



**Economic and Social  
Council**

Distr.  
GENERAL

E/CN.4/1991/SR.12  
21 February 1991

Original: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Forty-seventh session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 12th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
on Tuesday, 5 February 1991, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Martius (Germany)

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shortly after the end of the session.

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES, INCLUDING PALESTINE (agenda item 4) (continued) (E/CN.4/1991/6-8, 60-62, 65 and 67; A/45/3, 13 and Add.1, 35 and Corr.1, 84, 306, 503, 576, 595, 608-614 and 726)

THE RIGHT OF PEOPLES TO SELF-DETERMINATION AND ITS APPLICATION TO PEOPLES UNDER COLONIAL OR ALIEN DOMINATION OR FOREIGN OCCUPATION (agenda item 9) (continued) (E/CN.4/1991/13 and 14; E/CN.4/1991/NGO/2; A/45/488)

1. Miss CHAALAN (Observer for the Syrian Arab Republic) speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the allegation by the International League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples that Kurds were deprived of their national identity in Syria did not square with the facts. Syrian citizens of Kurdish origin formed an integral part of Syrian society. All citizens enjoyed equal rights and were equal before the law in accordance with the Syrian Constitution. Syrian citizens of Kurdish origin thus enjoyed the same rights and duties as other citizens and participated actively in all aspects of the life of the country.
2. The League could more usefully have directed its attention to the explosive situation in occupied Palestine, the violation by Israel of Palestinian rights and the tragic conditions in which the Palestinian population was forced to live.
3. Mr. AL-OTHTMAN (Observer for Kuwait), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the representative of Iraq had made a desperate attempt to distort the history of Kuwait. It was unnecessary for his own delegation to defend the al-Sabah dynasty, which, as was well known, enjoyed the full support of the Kuwaiti people.
4. Before the invasion of Kuwait, the President of Iraq had awarded to al-Sabah, the Emir of Kuwait, the highest Iraqi award as a token of his appreciation and gratitude to the Kuwaiti people. That fact should be borne in mind when listening to statements by the delegation of Iraq on the historical background.
5. Mr. ROMA de ALBUQUERQUE (Portugal), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the delegation of Indonesia asserted that self-determination for East Timor was a non-issue and that the people of the territory had freely and democratically chosen its integration into Indonesia. That was not the opinion of the United Nations, as could be seen from General Assembly resolution 31/53. The question of East Timor was still before the Special Committee on Decolonization. The United Nations had confirmed that the so-called "act" of 31 May 1976 integrating East Timor into Indonesia had not been a free and democratic choice for East Timor and had ruled that integration could not take place unless and until such a choice were made.

6. Portugal had never denied its share of responsibility for the difficulties associated with the decolonization process in East Timor. That did not, however, justify military conquest by Indonesia. His Government would not challenge the will of the people of East Timor, even if the decision taken was in favour of integration into Indonesia. If the Government of Indonesia was so certain what the people of East Timor wanted, he wondered why it refused to allow the territory to exercise its right to self-determination.

7. Mr. STEEL (United Kingdom), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, informed the delegation of Iraq that there were only two issues of concern to the Commission: how Iraq observed human rights in Kuwait and how the Government of Iraq observed human rights in Iraq. The facts spoke for themselves.

8. Mr. DEESRISUK (Observer for Thailand), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, thanked the International Federation-Terre des Hommes for bringing to the attention of the Commission the plight of the displaced Cambodians living in Thailand as a result of the ongoing conflict in their country. There were, however, a few points that he wished to elaborate upon in order to shed some light on the relief operations along the Thai-Cambodian border.

9. Since the early 1980s, Thailand, in co-operation with the United Nations Border Relief Operation (UNBRO) and non-governmental organizations, had assisted some 310,000 displaced Cambodians. There were nine UNBRO-assisted camps, administered by the Cambodians themselves, which were accessible to international relief agencies. Over the years, attempts had been made to render life in those camps more tolerable by improving medical and nutritional services, establishing schools and training facilities and organizing an array of activities for all segments of the camp population. Unfortunately, some of those programmes and activities might have to be discontinued as a result of UNBRO's financial difficulties.

10. Cambodians in Thailand were able to choose in which of the various camps they wished to stay and there had been a number of cases where, for the purposes of family reunion, protection or voluntary repatriation, Cambodians residing in one camp had been granted a transfer to another.

11. As for the repatriation of displaced Cambodians, Thailand was ready to co-operate fully with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in repatriating the Cambodians once a political solution to the problem had been found.

12. Lastly, he wished to inform the International Federation-Terre des Hommes that initial plans to close the O'Troa camp in the Sri Saket Province had been temporarily shelved and the camp was still open, with regular access for the relief agencies concerned.

VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA: REPORT OF THE AD HOC WORKING GROUP OF EXPERTS (agenda item 5) (E/CN.4/1991/9 and 10; A/45/615)

THE ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES FOR THE ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS OF POLITICAL, MILITARY, ECONOMIC AND OTHER FORMS OF ASSISTANCE GIVEN TO THE COLONIAL AND RACIST REGIME IN SOUTHERN AFRICA (agenda item 6) (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1990/13 and Add.1)

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON THE SUPPRESSION AND PUNISHMENT OF THE CRIME OF APARTHEID (agenda item 15) (E/CN.4/1991/40 and Add.1-2, 41 and 42; A/RES/45/90)

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE SECOND DECADE TO COMBAT RACISM AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION (agenda item 16) (E/CN.4/1991/45)

13. Mr. MARTENSON (Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights), introducing agenda items 5, 6, 15 and 16, said that they touched one of the central purposes of the United Nations, the elimination of discrimination. The Charter itself insisted upon "the equal rights of men and women and of nations large or small" and further urged respect for human rights "without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion".

14. The elimination of racism and racial discrimination was, indeed, central to the achievement of the United Nations objectives of preserving world peace and providing improved living standards. Racial discrimination could give rise to conflicts between States that might escalate and endanger the wider stability. Within society, discrimination denied groups and citizens full participation in economic, political and social processes and the rights that were their due.

15. The objective of eliminating discrimination, and in particular racial discrimination, was one that cut across all United Nations activities, be they treaty implementation, human rights situations, research and study, standard-setting or advisory services and public information

16. Three of the four items under consideration concerned the human rights situation in South Africa, while under the fourth item, the Commission would review implementation of the overall Programme of Action for the Second Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination.

17. With regard to agenda item 5, the issue of discrimination and, in particular, apartheid had been of the greatest importance since the first session of the General Assembly. From the very outset, the abhorrent system of apartheid, the most clearly institutionalized form of racism, had been the object of action for its elimination by the United Nations.

18. The Commission had, for many years, been giving its closest attention to the elimination of apartheid and could justly derive satisfaction from its record as the initiator and supervisor of many of the measures and instruments which had become some of the most effective arms in the arsenal used by the United Nations in the fight against racial discrimination. He was thinking, in particular, of the establishment of the Ad Hoc Working Group of Experts, the study on the consequences for human rights in South Africa of foreign assistance and the Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid.

19. Since its establishment in 1967, the Ad Hoc Working Group of Experts on southern Africa had kept the Commission informed of the serious violations of human rights as institutionalized under the system of apartheid. Over the years, the Group's mandate had been extended and broadened through various resolutions of the Commission and the Economic and Social Council.

20. The report currently before the Commission (E/CN.4/1991/10) was based on a mission to the front-line States in August and September 1990, during which hearings had been held in London, Dar-es-Salaam, Lusaka and Harare. The mission had been conducted jointly with the Special Rapporteur on Summary or Arbitrary Executions. Information had been gathered during that mission on the policies and practices violating human rights in southern Africa, 64 witnesses being heard.

21. The Chairman of the Working Group would introduce the report, which documented the continued serious human rights situation that still prevailed, despite some encouraging steps during the past year. Further welcome steps had just been announced towards the elimination of the legal basis of racial discrimination. Nevertheless, the Commission was well aware that, as the Working Group's report showed, other measures must be taken to ensure democracy, put an end to violations, such as the ill-treatment of prisoners, and see to it that the actual human rights situation of the black population was really improved once the pillars of apartheid had been knocked away.

22. Over the years, the Working Group had many achievements to its credit as the first human rights fact-finding mechanism established by the Commission. One of the outstanding members of the Working Group had been Professor Branimir Jankovic (Yugoslavia), and it was with sadness that he must inform the Commission of his death in September 1990. Another outstanding member of the Working Group, Mr. Humberto Diaz Casanueva of Chile, had tendered his resignation for health reasons. He paid tribute to the valuable contribution of those two distinguished jurists.

23. Some years after the establishment of the Ad Hoc Working Group and in the light of the continuing existence of the apartheid system, it had become apparent that scrutiny would have to be given to the outside assistance that made the continuation of apartheid possible. In 1973, the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities had decided to evaluate the adverse consequences for the enjoyment of human rights of assistance to the colonial and racist régime of South Africa. It had recommended that same year that a special rapporteur be appointed to undertake the task and, since then, the question had been regularly considered by the Sub-Commission, the Commission and the General Assembly.

24. The basic documentation for those activities was a report prepared and updated annually by Mr. Ahmed Khalifa, the Special Rapporteur, containing a list of banks, firms, transnational corporations and other organizations assisting the racist régime of South Africa.

25. The Commission had before it the most recent updated report, which included the Special Rapporteur's analysis of partial disinvestment measures by foreign enterprises and of measures adopted by the Government of South Africa to counter sanctions and reduce their impact.

26. The International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid, adopted by the General Assembly on 30 November 1973, had entered into force on 18 July 1976. To date, it had been ratified or acceded to by 88 States. The Convention declared apartheid to be a crime against humanity, defined in terms of acts "committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group of persons over any other racial group of persons and systematically oppressing them". A wide range of such acts were enumerated in the Convention itself.

27. Under the Convention, States parties undertook to submit periodic reports on the legislative, administrative or other measures that they had adopted to give effect to the provisions of the Convention. Those reports were reviewed by a Group consisting of three members of the Commission, who were also representatives of States parties to the Convention.

28. Since its first session in 1978, the Group of Three had considered 127 reports submitted by 54 States parties and had made a number of recommendations regarding measures to be adopted by States parties, by the Commission and by the Group itself for the implementation of the Convention. Unfortunately, many reports were overdue.

29. The Commission had before it the report of the Group of Three on its 1991 session (E/CN.4/1991/42), which would be introduced by Mrs. Narcisa L. Escaler, its chairperson/rapporteur, and a note on the status of the Convention and the reports due under it (E/CN.4/1991/40).

30. In the early 1970s, the United Nations had felt the need to take special measures to mobilize public opinion and galvanize activities in order to work for the eradication of racism and racial discrimination from the world-wide perspective. The General Assembly had thus proclaimed 1973-1983 the United Nations Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination and 1983-1993 the Second Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination. The basic objectives of the Second Decade were to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin, to eliminate prejudice and racial discrimination and to abolish régimes and policies based on racism.

31. A broad Programme of Action for the Second Decade had been approved by the General Assembly and supplemented by detailed plans of action for the periods 1985-1989 and 1990-1993. The activities included action against apartheid, education, teaching and training, dissemination of information, protection of minorities, migrant workers and indigenous populations, implementing international conventions and action through national legislation, institutions and recourse procedures.

32. In the course of the past year, the Centre for Human Rights had vigorously pursued its activities aimed at eradicating all forms of racial discrimination and implementing the programme to the extent that available resources permitted. Unfortunately, the lack of assured resources for the Decade programme was a serious handicap to its implementation.

33. In his capacity as United Nations system Co-ordinator of the Programme of Action under the Second Decade, he had endeavoured to give special priority to the efforts of the United Nations in that area. The fight against racism concerned everyone, and one of his objectives was to alert each United Nations organ to the need to act against racial discrimination so that all the activities of the Organization would be mutually reinforcing. In May 1990, he had convened an inter-agency consultation for that purpose, as a result of which, each agency or body had been asked to appoint a focal point for activities against racial discrimination. A further consultation among the agencies would take place in early spring of 1991.

34. One of the key activities of the 1990 programme had been the Seminar on Political, Historical, Economic, Social and Cultural Factors Contributing to Racism, Racial Discrimination and Apartheid, held at Geneva in December 1990. That Seminar, mandated by the Commission, had brought together representatives of Member States, United Nations organs, specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations to consider the causes and current manifestations of racism and racial discrimination and to focus upon various forms of discrimination against vulnerable groups.

35. The participants' considerations of the various factors contributing to racism and racial discrimination had been summed up in 21 conclusions and recommendations adopted by the Seminar. The report of the Seminar, including the recommendations, was being submitted to the Commission at its current session, together with the relevant background and working papers and other documents.

36. One key element to which greater attention would have to be paid in the future was education and its contribution to creating a climate of mutual tolerance and understanding between different communities. In that context, it must be borne in mind that all cultures were of value and that each of them was an important part of the common heritage of all. Efforts in the early school years to increase awareness and broader-based community action programmes were important tools to achieve that objective.

37. Experience had shown that community-relations commissions could make a valuable contribution to promoting tolerance. Such institutions had frequently demonstrated positive results with an impact far in excess of their costs. They could be set up not only in areas where tensions had actually manifested themselves, but also as a general mechanism in all communities to reinforce existing inter-group understanding and to identify at an early stage the seeds of future tensions. The establishment of national ombudsmen in the field of racial discrimination had also proved an effective measure, and he had suggested to the Seminar that consideration be given to appointing such an ombudsman in each State.

38. The harmful effects of discrimination both nationally and internationally had been amply demonstrated and would appear to warrant a solemn undertaking against that phenomenon by all national leaders and institutions. That was not solely a State responsibility. In fact, it was more important, to use the words of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that "every individual and every organ of society" should promote tolerance and reject discrimination and prejudice. That concerned trade unions, teachers' associations and political parties, but it was equally important for religious, spiritual and cultural leaders to come to the fore.

39. The Commission had an important contribution to make to the struggle for equality and against discrimination through its debate and decisions on the Second Decade under item 16. As the Commission had decided at its previous session, the theme for consideration in 1991 was "Ways and means of denying support to racist régimes with a view to making them change their policies". Another matter for consideration was the recommendation by the Sub-Commission that a third decade against racism be declared. He had made a few suggestions in that regard in his statement to the Commission at its opening meeting.

40. He was confident that the debates and decisions of the Commission on those most important agenda items would be of great value in guiding and directing United Nations activities against discrimination.

41. Mrs. ESCALER (Philippines), introducing the report of the Group of Three established under the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid (E/CN.4/1991/42), said that the Group had considered the second periodic report of Panama (E/CN.4/1991/40/Add.1) and the initial report of Bolivia (E/CN.4/1991/40/Add.2); it had noted that those States parties had complied with their commitments under the Convention. The Group had also considered, in the light of views expressed by two States parties, the nature and importance of the role played in South Africa by transnational corporations.

42. To sum up the Group's conclusions and recommendations, set out in part V of its report, she said that the Group had thanked the representatives of Panama and Bolivia, had noted with concern that only two States parties had submitted periodic reports since the Commission's forty-sixth session, had noted with regret the number of overdue reports and had urged the States parties concerned to expedite submission of their reports in fulfilment of their obligations. She drew attention to the Group's appeals in paragraph 28 of the report and to the Group's recommendation, referred to in paragraph 40, that it should meet every two years instead of annually as a result of the change in the periodicity for the submission of reports.

43. In concluding its report, the Group reiterated the desirability of serious efforts to end the South African Government's policies and practices of apartheid through negotiations based on the principle of justice and peace for all, and had expressed the view that, despite the limited progress made during the past year, the maintenance of sanctions and other forms of pressure remained an important and effective means of putting an end to the system of apartheid in South Africa.

44. Mr. AMOO-GOTTFRIED (Ghana), having congratulated the Ad Hoc Working Group of Experts on southern Africa on its report (E/CN.4/1991/10), said that, despite President De Klerk's good intentions in announcing plans aimed at political reform, the practical situation had not changed, and the African Group's counsel for more caution and less euphoria seemed justified. Reports from South Africa indicated that the police continued to enjoy considerable power to arrest and interrogate without charge, and that acts of violence, with either police complicity or the involvement of the security forces or white extremists, continued to occur, always so contrived that the blame was placed on clashes between rival black groups. A number of cases of murder had also been reported, and the confessions of Captain Dirk Coetzee appeared to suggest that there had been several murders for which the South African authorities should be held responsible.

45. Despite the so-called political reforms, Section 29 of the Internal Security Act remained in force. It had been further noted that a number of deaths had occurred during arrest or pre-trial detention. The report also mentioned that South African children continued to be arrested, tortured, ill-treated and harassed if they organized school protests.

46. His delegation thus endorsed the Working Group's conclusion that, notwithstanding the positive and encouraging measures announced by the South African leadership, the lives of South African blacks continued to be characterized by injustice and inhumanity. It also regretted that, while a number of countries had reduced their trade with South Africa, certain countries in the Far East and Europe had been trying to fill the vacuum thus created, thereby undermining international action against South Africa and prolonging the black majority's sufferings.

47. His delegation commended those States parties which had submitted reports under article VII of the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid. It hoped that States which had not yet done so would ratify or accede to that instrument without delay in view of the conflicting signals coming out of South Africa. In particular, it urged all States whose transnational corporations continued to do business with South Africa to take measures to terminate such links.

48. Although his delegation welcomed the new measures of political reform, recently announced by the South African régime, as a step in the right direction, it cautioned against euphoria, and was saddened by some countries' seemingly hasty decision to lift sanctions. The events of the past year suggested that continued international pressure would be needed to ensure that South Africa's State organs demonstrated both the ability and the willingness to implement those measures in full.

49. It thus joined the leadership of South Africa's liberation movements in calling for the maintenance of sanctions until all political prisoners had been released, the principle of one man, one vote had been introduced and the return of political exiles had been facilitated. While welcoming all the positive statements made and measures adopted by the South African Government, it thus cautioned against any relaxation of pressure until the dismantling of apartheid had reached an irreversible stage.

50. His delegation endorsed all the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Working Group of Experts and commended them for adoption by the Commission.

51. Mr. de RIVERO (Peru) said that, when the Commission had begun its decisive action against apartheid in 1967, Peru had been in the front rank and had been a founder member of the Ad Hoc Working Group of Experts on southern Africa. Since then, his delegation had never been pessimistic, sceptical or indifferent in its attitude to apartheid, even when apartheid had seemed an ineradicable feature of white South Africa's policy. It had taken an active part in the preparation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid. Peru was a member of the Special Committee against Apartheid and had chaired the World Conference on Sanctions against Racist South Africa, held in June 1986, as well as the task force on political prisoners in South Africa, which had met from 1986 to 1988.

52. The struggle against apartheid was at last showing signs of progress; South Africa's white leadership had begun to acknowledge that that policy had led only to hatred, confrontation and death, as well as to world-wide opprobrium, and that the country must inevitably move towards a democracy from which no ethnic group was excluded.

53. As a result, the threshold of the 1990s had been marked by changes unimaginable only a short time previously: Nelson Mandela had been freed after 27 years of captivity, Oliver Tambo had been able to return from exile, and political opposition parties had been legalized; the state of emergency had been lifted in the Orange Free State, Cape Province and Natal; the Separate Amenities Act had been abolished; and commissions had been established to investigate the security forces. Other similar measures, announced at the recent opening of the South African Parliament, included proposals to abolish the Group Areas Act, the Lands Act and the Population Registration Act.

54. His delegation agreed with the African National Congress that those measures marked a positive step, in line with the principle that South Africa was a single nation and that the Government must derive its legitimacy from the governed; a climate must be established for the drafting of a new constitution by means of a constituent assembly elected on the basis of the equality of all citizens. Likewise important for progress were measures such as repeal of the security laws, the return of exiles, an end to the violence committed by paramilitary groups of the extreme right, and equality of suffrage. His delegation also welcomed the recent understanding between Nelson Mandela and Chief Buthelezi, since a climate of conciliation and trust between rival black political groups was essential. Nevertheless, a long road, full of potholes, still lay ahead, requiring careful efforts by South Africans and vigilance on the part of the world community.

55. Mr. ZHAN Dao (China) said that one of the United Nations' major purposes was to promote racial equality. Thanks to efforts over many years, the majority of countries and peoples had accepted the concept of complete equality, irrespective of race, colour or ethnic origin, as a fundamental

human right. It was particularly gratifying that the Namibian people's accession to national independence, a victory achieved through its unyielding struggle with the support of the international community, had been a feature of the further progress witnessed during the past year; his delegation warmly welcomed the observer delegation of Namibia, which was, for the first time, attending a session of the Commission.

56. However, the black people in South Africa remained under the barbarous system of apartheid, a system long since cast aside by the civilized world. The black people's unrelenting struggle, and the international community's sustained sanctions, had at last begun to force the South African authorities to take some steps towards a political solution, such as the gradual lifting of the state of emergency, the release of some black activists and the removal of bans on the African National Congress and other anti-racist organizations. At the same time, however, the authorities had not yet abolished the fundamental legislation of apartheid. The apartheid system was deep-rooted and would not wither away of its own accord.

57. Rather than slacken its efforts, therefore, the international community should step up its support for the national liberation movements and front-line States, and continue to apply sanctions against the South African régime until its racist policies had been abolished. The Declaration on Apartheid and its Destructive Consequences in Southern Africa, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution S-16/1, explicitly provided principles and programmes of action for the settlement of the South African question. It was to be hoped that the South African authorities would correctly interpret the current situation, seek to take the necessary steps towards a political settlement in conformity with that Declaration, and adopt substantive measures to abolish the apartheid system so that all South African people, irrespective of race, colour or sex, could enjoy equal rights.

58. The Chinese Government and people had always firmly opposed racism, and would continue to support the people of South Africa until it was victorious in eradicating apartheid. China called on the international community to give more support to the South African people, and to anti-apartheid organizations in South Africa and the neighbouring States, including continued co-ordination in imposing effective sanctions. In particular, it appealed to those countries in a position to exercise political, economic and military influence on South Africa to contribute to the efforts to eliminate apartheid and put an end to racist rule in that country.

59. Mrs. REGAZZOLI (Argentina) said that world peace and harmony could be achieved only through respect for all human rights, as an indivisible whole, in order that every nation could enjoy social justice, economic freedom and political sovereignty. In that connection, a number of events during the past year, including the legalization of the ANC and the release of Nelson Mandela, gave grounds for optimism. The world community expected that the announced proposals to abolish the system which sanctioned racial discrimination in southern Africa - the sole system of mass violation of human rights extant in the world - meant that the ignominious institution of apartheid would be dismantled entirely.

60. Her delegation remained disquieted, however, by the persistence of certain actions, indicated in the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group of Experts on southern Africa (E/CN.4/1991/10) - for example, the systematic torture in detention of children and adolescents and their harassment after release.

61. It was right that action for the Second Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination should emphasize the grotesque system of apartheid, a system that could not be amended or transformed, but could only be completely eradicated. Its continued existence was an affront to the conscience of mankind and could no longer be tolerated.

62. It was to be hoped that the South African Government would permit the Ad Hoc Working Group of Experts to visit the country and conduct inquiries in accordance with its mandate, and that it would fulfil, as speedily as possible, its promise to repeal the apartheid legislation and promote negotiations with the leaders of the majority population. It was to be hoped that the Pretoria Government had come to realize that only a free, pluralist society, with equality of rights for all inhabitants, would guarantee a future of peace and prosperity in South Africa.

63. Mr. HARUN-UR-RASHID (Bangladesh) said that his delegation was encouraged by the fact that the Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights had taken the initiative, the previous year, to convene an inter-agency consultation for the purpose of ensuring that the activities of other United Nations organizations were conducive to the aim of preventing racial discrimination.

64. Recent political changes throughout the world, particularly the decline of bi-polar ideological confrontation, had provided new opportunities for international co-operation in the field of human rights. Everyone recognized that human rights violations represented a major threat to peace. Yet, despite the proclamation of the Second Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, racism was still alive. Ominous signs of the rise of the extreme right and of virulent nationalism might result in cases of racism and anti-semitism. The world had entered a new and uncharted phase, in which it was necessary to avoid chaos and ensure respect for human rights.

65. Discussions concerning the need to combat racism and racial discrimination naturally gave rise to consideration of the situation in South Africa. In that connection, there were three documents before the Commission: the report of the Group of Three (E/CN.4/1991/42); the updated report by the Special Rapporteur of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1990/13 and Add.1); and the final report of the Ad Hoc Working Group of Experts on southern Africa (E/CN.4/1991/10).

66. The report of the Group of Three highlighted the nature of the exploitation of the resources and people of South Africa to the detriment of the majority of the population and recommended, inter alia, that the States parties to the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid should strengthen their co-operation at the international level and take measures in accordance with the decisions of the Security Council.

67. The Special Rapporteur's report focused on the circumstances whereby trade sanctions were circumvented, the shortcomings in the measures adopted by Governments in terms of the Security Council resolutions and the marked increase in exports to South Africa, while the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group of Experts clearly emphasized the nature of human rights violations in South Africa.

68. His delegation endorsed the recommendations contained in all three reports.

69. In the past few days, the world had been informed of the intention of the South African régime to scrap the notorious laws on which apartheid rested. That was a welcome and positive development. At the same time, his delegation fully understood the caution expressed by the Deputy President of the ANC and agreed that unless and until the progress towards the elimination of apartheid became irreversible, sanctions should not be relaxed.

70. Bangladesh consistently stood for the elimination of the abhorrent system of apartheid, which was repugnant not only to the principles of international law but also to human dignity. It was thus a party to the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid and complied with its provisions, and his delegation appealed to States that had not yet done so to ratify or accede to that Convention without further delay.

71. The fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights had been incorporated into the Constitution of the country and were enforceable by the courts. In addition to such constitutional safeguards against discrimination on the basis of race, caste, belief or gender, there were also penal provisions for offences relating to apartheid. His Government's total commitment to the eradication of apartheid was demonstrated by its role in international activities to establish non-racial democracy on the basis of adult suffrage in South Africa.

72. Mr. AZIKIWE (Observer for Nigeria) said that, although the elimination of apartheid and racial discrimination continued to command priority attention, the problem remained unresolved. His delegation reiterated its rejection and condemnation of apartheid and, while commending the international community for the action taken against apartheid over the years, it wished to point out that the persistence of apartheid in South Africa was an indictment of that community as a whole. Apartheid continued to impede the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination and was the root cause of the crisis and instability in South Africa.

73. The contents of the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group of Experts on southern Africa (E/CN.4/1991/10) provoked deep concern and outrage. It revealed that widespread individual and mass violations of human rights continued to occur in South Africa. The report cited cases of exiled individuals, granted amnesty by the Pretoria Government as part of the general amnesty of the previous year, who were subsequently arrested on entering South Africa. The Working Group had noted many cases of the violation of the right to life. There was continuing torture of men, women and schoolchildren. The report also noted the increase of extreme right wing and conservative activities, the declared aim of which was to impede the dismantling of apartheid and restore it in its original form.

74. In its assessment of the year under review, the report stated that, in spite of a number of statements of intent from the South African Government to bring about changes, the Working Group noted that the situation in South Africa remained unchanged or had become worse than before, and that there were contradictions in the attitude of the Government of South Africa. His delegation supported the Working Group's recommendations which, if fully implemented, would accelerate the elimination of apartheid and was in favour of renewing the Working Group's mandate.

75. Despite the fact that apartheid remained in place, his delegation could not ignore the positive and encouraging developments that were taking place in South Africa. In February 1990, President De Klerk had announced some far-reaching measures and the repeal of various laws for the purpose of reforming apartheid. The President's recent address, a few days previously, gave further evidence of his intention to move away from apartheid and to engage in the process of "fundamental reform".

76. However, it should be remembered, in that connection, that apartheid could not be reformed and must be totally eliminated. Moreover, despite the Government's expressed intention to repeal the Land Act, the Group Areas Act and the Development of Black Communities Act, the bills in question had yet to be approved by the Parliament and thus acquire the force of law. There was other racist legislation also which the Government, by its own admission, was unable to repeal, such as the Population Registration Act, which classified South Africans from birth to death. Furthermore, the Constitution remained a racist document and excluded the indigenous majority from access to political power.

77. His delegation commended the courage and initiative of President De Klerk. The movement to liberalism was a positive one. Recent developments had reduced the areas of difference with the representatives of the indigenous majority of South Africa and the national liberation movements and had helped to create an atmosphere conducive to a constitutional dialogue between the Government and those representatives. However, it could not yet be said that the changes had put South Africa on the path of irreversible change for the elimination of apartheid. The test of irreversibility should be the legitimate constitutional involvement of the indigenous majority and its active engagement in the process for the total elimination of apartheid and for the establishment of a free, united and democratic South Africa.

78. In that connection, his delegation endorsed the position of the national liberation movements, in particular the ANC, that the Government could not preside over the transition to democracy and at the same time be a party to negotiations on change, since the two roles were in conflict. It therefore called for a democratically elected constituent assembly to regulate the transition to a free, united and democratic South Africa. His Government would continue to accord all necessary diplomatic, political and material support to the national liberation movements for the achievement of those objectives.

79. His delegation thus urged the international community to maintain existing sanctions until evidence emerged of irreversible changes for the elimination of apartheid in the establishment of a free, non-racial and democratic South Africa, based on the principle of one man, one vote. In that

context, he called on the organizations which continued to aid and do business with South Africa to refrain from doing so and to help maintain the existing sanctions against that country. There could be no doubt that it was primarily the threat or use of sanctions against South Africa, coupled with the active resistance of the people, which had constrained the Government\* to pursue a policy of liberalization and change.

80. In connection with the report on the implementation of the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid (E/CN.4/1991/42), his delegation noted with concern the small number of States parties that had submitted their periodic reports and called on those that had not yet done so to comply as quickly as possible. It also urged States which had not ratified or acceded to the Convention to do so, particularly those countries which had jurisdiction over transnational corporations operating in South Africa. His delegation fully supported the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report of the Group of Three (E/CN.4/1991/42).

81. There was no doubt that the United Nations continued to play a significant role in the struggle against racism. The Programme of Action for the Second Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination was a practical demonstration of the Organization's commitment to move away from declarations and standard-setting to concrete action. It was a strategy that had made it possible to co-ordinate the actions of Member States and the various international and non-governmental organizations in the fight against racism.

82. In his delegation's view, the implementation of the Programme of Action should continue to command the priority attention of the Commission, with particular emphasis on action against apartheid. While his delegation supported the plan of activities for the second half of the Second Decade, it would like to see greater attention paid to the organization of more seminars, workshops and conferences. In addition, efforts should be intensified for the provision of assistance and relief to the victims of racism and racial discrimination.

83. His delegation was pleased to have participated in the work on the draft International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and the Members of their Families. It hoped that there would be no loss of interest in the plight of migrant workers and that more solutions would be proposed for the improvement of their conditions and the provision of relief and assistance. While it supported the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report (E/CN.4/1991/43), it regretted that some of the activities in the plan of activities for the first half of the Programme of Action had yet to be carried out. It called on the appropriate authorities in the Secretariat to release adequate resources, as authorized by the General Assembly, for the implementation of all the activities approved by the General Assembly.

84. Mr. PHEKO (Pan Africanist Congress of Azania) said that, on 1 February 1991, while Mr. De Klerk of South Africa had been addressing the racist minority Parliament in Cape Town, various political organizations had held a mass rally outside demanding the immediate establishment of an elected constituent assembly to draft a new non-racial majority democratic constitution for the country. Inside the Parliament, Mr. De Klerk had

proclaimed that he was considering suspending or abolishing some apartheid laws which the PAC had called "pillars of apartheid". That was a welcome intention, but it had still to be translated into deeds.

85. On 2 February 1990, the South African racist régime had announced that it would lift the ban on African political organizations opposed to apartheid and colonialism and enter into negotiations with them on constitutional changes, designed to dismantle apartheid. Nine days later, the Pretoria régime had released Nelson Mandela. Over 3,000 political prisoners, however, had remained in gaol. It was expected that they would be released in a matter of weeks and that all political exiles wishing to return home could do so at their convenience. However, months had passed without any fundamental change having taken place except for the massive killings of Africans on a genocidal scale.

86. It was estimated that about 10,000 Africans had been slaughtered between February and December 1990. An important aspect to be borne in mind in connection with the violence in South Africa was that Africans were a colonized people living under a racist régime, which had a moral and legal obligation to protect all the inhabitants in the country. The evidence was that, if whites were killed by Africans, the offenders were always arrested. However, if whites or their agents killed Africans or Africans killed other Africans, the culprits were rarely found. There seemed to be a conspiracy to wipe out the African population or at least to reduce its numerical strength.

87. The media was controlled by forces with vested economic and other interests in South Africa and it therefore painted a rosy picture of "wonderful changes" in that country. However, even the best of apologists on reforming apartheid as against dismantling the evil system had admitted that Mr. De Klerk's dramatic announcement of February 1990 had not been matched by deeds.

88. One such apologist, Allister Sparks, had pointed out in an article in the Observer that there was overwhelming evidence that the South African régime's opponents were being killed by Mr. De Klerk's police. In that connection, Mr. Makwetu, the PAC President had noted in a press statement on 1 February 1991 that Mr. De Klerk was silent about the murderous activities of the hit squads and security forces and that there was not a word about punishing the guilty. What was even more frightening was that the South African régime had set aside 5 billion rand of its defence force budget for secret operations and the acquisition of arms.

89. In a speech on 19 April 1990, Mr. De Klerk had been clear and honest. He had rejected majority rule, calling it simplistic and unsuitable for a country like South Africa and had said that a so-called new constitution would have to be approved by the racist minority electorate in a referendum or election. He had told the members of the white minority that a key role awaited them in the new dispensation and that those who currently enjoyed full political rights were not prepared to bow out apologetically from the stage of history.

90. There was substantial evidence that by "negotiations", Mr. De Klerk's régime meant collusion, surrender and co-option of the dispossessed Africans to the apartheid system. In those "negotiations", there was no impartial

chairman or mediator from the international community and Mr. De Klerk was therefore both player and referee, prosecutor and judge, oppressor and purported "liberator".

91. On 7 August 1990, Mr. De Klerk had sent an emissary to the late PAC President, Dr. Mothopeng, inviting the PAC for talks. The PAC, which genuinely believed in democracy, had stated that it was prepared to negotiate once majority rule, the distribution of resources, particularly the land, and a constituent assembly elected on a non-racial basis of one man, one vote on a common voters' role were included in the agenda for negotiations. Only democratically elected representatives of the people could authoritatively claim to have a mandate to determine the nature and content of the new constitution.

92. Moreover, the whites who constituted only 13 per cent of the population of South Africa, had seized 106,800,000 hectares of land leaving only 15,200,000 hectares of barren land for 36 million Africans. The white settlers controlled 80 per cent of the country's wealth. Apartheid could not be dismantled without redressing that economic imbalance, as a result of which the indigenous African majority suffered from poverty, disease, under-development, a very high child mortality rate and a very short life expectancy.

93. At its National Congress in December 1990, the PAC had repeated its conditions for negotiation and had also resolved that existing sanctions against the South African régime must be strengthened. In that connection, he said that the Nineteen African States Preferential Trade Area Conference, held in Swaziland in November 1990, had also called for sanctions to ensure that Mr. De Klerk did not renege on his undertakings.

94. In 1990, the human rights situation in South Africa had deteriorated to its worst level ever. The Human Rights Commission in Johannesburg had reported that, between February and October 1990, 2,679 people had been injured by police action in situations of political unrest and that 92 were still being held under the Internal Security Act.

95. PAC leaders in exile had been refused permission to return home to bury their President, Dr. Mothopeng, two months previously. They had also initially been refused permission to enter South Africa to hold their National Congress and consult with the African people on negotiations.

96. In conclusion, he said that the stakes were high in South Africa, which was precisely why that rich country had never been decolonized.

97. Mr. AL-OTHTMAN (Observer for Kuwait) said that his Government had never ceased to condemn the racist policies of the Government of South Africa in all international forums, and would continue to do so at the current session of the Commission, despite the Gulf crisis.

98. He shared the concern of the Ad Hoc Working Group of Experts on southern Africa at the partial extension of the state of emergency in South Africa, which had resulted in greater violence. Other sources of concern were the heightened powers granted to the police and armed forces, which had led to the repression of students and trade unionists, forced population removals and

restrictions on freedom of expression and conscience, not to mention the cases of torture of prisoners, particularly children. He had been particularly distressed to learn of the detention of Mr. "Mac" Maharaj under Section 29 of the Internal Security Act, which meant that his life was in danger. The violence in Natal and in the black townships around Johannesburg in August 1990 was also deeply regrettable.

99. The right to life was a fundamental human right which was being flagrantly violated by the South African Government. The Working Group's report showed that the situation had not changed for the better, despite the reforms announced by President De Klerk. Bantustanization and other policies of apartheid continued in South Africa despite certain minor changes.

100. The Commission could not remain indifferent to the sufferings of black workers, particularly the 6 million farm workers who lived in inhuman conditions and whose wages were a mere fraction of those received by whites.

101. He endorsed the conclusions of the Working Group and urged it to continue its activities.

102. Mr. NDIYE (Amnesty International) said that, during the past year, the South African Government had taken some initiatives to reduce violations of basic civil and political rights, including the lifting of restriction orders on some 700 persons, the release of prisoners of conscience and other political prisoners detained under the nationwide state of emergency, and a dramatic decline in judicial executions from more than 100 per annum to only 1 in 1990.

103. However, his organization was concerned that serious human rights violations were still continuing. Insufficient action had been taken to prevent the torture of detainees, who were often held incommunicado, and some had died as a result. The Government had so far failed to repeal laws which permitted indefinite incommunicado detention without trial and granted immunity from prosecution to the security forces. Nor had adequate steps been taken to investigate and bring to justice members of the security forces implicated in the torture and killing of opponents of the Government.

104. During 1990, the security forces had used their powers under the state of emergency and the Internal Security Act to hold more than 1,500 persons incommunicado. In Amnesty International's experience, incommunicado detention facilitated torture.

105. A number of released detainees had brought charges of torture against the police. On occasion, the courts had issued injunctions against the police after receiving evidence of the ill-treatment of detainees. Certain police stations had been repeatedly named as places where torture had occurred. At Welverdiend police station, the victims, predominantly youths, had described being beaten, kicked, suspended upside down on an iron bar, partially suffocated and given electric shocks. Police officials had announced that the methods used at Welverdiend were under investigation, but their conclusions had not yet been forthcoming.

106. At least 18 persons had died in police custody in 1990, and in only one case had the Government ordered an independent judicial inquiry. While concluding that Internal Security Act detainee Clayton Sizwe Sithole had committed suicide, the investigating judge had described the conditions in which he had been held as making "serious inroads into the normal rights and privileges of every citizen".

107. The security forces' lack of accountability, particularly to the courts, had resulted in large-scale loss of life. In 1990, the security forces had again been responsible for killings of unarmed civilians which amounted to extra-judicial executions. In Sebokeng in March 1990, 5 persons had been killed and 161 wounded when the police had fired on a peaceful demonstration organized by the United Democratic Front. Following a public outcry, the South African President had ordered a judicial commission of inquiry. The investigating judge had concluded that the behaviour of the police had been unlawful and unjustified, and had recommended that the Transvaal Attorney-General should investigate the conduct of the police officers with a view to bringing criminal charges against them. Nearly five months later, the Attorney-General's decision was still not known.

108. His organization urged the Government of South Africa to ensure that police officers who committed killings in such circumstances were brought to justice.

109. During the violence that had swept through the black townships around Johannesburg in late 1990, there had been persistent allegations of complicity on the part of the security forces in killings and other acts of violence carried out against members and supporters of the ANC and allied organizations. A judicial commission of inquiry into the alleged involvement of the security forces in political assassinations had recently concluded that a covert military unit, the Civil Co-operation Bureau (CCB), had been involved in attempted assassinations of opponents of the Government as recently as 1989. The commission of inquiry had recommended that the Attorney-General should further investigate a number of cases of assassinations and attempted assassinations with which CCB members had been linked. There was no indication as yet that the Attorney-General had reached a decision in those cases.

110. In his organization's view, the Government of South Africa should take immediate action to repeal legislation providing for indefinite incommunicado detention without trial and to bring all laws fully into line with the standards set out in international human rights instruments. The Government should state publicly and unequivocally that the torture and ill-treatment of prisoners would not be tolerated, and formal procedures should be established to ensure that all such allegations were subjected to independent and impartial investigations.

111. Mr. RYDER (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions) said his organization welcomed the positive measures adopted by the South African Government in February 1990 and those announced in the previous week. However, it was clear that further steps needed to be taken urgently by the Pretoria régime before irreversible change could be said to have taken place.

112. The continued application of the Internal Security Act, and the wide-ranging powers which it conferred on the Government and the security forces, made the lifting of the state of emergency largely inconsequential. The régime could still do what it had done under emergency powers by slightly more cumbersome means, and large numbers of political prisoners were still detained without basic judicial guarantees.

113. In addition, many South Africans who were committed to the abolition of apartheid remained in exile. The Government must act effectively to facilitate their early return.

114. The changes announced by President De Klerk did nothing to alter the current situation in which political rights and power were concentrated solely in the hands of South Africa's white minority. The Government had not committed itself to the objective of one man, one vote in a united, non-racial democracy. His organization believed that a genuinely representative constituent assembly must be convened without further delay in order to pave the way for the adoption of a constitution embodying the principle of majority rule.

115. Until all those obstacles were removed, international sanctions against South Africa must be maintained. The independent black trade-union movement had stated that, while it looked forward to the time when sanctions would become irrelevant, they were for the moment needed. Nelson Mandela had again urged the international community not to be hasty in reviewing sanctions.

116. Optimism concerning future developments in South Africa should be tempered by the experience of the past year. He had been particularly disappointed by the Government's continuing failure to repeal the provisions of the Labour Relations Amendment Act 1988 which severely restricted basic trade-union rights. While all trade unionists were victims of restrictive legislation, there were three categories of workers whose basic rights were denied to an even greater extent. Public-sector workers and domestic employees had still not been granted collective-bargaining rights, while the conditions of agricultural workers and their families had been described as inhuman.

117. In 1990, a year which had seen more industrial conflict than any other since black workers had won the right to organize, an estimated 4 million working days had been lost through strike action. Regrettably, many employers had continued to respond to legal industrial action by mass dismissals, intimidation and harassment, while the security forces had responded with arrests and violence.

118. Violence had also been directed against trade unionists outside the context of industrial conflicts. In that regard, the disturbances that had broken out in Natal and the Transvaal were a cause of deep concern. Working people had been the primary victims of those conflicts, which had taken the lives of well-known trade-union activists.

119. There was a growing concern that behind what was widely portrayed as "black on black violence" were the provocations of those with an interest in the preservation of the apartheid system. The failure of the police and security forces to bring to justice those responsible for acts of violence could not but raise questions as to their identity and connections.

120. His organization sincerely hoped that the recent meeting between Nelson Mandela and Chief Buthelezi would help put an end to the violence which stood as a major barrier to the final abolition of apartheid.

121. Mr. GROSSE (International Federation of Human Rights) said that his organization was particularly concerned at the role of the police in the recurring violence in South Africa. At Sebokeng in July 1990, members of Inkatha had attacked residents of workers' hostels under a police escort. In September, members of Inkatha had launched another armed attack on a train bound for Soweto; according to witnesses, the police had done nothing to protect the passengers. In both cases, the police had been warned beforehand that an attack was imminent.

122. In other townships, according to numerous reports, the police had disarmed community residents while allowing Inkatha members to retain their weapons.

123. At the time, the Natal Zulu Code had permitted Inkatha members, who were Zulus, to carry weapons, including battleaxes, spears and iron-tipped staffs, as part of their traditional dress. The subsequent amendment of the act had authorized the police to issue weapons permits to some groups while denying them to other groups. According to an independent board of inquiry consisting of lawyers and clergymen, attacks since November 1990 had been carried out by small groups carrying AK-47-type firearms, whereas, during August and September, such attacks had been perpetrated by larger groups using traditional weapons. Assaults had also been committed by members of extreme-right-wing groups, such as the Order of Death.

124. The Harms Commission report had established the responsibility of a police unit, the Civil Co-operation Bureau (CCB), for a large number of violent crimes. However, the head of CCB and other responsible authorities had not been found guilty. In January 1991, a former police officer, Dirk Coetzee, had revealed the existence of death squads within the police. A report issued by a non-governmental organization had concluded that many members of the police and armed forces were involved in sabotage and destabilization activities. The report, which called for an independent judicial inquiry into those actions, had been supported by a number of judges and eminent persons.

125. His organization asked that the Government should exercise genuine control over the police to guarantee its impartiality, that police officers should be accountable for their actions, that police methods should be reviewed and that there should be a judicial inquiry into the conduct of the police and armed forces. In addition, the workers' hostels should be closed, the residents of the townships should be disarmed, patrols should be stationed at all railway terminals, the police "hit squads" should be dissolved and there should be an effective police presence wherever an attack was likely to take place.

126. Ms. SINEGEORGIS (Ethiopia), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that, at the previous meeting, representatives of three non-governmental organizations had made outlandish allegations about her country. Those

organizations were either ignorant of Ethiopian history or were deliberately distorting it for their own political ends. It was obvious that, by repeating similar distortions and biased comments year after year, they were aiding the secessionists who were working to weaken and dismember an ancient nation.

127. If those organizations had been accurately describing the existing situation in her country, they would have exposed the terrorist acts of the secessionists and their surrogates, including indiscriminate and inhuman attacks against the civilian population and sabotage of installations and infrastructures.

128. In past statements, her delegation had informed the Commission of the peace initiatives undertaken by her Government over the years and the numerous obstacles created by the secessionists. Two rounds of negotiations on procedural matters had been held with one of the secessionist groups from the autonomous region of Eritrea. However, the secessionists still refused to agree on a date for the commencement of substantive talks, thereby blocking all avenues towards a peaceful solution.

129. Contrary to what had been alleged by one of the non-governmental organizations, the fixing of a date for discussions did not depend on the Ethiopian Government alone, but was subject to the mutual agreement of the parties concerned. Accordingly, the statement of the organization in question demonstrated its utter partiality and untruthfulness.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.