

Statement

Minister for
External Relations
and International
Development



Déclaration

Ministre des
Relations extérieures
et du développement
international

89/68

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

NOTES FOR A SPEECH

BY THE MINISTER FOR EXTERNAL RELATIONS

AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT,

THE HONOURABLE MONIQUE LANDRY,

AT THE UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL SESSION ON APARTHEID

NEW YORK

December 12, 1989.

Mr. President, every one of us here, I am sure, is driven by the same desire: to see the end of the odious system of apartheid. Thus, as each new government comes to power in South Africa, collectively we look for evidence that with this new leader, with this new government, we will begin to see clear signs that apartheid is being dismantled.

If President de Klerk is to be taken at his word, his government intends profound reforms leading to the end of apartheid. Not only must the suffocating web of regulations and laws buttressing apartheid be done away with, but the government must prepare the way for negotiations towards a non-racial democracy with black leaders through the termination of the state of emergency, the release of political prisoners, and legalization of banned political parties. This agenda lies before it - we still await solid evidence that President de Klerk's government is determined to address it.

Apartheid has brought misery, despair and destitution to untold millions, death to thousands and an incalculable financial burden for South Africa and its neighbours. Both the victims and their oppressors have been scarred by this iniquitous system. Apartheid has left an indelible stain on the honour of South Africa.

When apartheid is finally swept away - as it will be - many in the white community will say "we did not know". Through intensive propaganda, designed to encourage fear of the black majority, and strict censorship laws, their government has kept them swaddled in a layer of protective ignorance about what is really going on under apartheid. Little wonder that sanctions are seen as cruel, and often irrational, measures to white South Africans.

Sanctions work. We readily acknowledge that they are far from perfect: they hurt South Africans black and white; but there has simply been no other recourse left to the international community to impress upon Pretoria the urgent need for fundamental change. For forty years the world attempted through diplomatic efforts to bring about apartheid's demise. It did not work. Apartheid is still very much with us, and its pillars, the Population Registration Act, the Group Areas Act, the Land Act, segregated education and health care, the homelands system, and, above all, the denial of the vote to the black majority, remain entrenched in law. So sanctions must stay.

Discussion regarding the dismantling of sanctions can only commence the day we see evidence of clear and irreversible change. Until then, it would be an affront to those who have and are fighting apartheid from within South Africa to relent, in any way, our pressure on the government.

Mr. President, many nations, including Canada, stand ready to assist South Africa with its transition to a non-racial democratic state. This evolution, which must inevitably take place, will require all of the internal good will, and all of the external assistance that the international community can muster.

Canada believes that assistance to the victims of apartheid today contributes to a democratic and just South Africa tomorrow. Through support for education and other forms of training, we not only contribute to the current process of change but also help the development of skills required in a post-apartheid society. Our efforts are aimed at enhancing the pillars of any free society - democratic institutions such as the free press and a fair and accessible legal system. To this end we support diverse groups that fight against censorship and we champion the cause of human rights.

Mr. President, through our ongoing dialogue program, we encourage South Africans of all races to engage in an open, constructive exchange about their hopes and aspirations for a South Africa based on equality, justice and tolerance. This dialogue serves to build the foundation of trust upon which meaningful negotiations can take place, and from which a new South Africa will emerge.

All who would be part of meaningful negotiations towards the creation of a non-racial democratic South Africa have expressed a preference for a negotiated, peaceful settlement. This preference is strongly shared by the international community. We also share the belief that meaningful negotiations cannot take place as long as some of the parties are jailed, banned, or otherwise constrained from consulting with their constituencies.

That is why the Commonwealth Eminent Persons' "Possible Negotiating Concept" called on the South African Government to remove the military from the townships, provide for freedom of assembly and discussion and suspend detention without trial, release Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners and detainees, unban the ANC and PAC and permit normal political activity. It called on the ANC and others to enter negotiations and suspend violence. That concept remains as valid today as when it was first put forward, and has found resonance in subsequent proposals aimed at creating the necessary climate for negotiations.

In this context, Canada and all of the Commonwealth recently noted with satisfaction the strong preference for the path of negotiated and peaceful settlement inherent in the 1989 Harare Declaration of the Ad-Hoc Committee of the OAU on Southern Africa. The Commonwealth also reaffirmed its belief that the constitutional system was a matter for all the people of South Africa to decide, and that its own role remained essentially to

facilitate the opening of negotiations. For our part, we are confident that the South African people, in determining their new constitutional order, will be guided by the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

This Special Session against Apartheid is being held at what we hope will prove to be a critical juncture in South Africa's history. It is vital that we, the members of the United Nations, take this historic opportunity to speak with one voice in stressing the urgent need to remove barriers to negotiations - negotiations aimed at the establishment of non-racial representative government. The exact process of those negotiations will be up to the parties themselves, and need not complicate our deliberations here. But the South African Government must know that the world stands united in demanding that negotiations begin with genuine representatives of all the people, unfettered by restrictions, bannings or imprisonment. When that occurs, the international community will be there to provide whatever assistance is required to assist the peaceful transition to a truly non-racial democracy.

Let there be no mistake about it; Canada is an implacable foe of apartheid. But we will also prove to be a strong, resolute partner and friend to a democratic non-racial South Africa.

There have been several hopeful signs coming from South Africa, gestures that contain within them a tantalizing element of hope. Hope that the new de Klerk government is bringing with it a sense of reality, a sense of compassion, a sense of decency that have been sadly lacking in previous administrations. In particular, we welcome the commitment to repeal the Separate Amenities Act; the release of Walter Sisulu and other political prisoners; the decisions to allow peaceful protest marches, the rally for released political prisoners and, most recently, the Conference on a Democratic Future.

We hope that these are not just gestures, but harbingers of real change. For it must be understood that apartheid can only be abolished, not amended. Cosmetic reforms designed to placate foreign and domestic critics alike will only have the effect of redoubling the conviction and efforts of those fighting apartheid. In this connection, we laud the activities of the Mass Democratic Movement: peaceful, organized mass protests which have, in a very tangible sense, dramatized the unshakeable demands of the oppressed.

It is with a sense of hope that we are gathered here today. And, it was with that same sense that the Commonwealth leaders at their Kuala Lumpur summit reviewed the situation in South Africa against the possibility that significant and long-awaited changes in approach on the part of the South African Government may yet prove within reach.

Commonwealth leaders agreed that the encouraging signs were very much the product of a combination of internal and external pressures. They determined to maintain, and encourage others to maintain, existing pressures, to ratchet up financial sanctions, support ongoing efforts to strengthen the implementation of the United Nations mandatory arms embargo, but to impose no new trade sanctions; in order to afford the new government some time in which to demonstrate its true intentions.

South Africans of all races and cultures have at least one thing in common: a love for their country. Their views on the future of that country also coincide: they wish a prosperous, safe community where their individual aspirations, and those of their children, can be realized.

It is thus unfortunate that the supporters of apartheid are unable to realize that it is only when the vast majority of their countrymen, the Blacks, Indians and Coloureds, are fully participating in the shaping of that future that there can be any hope of its coming to pass in the design all desire.

We deplore the sufferings and injustice brought about by apartheid. We work for a new non-racial democratic South Africa. We pray that this new government will have the vision to act quickly to end the violence, the injustice and the dishonour that is apartheid, so that South Africa can take its rightful place as a truly democratic state and member of the international community.