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SPECIAL COMMITTEE AGAINST APARTHEID

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 608th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,  
on Friday, 11 September 1987, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. GARBA (Nigeria)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The agenda was adopted.

HEARING ON THE REVIEW OF THE GRAVE SITUATION IN SOUTH AFRICA AND STUDENT ACTION IN THE UNITED STATES AGAINST APARTHEID

2. The CHAIRMAN said that the Special Committee against Apartheid attached great importance to the role of student initiatives in mobilizing world public opinion against apartheid. It was holding its third hearing of student leaders in three years and had recently organized in London an International Student Conference in Solidarity with the Struggle of the Students of Southern Africa.
3. Student campaigns had helped bring about selective restrictive measures against South Africa by some of its traditional trading partners. Those measures represented a step in the right direction, but total isolation of South Africa remained the only peaceful means of eliminating apartheid. The need for concerted international action was greater than ever, given the extended state of emergency in South Africa.
4. Divestment campaigns and other anti-apartheid action on United States campuses were especially encouraging at a time when certain Western Governments were insisting on "constructive engagement" with the apartheid régime. Students had helped stir the call for disengagement which had led, inter alia, to the adoption of selective restrictive measures by the United States Congress in October 1986. Their protests had increased public pressure on United States companies to end their direct investments in South Africa, although the form of divestment adopted by some companies unfortunately left much to be desired. Students' protests in the United States echoed those in Soweto and elsewhere in South Africa and their anti-apartheid efforts would continue to receive the Special Committee's support and encouragement.
5. Ms. ALLEN (Children United against Apartheid, Houston) said that her organization had been formed out of concern that children were being singled out as a special target of repression in South Africa. It was planning a broad educational campaign and also planned to build a coalition to force the South African Consulate out of Houston, support the Unlock the Prisoners campaign of the African Coalition on Africa and identify local businesses violating the United Nations cultural and economic boycott against South Africa.
6. Ms. ANDERSON (Task Force on Human Rights, University of Northern Idaho) said that as a Native American woman she had watched racism take hold in northern Idaho, reversing the gains made in the 1960s and 1970s and even spawning a movement to establish a white separatist homeland in the North-West United States. Although that movement had been checked, the fact remained that predominantly white civil rights groups were not addressing the root causes of national and international

(Ms. Anderson)

racism. People of colour must decide for themselves which path to follow, without interference by others who ignored basic questions of self-determination. That there was a link between racism at home and racism in southern Africa must be stated clearly.

7. Mr. BRAME (Illinois Alliance of Black Student Organizations) said that in March 1986, his organization had established a plan of action for the 44 black student organizations which it represented. That plan of action included a state-wide day of prayer for liberation and an end to violence, petitioning of elected officials to enact and support legislation against racism, a protest in front of the South African Consulate in Chicago, a boycott of companies and banks with ties to South Africa, and consciousness-raising programmes. The Alliance would continue to co-operate with the Anti-Apartheid Student Alliance and Coalition for Illinois Divestment in South Africa (CIDSA).

8. Mr. ERWIN (Anti-Apartheid Coalition, Western Washington University) said that the Coalition had been revived recently to counter apathy towards the South Africa issue on campus. Its immediate goal was to educate the student population about South Africa and national and international racism through a programme of speakers, a campus radio show and a film series on South Africa, among other things.

9. It was also important to take a closer look at society in the United States where, legally, racism did not exist but the reality was quite different. The Coalition had found it useful to work with other groups on campus, and was beginning to work with community groups, in educating the public about racism and apartheid.

10. Mr. KAGEHIRO (Hawaii Committee for Africa, University of Hawaii) said that student activism had led the University of Hawaii Board of Regents to divest approximately \$2.3 million in South Africa-related investments. Campus activities had included a petition for divestment, the compilation of a 100-page pro-divestment paper by a faculty task force and lobbying for the divestment of over \$100 million invested in South Africa by the State Employees Retirement Fund. Hawaii too had suffered at the hands of Western civilization. Western diseases had ravaged the native population, Christian missionaries had destroyed its culture and capitalism its native economy. Students at the University of Hawaii had devoted much time and energy to the anti-apartheid movement and the latter had, in turn, deepened their understanding of racism in their own society.

11. Mr. MCKINLEY (Action against Apartheid, University of North Carolina) said that racism at home must be overcome if American students were to show solidarity with the liberation struggle against apartheid. Acts of civil disobedience and public demonstrations at the University of North Carolina had highlighted the duplicity of racist entities, and students had also campaigned for divestment and provided medical and material aid to the anti-apartheid forces in South Africa. An education programme was equally important in overcoming entrenched racist attitudes in the southern United States. Accordingly, his organization was using open forums, discussions and the media both to educate the community about apartheid and break down racist barriers at home.

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12. Mr. MONTGOMERY (Steven Biko Committee, University of Texas at Austin) said that following the arrest of 16 University of Texas student protesters, several rallies had been held on campus to demand their release and divestment by the University of Texas of \$870 million invested in companies doing business in South Africa.

13. The students, known as the "UT 16", had been released but formal charges had been brought against them by the state of Texas in an attempt to make an example of them. Student awareness had also been aroused by the repeated violent destruction of a shanty built on the university campus. The Steven Biko Committee had responded by organizing rallies, disseminating information and sponsoring debates. It also planned to implement a work study programme in which students would be able to focus on international social, economic and political issues. The Committee and the Black Student Alliance were working with progressive community organizations in an attempt to bring about change at the various governmental levels and challenge the myth of "constructive engagement". Grass-roots organizing was also needed to compensate for the administration's indifference to the problems of black students at the University of Texas.

14. The illegal régime in South Africa was only one piece of the puzzle. The Western countries were working together to sustain apartheid, protecting the interests of a few at the expense of many.

15. The CHAIRMAN asked Ms. Allen whether young people in Houston were aware that Lufthansa and British Airways had stepped in to fill gaps created by the barring of South African Airways from the United States. Lufthansa had more than doubled its flights from South Africa to Frankfurt so that South Africans could then fly on to points in the United States.

16. Ms. ALLEN (Children United against Apartheid) said that such a possibility might exist for South Africans travelling to Houston, as South Africa had a consulate there. Her organization was a group of teenagers concerned principally with removing threats to children in South Africa, however.

17. The CHAIRMAN said that the organizations participating in the hearing would be given updated information on whether European airlines were providing South Africans with cheaper flights to the United States. They might wish to use that information in their campaigns.

18. Mr. JOSHI (Nepal) said that he would like to hear Mr. McKinley's views on how public awareness might be heightened in the United States and what the Special Committee could do to assist student information campaigns.

19. Mr. McKINLEY (Action against Apartheid, University of North Carolina) said that students' public awareness campaigns could be intensified through expanded contacts with the community. Students should press for divestment not only by universities but also by state governments. Groups from different states could then co-ordinate their activities nation wide. The United Nations could provide information and speakers for student groups: students might not have made full use of the resources the Special Committee had to offer.

20. Mr. OBAZE (Nigeria) asked whether the Illinois Alliance of Black Student Organizations had told the general public which products to boycott.

21. Mr. BRAME (Illinois Alliance of Black Student Organizations) said that CIDSa was the main source of information on companies doing business with South Africa and products which might be boycotted.

22. Ms. NADASEN (University of Michigan Students Against Apartheid and Racism) said that the movement to free South Africa had struggled for decades but the situation in South Africa was still an intolerable one. The University of Michigan Students Against Apartheid and Racism had been inspired by the struggle of their counterparts in South Africa and were now struggling against racism at home. Although the struggle within the United States was being waged on a smaller scale and in a different context, it was the same struggle. There was a need to fight the news blackout in South Africa and show continued solidarity with southern African freedom fighters. A militant battle had been won at the University of Michigan, resulting in the award of an honorary degree to Nelson Mandela. Only through continued militancy would progress be made.

23. Ms. NEGRON (University Student Senate of the City University of New York) said that the City University of New York (CUNY) had been the first university in the United States to divest itself of any investments in financial institutions or companies doing business with South Africa. Divestment had been completed by the first week of January 1985, resulting in a profit for the University of thousands of dollars from the sale of stocks.

24. The University Student Senate had also been successful in convincing the New York State Assembly to pass legislation requiring the state of New York to divest itself of its holdings in companies operating in South Africa, although the New York State Senate had refused to pass the bill. Efforts would continue to ensure passage of the bill at the next legislative session.

25. The University Student Senate had also lobbied for a bill which would have allocated \$500,000 to enable South African refugees to enter universities in New York State. Furthermore it was requesting the CUNY Administration to ask for funds from the State Legislature to allow South African students to attend the University at no cost. Lastly, student governments at the 20 CUNY campuses had used their student funds to educate students and the community about the evils of apartheid.

26. Ms. PARKER (Washington, D.C. Student Coalition Against Apartheid and Racism) said that the Coalition was continuing its divestment campaign and its involvement in the entire struggle of the South African people. In its confrontation with Johns Hopkins University, it had been unable thus far to achieve divestment. However, it had ended the Maryland National Bank's support for the South African régime and had won a \$150,000 grant for community assistance and \$50 million in loans for lower- and moderate-income housing. The Coalition was becoming increasingly involved in educating the community about South Africa and southern Africa, particularly high schools and elementary schools. The main focus of the educational and media events sponsored by the Coalition was the wars which South Africa was waging to destabilize southern Africa, and their effect on children.

(Ms. Parker)

27. The Coalition was petitioning the United States Congress to change its policies towards South Africa and to make itself fully accountable to the people of the United States for those policies.

28. Mr. PITARD (Tuskegee University) said that students at Tuskegee University were not new to the battle against racism; they identified with it because of their own struggle within the United States. United States foreign policy was an extension of its domestic policy with regard to racism. A meaningful campaign against apartheid would become possible only when the United States Government addressed its problems at home. He wondered what the tangible results of the current hearings would be. The situation with regard to racism within the United States was an explosive one which could be defused only if the various groups fighting against apartheid and racism banded together. At Tuskegee University, the focus was on continued information and training. The struggle involved not only the attainment of freedom in South Africa but also the maintenance of freedom throughout the world.

29. Mr. RAMSEY (Atlanta Student Coalition Against Apartheid and Racism) said that the policies of the Governments of both the United States and South Africa were rooted in racism and the relationship between them was one of collaboration in human oppression. History had demonstrated that in virtually every struggle for justice and peace, youth had been at the forefront. The importance of the United States student anti-apartheid movement could not be overstated.

30. Many of the forces in the United States that supported the apartheid régime advocated racism and racist violence, while attempting to keep the American people ignorant of the atrocities committed in southern Africa and the relationship between the Zionist and apartheid régimes.

31. The Atlanta Student Coalition would continue to combat apartheid and racial discrimination through protests against companies doing business in South Africa, educational campaigns and pressure on government officials to prevent the escalation of war in South Africa. At the same time, it urged the United Nations to continue to condemn the United States for violating the human rights of the South African people.

32. Ms. SCHULMAN (Concerned Students and Faculty for Divestment, University of Montana) said that organizational efforts against racism and apartheid had been conducted in three major contexts in Montana: the University of Montana, community organizations advocating state divestment and the North-West Human Rights Coalition. At the University, efforts had focused on education about issues related to South Africa. Divestment negotiations with the University of Montana Foundation had been followed by non-violent demonstrations and a student/faculty petition, as a result of which the Foundation had agreed to divest itself of its holdings in any corporation operating in South Africa that had failed to adopt the Sullivan Principles. A week-long symposium had also been held to explore the issue of racial separation and compare and contrast the cultural pluralist model with the apartheid system in South Africa and with current United States policy and practices.

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(Ms. Schulman)

33. At the state level, the Peace Legislative Coalition had been working since 1984 for passage of a bill in the Montana Legislature that would require the state to divest. However, the bill had twice failed to be passed. Direct appeals to the Montana Board of Investments to divest had also failed. Concerned citizens throughout Montana would continue their efforts in favour of divestment.

34. The third effort to address racism in Montana had been that of the North-West Human Rights Coalition, which was challenging the Aryan Nation's plans to make the entire North-West "the land of the white Christians". Individual activists from Montana had staged vigils at the gates of the Aryan Congress for the past two years.

35. Ms. ELLIS (National Association of Black Law Students) said that her organization totally rejected apartheid and the occupation of Namibia and supported those people in South Africa who were struggling against the apartheid régime, as well as members of national liberation movements and black students in southern Africa.

36. The CHAIRMAN observed that the news blackout in South Africa was the apartheid régime's greatest weapon against the international community, for people throughout the world could no longer see the barbarity of the South African police as they mowed down children, mothers and innocent demonstrators. The issue of the news blackout was rarely addressed in the Western press and, as in the case of a series of articles in The New York Times, seemed to be regarded as justified. When the Special Committee had sent a letter to Senator Edward Kennedy suggesting that whenever a journalist was expelled from South Africa the United States should retaliate by expelling a South African journalist, the reply had been that the suggestion would be taken into consideration. The disinformation campaign launched by the South African régime was resulting in public apathy about the situation in South Africa. He asked Ms. Nadasen what she felt could be done to gain more media attention.

37. Ms. NADASEN (University of Michigan Students Against Apartheid and Racism) said that her organization held teach-ins at weekends to bring students up to date on the situation. There were various ways of finding out what was going on in South Africa. For instance, through the newsletter published by the African National Congress. Following the teach-ins, students were encouraged to communicate to others what they had learned.

38. Ms. ELLIS (National Association of Black Law Students) said that the Journal of International Law at the University of Virginia had published articles analysing the violation of international law with regard to the situation in South Africa. Although the Journal was not widely read in the United States, it was distributed in other countries and might encourage others to write similar articles.

39. Mr. MARCHANT (American Committee on Africa) said that it was important to incorporate information about apartheid into elementary and high school curricula in the United States.

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40. Mr. JASSNOWSKI (German Democratic Republic), replying to Mr. Pitard, said that the purpose of the hearings was to find out more about the student movement against apartheid, co-ordinate efforts and find more effective means of combating apartheid. He asked Mr. Pitard what his expectations of the hearings had been.

41. Mr. PITARD (Tuskegee University) said that he had noted, at a model United Nations conference held at Tuskegee University, that it was common practice for delegations to compromise in order to obtain support for their resolutions. He suggested that the various blocs should get together and inform the Western Powers that they supported the anti-apartheid cause.

42. Mr. MAKHANDA (Pan Africanist Congress of Azania) said that the chief methods used to mobilize Azanian students had been to develop a systematic, nationwide programme, utilize the resources of the Centre against Apartheid and try to make students aware of community needs. Students needed to be mobilized around definite positions, singling out issues which unified and strengthened them and avoiding peripheral ones.

43. Mr. SHELTON (Missourians Against Apartheid) said that his organization was a vast coalition born of a 1985 meeting between trade unionists, students and fraternity members to discuss ways of bringing about divestment from South Africa by the University of Missouri. Among its accomplishments the coalition could now count the complete divestment from South Africa of the City of St. Louis (involving assets of over \$120 million), Kansas City, and most recently, the entire state of Missouri (involving assets of over \$300 million). The coalition was now working to secure complete divestment from corporations operating in or involved with South Africa. It had managed to arrange a boycott of Shell products, South African wine and seafood and, most recently, had persuaded advertisers to disassociate themselves from the broadcasting of a film presenting an extremely racist view of South African history.

44. The coalition was eager to offer technical assistance to other groups wishing to work for divestment from South Africa. It would also be interested in receiving suggestions as to how it, as a grass-roots movement, could help to bring about the adoption and extension of sanctions against South Africa so as to isolate the South African régime completely.

45. Ms. TAYLOR (Black Student Union, Fisk University, Nashville) said that African Americans were no strangers to racism. The parallels between their position and the situation confronting the people of South Africa were clear. Apartheid was, in her view, the greatest crime against humanity; no deceptive assurances about "making the world safe for democracy" or countering a supposed communist threat to the fortunes of southern Africa could conceal the need for action to stop it.

46. Ms. THOMAS (Black Student Communications Organizing Network (BSCON)) said that her organization had been organizing rallies and conferences for many years to make the public aware of the outrages perpetrated against the people of South Africa. The white supremacist system was based upon genocide, as the many reports of death and destruction among her people served to show. The whites knew that they could



(Ms. Thomas)

not continue their present policies, but there was a danger that they would reform only far enough to be sure of a comfortable existence.

47. Her organization did not believe that significant change could be brought about in South Africa through peaceful negotiation. The South African people must be supported in the use of any means they thought necessary to abolish apartheid.

48. Ms. TYNAN (Penn State University Committee for Justice in South Africa) said that the Committee had used divestment as a means of drawing attention to racism at home and United States corporate support for apartheid. Institutional racism was rampant at Penn State University, whose insensitivity to minority concerns had helped maintain the racist atmosphere.

49. A major obstacle to divestment at the University had been corporate influence upon and within the Board of Trustees, notably from the Mellon Bank: her Committee had gained state-wide support for a boycott of that Bank. Bills were pending in the Pennsylvania state legislature which would bring about state-wide divestment, and the Committee was lobbying intensively in their support. In preparation for state-wide divestment, the Committee was launching a support campaign for the National Union of Mineworkers in South Africa and was discussing the establishment of an ANC support group at Penn State University, in addition to continuing its educational efforts in the community.

50. Ms. WEITZEL (Coalition for Divestment, University of Missouri at Columbia) said that on 10 October 1986 the Coalition had constructed a shanty in front of the administration building at the University of Missouri at Columbia. The occupation of the "shanty-town" throughout the year had, for the first time in 10 years of student action, truly brought home the destructive pervasiveness of racist sentiment. Fifty-eight students and supporters of the Coalition had been arrested for shanty-building; vigilantism had been rife; and the shanties had been pulled down 38 times before the University had finally consented to provide round-the-clock protection in the face of growing demands that the right to mount symbolic protests should be respected. The project had been successful in raising awareness of the injustices of apartheid, and had fostered an atmosphere of openness enabling people to draw attention to apartheid and racism at home. Students had begun to demand an end to investment in South Africa, an end to arrests and racism, and a commitment to diversity in education.

51. Mr. FISHER (Lehmann College) said that he was working with the Earth Against Apartheid Foundation, an organization that supported both the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania and the African National Congress of South Africa. He warned against the dangers of sectarianism, saying that some supporters of the anti-apartheid movement were eager to shape it in their own image. The organization he spoke for believed that the ultimate fate of the South African nation should be decided exclusively by the oppressed majority in that country. It was important therefore for American students to give active support to both the established liberation movements, as the United Nations did. The International Student Conference in Solidarity with the Struggle of the Students of Southern

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(Mr. Fisher)

Africa, held in London earlier in the year, had taken a stand damaging to the unity of the anti-apartheid movement. The Special Committee ought to stipulate that any group receiving materials or support from it or the Centre against Apartheid should state in its literature that it supported both ANC and PAC, and should distribute monies equally to both organizations; otherwise, it should be denied non-governmental organization status at the United Nations.

52. The CHAIRMAN said that the Special Committee had helped sponsor the London Conference and was naturally concerned at what had taken place in the drafting committee there. On the other hand, at a student conference students must conduct their affairs as they saw fit, especially if they were afterwards to act on the decisions they adopted. At any rate, the Special Committee was aware of the situation to which the previous speaker had alluded and action was being taken.

53. Ms. BALOYI (Columbia University) said that, as a South African student studying at an American institute of learning, she felt that she and others in her position were uniquely placed to speak at first hand of the indignities and injustices of the apartheid system. She appreciated the efforts of solidarity groups but had been dismayed at the turn of events during the London conference. Ideological diversity could not be avoided in any nation. Some South Africans, including herself, felt that a national liberation movement had a part to play in the struggle to end apartheid in South Africa - which national liberation movement, it did not matter. Others disagreed. Some in the solidarity movement might wish to play on the differences among opponents of the apartheid régime, but the points of agreement were in fact much more numerous than the differences. All concerned wished to avoid unnecessary bloodshed and division in South Africa.

54. The CHAIRMAN agreed that the proper course of national liberation was a matter for the South Africans to decide, and others could only try to help in the process. The Special Committee could not be blamed for promoting divisions among South Africans, for it recognized both ANC and PAC and would do nothing to discourage or divide the anti-apartheid movement.

55. Ms. JONES (University Coalition for a Free Southern Africa) said that student action to force divestment by Columbia University had attracted a good deal of media coverage and served as a model for other student activists. The question which now arose was how to keep the issue alive when the media had decided that South Africa was no longer newsworthy.

56. Racism was all-pervasive in the United States. President Reagan had one of the worst records of any United States President, and Mayor Koch's tenure in New York City had been marked by more than 200 murders of blacks by police officers. It was essential to construct an effective student movement against racism, both at home and abroad. Malcolm X had been the first to link the status of blacks in the United States with the position of blacks in South Africa: both were still slaves. Nevertheless, the struggle would continue until victory was won.

57. Mr. MILLS-LUTTERODT (Ghana) said that the South African régime had muzzled the press and disseminated propaganda to mislead public opinion. Thought should be given to the action that the student movement might undertake to counter such propaganda.

58. Mr. FISHER (Lehmann College) said that the Special Committee was not in any way guilty of sectarianism; on the contrary, it had done much to promote unity. However, any group that supported only one of South Africa's liberation movements could not pretend to be non-sectarian. Only the South African people had the right to choose their leaders - others should support both liberation movements.

59. Mr. SIMELANE (African National Congress) said that democratic forces in South Africa had become the motors of change. It was gratifying that the Special Committee had not sought to influence the conduct of the London conference. His organization was in no way responsible for sectarianism.

60. Mr. MAKHANDA (Pan Africanist Congress of Azania) said that the Special Committee had always displayed its impartiality vis-à-vis the two liberation movements and had discharged its mandate well.

61. Ms. BLOMQUIST (Swedish Movement Against Nuclear Power and Nuclear Weapons) said that inadequate attention had been given to boycotting South African exports of rare minerals, a question which the Special Committee might address more effectively. Greater attention should also be paid to Israeli policies towards South Africa.

62. The CHAIRMAN said that the Centre against Apartheid was addressing the issue of mineral exports from South Africa and was seeking to identify other sources to which importers might turn. The question of Israeli relations with South Africa was also being followed closely.

63. In conclusion, he trusted that the two major Powers, the United States and the United Kingdom, that were hand in glove with the South African Government, would draw the appropriate lesson from the proceedings. Nonchalance and empty verbiage on the part of the international community could only weaken the resolve of those who fought the apartheid régime. The most effective course was to produce hard facts to combat ambivalence and indifference. For example, the true history of South Africa's occupation of Namibia should be made known to public opinion.

64. The implementation of Security Council resolution 435 (1978) had been hindered by the attitude of Western States. The question of Cuban troops in Angola was an extraneous issue; a more relevant question would be why Angolans needed assistance from Cuba. The Western democracies, that prided themselves on freedom of the press, should seek to combat the press black-out in South Africa. Even the so-called withdrawal by United States and United Kingdom firms from South Africa was largely meaningless since their subsidiaries often continued their operations in that country.