

Statement

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

SPEECH BY

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE JOE CLARK,

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

AT THE OPENING OF THE

FOURTH SESSION OF THE

COMMONWEALTH COMMITTEE OF FOREIGN MINISTERS

CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA

August 7, 1989.

Secretary of State
for
External Affairs

Secrétaire d'État
aux
Affaires extérieures

Canada

Prime Minister,

Secretary-General,

Colleagues and distinguished guests

Thank you Prime Minister Hawke. We are all honoured by your presence here and pay tribute to your unflagging efforts and those of your countrymen in the fight against apartheid. I would like to thank you, your Foreign Minister and the people of Australia for your commitment to equality in southern Africa and your hospitality here in Canberra.

Canberra, like Ottawa, lies a great distance from South Africa, but when measured not in kilometres but in commitment and conviction, the problems of South Africa are very close to us all. Our meeting, the last before Commonwealth Heads of Government gather in Kuala Lumpur, lets us assess prospects for change and negotiation. We must analyze both what has changed and what has not and send signals, not only to Commonwealth Heads, but also to South African leaders, black and white.

South Africa has not remained still since this Committee was formed at Vancouver. Nor have we. In the first year of our mandate, the atmosphere in South Africa grew even more menacing. Shortly after our Lusaka meeting, the mass democratic movement was mauled by bannings. Political detentions sought to stifle dissent, and censorship grew with attacks on the alternative press. Destabilization disrupted the Front-line States and no solution to Namibia was then in sight.

We responded, by reaching out to the victims of apartheid and by using the instrument of sanctions to apply pressure for change. Our Committee kept the case for sanctions before the international community and before South Africa.

We initiated studies to evaluate the application and impact of sanctions to assess South Africa's relationship with the international financial system. In Toronto we made a number of concrete proposals to tighten and intensify Commonwealth sanctions. Of particular import, were the emphasis on financial sanctions and measures to prohibit the transfer of technology which could serve to circumvent the arms, oil and computer embargos. In Harare we agreed to a proposal which could lead to a substantial strengthening of the arms embargo.

Recognizing that none of us has significant economic leverage alone on South Africa, we have each sought the support of nations who do, particularly those who continue to carry on significant trade and financial dealings with South Africa in areas under Commonwealth sanctions. We need to continue our efforts to widen the adoption of Commonwealth measures.

Here in Canberra we will consider the final report of the experts on the application and impact of sanctions. These experts are independent of our respective governments and their conclusions and recommendations reflect their own views. They have provided us with a far-reaching and thought-provoking document which will be a useful contribution to the sanctions debate.

To counter growing censorship and propaganda, a detailed strategy was prepared by Canada and adopted by a Commonwealth Working Party. Trying to get out the news in South Africa takes courage and ingenuity. Apart from our practical assistance, those in the alternative press, have been strengthened by our moral support and involvement.

In Harare, we were witness to the effects of continuing South African destabilization. The enormity of the damage has been well documented by the independent experts whose interim report was released in Harare. We look forward to reviewing their final report at this meeting. We can, I believe, take some hope from the Angolan cease-fire and the African-brokered initiative to negotiate lasting peace and reconciliation, and we will wish to encourage similar efforts on Mozambique.

In response to the situation South Africa's neighbours are facing, the CFM has pledged economic and security assistance, particularly to Mozambique, where destabilization's legacy has been a conflict of brutality and unrelenting misery. Several projects under the Mozambique Fund have already been implemented. For Canada's part, we have recently announced substantial increases in the support we will be providing to Front Line States through our Military Training Assistance Program.

We are helping the victims of apartheid -- for example, those blacks who receive only one-fifth the spending on education as do whites, and those whose segregated, overcrowded and underfunded education handicaps even the most able. We have helped establish a Commonwealth-wide NGO network for advanced training and education for black South Africans, based on the needs of a post-apartheid society.

The Commonwealth Secretariat and many countries, Zimbabwe in particular, have pitched in to make Archbishop Scott and Lord Chitnis' initiative a very successful program. We look forward to receiving a report of their major consultative meeting this past week-end.

Namibia's transition to independence got off to a near tragic beginning in April, at a time when UNTAG had only just begun its deployment. A tense period followed but, since June, real progress has been made and the prospects for free and fair elections under UN supervision and control look more favourable. The Commonwealth has a particular interest in Namibia, and we will do whatever we can to ensure its independence.

In South Africa itself, signals are mixed. The forced incorporation of black communities into the so-called homelands continues. The government has announced it will appoint seventy officials to inspect violations of the Group Areas Act. The National Party's reform manifesto remains rooted in the idea of group rather than individual rights.

There has been a consolidation of a new leadership in Pretoria. Some but not all of the cells holding political prisoners have been opened. Virtually all of those detained without charge under emergency regulations have been released. However, many of them traded one form of imprisonment for another when they subsequently were served restriction orders. Other political prisoners, such as Nelson Mandela, remain behind bars - rather than behind the negotiation table where they belong. President Botha's coffee table is no substitute, but their meeting was a symbolic recognition that Nelson Mandela remains central to any solution in South Africa.

A national election has been called for September, from which the majority is excluded. Importantly, though, a key issue is whether and how to allow the black majority a voice in writing a new constitution and in working out a common destiny. But that majority is not content to sit on the sidelines and wait for the white electorate to decide its fate. Neither will it negotiate a settlement that remains within the framework of apartheid. But its many leaders are taking more seriously the idea of national constitutional negotiations. There is more talk about talks. In the meantime, the mass democratic movement continues to keep up the pressure for change from within, and is now engaged in a non-violent campaign to demonstrate the realities of racial segregation.

The South African Government may finally understand that it does not hold all the keys to the future of South Africa. Forced separateness is increasingly difficult to sustain in an era of rapid black urbanisation, and the monopolization of political power cannot withstand forever the pressures of an increasingly politicized majority. Some white South Africans have accepted and work for a non-racial future. Others remain paralyzed by fear, ascribing to their black countrymen their own attitudes, and hence believing there exist only two alternatives - to dominate or to perish. I believe a third alternative - non-racial democracy - is not only viable but also reflects black South Africa's vision of the future. It is this vision of the future that we hope will be promoted through dialogue across the racial divide, and to this end Canada has put in place a \$1.6 million Fund to Promote Dialogue Among South Africans.

If the prospects for fundamental change and negotiations towards non-racial, representative government are better than ever before, it is also due in large measure to sustained international pressure. Economic and other sanctions, particular financial sanctions, are working. South African officials themselves acknowledge the very financial squeeze they are facing. Not only do sanctions directly increase the cost of maintaining apartheid, but, far more importantly, they also have a psychological impact. Our various experts have highlighted the importance of the forthcoming debt rescheduling. Pressure must be maintained until there is concrete evidence of fundamental change.

What in our view represents change? The best starting point is the "possible negotiating concept" of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group. The release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners must be accompanied by the unbanning of the ANC and PAC, the normalization of black politics, an end to the state of emergency, and, in the context of a suspension of violence on all sides, the beginning of a process of meaningful negotiations towards non-racial, representative government.

This is our last meeting before Commonwealth Heads gather in October. Over the past two years we have kept before the international community the need to sustain international pressure, particularly sanctions, to complement internal efforts to promote change in South Africa.

Much can and will happen before the Kuala Lumpur meeting, but the message is constant. Our attitude should not be to wait and see. Pressure has brought us this far, and cannot relent until we see action rather than just talk about fundamental change.

This Committee was established to keep a steady Commonwealth focus on apartheid, and not let the world's attention slip away, as it did in earlier times. All the world is offended by apartheid, but the Commonwealth feels a particular obligation to end that system, and to end it peacefully. So many of our Member States and citizens live literally on the front lines. So many children of the Commonwealth have their futures blighted, or their sense of their worth demeaned, by this legalized racism. And South Africa itself was once a member of the Commonwealth family and would be welcome home again, once apartheid is gone.

The commitment of the Commonwealth has always been clear, but a focus was needed, an instrument to explore alternatives, to expose destabilization and propaganda, to maintain the pressure for change, and to open channels through which black and white South Africans might find common cause.

As we begin our final formal meeting, I want as Chairman to thank my colleague Foreign Ministers for giving this issue and our work your unfailing priority. But I want also to draw a lesson about modern international life, and the special nature of this Commonwealth.

We represent, in this Commonwealth family, the world's diversity - diversity of culture, languages, and standards and visions of life. Each of us has preoccupations at home, which could divert our attention away from the fight against apartheid. But we have not been diverted, the Commonwealth will not be. The individual measures we have adopted each have their own weight. But what matters most of all about the Commonwealth, what makes our position against apartheid impossible to ignore, is that we will not relent until the system is ended. That has been the purpose and the standard of this Committee, as it is of the Heads of Government meeting to which we will report. Because that determination is so universal and so strong, I am convinced we will finally see an end to apartheid.