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THE POLICIES OF APARTHEID OF THE GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH AFRICA

Ways and means of promoting concerted action against apartheid
by the trade-union movement

Report of the Special Committee on Apartheid

Rapporteur: Mr. Uddhav Deo BHATT (Nepal)

* Revision issued for technical reasons.

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

12 November 1971

Sir,

..... I have the honour to send you herewith the report on "Ways and means of promoting concerted action against apartheid by the trade-union movement", adopted unanimously on 12 November 1971 by the Special Committee on Apartheid.

This report is submitted to the General Assembly in pursuance of operative paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 2671 D (XXV) of 8 December 1970.

Accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

(Signed) Abdulrahim A. FARAH
Chairman
Special Committee on Apartheid

His Excellency
U Thant
Secretary-General of the United Nations
New York

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1. In resolution 2671 D (XXV) of 8 December 1970, the General Assembly stated:

"3. Invites all national and regional trade-union organizations to observe the International Year for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination by organizing seminars, symposia, conferences and other activities against apartheid and to report to the Special Committee on ways and means by which the international campaign against apartheid can best be promoted through the trade-union movement;

"4. Requests the Special Committee, in consultation with the Organization of African Unity and the International Labour Organization, to report to the General Assembly at its twenty-sixth session on the possibility of holding an international conference of trade unions in 1972, and on any alternative proposals which it may receive from the principal trade-union federations, for promoting concerted action against apartheid by the trade-union movement at a national and international level."

2. The Special Committee considered this matter early in 1971. After preliminary consultations with the representatives of the ILO and the three main international trade-union confederations in New York, and pursuant to a decision of the Committee, the Chairman addressed identical letters on 2 March 1971, to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), the World Confederation of Labour (WCL), the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) and the All African Trade Union Federation (AATUF) inviting their views on ways and means by which the international campaign against apartheid can best be promoted through special activities they proposed to conduct in observance of the International Year for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination. The Committee also invited comments concerning the possibility of holding an international conference of trade unions in 1972, or any alternative proposals, for promoting concerted action against apartheid by the trade-union movement at a national and international level.

3. The provisions of General Assembly resolution 2671 D (XXV) were considered by the International Organisations Committee of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office on 26 February 1971. The report of the Committee stated:

"... the Worker members maintained that the desirability of an international conference of trade unions for the purpose was necessarily a matter for the international trade union movement alone, and not for the International Labour Organisation as a tripartite organisation.

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"The Employer members supported the idea that if and when the international trade union movement organised such a conference, the ILO should place at its disposal the full series of special apartheid reports prepared for the International Labour Conference." 1/

4. In a letter dated 23 March 1971, the World Confederation of Labour stated that it had proposed to the other international trade-union organizations, and to the most representative regional and national trade-union organizations, the convening in 1972 of an International Trade Union Conference against Apartheid and Colonial Régimes.
5. The mission of the Special Committee which visited Europe and Africa in June 1971 held consultations on this matter with ICFTU and WCL in Brussels, with the ILO in Geneva and the Organization of African Unity in Addis Ababa. It also consulted with national trade union leaders in Ireland and France and communicated with WFTU, as it was unable to visit Prague.
6. The consultations indicated that the trade-union movement can play a more effective role in the campaign against apartheid, for instance in discouraging emigration of skilled workers to South Africa, taking appropriate action with regard to the infringements of trade union rights and persecution of trade unionists in South Africa, exerting pressure on investors who profit from the practice of racial discrimination in South Africa and, in general, supporting the decisions of the competent organs of the United Nations and the ILO. They also indicated that the three main international trade union confederations were opposed to apartheid.
7. The consultations also showed that WCL and WFTU favoured an international trade union conference against apartheid, to be held immediately after the ILO General Conference in June 1972. However, ICFTU felt that a trade union conference organized by the trade unions themselves would not be possible under the present circumstances. It informed the Mission, however, that the question of apartheid would figure prominently on the agenda of its next World Congress in July 1972.

1/ ILO document GB.182/11/27, paras. 21 and 22.

8. Subsequently, WCL provided further information to the Committee on its contacts with international and national trade union organizations concerning the proposed conference. It indicated that ICFTU remained unwilling to join WCL and WFTU in preparing for the proposed conference. Moreover, a majority of the Western European national trade union organizations affiliated with ICFTU aligned themselves with its position and did not agree to join a preparatory committee. On the other hand, WCL and WFTU, and their affiliates, as well as a number of important regional and national autonomous trade union organizations approved and welcomed the proposal made by WCL to convene an international trade union conference against apartheid in 1972.

9. It suggested, in a letter of 5 October, that consideration be given to holding a conference under the auspices of the United Nations in the hope that ICFTU might be willing to participate and that the conference might be representative of the whole trade-union movement. It added that "the WCL and the WFTU would, regardless of the position of the ICFTU, bring their full support and co-operation to the Special Committee for the preparation and the organization of the Conference in 1972".

10. After consideration by the Special Committee of the report of the Mission^{2/} and the letter of the WCL, the Chairman addressed a letter to ICFTU on 13 October urgently requesting to be informed whether ICFTU would participate in an international conference of trade unions under the auspices of the United Nations. He indicated that, if the main trade union confederations agreed, the Special Committee would consider proposing to the General Assembly that a conference be held at Geneva, immediately after the General Conference of the ILO in June 1972.

11. In a telegram dated 27 October, addressed to the Chairman of the Special Committee, ICFTU stated:

"Re your letter 13 October confirm ICFTU has no objection in participating apartheid conference held under UN auspices provided per diem and if necessary transport expenses covered by UN stop letter follows."

^{2/} A/AC.115/L.308.

12. Further, in a letter dated 29 October, addressed to the Chairman of the Special Committee, ICFTU stated:

"The ICFTU, as an organisation with consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council and a number of United Nations specialized agencies, fully participates in and closely associates itself with all their activities which affect the interests, living and working conditions of workers throughout the world.

"On the basis of the long standing co-operation between the ICFTU and United Nations organs in the fight against racial discrimination and apartheid for instance, your Committee has been fully informed of the outstanding contribution of the international free trade union movement in this respect. May we mention in this connexion that it was on the initiative of workers' delegates from ICFTU affiliated organizations that the 56th session of the International Labour Conference adopted a resolution concerning apartheid and the contribution of the International Labour Organisation to the International Year for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination. We would like to mention that apartheid will be one of the most important items to be discussed at our forthcoming tenth Congress, scheduled to take place in London from 10 to 14 July 1972.

"In due course, we shall be pleased to send you an official invitation to attend the deliberations of our Congress.

"Our tenth World Congress will be preceded by a meeting of the ICFTU Executive Board. Despite the fact that we shall have to give much time to the preparation of the afore-mentioned events, we pledge our full co-operation to ensure the largest attendance to the United Nations trade union conference against apartheid. We are happy that such a conference will be convened under United Nations auspices and expect that per diem and, if necessary, travel expenses are covered by the United Nations."

13. In a telegram dated 4 November, the Chairman of the Special Committee informed the ICFTU as follows:

"Special committee envisages proposing to General Assembly convening of trade union conference against apartheid for two days immediately after ILO general conference with United Nations conference facilities stop Most unlikely that United Nations will reimburse travel costs and per diem stop Request reconsider matter and advise if ICFTU willing participate in conference under these arrangements."

14. No reply has yet been received from ICFTU.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON APARTHEID

15. The Special Committee recommends the following draft resolution for consideration by the General Assembly at its twenty-sixth session:

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Ways and means of promoting concerted action against apartheid
by the trade-union movement

The General Assembly,

Recalling resolution 2671 D (XXV) of 8 December 1970,

Noting the opposition of the international trade-union movement to apartheid and racial discrimination,

Convinced of the need to promote concerted action by the trade-union movement at the national and international levels in the campaign against apartheid,

Noting that the question of apartheid will be before the International Labour Conference at Geneva in June 1972,

Taking note of the report of the Special Committee on Apartheid,

1. Appeals to all national and international trade-union organizations to intensify action against apartheid in particular:

(a) By discouraging emigration of skilled workers to South Africa;

(b) By taking appropriate action in connexion with the infringements of trade-union rights and persecution of trade unionists in South Africa;

(c) By exerting maximum pressure against foreign economic and financial interests which are profiting from racial discrimination against non-white workers in South Africa, in order to persuade them to cease such exploitation; and

(d) By co-operating with other organizations engaged in the international campaign against apartheid;

2. Decides to give further consideration to the proposed International Trade Union Conference at its twenty-seventh session;

3. Requests and authorizes the Special Committee on Apartheid to send a mission to hold consultative meetings, if possible, with the workers' representatives at the International Labour Conference at Geneva, in June 1972, to consider lines of action which the trade-union movement may take against apartheid, including the holding of the International Trade Union Conference, and to invite representatives of international and regional trade-union federations to those consultative meetings;

4. Requests the International Labour Organisation and invites the workers' representatives to lend co-operation to the Special Committee on Apartheid in preparing and holding the consultative meetings.

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16. The Special Committee also recommends that it be authorized to send a representative to Geneva in February 1972 for consultations with the ILO and the workers' representatives in preparation for the meetings, and to send a mission - consisting of two committee members and a member of the Secretariat - to attend the consultative meetings in June.
