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QUESTION OF NAMIBIA

Letter dated 24 May 1979 from the Chargé d'Affaires a.i. of the  
Permanent Mission of South Africa to the United Nations  
addressed to the Secretary-General

You are aware that I have been prevented this morning from stating the views of the Government of South Africa on the agenda item now under discussion by the resumed thirty-third session of the General Assembly.

In order to afford Member States the opportunity of having, as a matter of official record, the statement which I had proposed to deliver on the question of South West Africa, I am enclosing a copy of that statement with the request that this letter and its annexure be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under agenda item 27.

(Signed) J. Adriaan EKSTEEN  
Chargé d'Affaires

ANNEX

Statement to be delivered in the General Assembly on 24 May 1979  
by Mr. J. Adriaan Eksteen, Acting Permanent Representative of  
South Africa to the United Nations

Mr. President, you will be aware that almost five years have elapsed since South Africa last attempted to speak in the General Assembly. Why did we return today to address this Assembly? We have done so now, firstly, because we wish to express our views on the South West Africa/Namibia issue which has now reached a critical phase, and secondly, because we wish to voice our concern at the General Assembly's repeated breaches of the Charter of the United Nations on this and on other questions related to southern Africa.

Our concern, however, goes deeper than procedural matters. The future of a people - the people of South West Africa/Namibia - is at stake. Sixty years ago South Africa accepted a "sacred trust of civilization" to provide for the well-being of the people of the Territory. We believe that we have now acquitted ourselves of our task - that the people of the Territory are now ready to take their place with others "in the strenuous conditions of the modern world".

We are proud of our record in South West Africa/Namibia and would be happy to compare it with those of any of the other mandatory Powers, or indeed with those of most independent nations. We believe that we have fulfilled all our responsibilities to the people of South West Africa/Namibia, except one last great responsibility: that is to ensure that they will be guaranteed the right of determining their own future, freely and without coercion from any quarter.

With this goal in mind we embarked two years ago on an initiative with the Western Five to find a peaceful settlement to the South West African/Namibia question. We wanted above all to ensure that the birth of the new nation of South West Africa/Namibia would be both peaceful and acceptable to the international community. We accordingly accepted all the demands which the international community had so long been making of us. We agreed to grant independence to South West Africa/Namibia on the basis of:

- (a) A unitary State;
- (b) One man, one vote;
- (c) The removal of discrimination on the basis of colour;
- (d) The holding of free and fair elections to the satisfaction of the United Nations;
- (e) The right of all South West Africans to return to participate peacefully in the political process.

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However, it appears that all of this has been to no avail. Every compromise offered by South Africa has been met with ever-escalating demands. Every gesture of goodwill has been repaid with increased vindictiveness. And the reason is not difficult to discern. As we have long suspected, the General Assembly does not share our underlying concern that the people of South West Africa/Namibia should be allowed to determine their own future or that the solution to the problems of the Territory should be peaceful.

On the contrary, the General Assembly has arrogated to itself the right to determine who should be and who should not be the representatives of the people of the Territory. By prejudging this matter it has made a mockery of the central element of the settlement plan - an election in which the United Nations would be involved.

To its undying shame, the General Assembly has gone even further than this. It has torn into shreds the principle which should lie closest to the soul of the United Nations, namely, that international disputes should be settled by peaceful means and by reasoned negotiation. In diatribe after diatribe, in resolution after resolution, the General Assembly has urged that the problem of South West Africa/Namibia should be solved by violence, and this at a time when painstaking negotiations were under way to find a peaceful solution. Translated into harsh reality these resolutions mean the death and mutilation of innocent civilians of all races and persuasions in the Territory.

South Africa wishes to give this solemn advice to the General Assembly: any organization which does not abide by its basic principles has a very limited future. The test of an organization's integrity does not lie in its adulation of the popular majority but in its preparedness to stand by the individual who has no support other than basic principles. Do not imagine that exceptions to the rules can be made with impunity in the case of southern Africa. Each breach of the Charter brings this Organization inexorably closer to disintegration. We, who cherish nostalgic memories of what this Organization might have become, would regret such an eventuality.

South Africa has made every reasonable effort to settle the South West Africa/Namibia problem by peaceful means in accordance with the letter and spirit of the Charter. Even now we are more than willing to implement Security Council resolution 435 (1978) in its unadulterated form. Neither South Africa nor the people of South West Africa/Namibia has ever retreated from their agreement to the original proposal. Indeed, South Africa insists that the original proposal, as approved in its final and definitive form by Security Council resolution 435 (1978), be implemented without delay.

We and the people of South West Africa/Namibia, more than anyone else, want a peaceful and internationally recognized independence for the Territory. We do not seek confrontation with the international community or with the United Nations. But let there be no mistake: we have no intention of renegeing on our last great responsibility to the people of South West Africa/Namibia - that they should be guaranteed the right of determining their own future freely and without coercion from any quarter.

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This Assembly has now before it the letter my Foreign Minister addressed to the Secretary-General on 22 May 1979 (A/33/568, annex). I do not wish to dwell on all the points elaborated by my Foreign Minister in this and in previous communications between the Secretary-General and the South African Government. I do, however, want to conclude by quoting from the latest communication to the Secretary-General:

"... the present difficulties have arisen in spite of the fact that all the elements which formed the basis of so many years of dispute and acrimony between South Africa and the United Nations have been eliminated.

"... SWAPO cannot claim a free hand to continue its acts of subversion and aggression against the Territory and its people. SWAPO should not be allowed to rely on the General Assembly to provide a protective shield, if not encouragement, for perpetrating these heinous acts.

"... SWAPO never intended to participate in a peaceful process. It knows that it does not enjoy the support of the majority of the people of the Territory - contrary to what the General Assembly is proclaiming in this regard. It can only hope to achieve power through brutal force.

"... What was the factor around which the whole negotiation process had to pivot? What was the sole indispensable link between all the parties? Clearly it was the element of good faith. South Africa trusted the Five Powers to conduct the negotiations impartially and relied on them to ensure that agreements and understandings arrived at between the Five Powers and South Africa would be safeguarded when translated into United Nations reports and Security Council decisions. There was no other way. It was likewise assumed that the Front-Line States would negotiate in good faith, that their objective would be the achievement of a settlement, and not a manoeuvre to put SWAPO in power at all costs, failing which to force a breakdown in the negotiations and blame South Africa seeking to bring it into maximum discredit.

"... If the General Assembly should choose to censure South Africa despite the facts as they are now known, it will be a travesty of justice and a conspiracy against decency and honesty. There is no way in which the General Assembly can escape the truth.

"... South Africa will continue to respect the interests and wishes of the people of the Territory, which are paramount. South Africa cannot be a party to persuading the people to accept proposals which will render them vulnerable to a take-over by threat and force."

This last sentence makes our approach to the whole South West Africa/Namibia problem abundantly clear.

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