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Ambassador Wolke

Agenda items 6, 7, 16 and 17 - Human Rights Situation in Southern Africa. Nordic Statement. (Feb. 10th - 88)

UD IV

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Mr. Chairman,

On this occasion I have the honour to speak on behalf of the five Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and Norway.

The South African policy of apartheid is the single most important and urgent issue in our struggle against racism and racial discrimination. We condemn apartheid and all forms of discrimination and segregation based on race, creed or colour. Apartheid betrays the most fundamental concepts of human liberty and equality. It constitutes the most systematic violation of human rights and it must be abolished in its entirety. We reject any notion that apartheid can be reformed.

Since the Commission last met we have seen a further deterioration in South Africa. The South African Government has renewed the nationwide state of emergency. We have had numerous reports of arbitrary arrests and detention without trial, torture and ill-treatment of detainees and severe restriction orders on opponents to the regime. Since June 1986 several hundred persons have been killed and as many as 30 000 people have been detained without charge or trial. Members of the United Democratic Front (UDF) and COSATU in particular have been subjected to harassment and detention and their activities severely restricted.

Even children have become the target of the South African regime's brutal repression. Reports of the Conference on Children, Repression and Law in Harare in September last year gave ample evidence of children having been subjected to detention, abuse and torture.

We are also deeply concerned at the high number of executions in South Africa. This policy of oppression will only lead to escalating violence, increased bloodshed and a prolonged suffering for the people of South Africa.

The South African regime is trying to hide from the outside world the dissatisfaction and unrest that is growing. Through the severe emergency laws the military and the police have been given wide powers and it is only through tight control and severe suppression that the authorities are able to keep a reign on the situation. Harsh censorship measures can, however, not fool the outside world to believe that the situation has improved.

The Nordic governments strongly condemn all these brutal violations of basic human rights in South Africa.

Mr. Chairman,

The situation in Namibia also continues to give rise to serious concern. The Namibian people, like their brothers and sisters in South Africa, are being subjected to oppression and inhuman treatment. According to Amnesty International the detentions without trial of suspected opponents of the South African Administration continues, so does the torture and ill-treatment of detainees.

Even though the situation in Namibia is often overlooked in light of the more dramatic events in South Africa, we must maintain focus on the human rights violations in Namibia. The Namibian people's struggle for independence and self-determination deserves our full support. South Africa's illegal occupation of Namibia must be brought to an end without further delay. The Nordic countries reject the attempts to obstruct progress by introducing extraneous issues. The UN Security Council res. 435 remains the only internationally acceptable basis for Namibia's independence.

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Mr. Chairman,

South Africa unabatedly continues its destabilizing policy in the region. They have launched direct and indirect attacks against several of the neighbouring states in the past year, notably Mocambique and Angola. The constant source of tension that the apartheid policy represents in the region of Southern Africa is yet another reason why immediate action needs to be taken in order to eradicate this inhuman system. We would like to express our solidarity with all Frontline states and to assure them of our continued support in the face of South African aggression and destabilization. This solidarity was clearly expressed at the successful meeting of the foreign ministers from the Nordic countries and the Frontline States in Arusha ten days ago.

Mr. Chairman,

Despite universal condemnation, the South African Government has so far refused to take meaningful or definite steps towards ending its racist policy. The Government of South Africa has to recognize that the present agony of that country signals the end of apartheid, once and for all. Pretoria has to address the fundamental problems of this divided nation. It is not for our Governments to present a blueprint for a post-apartheid South Africa. The essential requirement is that apartheid is abolished in all its forms and substituted by a democratic non-racial society with equal rights for all people. A first step in this direction would be for the South African Government to show a genuine willingness to enter into negotiations with the true leaders of the black majority. We therefore appeal to the South African Government to lift the state of emergency, to release Nelson Mandela and all other political prisoners, to lift the ban on all political organizations and to allow all exiles to return to South Africa. Only if these conditions are met, may we have reason to hope for negotiations on the peaceful abolition of apartheid in South Africa.

The release of Govan Mbeki, speaker of the ANC, and other political prisoners has been seen as a positive sign by those who have waged the struggle for the release of all political prisoners in South Africa. We deeply regret, however, that severe restrictions have been placed upon Mbeki's activities after his release. The Nordic governments have invited Govan Mbeki to visit our countries.

The policy towards the abolition of apartheid through a dialogue with the regime has been tried repeatedly without success. The way we see it, the South African regime is still unprepared for a genuine dialogue, and outside pressure is essential for any prospect of peaceful change. In our opinion, increased international pressure is of critical importance in our efforts to abolish apartheid by peaceful means. The Nordic governments therefore urge the Security Council to impose comprehensive mandatory sanctions against South Africa. Pending mandatory sanctions by the Security Council, additional voluntary measures should be considered by the Council. Even limited measures may be important, in order to signal disapproval of apartheid and express solidarity with those who work for changes in South Africa.

An effective oil embargo would have a particular potential for influencing South African society, inasmuch as oil is virtually the sole strategic raw material in which South Africa is not self-sufficient. Mandatory sanctions in clearly defined fields, such as a ban on the supply and shipping of oil and petroleum products to South Africa should be considered..

Moreover, the arms embargo of 1977 needs, in our view, to be strenghtend and made more effective.

Sanctions are intended to tell South Africa clearly how the world community stands on the question of apartheid. Without sanctions or with only a limited degree of pressure applied, the signals will remain mixed, which is precisely why sancitons must be carried out and further strengthened.

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Mr. Chairman,

The absence of mandatory sanctions should not be used as a pretext for failing to act against apartheid. As repeated calls for comprehensive and mandatory sanctions by the Security Council have met by vetoes, the Nordic countries have for several years actively sought to implement measures against South Africa to combat apartheid. All the Nordic countries now practice an economic boycott against South Africa and Namibia. In this way we hope to inspire other countries to follow suit, to increase the combined international pressure against the apartheid system.

In addition to these restrictive measures, the Nordic countries would like to stress the need for positive support for those who suffer the effects of apartheid. South Africa's neighbours find themselves in a particularly precarious situation, both because of their economic dependence on South Africa and as a result of South Africa's policy of destabilization in the region. To ensure sustained development, independent of South Africa's economic might, our governments have for several years offered assistance to SADCC and the SADCC countries. We have also made it clear that we are prepared to increase our assistance to the SADCC countries.

In addition, the Nordic countries provide humanitarian assistance to liberation movements, refugees and other victims of apartheid. This support has increased considerably during the last few years and will continue also in the future.

We believe that the International Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa which will take place in Oslo in August this year, may give a new impetus to sensitize the international community to the plight of refugees in the region.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I want to emphasize that the struggle against racism, racial discrimination and apartheid is of such an order of importance that it requires the collective

efforts of all members of the international community. We therefore find it particularly apt that the General Assembly has decided that the second half of the Second Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination should give the highest priority to combating racism and all forms of racial discrimination and apartheid, especially in South Africa and Namibia.

Time is running out for peaceful solutions to the problems of South Africa. If apartheid is not abolished soon, the whole region of Southern Africa may explode in a violent upheaval. Let us therefore all join in taking effective action against apartheid.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman