

Statement

Discours

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Ministère des
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NOTES FOR REMARKS BY
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE JOE CLARK,
UPON PRESENTATION OF THE REPORT OF THE
COMMITTEE OF FOREIGN MINISTERS
TO THE
COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT MEETING

KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA

October 19, 1989.

Secretary of State
for
External Affairs

Secrétaire d'État
aux
Affaires extérieures

Canada

Mr. Chairman,

Mr. Secretary-General,

Distinguished Heads of Delegation

At Vancouver, Heads of Government established the Commonwealth Committee of Foreign Ministers on Southern Africa. I am honoured to submit its Report today. The Chairman earlier listed a number of other documents that were either commissioned by the Committee or originated in proposals first put forward in the Committee.

The Secretariat had also prepared for the Committee's use a document reporting on developments in Southern Africa since the last formal meeting of the Committee of Foreign Ministers in Canberra in August. My colleagues and I met informally on Monday of this week with the Reverend Alan Boesak and Mr. Thabo Mbeki of the African National Congress to hear their views on the latest events in South Africa.

Because there have been confusing press reports, I should make it clear that, at no time, did Mr. Boesak suggest it would be appropriate to relax Commonwealth pressure on South Africa now. He believes it is essential that pressure be maintained, and that the mere promise of reform should not be rewarded by any relaxation of pressure. He does believe that it would be reasonable to expect the South African Government to demonstrate its commitment to real reform within six months from its inauguration, and that it would be appropriate, at the end of that time, to hold South Africa to account if it had not acted on the programme presented to President de Klerk in his meeting with clerics last week. That is the position Dr. Boesak conveyed to our dinner.

This morning I want to highlight briefly some of the principal points in the Report and offer some observations on the Committee's experience.

The Committee included the Foreign Ministers of Australia, Canada, Guyana, India, Nigeria, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The Foreign Minister of Malaysia, as host of this CHOGM, attended the Canberra meeting and we sought to keep other Governments fully briefed. There was a frank and collegial atmosphere. All members attended all sessions, although schedules were often inconvenient. We all learned from the experience, and were able to submit a unanimous report. We were very ably assisted in our work by both the present and the new Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, and by officials of the Secretariat.

This Committee was established with the following principal goals:

- to keep the South Africa issue on the public agenda;
- to give high level impetus to the objectives of the Okanagan declaration; and
- to provide guidance in the fight against apartheid.

The mandate of the Committee covered four areas:

- sanctions;
- the relationship between South Africa and its neighbours;
- a range of activities related to what might be termed "reaching into South Africa"; and
- Namibia.

It was a mandate which reflected the two-track approach towards southern Africa that was agreed to in Vancouver. One track reflected a desire to promote a positive agenda in terms of encouraging dialogue, facilitating negotiations and assisting both the victims of and opponents to apartheid. The second was to maintain pressure on South Africa to reform through the widening and intensifying of sanctions.

The Committee met formally on four occasions: in Lusaka in February of 1988; in Toronto in August of that year; in Harare last January and, most recently, in Canberra in August. One of the most important aspects of those meetings is that they allowed us to meet directly with, and hear directly from, South Africans engaged on the front lines of the fight against apartheid - whether union representatives, church leaders, journalists, officials of the ANC and PAC, or others. I wish all of you could have been present that first night in Lusaka when Frank Chikane and Byers Naude spoke of the fears and the hopes they meet in their daily rounds within South Africa. That exposure to the witnesses of apartheid is compelling.

A number of those persons invited from South Africa to meet with us were prevented by the South African Government from doing so. However, those witnesses with whom we did meet spoke to us eloquently, passionately and graphically of South African oppression within its own borders and of its destabilization activities against its neighbours.

The Committee commissioned a number of important studies related to our mandate. One, an independent study on South Africa's destabilization of its neighbours is a chronicle of deliberate destruction, death and dislocation. You have it before you as "A Candle on Kilimanjaro". The cost to South Africa's neighbours of deliberate destabilization has been staggering in terms of loss of life, human suffering and damage to the economy, the infrastructure, and the society as a whole.

The Committee's study of South Africa's links to the international financial community has highlighted the importance of financial measures as a means of exerting direct and critical pressure on the South African Government's ability to continue to finance apartheid. The South African Government reacted to that report last night and did so on terms that are very costly to their economy. In my judgment it is no coincidence that this announcement occurred on the day this CHOGM began.

A third study, an independent assessment of the application and effectiveness of sanctions, demonstrated that sanctions work, that they have an effect on the attitudes of white South Africans and on the policies of their government. It set forward further actions the Commonwealth can consider.

We have been interested in means to encourage genuine dialogue among South Africans, which I believe is now more possible and more necessary than ever. We have also borne in mind the fundamental importance of the "possible negotiating concept" established by the Eminent Persons Group.

Finally, the Committee had as one of its tasks the pursuit of implementation of Security Council Resolution 435: the question of Namibia. That occupied an increasing amount of our attention as developments in Namibia unfolded. The Committee's role was, first and foremost, to assist the United Nations through the Secretary-General, his Special Representative, and UNTAG in its responsibility to bring about the long overdue independence of Namibia through the implementation of Resolution 435.

We have monitored events in Namibia closely and offered assistance whenever it seemed that the Committee or the Commonwealth at large could make a contribution. Our concern over intimidation by Koevoet led us to have Secretary-General Ramphal encourage Commonwealth countries to supply additional police forces to UNTAG if requested by the UN Secretary-General. Similarly, because we saw serious problems in the proposed electoral law we provided the UN Special Representative with a number of suggestions, reflected in the electoral law finally negotiated, to ensure the integrity of the secret ballot and decentralized counting.

While Resolution 435 vested responsibility for the supervision and control of the election campaign and elections in the UN, there was scope for others to observe and lend weight to the UN operation. Accordingly it was at the Committee's suggestion that a Commonwealth observer group, drawn from 7 countries, travelled to Namibia several weeks ago to report to this meeting on the situation and possible future arrangements. Their Report has been provided to you for consideration at this meeting. It has not been reviewed by the Committee of Foreign Ministers.

The Committee also looked beyond Namibian independence - an independence that could be threatened by South African political and military pressures. As a result the Committee asked the Secretary-General to explore the prospects for significantly expanded aid in the operational, developmental and constitutional fields.

We believe the Committee's very existence, and the publicity of our meetings, themselves became instruments of pressure. But we also learned that when eight countries sit down regularly to campaign against apartheid, we find new pressure points, new instruments of influence.

We identified a number of practical ways in which the Commonwealth can increase pressure upon the South African Government to end apartheid.

One of the most important is to emphasize financial links and establish an independent monitoring mechanism to provide objective information on South Africa's international financial relations.

Another is to confront and counter the efforts of South African censorship and propaganda in each of our countries.

A third is to act together to tighten and extend the mandatory arms embargo of the United Nations, including to prohibit the import of arms from South Africa.

A fourth, which can be pursued more diligently, is to organize joint demarches by Commonwealth countries on individual nations which have not introduced sanctions similar to those of the Commonwealth. We believe pressures of this kind helped encourage Japan to reduce its imports of South African coal.

None of these will work miracles. However, if pursued steadily and broadly, they increase the pressure for change.

So does visible active support for the victims of apartheid, and the opponents of apartheid.

General Obasanjo prepared a report on the security needs of the Front Line States. Professor Cornford and Archbishop Scott have established a network of NGOs to train black South Africans. Governments can help the victims of apartheid. The Secretariat is developing a new strategy on trade and investment in southern Africa.

These all provide opportunities to individual members of the Commonwealth to increase visible, practical help. We hope they, and other measures, will be considered by Heads of Government.