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REPORT ON AFRICAN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT (AMCEN)

HELD IN NAIROBI 10 - 12 MAY 1989

The conference was preceded by the President and members of the bureau of AMCEN"

It. was sponsored by United Nations Environment Programme.

The aim of the conference was to seek solution to deqratation of environment in Africa.

The participant of our organisation was Mondli Dlamini, a Researcher in the Department of Manpower Development based in LusakaÂ»

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an opportunity was given and a. paper attached hereto on Environmental Problems in South Africa was presented. Each participant was gi ver f i ve minutes to present his paper .

There was also a PAC participantâ– He could not present a paper.

V o u r s C o rn rad e 1 y

REPORT ON AFRICAN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT (GO

Mr. President
Members of the bureau
Hon. Ministers
High Commissioners

Delegates of non-governmental organisations
Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like first and foremost to express my deep gratitude and high appreciation for having been permitted to say a few words in this historic conference on behalf of the African National congress and the oppressed majority of South Africa.

I would like to, cordially, state that one of the major means of informing the world about the situation in South Africa is to participate in such conferences. It is therefore an honour to me to inform this conference that apartheid rule is not only an instrument of oppression but also a catalyst for degradation of environment. The basic law of apartheid is the Land Act of 1913 which prohibited Africans from acquiring land outside specifically demarcated "Native Reserve" areas constituting 7.3% of the land area of the whole country. It also severely restricted families to remain in white-owned farms as rent paying squatter peasants. This act was further consolidated in 1936, under the Native Land and Trust Act, intended to settle once and for all the various land divisions in the country. It extended the area of reserves to 13% of the total land area. The implementation of this act facilitated segregation and separate development. The residential areas of the White population got separated from the black population. The implementation of that act therefore enables the South African government to select dumping areas for wastes and usage of herbicides detrimental to human life.

These areas are within the atmosphere of black population. Their negative effects are experienced by blacks. An "Agent Orange" for instance which is a herbicide containing the same ingredients as the notorious defoliant is being used as a weed-killer with high levels of pollutants in the atmosphere despite being banned in most major agricultural countries because of its well documented link with birth deformities, cancer and skin diseases.

In 1986, a woman birth to a child without one ear. Her husband worked in a forest near Richmond which was sprayed with an "Agent Orange". Another couple had twins in January, 1989. One was healthy, the other had no fingers. Their father also worked in the same Richmond forest.

300 similar cases have been reported to Chemwatch, a group of environmentalists which has not as yet strongly challenged the South African government for ignoring numerous medical studies

which point to the dangers associated with "Agent Orange".

There is a shroud secrecy surrounding the manufacture of herbicide in South Africa and a powerful lobby of chemical producers that any restriction being imposed on the multi-million dollars industry. It is beyond any reasonable doubt that if these herbicides were affecting the white population they would have long been banned.

In addition to the negative impact of the Land Act, people's organisation in their residential areas are always disrupted by forced removals. They are always moved to areas where they can hardly make use of the soil. The environment of these areas is devoid of decent and affordable shelter, affordable safe, comfortable and convenient transport, decent community facilities basic needs such as accessible water supplies, efficient sanitation system, health facilities, medical care. These are the most hazardous areas even to children, their environment is without basic material needs, and the result of this is famine, various diseases and subsequent high death rate.

I have today pleasure to let the environmentalists participating in this conference know that apartheid rule is an instrument of degradation of environment.

Thank you.