

Statement

Secretary of
State for
External Affairs



Déclaration

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Affaires
extérieures

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AS DELIVERED

NOTES FOR A STATEMENT BY

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,

THE HONOURABLE BARBARA McDOUGALL,

AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE

COMMITTEE OF COMMONWEALTH FOREIGN MINISTERS

ON SOUTHERN AFRICA

**NEW DELHI, India
September 13, 1991**

Affaires extérieures et
Commerce extérieur Canada
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Canada

It is a great pleasure to meet here in New Delhi, and also singularly appropriate. Delhi is a city at once ancient and modern, a true meeting place of cultures from both East and West. And India's contribution to justice in South Africa goes back a long way indeed. Over 40 years ago India led the way in taking concrete measures against apartheid. Nearly 80 years ago the African National Congress (ANC) acknowledged at its creation the example of the Indian National Congress. And it was a young lawyer visiting from India, thrown off a South African train one night in 1893, who refused to accept things as they were and went on to change both countries forever -- that man was Mahatma Gandhi.

This meeting in Delhi also offers us an occasion to reflect on the Commonwealth's role in the past decade in encouraging change in South Africa. It was the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Delhi in 1983 which declared that only the establishment of democratic rule can lead to a just and lasting solution in South Africa.

Two years later, in Nassau, our Heads of Government set out a detailed agenda for international action towards this objective. These were the first significant steps to galvanize international concern and transform it into constant and persuasive pressure. On this issue, the Commonwealth led and the rest of the world followed.

The reason Commonwealth sanctions policy was so influential and effective was because its purpose from the very beginning was clear and constant. As our Heads of Government put it in Kuala Lumpur: "The Commonwealth's role is to facilitate the opening of negotiations between the South African authorities and authentic black leaders. Our purpose is to bring Pretoria to the negotiating table and keep it there until change is irreversibly secured."

And now, at last, our collective efforts in the Commonwealth have begun to bear fruit in recent months. A new South Africa is at last in sight. Over the next two days we will be closely reviewing important recent developments. At the end of our deliberations I hope that we will emerge with an approach that will sensitively reflect the many challenges and opportunities offered by a South Africa in transition, an approach that will both give credit where it is due and sustain the pressure for further change.

In the past two years, the political environment in South Africa has been radically transformed. The African National Congress and other parties were unbanned. Nelson Mandela and other leading opponents of apartheid were released. A dialogue was initiated that led to historic agreements between the ANC and the government. The State of Emergency was ended. The South African government has abolished the legislative pillars of apartheid: the Separate Amenities Act, Group Areas Act, the Land Acts and the Population Registration Act. It has substantially reformed

its security legislation. It has freed more than a thousand political prisoners, and established a process to act on the applications for release of others. It has reached agreement with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), paving the way for the return of exiles.

Tomorrow the National Peace Accord will be signed by the three parties most involved in negotiating it and several others. We salute the efforts of its church and business sponsors to find a comprehensive package to resolve the intractable political violence, and sincerely hope they will be crowned with success. Next month the Patriotic Front conference will be held to enable the Liberation Movements to find common ground as they prepare for negotiations. And we look forward to a multi-party conference convened well before year's end, to negotiate transitional arrangements as well as principles and procedures for writing a new constitution.

When we last met in February these changes were only partly realized. That meeting, chaired by my predecessor Mr. Clark, sought to find an approach to encourage the South African government to make good on its promises. In London the Committee developed a "programmed management approach," designed to link changes in the application of sanctions not to mere statements of intent, but to the adoption of real and practical steps in the dismantling of apartheid. This historic step in the evolution of Commonwealth policy ensured that sanctions retained their relevance as an incentive to all parties in achieving a non-racial democracy in South Africa through negotiations.

Seven months later, it is apparent that this approach has been successful. It has clearly influenced the thinking of other governments as they developed their own approach to managing sanctions. Our decisions on the implementation of the sports boycott have been adopted by the International Olympic Committee, and have led to South Africa's welcome readmission to international cricket.

Our task here in Delhi is twofold. We need to determine whether sufficient progress has taken place to move ahead on our management of Commonwealth sanctions, and to define our conditions for further movement more clearly. We must also look forward to post-apartheid South Africa, and how the Commonwealth can help it to emerge. Our Heads of Government, when they meet in Harare next month, will look to us for solid recommendations and guidance at this crucial time for South Africa.

The Commonwealth has played a catalytic role in developing an international response to the challenge of apartheid. It has not only been active on the political front; it has played an indispensable role on the development front. Commonwealth countries have long been active in the education and training of South African exiles. We have provided legal assistance and

support for the families of detainees and political prisoners. We have supported the creation of independent trade unions within South Africa. Hundreds of community development projects have benefited from our aid and advice over the years. We are active in assisting non-racial sport. We have encouraged inter-racial dialogue and provided expert advice on constitutional issues. In a far-sighted initiative, Canada's John Harker and his colleagues in the Commonwealth Expert Group on Human Resource Development in a Post-Apartheid South Africa have prepared a thoughtful report on South Africa's education and training needs which deserves careful examination by Heads of Government in Harare.

A new challenge now faces the international community: to facilitate the return of political exiles to South Africa. I am proud to announce that Canada will be providing \$1.5 million to the UNHCR to help defray the costs for the return of South African exiles. The needs are changing, but our commitment to supporting the development needs of the victims of apartheid continues.

There have been important, and positive, political changes in South Africa. But for blacks in the townships, let alone in rural communities, apartheid is still alive and well. They are still denied access to hospitals and schools, awarded inferior pensions, intimidated when they try to use the legally integrated community facilities. They continue to fear and mistrust the state security forces. South Africa remains a violence-ridden society. The vast majority are still denied the vote. These issues will all have to be addressed in negotiations. But the scars of 40 years of apartheid could well take decades to heal.

Nonetheless, for the first time in decades there is good reason to hope for a peaceful transition to democratic rule in South Africa. The people have demonstrated a remarkable goodwill, and a strong commitment to reconciliation and peaceful resolution of conflict. The country is blessed with leaders of vision, whose courage and imagination will be tested in the period ahead. Flexibility and patience will be required on all sides. We and our Commonwealth partners must be prepared to do all we can, to help the people pass over the abyss of violence and chaos and build the firm foundations of their freedom and prosperity in a new South Africa.

South Africa is a country of extraordinary potential, a country that can contribute immensely to Africa and the world. South Africans need have no fear that they will be forgotten or ignored by the international community in the years to come. It was Canada's Prime Minister John Diefenbaker who said, at the Heads of Government meeting 30 years ago, that the Commonwealth would always have a lamp in the window for South Africa. As the long night of apartheid ends, that light blends with the dawn of a new day when we may finally hope to welcome South Africa back into our family of nations.