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STATEMENT BY
AMBASSADOR GÉRARD PELLETIER,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF CANADA TO THE UNITED NATIONS,
ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF CANADA, FRANCE,
THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY, THE UNITED KINGDOM,
AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
IN THE PLENARY DEBATE OF THE 36TH SESSION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
NEW YORK
NOVEMBER 20, 1981

Mr. President,

I have the honour today to speak on behalf of the five member governments of the Contact Group -- Canada, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America -- which have been working together during the past four years in an attempt to negotiate an internationally recognized settlement to the Namibian problem.

Mr. President, the independence of Namibia is one of the objectives that every government represented in this Assembly supports. Not one of our number would attempt to defend the legitimacy of South Africa's occupation of Namibia, and all of us subscribe to the proposition that Namibia should, at the earliest possible moment, join the ranks of the independent nations of the world. There are, however, differences of opinion as to how this goal should be reached. The five governments of the Contact Group are convinced that only a negotiated settlement accepted by the people of Namibia, the government of South Africa, the governments of the front-line states and, ultimately, the United Nations can bring the independence for Namibia that we all so ardently desire. As an alternative to a negotiated settlement, the Five see only an open-ended continuation of a war with all of the suffering this would entail.

Mr. President, as I am sure you and the representatives here assembled know, the foreign ministers of the Five met in New York on the 24th of September this year and decided to relaunch their negotiations on Namibia, which had been in suspense since the break-up of the Geneva Conference last January. Our ministers made this decision on the basis of extensive discussions that had been under way for six months between the Five, the front-line states, SWAPO, and the OAU mission led by Foreign Minister Ouko of Kenya. The present proposal of the Contact Group calls for the completion of three phases of negotiation which we hope will lead to the beginning of the implementation of Security Council Resolution 435 in 1982.

The first phase of this effort will be for the parties concerned to commit themselves to a set of constitutional principles designed to build the confidence of the parties concerned in the election process and in the future of an independent Namibia. Representatives of the Contact Group have just completed a mission made for the purpose of presenting these constitutional principles and discussing them with the parties concerned. The group visited Nigeria; Angola, where they met with both the Angolan government and SWAPO; South Africa; Windhoek, where they met with the internal Namibian parties; and then the capitals of Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Zambia and Tanzania. The delegation of the Five then travelled to Kenya to brief President Moi, the current

Chairman of the OAU, on the mission. I would stress, Mr. President, that in presenting these constitutional principles, the Contact Group has not attempted to write a constitution for Namibia. That is the task of the Namibian Constituent Assembly which, under the terms of Security Council Resolution 435, will be elected for that purpose. The document that the Five presented in Africa suggests guidelines for the Constituent Assembly and sets forth certain broad principles to be reflected in the constitution.

In the second phase, the specific arrangements for the United Nations' Transitional Assistance Group will have to be agreed upon. We intend also to make suggestions to help ensure that the transition would be conducted in a fair and impartial manner.

The third phase of the process, Mr. President, would begin with a public commitment by all of the parties concerned to a date for the beginning of the implementation of 435.

We are not yet in a position, Mr. President, to report on the reactions of all of the parties to the first phase proposals of the Contact Group. We can say, however, that the initial response has been encouraging. The Five are well aware that there are still difficult issues left to resolve in the second phase. But we are convinced that with goodwill on all sides, with patience, forbearance, and a spirit of constructive commitment, there is every reason to hope the negotiations can be carried through to a successful conclusion.

Another approach, and one which we believe offers no contribution in moving Namibia closer to independence, is embodied in the six-part resolution that has been drafted by the Council for Namibia. This document is vituperative in tone, unjust and inaccurate in its accusations, wholly unrealistic in its demands and unhelpful in the search for a negotiated settlement. Far from supporting or even recognizing the efforts of the Contact Group to establish conditions which will make possible the implementation of Resolution 435 in 1982, the Council's draft only takes notice of the present negotiations in paragraph (A) (31) in which it rejects what it calls the "latest manoeuvres by certain members of the Contact Group" to undermine 435. We can only view this misinterpretation of our efforts as ill-informed.

This draft resolution would have the General Assembly condemn two of the Contact-Group states for "collusion" with South Africa in the nuclear field. This charge is made in apparent ignorance of the true state of affairs as set forth in U.N. Document A/35/402 of this year, entitled "South Africa's Plan and Capability in the Nuclear Field". I would commend to the authors of the draft a careful study of that document.

In its paragraphs calling for increased financial support for SWAPO, the Council's resolution can only raise further accusations as to the ability of the United Nations to administer the transition process in an impartial manner.

The draft resolution calls for the breaking off of all contacts with South Africa, the consequence of which would be the end of negotiations for the implementation of Security Council Resolution 435. Having thus rejected the path of peaceful negotiations, the resolution would have the General Assembly support "the armed struggle of the Namibian people" which we consider to be the least likely avenue toward Namibian independence.

It is the Contact Group's judgement that this resolution, if adopted, would not contribute to the negotiations now under way and may be a hindrance to the achievement of the objective of those negotiations: the independence of Namibia.

In order ourselves not to compromise our role as negotiators we shall, as in the past, abstain when this resolution comes to a vote. We should emphasize that this abstention is purely procedural and does not imply any position on the merits of the resolution.

In order to help maintain the atmosphere of mutual respect necessary to the conduct of the Contact Group negotiations, the Five appeal to all parties, Mr. President, to refrain from all actions which could make the implementation of Security Council Resolution 435 more difficult to achieve.

Thank you, Mr. President.