



Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination

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SECOND WORLD CONFERENCE TO COMBAT RACISM AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION
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Brief on United Nations activities concerning the situation of women living under the apartheid regime

1. The Branch for the Advancement of Women of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs has been carefully following the issue of the situation of women and children living under racist minority regimes and women and children living in the occupied Arab territories and other occupied territories.
2. The proclamation of the United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985) indicates that the world community has a specific duty to attend to the problems of women and ensure their participation in the universal struggle for equality, development and peace, which are the main goals of the Decade. Contrary to all the aspirations of progressive mankind and in violation of all the decisions of the United Nations on women, and against apartheid, the minority white racist apartheid regime continues to perpetuate a system of inequality and oppression of not only the black women in South Africa, but also the black majority of the population as a whole.
3. This subject was brought to the attention of the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women, held in Copenhagen in July 1980 which examined the impact of apartheid on women in South Africa and Namibia and the specific disabilities and repressions that the system imposes upon them.
4. The Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women, in part 3, which concerns action at the international and regional levels, made recommendations concerning technical co-operation, training and advisory services to assist women in South Africa. ^{1/} Indeed, this Conference can be considered as a follow-up measure to other activities against the apartheid regime.
5. The Programme of Action was endorsed by the General Assembly in resolution 35/136 of 11 December 1980. By resolution 35/206 N of 16 December 1980, the General Assembly specifically endorsed the recommendations of the World Conference concerning women in South Africa, and urged all organizations of the United Nations system to give the highest priority to measures of assistance to women in South Africa and Namibia.

^{1/} United Nations publication, Sales No. E.80.IV.3, chap. I, sec. A, paras. 241-243.

6. In resolution 35/206 R of 16 December 1980, the General Assembly recognized the need for increasing contributions to the Trust Fund and to the voluntary agencies concerned, to enable them to meet the increased needs for humanitarian and legal assistance. In resolution 36/172 K, of 17 December 1981, the General Assembly encouraged the Special Committee against Apartheid to intensify activities in support of women and children oppressed by apartheid and authorized it to organize conferences, seminars and missions for that purpose.
7. During its twenty-ninth session, the Commission on the Status of Women recommended for adoption a resolution entitled "Women and children under apartheid". It invited all Governments and organizations to observe 9 August annually as the International Day of Solidarity with the Struggle of Women in South Africa and Namibia. It further invited women's organizations all over the world to intensify their action in solidarity with the struggle for liberation in South Africa and Namibia and to consider a greater co-ordination of their efforts in co-operation with the Special Committee against Apartheid. This resolution was endorsed by the Economic and Social Council at its spring session.
8. The Special Committee against Apartheid also devoted special attention, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 36/172 K, to the plight of women under apartheid and their heroic resistance against that inhuman system. It sought to promote publicity on the situation, as well as to increase assistance to the oppressed women of South Africa and Namibia, particularly through the projects of the national liberation movements and front-line States for assistance to refugee women and children from South Africa.
9. The Special Committee against Apartheid, in co-operation with the International Committee of Solidarity with the Struggle of Women in South Africa and Namibia, organized the international Conference on Women and Apartheid, which was held in Brussels, Belgium, from 17 to 19 May 1982.
10. The Conference was intended to promote broader awareness of the struggle of women of South Africa and Namibia, as well as world-wide assistance of a humanitarian, educational and political nature to those oppressed women, their national liberation movements and the front-line States.
11. The Conference declared that apartheid, especially as it affected women and children, was an international crime and an intolerable affront to the conscience of mankind. It called for effective international action, in accordance with the United Nations resolutions, for the elimination of apartheid, the independence of Namibia and the establishment of a democratic society in South Africa.
12. The Conference reiterated its support for the resolutions adopted by the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women in Copenhagen, condemning the expansion in the South Africa military and nuclear capacity as a threat to stability and world peace, and called for the implementation of the decisions reached by the United Nations and other international bodies on the military, nuclear and oil embargo against South Africa.
13. Finally, the International Conference emphasized the urgent need for widest publicity to the plight of women in South Africa and Namibia, and their resistance against apartheid, as well as greatly increased international assistance to alleviate their hardships and enable them to develop further their participation in the struggle for liberation.
14. United Nations bodies, particularly the General Assembly, have adopted a wide range of measures aimed at providing political, moral and material support

for the oppressed women of South Africa. These include expressions of support for the liberation movements; calls for the release of women prisoners; dissemination of information on the apartheid regime; international meetings on the question; and voluntary funds to aid the victims of apartheid.

15. In addition, the General Assembly has condemned the establishment of "home-lands" (bantustans) and the forcible removal of the African people (including women and children) to those areas as violations of their inalienable rights. This policy deprives the African women of South Africa of their land and livelihood as well as their citizenship, as they are required to obtain the citizenship of a bantustan they may never have seen.

16. Both the Assembly and the Council have reaffirmed that apartheid is a crime against humanity and the conscience and dignity of mankind and have recognized the legitimacy of the struggle of the oppressed women of South Africa for the attainment of their human and political rights.

17. Other organs and bodies of the United Nations have also condemned the apartheid regime.