of the Namibian people and refugees. Several days ago, Canada deposited its annual contribution to the UN Fund for Namibia. We don't wish to be presumptuous, but other countries, especially non-contributors or those whose contributions are little more than token, might wish to reconsider their funding. This is a time when social, educational, economic and humanitarian assistance are acutely necessary, and for the future prospects of the country, absolutely indispensable.

Unanimity of action should be our goal. Unanimity will keep the issue at the forefront of the international agenda and send, yet again, but with mounting force, a strong, clear message to South Africa. Each of us must do our part to maintain and to intensify the pressure. The Toivos of Namibia will one day triumph — of that there is no question. It is simply — if painfully — a matter of time. History will be left to calculate the consequences for South Africa of its obdurate and inconscionable delays.