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Chairman: Prince WAN WAITHAYAKON (Thailand).

AGENDA ITEM 23

The question of race conflict in South Africa resulting from the policies of *apartheid* of the Government of the Union of South Africa: report of the United Nations Commission on the Racial Situation in the Union of South Africa (A/2953 and Corr.1) (*continued*)

1. Mr. MERROW (United States of America) felt that the question of race conflict in South Africa involved such serious difficulties and might have such far-reaching implications that it demanded the greatest caution. It was a question of examining, and perhaps passing judgement on, the policies and practices of a Member of the United Nations in a most delicate area. There was therefore reason to wonder, with some concern, what direction United Nations action should take in a situation of that kind.
2. It was certain that the United Nations must endeavour, in a practical and constructive manner, to promote the advancement of human rights throughout the world. The question was how to do so. The Secretary-General had stressed, in the introduction to his annual report (A/2911), that the United Nations was faced with difficulties in that field; he had gone on to say that those difficulties should not prompt the Organization to actions with doubtful implications and that the Organization should favour initiatives leading forward without introducing the risk of sterile and endless controversy. That was sage counsel, which the Committee should bear in mind when considering the question of race conflict in South Africa.
3. It was true that the general objectives set forth in the Charter of promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion, were still valid. It was undeniable that that was the goal towards which the efforts of all Member States should be directed. If, however, the United Nations was to do useful work and succeed in its task, it could not hope to take giant steps forward.
4. In the United States the concept of the equality of man had been given reality in the earliest days of the Republic. The importance of that concept had been reasserted by President Eisenhower in his inaugural address on 20 January 1953. In that connexion,

Mr. Merrow cited the motto of his own State, New Hampshire: Live free or die. That ideal of freedom was valid for all the racial groups of highly diverse origins that lived side by side in New Hampshire, as in most States of the United States. That situation had had a major influence on the attitude of the inhabitants of the United States with respect to race problems. Although the people were so much attached to the concepts of liberty and equality, they realized that the implementation of those principles did not come overnight. In 200 years the United States had still not fully routed prejudice and intolerance, although there had been progress on that road. For example, a great step forward had been taken when the Supreme Court had ruled on 17 May 1954 that segregation in the public schools on the basis of race, creed or colour was unconstitutional. The United States Government was now endeavouring to enforce that decision, but it recognized that it would succeed only through much patient effort. That example showed that the Committee could not expect mere resolutions to correct, overnight, a situation that had existed for generations.

5. He by no means shared all the conclusions in the report of the Commission on the Racial Situation in the Union of South Africa (A/2953 and Corr.1), but he felt that the report brought out one factor which ought to underlie the general attitude towards the question of respect for human rights: the moral force of international public opinion, which played a particularly important part in that realm. From the first occasion on which the question of race conflict in South Africa had been considered by the Committee, United States representatives had asserted that the United Nations should reaffirm its belief in the wisdom and the universal validity of the human rights provisions of the Charter as a standard to which all Members should aspire.

6. When considering the serious problems relating to human rights that existed in a particular country, the United Nations ought rather to devote its attention to the evolution of international standards having general application. If those problems were considered in that perspective, the situation in a particular country could be related to developments throughout the world and the risk of offending a Member State would be avoided. The United Nations could thus bring a moderating influence to bear and serve as a guide to all its Members.

7. The Commission referred, in paragraph 313 of its report, to the programme of United Nations advisory services for the promotion of human rights, sponsored by the United States in the Commission on Human Rights. He stressed the relevance which that programme could have for all Members of the United Nations, including the Union of South Africa.

8. Mr. KING (Liberia) thanked the United Nations Commission on the Racial Situation in the Union of South Africa for its work. He also paid a tribute to the Governments which had placed at the disposal of the

United Nations the eminent persons who were members of the Commission. He hoped that the United Nations itself would not fail to recognize the Commission's impartiality and its contribution to world peace.

9. Without wishing to stress the position which the Union of South Africa had taken on the matter in the General Assembly, he recalled that the Assembly had already decided that it had full competence to discuss the question. A further prolonged discussion of the matter would serve no useful purpose, as action was what the world now awaited from the United Nations.

10. His delegation was therefore pleased to join in sponsoring a draft resolution which would be proposed by a number of countries. It felt that the policy of *apartheid* was contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations, although it had been maintained from a purely technical point of view that the matter was within the domestic jurisdiction of the State concerned. It was inconsistent on the one hand to subscribe

to the Charter and bind oneself to respect the obligations following therefrom, and on the other to ride roughshod over the purposes and principles of the Charter by pursuing a policy diametrically opposed to them.

11. The draft resolution of which his delegation was a sponsor did not prescribe any punitive action against the Union of South Africa, nor did it in any way violate that country's integrity and independence. It confined itself to invoking the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, justice and the fundamental freedoms.

12. In conclusion he quoted a passage from an article by Mr. Lewis Galantière in *Foreign Affairs*, published in July 1950, showing that no nation could hope to attain world leadership merely through the exercise of force; that objective could be attained only by radiating culture.

The meeting rose at 3.40 p.m.