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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE POLICIES OF APARTHEID OF THE
GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE NINETY-NINTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 18 April 1968, at 3.15 p.m.

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Mr. ACHKAR

Guinea

Rapporteur:

Mr. FARAH

Somalia

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The agenda was adopted.

TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF THE REVEREND DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

The CHAIRMAN said that the news of Dr. King's tragic death on 4 April had shocked decent people everywhere. While most Governments had already paid a tribute to Dr. King as a great man and an advocate of peace, it was fitting that the Committee should express its sorrow at the loss of an ally in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. Dr. King had been actively engaged in the fight against racism in South Africa: in 1962 he had appealed, with Chief Albert Luthuli, for strong action against South Africa, and when the Special Committee had been set up in 1963, he had even expressed his intention of addressing it.

Having had the privilege of meeting Dr. King a number of times, he had been impressed by his preoccupation with the intolerable situation created in South Africa by the policy of apartheid and would never forget the moving appeal which he had made on Human Rights Day in 1966 for assistance for the victims of apartheid and for strong measures aimed at a peaceful solution of the South African problem. Dr. King had been a devoted ally on whom the Committee could rely, and his absence would certainly be deeply felt. A message expressing the Committee's sorrow and sympathy would be sent to Dr. King's family and to his organization, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

Mr. TINOCO (Costa Rica), speaking as Vice-Chairman of the Committee, said it was very appropriate that a Committee set up by the United Nations to oppose the policy of apartheid in South Africa and the constant transgression of human rights by that Republic should pay a tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a figure whose stature, in spite of his tragic death, would increase with time, as his philosophy became more widely known. Dr. King had been awarded a Nobel Peace Prize, and that honour had never been better deserved, since he had devoted his life to the cause of equality and peace, not only between nations but between individuals. His violent death in pursuit of rights which were embodied in the United Nations Charter and guided the Committee in its work, but which regrettably

(Mr. Tinoco, Costa Rica)

were not respected in all parts of the country in which he had lived, would serve as a reminder of the urgency of achieving equal rights for all people, while his achievements would stand and be remembered as an example.

He welcomed the Chairman's intention to express the Committee's sympathy to Dr. King's family; he had already expressed his sympathy personally to the United States representative to the United Nations since Dr. King's death was a great loss both to that country and to the world as a whole. Every effort must be made to ensure that the ideals of equality and fraternity for which he had died did not die with him.

Mr. FARAH (Somalia), Rapporteur, said it was fitting that the Committee should pause to pay tribute to Dr. King, whose life's work and philosophy of non-violence were of great relevance to the work of the United Nations as a whole, and of the Committee in particular. While the Committee's task was to combat apartheid, the most virulent form which discrimination had taken in the twentieth century, it could not fail to recognize that all forms of discrimination were bad. Dr. King had devoted his whole life to the fight against discrimination, and his achievements, a credit to his determination, could only serve as an inspiration to the Committee in its efforts to put an end to the dehumanization of those suffering from apartheid.

Mr. AGGREY-ORLEANS (Ghana) said that two weeks previously the dastardly act of an assassin had robbed the black civil rights movement of a champion who had dedicated his life to the struggle of Afro-Americans for social justice, equality and human dignity.

On receiving the news of Dr. King's death, the Government and people of Ghana had sent a message expressing their profound shock and horror at the event. The cold-blooded murder of a man whose only guilt had been that he stood firmly for human rights and fought relentlessly against racial discrimination in the United States should be condemned by peace-loving people throughout the world. It was particularly ironic that that tragic event should have taken place just fourteen days after the celebration of the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and shortly before the International Conference on Human Rights to be held in Teheran. It should be a matter for world

(Mr. Aggrey-Orleans, Ghana)

concern that it was necessary in the twentieth century for human beings to continue to lay down their lives in the struggle for equal rights and human dignity in a country which they had helped to build. As millions of Negroes throughout the United States and Africans both in and outside Africa mourned the death of Dr. King, the Republic of South Africa continued in its policy of apartheid, while in Rhodesia a minority white population was doing its utmost to impose its rule on an overwhelming majority of Africans. Dr. King's assassination, like the cold-blooded murder of many other Negroes in the United States and the Sharpeville incident in South Africa, brought into sharp focus the urgent need for universal respect for human dignity and racial harmony. The Government and people of Ghana condemned all forms of racial discrimination, and called on the world to act urgently to remove all manifestations of racial inequality and create conditions for the racial harmony which alone could sustain human progress.

In such terms his Government had paid homage to the memory of a man whose life had become a monument in the history of black people struggling legitimately to assert themselves in a society which denied them rudimentary rights as human beings. It was his fervent hope that Dr. King had not died in vain, but that his death would awaken a new spirit which would respond positively to the imperative need to create a society in which racial oppression and bigotry would be scorned as things belonging to a past barbaric era. Those who still mourned the tragic event should take from it, in the words of Abraham Lincoln, "increased devotion to the cause for which he gave the last full measure of devotion".

Mr. JIMENEZ (Philippines), speaking on behalf of the representatives of Malaysia and Nepal as well as his own Government, said that they fully shared the general grief at the tragedy which had occurred. In spite of his death, Dr. King's ideals of equality, non-violence, justice and dignity would live on. The example of his continued faith in the goodness of man, the unswerving honesty of his convictions and his moral strength in the face of insults and humiliation could not fail to strengthen belief in non-violence and to hasten the day when an international order based on justice, tolerance and understanding would prevail. His death had been a sad occasion, not simply for the United States, but for the world as a whole, and it was deeply to be regretted that a man who had devoted his life to the cause of peace had been unable to die in peace.

Mr. Mohammed (Nigeria) said that the tragic course of events which had led to, but not culminated in, the brutal assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. had been followed with interest and hope, more especially outside the United States. He personally had been depressed above all by the admission of a number of ordinary Americans in interviews shortly after the shooting that they had been unaware of the ideals for which Dr. King stood; it was only after his death that the authorities who had strewn obstacles in his path had begun to admit the truth about him.

The third preambular paragraph of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights stated that "it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law". When a man who had preached and practised peace died in violence, illegally, it was impossible not to wonder what hope there was for the success of international efforts to protect the rights of the individual. It was indeed difficult to see any hope at all if events as demeaning as those of 4 April could take place in a country whose wealth and power should make it fully capable of solving any problem confronting it. No matter what was done on an international level, either within the United Nations system or outside it, efforts on the national scale must form the foundation for both the hopes and the achievements of the campaign for human rights. When the efforts of Dr. Martin Luther King, one of the most outstanding prophets of peace in the twentieth century and one acknowledged more widely outside his own country than in it, ended as they had, it was difficult to know where to turn.

The aim of the Special Committee's work was to protect human rights, but if a country which preached democracy, peace and harmony, and regarded itself as a world leader, could not set the example of a desire for racial harmony, it was difficult for the smaller countries to have any confidence in the attainment of those ideals. While he did not wish to attach blame to the United States Government, it must be admitted that Dr. King's death was not without its roots in that Government's laxity and unwillingness to be aware, active and honest in the elimination of racial discrimination. He believed that the message to be sent to Dr. King's family and to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference

(Mr. Alo, Nigeria)

should not merely be one of sympathy, but should also express the Committee's extreme concern that Dr. King's work should be continued.

On the proposal of the Chairman, the members of the Committee observed a minute's silence in tribute to the memory of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

CONSIDERATION OF THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE SPECIAL SESSION AWAY FROM HEADQUARTERS

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the Committee had already drawn up a time-table for the special session. The Committee on Conferences had approved the proposed itinerary. The Secretariat had been requested to make arrangements for the meetings and consultations to take place during the session, and the necessary steps were being taken. The Committee was now called upon to examine the draft communiqué to be released to the Press giving details of the special session.

Mr. AGGREY-ORLEANS (Ghana) proposed that the order of the first two paragraphs of the draft communiqué be reversed; it would be more logical to begin by referring to the General Assembly's resolution authorizing the Committee to hold a special session away from Headquarters. The text of the new second paragraph should then be amended to read "has accordingly decided...".

The CHAIRMAN acknowledged the logic of the proposal to reverse the first two paragraphs and suggested that the Committee adopt it.

It was so decided.

Mr. Mohammed (Nigeria) said that he was not in favour of referring in the fifth paragraph to the "close relationship" between the United Kingdom and South Africa, since the form of words suggested approval of that relationship. The primary reason for visiting London was the existence there of organizations opposed to apartheid; if any mention was made of the relationship between the United Kingdom and South Africa, the Committee's disapproval should be clearly stated, but it might be best simply to omit any reference to that relationship.

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that too explicit a statement might jeopardize the Committee's chances of visiting the United Kingdom.

Mr. BENSID (Algeria) said it would be unwise to omit reference to the relationship between the two countries, since its existence was one of the reasons for the Committee's visiting London. The text might be made clearer by using the phrase "close economic and financial relationships".

Mr. MOHAMMED (Nigeria) pointed out that even that might be misleading, in that paragraph 5 was preceded by a paragraph stating the positive reasons for the Committee's decision to visit Stockholm. The reasons for visiting London were partly negative, in that the Committee did not approve of the close relationship between the United Kingdom and South Africa. The words "close and undesirable relationship" would adequately convey its attitude.

Mr. JIMENEZ (Philippines) suggested that the fifth paragraph should be amended to read as follows:

"The Special Committee decided to visit London because of the activities of a number of public organizations in the United Kingdom - such as the Anti-Apartheid Movement and the Defence and Aid Fund - in the struggle against apartheid, as well as the special relationship between the United Kingdom and South Africa."

The CHAIRMAN said that members seemed to be in general agreement that the communiqué should mention the special relations existing between the United Kingdom and South Africa.

Mr. MOHAMMED (Nigeria) said that the need to define the close relationship between the Government of the United Kingdom and that of South Africa would depend on where the communiqué was to be sent. If the Special Committee accepted the Philippine representative's suggested text for the fifth paragraph, the fact that the organizations mentioned were actively engaged in the struggle against apartheid might lead persons unfamiliar with the nature of the relations existing between the United Kingdom and South Africa to believe that those relations should be regarded in the same light. The Special Committee would therefore not be achieving its purpose.

The CHAIRMAN said that the communiqué was of course intended for the Press. Mention of the close relationship between the United Kingdom and South Africa did not mean that the Committee approved of it.

(The Chairman)

He wished to propose the following text, which had been drafted by the Costa Rican representative:

"The Special Committee decided to visit London because of the activities of a number of public organizations in the United Kingdom - such as the Anti-Apartheid Movement and the Defence and Aid Fund - in the struggle against apartheid as well as of the problems created in this struggle by the close economic and financial relations between the United Kingdom and South Africa."

Mr. JIMENEZ (Philippines) said that that wording was acceptable to his delegation.

Mr. Mohammed (Nigeria) said that the text was acceptable, but he thought that the word "political" should also be used to describe the relationship existing between the United Kingdom and South Africa.

Mr. TINOCO (Costa Rica) wondered whether it would be advisable to introduce the concept of political relations, since that might create problems. While he did not have any formal objection to the addition of that word, he thought that it would be preferable not to mention it.

Mr. AGGREY-ORLEANS (Ghana) said that the wording "not only because... but also because" was preferable from the standpoint of style.

With regard to the Nigerian proposal, he thought that no specific reference should be made to the political relationship and that the text should be as vague as possible in that respect.

The CHAIRMAN referred to the recent positive attitude shown by the United Kingdom Government, which, despite tremendous pressure, had decided not to lift the embargo on the shipment of arms to South Africa. When the Special Committee referred to the problems created by the economic and financial relations existing between the two countries, that should be adequate to express its views on the matter. Any reference to the political aspect, however, might have the effect of provoking an unfavourable reaction. The Special Committee was going to the United Kingdom in order to mobilize public opinion and to seek the

(The Chairman)

assistance of members of the Government in the struggle against apartheid. He therefore appealed to the Nigerian representative not to press his proposal. When the Special Committee arrived in the United Kingdom, it would have every opportunity to state its views.

Mr. Mohammed (Nigeria) observed that the United Kingdom Government was fully aware of the political activities of the Special Committee. However, he would not insist on his proposal. If it was desired not to antagonize the United Kingdom Government, he thought that a phrase such as "the problems created by the special relationship" would be adequate.

Mr. FARAH (Somalia) suggested that the word "public" should be deleted from the paragraph, since it could be taken to mean government or official organizations.

It was so decided.

Mr. AGGREY-ORLEANS (Ghana) suggested that the paragraph should read:

"The Special Committee decided to visit London not only because of the activities of a number of organizations in the United Kingdom - such as the Anti-Apartheid Movement and the Defence and Aid Fund - in the struggle against apartheid, but also because of the problems created by the special relations between the United Kingdom and South Africa."

The CHAIRMAN said that if he heard no objection, he would take it that the text proposed by the Ghanaian representative was agreeable to members.

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN said that if there was no objection, he would consider that the Special Committee had adopted the text of the draft communiqué as a whole, as amended.

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN said that delegations should inform the Secretariat as soon as possible, and by 20 May at the latest, of the names of the representatives who would be attending the special session away from Headquarters. Furthermore, he thought that the effect would be greater if the members of the Special Committee could travel together and arrive as a group at the various capitals.

/...

Mr. AGGREY-ORLEANS (Ghana) suggested that a special meeting of the Committee should be held at a later stage so that members could discuss the agenda for the special session. Sufficient notice should be given to members in order to enable them to prepare statements. At a previous meeting, the representative of Hungary had made some suggestions concerning certain capitals, and he thought that members might wish to comment on them.

The CHAIRMAN said that he would ask the Rapporteur to prepare, with the assistance of the Secretariat, a memorandum, which would contain the agenda for the special session, together with a list of the persons whom the Special Committee was to meet in the various capitals. As soon as the memorandum was circulated, an informal meeting could be held, at which members could discuss it and exchange views. Furthermore, the Special Committee might decide to send a member of the Secretariat in advance to Europe to ascertain whether the persons whom the Committee was going to meet would be available.

In reply to a question put by Mr. AGGREY-ORLEANS (Ghana), the CHAIRMAN said that the memorandum would be prepared after the Secretariat member returned from Europe and that it would be ready by mid-May.

The meeting rose at 4.35 p.m.