



General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/39/241
27 August 1984

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

thirty-ninth session

REQUEST FOR THE INCLUSION OF AN ADDITIONAL ITEM
IN THE AGENDA OF THE THIRTY-NINTH SESSION

CELEBRATION OF THE ONE-HUNDRED-AND-FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE EMANCIPATION OF SLAVES IN THE BRITISH EMPIRE

Letter dated 24 August 1984 from the Permanent Representative
of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations addressed to the
Secretary-General

I present my compliments and write to inform you that, on instructions from my Government, I have the honour to request, in accordance with rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the inclusion in the agenda of the thirty-ninth session of the Assembly of an additional item entitled "Celebration of the one-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of the emancipation of slaves in the British Empire".

You will find enclosed an explanatory memorandum in accordance with rule 20 of the above-mentioned rules of procedure.

In view of the importance of the subject, my Government requests that the item be discussed by the General Assembly in plenary meeting.

(Signed) Lloydstone F. JACOBS
Ambassador Extraordinary
and Plenipotentiary

ANNEX

Explanatory memorandum

1. Antigua and Barbuda proposed that the year beginning 1 August 1984 be observed by the international community, through the United Nations, as the one-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of the emancipation of slaves in the British Empire.
2. On 1 August 1834, the Abolition of Slavery Act came into force in Britain's possessions across the world, particularly in the Caribbean, ending two centuries of economic exploitation and social degradation of 700,000 people of African descent whose forbears were forcibly transplanted from their homelands in Africa, dehumanized by the process of slavery and stripped of their culture, creed, dignity and self-respect.
3. The emancipation of slaves in the British Empire marked an important advance in mankind's effort to achieve racial equality and social justice in the context of basic human rights. It was the forerunner of emancipation of millions of slaves in the United States of America 29 years later; it was the high point of the work of the abolitionist movement led, within Britain, by William Wilberforce; it was the first step on a long journey which has so far witnessed the political advancement to full independence of States in Latin America and the Caribbean and which has also seen the attainment of civil rights for all people in the United States.
4. The one-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of the emancipation of slaves in the British Empire is a symbol of mankind's desire for freedom from political and economic exploitation; it is a beacon of hope to those people, such as the majority of persons in South Africa, who are forced to live under the oppression and exploitation of apartheid; it is a promise to humanity of a world free of the bitterness of racial prejudice and the vileness of racial discrimination.
