

Statement

Discours

Department of
External
Affairs



Ministère des
Affaires
extérieures

89/08

SPEECH

BY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE JOE CLARK,
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,
AT THE OPENING OF THE THIRD MEETING
OF THE COMMONWEALTH COMMITTEE OF
FOREIGN MINISTERS ON SOUTHERN AFRICA

HARARE, ZIMBABWE

February 6, 1989.

Secretary of State
for
External Affairs

Secrétaire d'État
aux
Affaires extérieures

Canada

Mr. President,

Secretary-General,

Colleagues and Distinguished Guests.

Thank you President Mugabe. It is a pleasure and an honour to share the floor with such a distinguished opponent of apartheid, at the opening of this third Commonwealth Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

I would like to thank you, your Foreign Minister and the people of Zimbabwe for such gracious hospitality. I am very pleased that Harare is the site for this meeting. There are few places, more appropriate, to deliberate on the means to end apartheid or to consider the nature and the cost of South Africa's destabilization. The issue of destabilization is a focus of this meeting.

Much has happened since we last met in Toronto, some positive developments, some negative. The stark fact remains that none of the more positive developments reveals any change in South Africa's commitment to apartheid, and some of the negative developments, such as the outcome of the Delmas trial, raise serious new threats to the internal non-violent opposition to apartheid.

However, we may well be entering one of those periods which historians later will say was "seminal" in South African history. I say this, not in the expectation that Pretoria has seen any writing on the wall, but in the knowledge that the inevitability of fundamental change cannot be shut out of the minds of the white minority for very much longer, despite the powerful communication tools at the sole disposal of the regime. And despite the powerful tools of repression used by Pretoria, the movement for democracy in South Africa cannot be silenced; it can only be forced to become more creative in mobilizing people to express peaceful but resolute opposition to apartheid.

It is important to focus on South Africa's efforts to destabilize its neighbours. That happens every day, and should not be obscured by welcome developments elsewhere. There is hopeful progress in Namibia, although that change has only just begun, and will require care and vigilance at every step. It is essential to secure conditions which allow genuinely free and fair elections.

Speaking for my own country, Canada is prepared to do our part in the major international effort that is required in Namibia. Our goal is not only to guarantee free and fair election of a truly representative government, but also to help the people of Namibia meet their post-independence development needs. If we take care, an independent Namibia can mark an important step forward in Southern Africa. But there should be no illusion. That step has not yet been taken. And an independent Namibia does not mean the end of apartheid, nor the end of South Africa's attempts to disrupt its neighbours.

Zimbabwe has suffered both directly from South African aggression and just as significantly from South African pressure and interference. So have the other states of the front line. There is no reason for anyone to assume that South Africa's intentions have changed. Destabilization is a long-term process. It waxes. It wanes. It turns from one target to others. But we have to work on the assumption that it will not disappear until the system of apartheid itself is dismantled.

Yesterday, Mr. President, your Foreign Minister took me to see buildings bombed here in Harare. Earlier I visited a Zimbabwe company plant that used to import Canadian sulphur by way of Maputo, but had to change that route, because destabilization made the line no longer safe. Eighteen months ago, in Mozambique, I spoke with a Canadian doctor who had been working in a rural clinic, built to help people, which had become a target of terrorists. The destruction is one thing. The atmosphere of uncertainty, of not knowing who will be the next target, is equally destabilizing.

We will be looking at a detailed report of destabilization practices and the consequential costs incurred by the Front Line States. General Obasanjo's earlier Commonwealth-initiated report on the security needs of the Front Line States provided a very useful set of recommendations. We will be examining here how we, as Commonwealth countries, can help enhance security in this region. Many countries make substantial contributions to that process now. In September Canada announced changes in our policy which help the Front Line States, in particular Mozambique, try to cope with security threats.

It is tragic to ponder the staggering costs of apartheid and its poisonous partner of destabilization. That cost - both human and economic - is enormous. The whole of Southern Africa is full of potential. It could truly be the economic powerhouse of the entire continent. But instead of building on that potential, the white minority in South Africa allows policies that hold back the whole region, that cripple the powerhouse.

The world is looking for ways to bring supporters of apartheid to their senses. Our Committee, I believe, will continue to make a valuable contribution in the use of sanctions as pressure for change.

Here, at Harare, we will examine closely means to strengthen the United Nations arms embargo, an important United Nations sanction.

The report at Toronto on South Africa's relationship with the international financial system clearly indicated the effectiveness of financial sanctions in terms of pressure on the country's economy, which we believe can also translate into pressure for political change. In Harare, we will want to find ways of encouraging the wider adoption of the constructive recommendations agreed to at Toronto.

We will also be receiving a progress report on the experts' study on the impact of sanctions. Based on their interim report, we have already been able to make a number of specific suggestions to widen, tighten and intensify sanctions. We must be diligent in encouraging their adoption by Commonwealth members and South Africa's major trading partners. For our part, Canada has taken a number of steps since Toronto to tighten the application of our sanctions, including, for example, extending the ban on sales of high technology items to private sector end-users in South Africa. We will continue to look for effective ways to build pressure for change.

We will also seek new means to reach into South Africa and assist victims and opponents of apartheid, promote dialogue among South Africans and counter South African propaganda and censorship. Those struggling to cope with inadequate education, housing, working conditions and other day-to-day problems resulting from apartheid, deserve our support, both financial and psychological. So do those whose active, non-violent opposition to apartheid has landed them in detention. So do South African labour leaders, who are fighting to preserve what union rights they have won at much cost. Commonwealth countries must continue to provide that support.

An essential prerequisite of peaceful change in South Africa is meaningful dialogue among South Africans of all races. Just last week, lawyers from South Africa, and leaders of the ANC, met here in Harare. There must be more contact of that kind, and this Committee might help.

At the meeting in Toronto our focus was on the use of censorship in South Africa. The Commonwealth working party on this issue has now met and set assistance to the alternative press as a priority. In Canada, we have also gone a long way towards implementing the action plan on countering South African propaganda and censorship, announced at our last meeting. I am pleased that other countries are also developing national action plans.

At this meeting we will have an opportunity to hear views on the latest developments in South Africa by active opponents of apartheid. They will have much to tell us. Since Toronto, the state of emergency has continued to be used to detain without trial non-violent opponents of apartheid, about 1500 to 2000 at present, about ten percent of whom are known to be under 18 years old. Equally debilitating for the opposition is the increasing use of restriction orders which amount to a form of self-policing house arrest.

During this period the Government of South Africa continued to advance proposals for so-called "power-sharing" which are utterly unacceptable to the South African majority. In the October 26 municipal elections, the overwhelming majority of blacks were disenfranchised and most of the rest simply stayed away. That experience left no doubt that black South Africans will not be told who their real leaders are. Only genuine leaders can negotiate on behalf of their people.

The system of apartheid remains fundamentally unchanged. And while the political situation appears more uncertain than it has been for some time, there is simply no evidence to suggest that the white South Africans supporting the Government have yet accepted the reality that they cannot continue to deny the most fundamental rights to the majority of their countrymen.

So the international community must continue to put pressure on Pretoria through sanctions and other means. It must also encourage where possible efforts aimed at convincing supporters of apartheid that there is a better way, a more just way than adherence to an immoral and debilitating system of racial discrimination.

Here at Harare the Committee has reached the midpoint of our work. We will be focussing more than ever on the run-up to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Kuala Lumpur. We have helped keep the issue before the public and have set in train several initiatives. There is much to be done and we are looking forward to our exchanges over the next three days to move the process forward substantially on a wide range of issues.

We will be looking at ways to help the people of Southern Africa achieve their true potential, a potential that has for too long been stymied by racial discrimination and repression in South Africa and destabilization of the rest of the region. A continuation of the status quo can only lead to greater misery and violence. Peaceful but fundamental change in South Africa will unleash a tremendous potential for good. It is a challenge and an opportunity that must be grasped.