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LETTER DATED 27 AUGUST 1981 FROM THE CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I.
OF THE PERMANENT MISSION 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 27 August 1981.

I should appreciate it if this letter could be circulated as a document of the Security Council

(Signed) David W. STEWARD
Chargé d'Affaires a.i.

Letter dated 27 August 1981 from the Minister of
Foreign Affairs and Information of South Africa
addressed to the Secretary-General

I must urgently draw your attention to the premeditated attacks from across the border conducted by SWAPO against the civilian population of South West Africa/Namibia. These acts of aggression have escalated to new levels of intensity during the past few weeks. It is clear that SWAPO plans to perpetuate its terrorist attacks against the Territory. Its strategy to achieve this objective is to build up a terrorist force in neighbouring countries. It is dependent on the Soviet Union and its satellites, including Cuba, for its philosophy, training, armament and supplies.

The Soviet Union together with Cuba and SWAPO are responsible for the unstable conditions in the border region and for introducing Soviet imperialism into this region of Africa. SWAPO's presence and actions threaten its host countries and impede the evolution of peaceful relations in the region, since no country, least of all South West Africa/Namibia, can afford to ignore the build-up of hostile concentrations in a neighbouring state. SWAPO is being deliberately aided by vast numbers of Cuban troops and other foreign elements in Angola. The presence of such foreign forces in the area immediately bordering on South West Africa/Namibia poses a serious threat to the Territory and its people. Indeed sophisticated weapon systems supplied by the Soviet Union are now being deployed in southern Angola. This situation is incompatible with the proclaimed desire of Angola to live in peace with its neighbours. In fact, it would seem to indicate that Angolan intentions are the opposite.

Neither South West Africa/Namibia nor South Africa is prepared to acquiesce in the offensive actions which are planned and launched from across the border. Neither this region of Africa nor any other part of Africa will survive the destabilizing effect of Soviet encroachment unless the free world, and in particular the African States, awake to the long-term objectives of the Soviet Union. How many Afghanistans will have to be endured before, in the words of former President Carter, the true motives of the Soviet Union are learned?

SWAPO bands conduct hit-and-run forays into South West Africa/Namibia from across the border to intimidate the local population by every grisly means possible: assassination and mutilation, planting of landmines and bombs, murder squads, abduction and destruction of property. Despite their failure to achieve a foothold in the Territory, the SWAPO leadership persists with these tactics, sacrificing its members for propaganda purposes. SWAPO deliberately provokes counter-operations against its actions in order to induce the Angolan Government to lodge complaints against South Africa at the United Nations, in the hope that United Nations action will be taken against South Africa which in turn would assist SWAPO in its designs to achieve power through force of arms.

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In countering SWAPO incursions, South Africa has been guided by the objective of limiting its operational response to SWAPO targets. Because of an understandable political embarrassment over the resistive role of UNITA, South Africa is conveniently blamed for the military feats of this liberation movement. We refuse, however, to accept responsibility for the consequences of UNITA operations.

SWAPO has visibly demonstrated that it will not hesitate to stoop to excesses in its programme of eliminating its democratic opponents, whom it is not prepared to face in a free and fair contest in a peaceful environment at the polling booths. Despite the increased Soviet-backed build-up and training of SWAPO, it has now fallen back to a greater degree on the support of the Cuban occupation forces in Angola. This it hopes, will protect its personnel from retribution.

The violence which SWAPO espouses is aimed at depriving the inhabitants of South West Africa/Namibia of their right to self-determination and undermining their resolve to secure a peaceful independence through democratic and constitutional means - which the United Nations is supposedly propagating.

The lack of United Nations condemnation of SWAPO is destroying the confidence of the people of the Territory in the United Nations. Moreover, the silence of the United Nations in respect of SWAPO's actions, is prejudicial to the achievement of a peaceful solution. It is a travesty that the United Nations, whose main function is the maintenance of peace and security, openly provides financial, moral and propaganda support to an organization which publicly proclaims its dedication to violence. The fact that this violence is practised against the civilian population does not seem to arouse any concern in the United Nations. What is even more deplorable is that the United Nations continues to encourage SWAPO to pursue its campaign of violence. This connivance by the General Assembly which will no doubt be repeated in future, in effect amounts to SWAPO being given a mandate to frustrate the wishes of the democratic majority in South West Africa/Namibia, to violate with impunity their right to freedom, liberty and justice, to entrench the concept of seizing power by force.

Because of the sponsorship of SWAPO by the General Assembly and its ritual annual resolutions condoning all that SWAPO does, the world is becoming desensitized to the barbarity of SWAPO's conduct. A heavy responsibility rests upon Your Excellency to encourage all organs of the United Nations which aid SWAPO, immediately to cease their support of that Organization. There is no need for any party in South West Africa/Namibia to conduct a struggle to secure its political objectives. All that has been demanded of South Africa in this respect, and more, has been agreed to.

As long ago as 20 September 1978, I stated in a letter to Your Excellency (S/12854) that "(South Africa) is willing to confirm that the moment SWAPO undertakes to stop violence and, in fact, carries out its undertakings, action against SWAPO by the South African forces would cease". But this offer has been ignored. I repeat this offer today while there is still time to implement it.

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The growing commitment of certain Governments in Africa to the philosophy of violence and officially sanctioned acts of subversion is not limited to the southern part of Africa or for that matter to Africa. It is a global threat. By providing sanctuary to the perpetrators of terrorism these Governments are just as guilty as if they were accessories. This double-edged danger threatens to assume proportions that may very soon become uncontrollable and irreversible. Not much time is left for the responsible leaders of southern Africa in particular to reflect on the consequences of the impending cycle of conflict which confronts them. Unless they take a resolute stand against allowing their territories to serve as launching sites for aggression against a neighbouring state, the entire sub-continent is headed for a turbulent era with potentially catastrophic dimensions.

The options have become limited. A choice has to be made urgently. It is my earnest belief that those of us in the region who desire to secure and maintain a stable future for our people have but one alternative. The economic and geographic imperatives should be allowed to set the scene and to establish the basis for constructive co-operation among all neighbouring nations. This is the choice, uncomplicated in nature and realistic in character.

South Africa is determined in its choice. Peaceful co-existence and economic stability should supersede all other considerations. Ideological and political differences, however important, should not be allowed to sink our destinies in a vortex of violence and conflict.

On the other hand South Africa cannot achieve this objective if it is to be subjected to subversion under the protection of neighbouring governments in violation of the rules of international law. It is my urgent appeal to you, Mr. Secretary-General, to call upon all the States of southern Africa to arrest and contain the drift towards confrontation.

Of overriding importance at this juncture is to establish the cause of the instability and conflict in the border area. Perceptions, prejudices and propaganda should be laid to rest by uncovering the facts. There is a rather simple answer to rhetorical debates and verbal delays. Observe and act. To make this possible I now wish to invite through you Mr. Secretary-General all members of the Security Council to visit the Territory of South West Africa/Namibia for personal observation.

The South African Government will make all facilities available to ensure Security Council representatives access to any and all parts of the Territory and to any and all of those individuals or groups in the Territory whom they would wish to interview. Only in this way can a factual finding be made in an effort to resolve the impasse. The South African Government will guarantee the protection and safety of the Security Council representatives during the visit. We are making this proposal in an attempt to assist the Security Council. We have nothing to hide. If the other parties involved in this matter are equally committed to a peaceful settlement process, there can be no reason for eschewing this proposal.

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At the same time it will be useful for Security Council members to visit the entire border area. Such a visit will enable the Council to see for itself what is happening in that region and to assess by personal observation who is to blame for the disruption and breakdown of the socio-economic structure in Angola.

If my Government's exposition of the facts is not accepted by the Security Council I suggest that it is an elementary rule of fairness to establish the facts before giving judgement. It is a fundamental rule of law, recognized by civilized nations, that an institution which is entitled to make decisions which may affect the rights of others, should not only apply its mind to every particular instance in which such a decision is called for, but should also be familiar with all the relevant facts and to this end allow ample opportunity for it to be presented with such facts.

The Security Council, on which rests the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, should apply this rule even more stringently because of the implications for the international community at large. In view of these considerations I appeal to Member States who are sincere in their efforts to find a peaceful settlement to accept this invitation. It demands so little yet the outcome may be surprisingly rewarding.

R. F. BOTHA
Minister of Foreign Affairs
and Information
