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NOTE VERBALE DATED 14 NOVEMBER 1960 FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE NORWEGIAN DELEGATION TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

The Chairman of the Norwegian delegation to the fifteenth session of the General Assembly presents his compliments to the Secretary-General and, with reference to the South African statement in the general debate at the 905th plenary meeting of the General Assembly on 14 October 1960, and the statement of the leader of the South African delegation of 18 October 1960, which has been circulated to all Members of the United Nations for their information (A/4558), has the honour to request that the attached statement from the Chairman of the Norwegian delegation be circulated to all Members of the United Nations for their information.

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE NORWEGIAN DELEGATION

On 18 October, this year, the leader of the South African delegation, His Excellency Mr. Eric Louw, pointed out that the Norwegian representative in the general debate in exercising his right of reply did not attempt "to refute the evidence" which Mr. Louw claims that he has presented to the General Assembly in support of his accusations against the Norwegian Government for practising racial discrimination against the Lapp (Same) minority in Norway.

Mr. Louw's statement has now been circulated to all delegations and I therefore feel constrained to make the following observations:

After Mr. Louw, during the general debate, had made his attack on the Norwegian Government, the Norwegian representative, in order not to prolong the debate by turning it into a debate on racial discriminations in South Africa, reserved his right to give a reply to the South African delegation in the Special Political Committee, to which this item has been allocated.

Mr. Louw, in his statement of 18 October, indicates that he is less than satisfied with this procedure, because the South African delegation has decided not to be present during the Committee's discussion of this item. I feel, however, that this difficulty could be overcome by the South African delegation reversing its decision to stay away from the Committee. As a Member of the United Nations the Union of South Africa is indeed expected to be present.

The Norwegian delegation, for its part, still reserves its right to deal with the South African statement in the Special Political Committee when the question of the racial conflict in South Africa comes up there.

However, I should like at this stage to point out the fundamental fact that there is not one law, act or regulation in force in Norway which deprive members of the Lapp minority of any of the rights and freedoms which are enjoyed by every citizen of the Kingdom of Norway. They are in every respect Norwegian citizens, with full political rights and entitled to the same legal protection and social rights and benefits as all other Norwegian citizens.

It is in my view entirely irrelevant to draw any parallel between the conditions of the Lapps in Norway and the situation in South Africa where racial discrimination is official government policy, implemented through laws and

regulations which deprive a large part of the population not only of common civil rights but also of fundamental human rights and freedoms.

The articles appearing in the Norwegian press concerning the Lapps in Norway, to which Mr. Louw has referred, do not reveal any discriminatory practices against the Lapp minority in my country. They do reveal that also amongst the Lapp people in Norway there are individuals who feel that other individuals or the society have done them wrong. Their complaints sometimes are justified; sometimes they are not. Everybody has, however, the right to have his cause brought to the attention of public opinion and to the authorities. It is essential in a democracy to have a vigilant press, and articles and reports of the kind to which Mr. Louw referred in his statement in the general debate are more than anything else evidence of a vigilant public opinion, reacting strongly against all forms of discrimination both in Norway and in other countries. In Norway, furthermore, there is no difference of opinion between the people and the authorities as regards the need to combat discrimination in all walks of life.

New York, 12 November 1960.

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