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QUESTION OF NAMIBIA

Letter dated 10 March 1981 from the Permanent Representative of  
South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-  
General

At the request of the South African Minister of Foreign Affairs and Information, the Honourable R. F. Botha, I am enclosing the text of a letter he has addressed to Your Excellency on 10 March 1981.

I should appreciate it if this letter could be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under item 36 of the preliminary list.

(Signed) J. Adriaan EKSTEEN  
Permanent Representative

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\* A/36/50.

ANNEX

Letter dated 10 March 1981 from the Minister of Foreign Affairs  
and Information of South Africa to the Secretary-General

On 6th March 1981 the General Assembly at its resumed thirty-fifth session adopted ten resolutions on South West Africa/Namibia. South Africa was illegally excluded from that session. In addition, the democratic parties of South West Africa/Namibia were prevented from addressing it, although SWAPO was afforded that opportunity. In rejecting these resolutions, the South African Government wishes to make the following comments:

Firstly, the resolutions clearly have no force or validity since they were adopted by a process which is ultra vires the Charter. In any event, resolutions of the General Assembly except for certain minor procedural matters, are not binding on any Member State. South Africa, although a founder member, was unconstitutionally prevented from addressing the Assembly. Despite the clear provisions of the Charter and of the Rules of Procedure as well as visible efforts to do so, on a matter in which South Africa has a vital interest and in respect of which South Africa has a contribution to make. Moreover, South Africa was denied the basic right, in terms of the Charter, of participation in the proceedings of the Assembly. The irresponsibility of the United Nations in proceeding with the institutionalization of its illegal actions and the spawning of confrontational resolutions, in pursuit of a vindictive and capricious campaign against a single Member State, has undermined its status and authority. South Africa's position has been set out in my letter of 6 March 1981 (A/35/802 - S/14395).

Secondly, the steps proposed against South Africa, the negative statements in the debate and the voting on the resolutions taken together add up to a politically motivated and orchestrated campaign in which the merits of the issue and the interests of

the people of the Territory are of little importance while a considerable behind-the-scenes role is played by the Soviet Union working on the emotions of Third-World countries with its own global objectives in mind. It is of significance that, in contrast with the many States which are willing to associate themselves with this campaign, the few who are not so willing, as shown by their recent voting record, are, according to a recent survey, responsible for approximately 80 per cent of all contributions to the United Nations and to its associated agencies and aid projects. This is a prime example of the political irresponsibility of a numerical majority.

Thirdly, the United Nations through one of its principal organs continues to ignore the fundamental realities of South West Africa/Namibia, namely that the future of the Territory is for decision, not by the United Nations nor by outside forces, but by the people themselves. It is not possible to obtain the solution which all desire if the democratic internal parties are excluded from the decision-making process. The more the General Assembly in particular, and the United Nations in general, continue to favour one political movement only, and at that, one whose proclaimed methods of violence and terror are in conflict with the Charter, the more the United Nations disqualifies itself from serious consideration as an organization with a meaningful role to play in the settlement process. The General Assembly has read the message of Geneva incorrectly. Instead of making a real effort to meet the concerns of the people of South West Africa/Namibia, as represented by the democratic parties, and to create impartiality, mutual trust and an atmosphere of good faith, with equal treatment for all, it has reiterated and reinforced its prejudices and its bias, further jeopardizing an internationally acceptable solution. I note, for example, that in the current series of resolutions, SWAPO is described as the "sole and authentic representative of the Namibian people" no fewer than fifteen times, while its armed struggle is supported and encouraged on five occasions. No fewer than thirty-four references in the resolutions directly favour

SWAPO. Four indirect references to the democratic parties are all negative and seek to deny the role they must rightly play in determining the political and constitutional future of their country.

Fourthly, the militant, punitive approach of the General Assembly reflected in the resolutions adopted on 6th March 1981 is the wrong one, if a genuine independence for South West Africa/Namibia is sincerely held to be the real objective. Threats will accomplish nothing other than to strengthen the determination not to permit an unfair solution to be foisted on the Territory. They will merely reinforce opposition to any process which employs unfair means, false pretences and subterfuge to subject the people of the Territory to an "independence" which is in reality a rule of tyranny, oppression and economic retrogression which they will never have an opportunity of changing by democratic processes. A cool and clear-headed approach is needed now, more than ever. Confrontation should be avoided. Realistic methods of implementing the independence of the Territory in such a way that the United Nations can divest itself of the suspicion currently attaching to it because of its ambiguous dual role should be explored. South Africa stands ready to play a constructive role in securing a peaceful, internationally recognized settlement in South West Africa/Namibia and, with this objective in mind, to assist in looking for positive ways forward.

Fifthly, threats of sanctions are singularly inappropriate, specifically in the southern African context. For various unsuspecting countries of southern Africa and farther afield - which may well not yet have considered the implications - the consequences are unpredictable but will certainly be far-reaching.

South Africa will not take sanctions lying down but will certainly consider all her options and react appropriately to safeguard her own interests. Sanctions against South Africa will in effect amount to sanctions against southern Africa, because the economies of a number of independent countries are so closely interlinked with the South African economy that they, and not in the first instance South Africa, will undoubtedly be the foremost to suffer, and it would inevitably be the poor in these countries who would suffer most. South Africa's trade with the rest of Africa during the past year has grown to well over one and a half billion United States dollars and a considerable volume of transit trade passes through South Africa to African destinations further north.

The ripple effect of sanctions if ever applied, would therefore be substantial. At this time more than ever, it is not sanctions that are called for in Africa - a continent which United Nations and OAU reports are unanimous in declaring to be economically ailing - but increased economic co-operation between South Africa and the rest of the continent. South Africa is willing to co-operate in such a venture on a basis of equality, dignity and non-interference.

It is clear from the above that the General Assembly is attempting to act out a tragedy of possibly considerable proportions. If the Assembly, and indeed the United Nations as a whole, does not change course and take cognizance of reality not only will the future of South West Africa/Namibia be in the balance but even more so the economic situation in southern Africa. Economic turmoil could then possibly be followed by political turbulence and strife, in wide areas of southern Africa and Africa as a whole, with the danger of outside

involvement greatly enhanced. Sanctions would clearly be an unmitigated disaster. The road upon which the United Nations is embarked is not the way of peace but of conflict.

May I avail myself of this opportunity of renewing to Your Excellency the assurances of my highest consideration.

R.F. BOTHA

MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INFORMATION

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