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ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Letter dated 20 January 1973 from the Secretary-General to the
Permanent Representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist
Republics to the United Nations

I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your letter of 3 January 1973, which was circulated at your request as a document of the General Assembly (A/8991).

In the seventh and eighth paragraphs of that letter you expressed regret at the fact that a letter dated 11 December 1972 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations had been circulated by the Secretariat as a document of the General Assembly (A/8987).

In order to clarify the situation, I should like to explain fully the practice which, in the absence of guidelines on the part of the General Assembly, has been followed over the years by the Secretariat with regard to the circulation of Assembly documents.

As you will see from the enclosed chart, a request by a Member State for the circulation of a communication as a document of the General Assembly will be complied with if the communication relates prima facie to an item on the agenda of the session or an item which the Assembly decided to include in the provisional agenda of the following session. In most cases, the item to which a communication refers can be readily determined even when the author of the communication does not specify it (for example: the question of the establishment of an international university, the question of Namibia). In other cases, however, where there has been no indication of the agenda item by the Member State concerned, the Secretariat asks that State to specify the item under which the communication should be circulated; document A/8987, like a number of other documents of the twenty-seventh session (for example: A/8680, A/8693, A/8749), fell in the latter category. Except in cases of indisputable error, it is obviously beyond the competence of the Secretariat to question the judgement of the Member State in this connexion.

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I hope that this letter and the enclosed chart may have clarified the procedure which has been observed by the Secretariat in the past for the circulation of communications of Member States as documents of the General Assembly. In this regard, it should be emphasized that the circulation of a document in no way implies a position by the Secretariat on the substance of that document.

In order that all Member States may be aware of the practice described above, I am having this letter and its annex issued as a document of the General Assembly.

(Signed) Kurt WALDHEIM
Secretary-General

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ANNEX

Circulation of documents of the General Assembly

A communication received from a Member State

