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INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE CHILD: PLANS AND ACTION TO IMPROVE
THE SITUATION OF CHILDREN IN THE WORLD, PARTICULARLY IN THE
DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Letter dated 21 September 1979 from the Chairman of the Special
Committee against Apartheid to the Secretary-General

The Special Committee against Apartheid has organized, in connexion with the International Year of the Child, an International Seminar on Children under Apartheid in co-operation with the Non-Governmental Organizations Sub-Committee on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Apartheid and Decolonization. The Seminar took place at the UNESCO House, Paris, and was attended by representatives of United Nations agencies, Governments, Organization of African Unity, southern African liberation movements and non-governmental organizations.

On behalf of the Special Committee, I have the honour to transmit herewith the conclusions and recommendations of the Seminar. The Special Committee requests that they be published in a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 26.

(Signed) B. Akporode CLARK
Chairman of the
Special Committee against Apartheid

ANNEX

Conclusions and recommendations of the International Seminar
on Children under Apartheid

The international seminar unanimously adopted the following conclusions and recommendations:

(a) The International Seminar on Children under Apartheid met on the anniversary of the Soweto massacre - proclaimed by the United Nations as the Day of Solidarity with the struggling People of South Africa - during the International Year of the Child, to consider the effects of apartheid and racial discrimination on the children in southern Africa.

(b) The seminar considers that the crimes perpetrated against the black children in southern Africa by the racist minority régimes are an affront to humanity and call for urgent action by the international community. These régimes violate all the principles of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child and all norms of international morality.

(c) The black children in southern Africa are deprived of equality of educational opportunity. They are obliged to attend segregated schools with inferior facilities and to pay fees, while the children of the minority receive free and compulsory education at many times the per capita expenditure for black children.

(d) The African children live under conditions of extreme poverty and starvation. The infant mortality rate for African children is estimated at over 200 per 1,000, in a country which exports food.

(e) The apartheid régime forcibly separates families and deprives millions of children of normal family life. The migratory labour system and the bantustanization, enforced on the Africans, have particularly cruel effects on children.

(f) Children are, moreover, subjected to brutal repression - including long terms of detention and imprisonment, torture and indiscriminate shootings - in their struggle for their inalienable rights. The seminar notes that some of the equipment used in those and subsequent shootings was supplied by transnational corporations. Despite the mandatory embargo imposed by the United Nations Security Council on arms to South Africa in November 1977, military equipment from Member States is still being supplied to the Pretoria and Salisbury régimes. The seminar, therefore, calls for the strict enforcement of the embargo.

(g) The seminar condemns the continued barbaric massacres by the minority régimes which, by their bombing raids violate the integrity of the front-line States and kill and maim hundreds of men, women and children in refugee camps.

(h) The seminar pays tribute to the heroism of tens of thousands of children who have defied bullets and truncheons, especially since the Soweto massacre, to demonstrate their total rejection of apartheid and white minority domination.

(i) Their just cause and their legitimate struggle deserve the full support of all humanity.

(j) The seminar emphasizes that the rights of children in southern Africa cannot be secured unless apartheid is destroyed. It recognizes that apartheid is essentially a system of racist domination and exploitation, a form of neo-slavery and a crime against humanity. The international community must denounce those who profit from this inhuman system, particularly the transnational corporations, and dissuade them from any collaboration with the racist régimes. The seminar strongly supports the resolutions of the United Nations condemning the political, military, economic and other collaboration by certain Western and other States with the minority racist régimes in southern Africa and calls for international mobilization against all such collaboration. It appeals to non-governmental and other organizations to campaign in full solidarity with the national liberation movements, to ensure that their Governments take measures to isolate the minority régimes by imposing total economic sanctions.

(k) The seminar further emphasizes that the rights of the children can only be secured in a non-racial society in which all the people of southern Africa, irrespective of race, colour or creed, enjoy freedom, equality and human dignity.

(l) Having discussed the various aspects of the problem, the seminar adopts the following proposals and commends them for action by the United Nations and its agencies and other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations:

- (i) The seminar requests the Special Committee against Apartheid in co-operation with the UNESCO, the NGO Sub-Committee, participants in the seminar and other organizations concerned to take all necessary action to follow up the results of this seminar.

It requests the United Nations Centre against Apartheid to publicize, urgently and as widely as possible, the report and papers of the seminar and all other available information on children under apartheid. It urges Governments and organizations to co-operate with the Centre in this regard.

- (ii) The seminar urges the United Nations to encourage and support follow-up seminars and other events on children under apartheid at the national and regional levels.

It recommends in particular that the period between 20 November 1979 (the twentieth anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child) and 10 December 1979 (Human Rights Day) should be observed in solidarity with the children of southern Africa, with seminars, mass meetings, demonstrations, exhibits and other events. It calls for the active participation of educational,

cultural and other institutions, trade unions, churches, and student, youth and other organizations in this observance by denunciation of apartheid and by disseminating information in close co-operation with the southern African national liberation movements.

- (iii) The seminar strongly supports the request of the United Nations General Assembly - to all Governments and organizations - in resolution 33/183 L of 24 January 1979 - to give special attention, during the International Year of the Child (IYC), to the plight of children oppressed by the inhuman policy of apartheid.

It urges the secretariat of IYC and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to take all necessary action to promote the implementation of this request.

It endorses the decision of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, on the recommendation of the Ad Hoc Working Group of Experts on southern Africa, that the United Nations Children's Fund, in collaboration with UNESCO, FAO and WHO, should, in observance of IYC, publish a study on the situation of black children in southern Africa.

- (m) The seminar urges the Special Committee against Apartheid to encourage the relevant United Nations organs and other bodies to investigate the crimes against children in southern Africa and to publicize them as widely as possible.

It further recommends that the Special Committee take all appropriate initiatives to secure action against apartheid in relation to children in relevant international instruments, especially the draft International Convention on the Rights of the Child.

- (n) The seminar invites the United Nations and its agencies, Governments and organizations, in co-operation with the liberation movements, to assist children and youth of southern Africa to travel to educational and other institutions in all countries to explain the situation of children under apartheid and their role in the struggle for the liberation of southern Africa.

- (o) The seminar urges the United Nations, UNESCO and other agencies to produce larger quantities of information material on southern Africa for wider distribution in all languages. It requests the Special Committee to encourage intensification and co-ordination of information activity against apartheid by the United Nations system.

It requests the Special Committee and the UNESCO to consider publicizing poetry and other literary works on children under apartheid.

- (p) The seminar requests UNESCO to consider production of textbooks and other educational material concerning children and youth under apartheid.

It recommends that the United Nations and non-governmental organizations

A/34/512
English
Annex
page 4

provide generous financial and other assistance to liberation movements in the production and distribution of books on apartheid and the struggle for liberation.

(q) The seminar commends the front-line States for assistance to and solidarity with child refugees from southern Africa.

It requests the United Nations and other international agencies, as well as Governments and non-governmental organizations, to respond generously to requests from liberation movements for assistance to child refugees.

It makes a special appeal to Governments and agencies to increase their contributions for programmes of assistance for refugees from South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe, especially those geared to the education and welfare of young school-going children, in accordance with United Nations resolutions.
