

The Permanent Mission of Canada  
to the United Nations



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auprès des Nations Unies

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EXPLANATION OF VOTE

ITEM 28: APARTHEID

delivered by

Ambassador Philippe Kirsch, Q.C.

Deputy Permanent Representative of Canada

NOVEMBER 22, 1989

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Mr. President,

There can be no doubt about Canada's unrelenting opposition to apartheid - what Prime Minister Mulroney has called a massive and institutionalized violation of human rights. Canada has fought against apartheid because we know it is wrong. We also believe that it is an issue where our joining forces with others through the United Nations and the Commonwealth has made a significant difference. These shared efforts have brought us to the point where, with continued steady pressure, we could soon hope to see apartheid in retreat. This vision is now within our reach, but it is not yet within our grasp.

Mr. President,

On behalf of the Canadian delegation, I will explain how Canada will vote on the twelve draft resolutions before us. Some of these resolutions are improved, as was also the case last year, while others show evidence of new and constructive thinking. I hope this welcome trend continues as we approach the Special Session: it enables Canada and others to respond more positively, and brings our overall message closer to the strength of unanimity.

In draft resolution L. 26 on solidarity with the liberation struggle, there is much that Canada can support. Further releases of political prisoners, lifting restrictions on organizations and individuals, and ending the state of emergency are goals we have long pressed for and would help to create a climate for genuine negotiations. Our assistance to the people of South Africa is substantial, growing and takes many forms. Our assistance to the Front Line States and SADCC countries who suffer from destabilization is larger still. However, even as we look to the launching of a real dialogue on fundamental change, we should stress that violence from any quarter makes this hope more distant, not closer. We cannot condone the use of violence, whether to maintain apartheid or to oppose it, and thus Canada cannot support language which seeks to justify armed struggle. At the same time we have noted and welcomed the newly expressed preference for peaceful means.

Mr. President,

Canada this year will move to an abstention on draft resolution L.28 dealing with comprehensive and mandatory sanctions. We agree that sanctions work and that Pretoria is beginning to feel their effect. We have

ourselves implemented many important sanctions, and we agree that pressure should be maintained at this time. We also agree that mandatory sanctions have a role to play, notably the vital arms embargo, and we could support efforts to make mandatory some of the other widely applied sanctions. We recognize that South Africa's actions have constituted a threat to regional peace and security in the past.

Nonetheless, as my Prime Minister has said, the objective of all this pressure is to bring South Africa not to its knees but to its senses. We should not impose a greater toll than necessary to achieve this objective. The comprehensive approach is a last resort, an admission that all else has failed.

Draft resolution L. 29 on measures is closer to Canada's approach and we will support it for the second time. The list of measures includes many that Canada and the Commonwealth have implemented. While there are also a number that we have not implemented, the thrust of this resolution clearly is effective pressure for peaceful change.

Mr. President,

Canada will support draft resolution L.30. Like the Commonwealth's Kuala Lumpur statement, it stresses the

importance of financial sanctions against South Africa and the need for wide international participation. However, Canada has difficulties with some of the language. The preamble goes too far in condemning the banks involved in the renegotiation: while we would have preferred that the renegotiation not be completed at this time, the timing at least shows that South Africa considers financial sanctions a serious threat. Operative paragraph 1 ignores the fact that tougher terms, as requested by the Commonwealth Committee of Foreign Ministers, were obtained by the banks and that South Africa has paid a high price for this agreement. The renegotiation maintains financial pressure on South Africa which faces significant capital outflow in the next few years. That said, Canada fully supports the important steps outlined in operative paragraphs 2 and 3, and urges all states which have not already done so to implement them.

Draft resolution L.31 on relations between South Africa and Israel really has no place under this agenda item and Canada will oppose it for well-known reasons.

On the Apartheid Committee's work program, Canada will again support draft resolution L. 32 because we support much of what the Committee does. I take the opportunity to pay tribute to your leadership, Mr. President, in this

regard. At the same time I must clarify Canada's understanding of operative paragraph 2. What the General Assembly is endorsing, in its own words, are those recommendations relating to the Committee's work program, and only those recommendations.

Canada is, with some regret, unable to support draft Resolution L. 33 on an oil embargo. Our own voluntary embargo on oil supply is effective, and we recognize this as a potential area for further international cooperation. Nonetheless a mandatory embargo on both supply and shipping raises the problem of extraterritoriality of laws and other issues of longstanding concern and particular sensitivity for Canada, and perhaps for others.

On draft resolution L. 34 on military collaboration, Canada will abstain. It is unfortunate that language which would have enabled us to support it did not come forward, and that the present text detracts from universal support for the arms embargo, by gratuitous and largely unsubstantiated name-calling rather than looking for ways to make the embargo more effective.

Draft resolution L.36 on concerted action is traditionally supported by Canada and we will do so again.

Canada has implemented all the measures in paragraph 7 and also provides substantial assistance to the Front Line States as urged in paragraph 8.

Finally, on draft resolution L.40 dealing with apartheid in sport, Canada is obliged to abstain. We have difficulty ratifying the UN International Convention on this subject, given our legal, constitutional and human-rights framework. Moreover we do not agree with the principle of secondary boycotts and thus cannot support the UN Register of Sports Contacts. That said, Canada has this year further tightened its policy of sporting contacts with South Africa, already among the toughest in the world. Our objective remains the effective elimination of all sporting contacts between Canada and South Africa pending the end of apartheid.

Mr. President,

We must all do our part to encourage peaceful change in South Africa. The statements we have heard in the debate and the resolutions before us are, taken together, a clear message to the Government of South Africa that it must take more concrete action. South Africa itself knows what it has do do. Let us hope, as we move on to the Special Session and shortly into a new decade, that Pretoria can find the

courage and wisdom to turn over a new leaf. Let us also be ready, while maintaining effective pressure, to recognize progress when it comes and to assist in overcoming difficulties when this would be appropriate.

As Prime Minister Mulroney has said in this Assembly: "There can be no doubt that fundamental change will come to South Africa. The only questions are when and how and at what cost in human life. We must make sure the answers are soon and peacefully."

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