



# Statements and Speeches

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## THE SITUATION IN NAMIBIA

Speech by the Honourable Gérard Pelletier, Permanent Representative, Ambassador for the Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations, to the Security Council, New York, May 31, 1983.

Mr. President,

I am grateful to you and to the Council for giving Canada the opportunity to participate in this debate, the subject of which is of critical importance not only to the lives and future of the people of Namibia but to all in southern Africa. It is a matter of particular satisfaction to do so under your presidency of the Council in view of the long-standing co-operation between our two countries. I am confident that under your distinguished guidance the Council will reach a constructive result and will bring us closer to our goal, the freedom and independence of Namibia.

Before turning to that issue, I want to join earlier speakers in expressing dismay at the recent South African attack on targets in Mozambique. Canada condemns that attack in violation of Mozambique's sovereignty just as it condemns the recent act of violence in South Africa. Both involved loss of life and injury to innocent victims. This pattern must be broken. We know change must and will come in South Africa; we hope it comes soon and in peace. For acts of terrorism and raids across national boundaries can only lead to the heightening of tension in the region and the risk of broader conflict.

For us in this Council, these events must also underline the urgent need to end the conflict in Namibia, and to implement the UN Settlement Plan.

Mr. President, as one of the initiators and drafters of the UN Settlement Plan for Namibia in 1978, Canada deeply regrets that the Security Council is still seized of the issue five years later, and that the people of Namibia are still unable to exercise their right to self-determination. We appreciate and share the concerns of the international community which have prompted the call for this Security Council meeting.

Earlier this week, the distinguished representative of the United Kingdom, Sir John Thomson, gave a comprehensive account of the negotiating history of this issue. He outlined the special initiatives that led to the formulation of the UN Settlement Plan and Security Council Resolution 435. He spelled out the committed effort undertaken by the Contact Group following the setback at Geneva to resolve the remaining problems and to clear the way for the implementation of the UN plan. I shall not therefore deal at length with the history of the issue. Suffice it to say that the intensive efforts which have been devoted to these negotiations during the five years have resulted in a substantial body of agreement.

That body of agreement has unfortunately fallen short, till now, of what is needed to secure implementation of a plan which no one challenges in itself. As Sir John suggested, this is not, however, the

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time to falter in our commitment or our efforts. It is rather a time of persist, to build on what we have already achieved, and to succeed.

I should like, in this context, to thank the Secretary-General for his recent report which summarizes the activities of those involved in the negotiations for a settlement over the past two years. All members are well aware that when the Secretary-General took office he identified Namibia as one of his highest priorities. His frequent consultations and expressions of concern for the issue have added to the international pressure for a solution.

Recognition should also be given to the dedication shown by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Namibia, Mr. Martti Ahtisaari, and to the Secretariat as a whole. The work they have done in preparing for the civilian and military components of the UN Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) has contributed immensely to the readiness of the United Nations to undertake the task which will face it on the day of implementation.

The special contribution of the Front Line States and Nigeria also deserves recognition. They have been unceasing in their efforts and have afforded close co-operation in the negotiations aimed at the early implementation of Security Council Resolution 435. The constructive attitude of our African partners has been important throughout our latest talks.

Their co-operation enabled substantial progress to be made during the intensive consultations last summer. During those consultations, difficult issues were addressed and resolved to the satisfaction of those involved in the negotiating process in Washington and New York:

– Understandings were reached on how to ensure the fairness and impartiality of the settlement process; and on the deployment of UNTAG.

– All parties agreed to a set of principles concerning the Constituent Assembly and the Constitution for an independent Namibia. These have been published in a Security Council document.

As a result of these consultations the only issues which remain outstanding are, first, the electoral system to be employed in choosing the members of the Constituent Assembly (and the context of the decision has been defined); and, second, some technical questions related to the composition of the military component of UNTAG.

In the light of the progress made, representatives of the Front Line States, Nigeria, SWAPO (South West African People's Organization) and the Contact Group met the Secretary-General on September 24, 1982 to report on the understandings which had been reached and to indicate what remained to be done. It was common to all that no insuperable obstacles remained in the context of Resolution 435.

Over the years of this negotiation, many issues have been addressed by one side or the other. Many obstacles have been overcome through discussions involving the United Nations, the Front Line States,

SWAPO, South Africa and the Contact Group. The legitimate interests of all the parties involved in the settlement plan have been weighed and taken into account.

These efforts have been made against the background of South Africa's illegal occupation of the territory. What remains to be achieved is its acquiescence and participation in the implementation of the UN Plan.

As the Secretary-General has pointed out, South Africa has made another issue in the region — outside the mandate of the Contact Group — a condition for the implementation of Resolution 435. These two matters have a relationship only in so far as one of the parties chooses to draw them together. Canada, for its part, does not accept the concept that the resolution of one should be conditional upon the resolution of the other. It is nonetheless evident that these regional security concerns exist and pose an obstacle. We understand they are being dealt with separately in bilateral talks. We hope that they may be resolved quickly — with full respect for the sovereignty of the states concerned — and that the people of Namibia may be given the opportunity to exercise their right to self-determination.

Our regret at past delays in the implementation of Resolution 435 does little to comfort those who must still face dislocation, conflict and the denial of political and human rights in Namibia. It is against this background that I should like to make three points:

The first is that an immediate, peaceful settlement is unquestionably in the best interests of all of the people of Namibia and of the countries bordering Namibia, including South Africa. That must be our guiding consideration. There is no other factor which can have equal weight with my government or with this Council.

Second, it is not a question of whether Namibia will achieve independence. It is a question of how soon it will do so and under what conditions. Canada will continue to exert its best efforts to ensure that the transition to independence comes soon and in conditions of peace.

That brings me to my third point. The people of Namibia have suffered in recent years not only from continuing conflict but also from conditions of uncertainty and protracted drought. They will face many challenges following independence, including the momentous challenge of developing their country and bringing benefits to all of its people. My government's hope is that they may be enabled to address those challenges in the context of co-operation within the region and with the support of all the countries which have shown a lively interest in the future of Namibia.

So far as Canada is concerned, I wish to leave no doubt that we should be happy to develop measures of economic co-operation with an independent Namibia, as we have with Zimbabwe and other countries following their independence. We look forward to that opportunity and also to the prospect of stability in the region. For we believe that the establishment of an independent and fully representative government in Namibia and the end of conflict will also increase opportunities for economic co-operation throughout the region.

Finally, I would suggest to all who have followed the debate that the future we envisage will, despite the fears and suspicions which hamper progress now, strengthen peace and security in southern Africa. Those of us who have sought a peaceful, negotiated solution in Namibia will not lose interest once our objective is achieved. I would recall, in this context, that the heads of government of the Commonwealth in 1975 declared their readiness to see Namibia join their club after independence. I am certain that they would be only too happy to receive a response to that invitation from the government of a free and independent Namibia in the near future.

Bearing in mind the particular responsibility of the United Nations and the Security Council for Namibia, my government hopes this debate and the adoption of a constructive resolution will hasten the implementation of Resolution 435. The people of Namibia deserve peace, and independence. They must be allowed to choose their future at the earliest possible date.

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