The United Nations and the struggle for liberation in South Africa

By Enuga S. Reddy

Introduction

South Africa’s racial policies were on the agenda of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly from its very first session in 1946 until the inauguration of the nonracial democratic government in 1994. This chapter focuses on the contribution of the UN to the liberation struggle in South Africa. Although the chapter is essentially about the UN, reference is made to the actions of its specialised agencies and to other intergovernmental and nongovernmental organisations which have made significant contributions to the struggle for liberation in South Africa in cooperation with the UN.

Special attention is given to the work of the Special Committee against Apartheid because, as the General Assembly recognised in its last resolution on South Africa in June 1994, it has played an important role as ‘a focal point for international action in support of the efforts to eliminate apartheid in South Africa and to establish a non-racial and democratic society in that country’. The African National Congress (ANC) is given prominence because it has, for various reasons, contributed much more to the policy and decisions of the UN than the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). Moreover, the Summit meeting of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in June 1983 commended the ANC as the vanguard of the national liberation movement of South Africa.

Leaders of the liberation struggle in South Africa have repeatedly acknowledged the significant role of the UN and its Special Committee in support of the struggle. In his first public statement at the UN on 8 October 1963, Oliver Tambo, then deputy president of the ANC, referred to the ‘supreme effort’ which the UN was making to induce the South African regime to abandon its racist policies. He said on 18 June 1968, that the Special Committee had been ‘an inspiring example of devotion to the cause of freedom for the people of South Africa’ and was ‘in a way an important wing of the liberation struggle of the people of South Africa’. In a message on 29 July 1980, he referred to the

---

1 For reference to statements made by Oliver Tambo, see: www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/or/
Special Committee as ‘a steadfast ally of our struggling people and a militant combatant of justice, liberty and peace in our own country. On 12 January 1982, he saluted the Special Committee ‘which has been a fighting weapon of the people of South Africa and which has taken the kind of initiatives through which the international community is virtually united today in support of the struggle of the people of South Africa’.

Nelson Mandela, in his address to the Special Committee on 22 June 1990, paid tribute to the UN for the decisions and actions it took to expunge the crime of apartheid, and to the Special Committee as ‘a very important instrument in our struggle’. He praised the UN Declaration on Apartheid, adopted by consensus in December 1989, as a ‘vital statement underlining the unity of the world community on the South African question and its resolution’.2

Thabo Mbeki, then first deputy president of South Africa, acknowledged at a meeting of the Security Council on 25 May 1994 ‘the outstanding contribution this organisation has made in bringing South Africa to the happy situation in which it is today’. He made special reference to the observers dispatched by the UN who played an important role in helping to deal with the problem of political violence and in ensuring the success of the first democratic and non-racial election in 1994. He declared: ‘The victory that has been won in South Africa belongs as much to the people of our country as to this organisation and the peoples of the world’.3

It is necessary to recall these statements in order to dispel any misunderstanding that the UN was ineffective as it failed to impose comprehensive economic sanctions against South Africa. The leaders of the liberation movement did not expect the UN to deliver freedom and democracy to South Africa. The UN, for its part, recognised, and the Special Committee emphasised, that the primary responsibility for liberation belonged to the people of South Africa and their liberation movement and that the role of the UN and the international community was secondary and supportive.

A fairly comprehensive review of UN action against apartheid, with texts of selected documents, was published by the UN in 1994.4 The present chapter follows somewhat the same structure, but the focus is on the interaction between the UN and the liberation movement, and the assistance provided by the UN in response to their requests. The next section contains a chronological survey of UN decisions and action against apartheid, with special reference to the role of the liberation movement.5 It is followed by a section on different forms of assistance, direct and indirect, to the liberation struggle, including moral, political and material support, and its role in various campaigns against South Africa: sanctions, the arms and oil embargos.

---

5 I prefer to use the term ‘liberation movement’ in the singular to encompass all organisations in the struggle for liberation, except when the reference is to the two South African Congresses recognised by the OAU as ‘liberation movements’, namely the ANC and the PAC.
disinvestment and divestment, and other boycotts. The concluding section looks at the role of the UN during the negotiation and transition period from 1989 to 1994.

Review of discussion and decisions

**Appeals to the South African government, 1946-1960**

The ANC recognised the value of the UN even before the organisation was founded. During the Second World War, after the adoption in 1941 of the Atlantic Charter by the allied nations, who called themselves the United Nations, the ANC set up a committee of eminent Africans to interpret the Charter as it related to Africa and to prepare a bill of rights. This action had a dual purpose: to let the South African government know the full aspirations of the African people and to convey to the governments of the UN the undisputed claim of the Africans to full citizenship. The report of the committee, adopted by the ANC Conference in December 1943, and published under the title 'African Claims', became an important policy document of the organisation.

The ANC had sought until then to secure understanding and support in Britain and the United States of America. But now it extended its vision to all nations of the world. Dr A.B. Xuma, president-general of the ANC, cabled the UN soon after the South African government informed the General Assembly, at its first session in London in January 1946 that it intended to consult the people of South West Africa concerning the incorporation of the territory into the Union. He cabled:

> Africans in South West Africa no share in government therefore no part in incorporation negotiations. South Africa denies political and economic rights to 8 000 000 Africans. 83 per cent of land reserved for 2 000 000 Europeans. Only less than 17½ percent land for 8 000 000 Africans. Only 40 per cent of African children accommodated in mission schools. 95 per cent of Africans imprisoned under discriminatory regulations against Africans only. South Africa must first remove the colour bar, restrictions, discrimination at home.\(^6\)

While this statement received little attention at the UN, Xuma soon obtained an opportunity to approach the nations of the world at the second part of the General Assembly session in New York.

**Complaint by India concerning treatment of Indians in South Africa**

On 22 June 1946, the government of India requested that the ‘question of the treatment of Indians in the Union of South Africa’ be placed on the agenda of the General Assembly as new discriminatory legislation against Indians in South Africa contravened agreements between the governments of India and South Africa and was likely to impair friendly relations between the two countries. The Natal and

---

Transvaal Indian Congresses had launched a passive resistance campaign against the ‘Ghetto Act’ in which nearly 2,000 men and women were to court imprisonment. Xuma and other African leaders supported the resistance, and a number of Africans, coloured people and white people joined the movement in solidarity.

At the request of the Indian Congresses, Xuma led a multi-racial delegation to New York to lobby the delegations to the UN General Assembly and to advise the Indian delegation. During the visit, Xuma presented a memorandum to the secretary-general of the UN on the disabilities of the African people of South Africa and their demand for full equality. The General Assembly rejected the contention of Field Marshal J.C. Smuts, then prime minister of the Union of South Africa, that the treatment of Indians was within the domestic jurisdiction of South Africa. It adopted Resolution 44 (I) on 8 December 1946 expressing the opinion that ‘the treatment of Indians in the Union of South Africa should be in conformity with the international obligations under the agreements concluded between the two governments, and the relevant provisions of the Charter’. The vote was 32 to 15, with 7 abstentions.

At the same session the South African government asked for approval of its plan to annex South West Africa. It reported that the wishes of the people had been ascertained by native commissioners who understood fully ‘the native mind’ and that a large majority had approved annexation. It hoped to receive quick approval as most of the delegations knew little about South West Africa. The opposition to South Africa’s proposal was led by Sir Maharaj Singh, who had been Indian Agent-General in South Africa. He described the oppression of the Africans in South Africa and questioned how the people of South West Africa could wish to be part of South Africa. There was so much opposition to the South African proposal that the United States (US) suggested that consideration of the item be postponed. On 14 December 1946, the General Assembly decided not to accede to the incorporation of South West Africa in the Union and asked South Africa to place the territory under the UN trusteeship system. The integrity of the territory of South West Africa (later Namibia) was preserved.

African leaders in South Africa were elated by the defeat of the government on both issues. The annual conference of the ANC in December 1946 adopted resolutions hailing the decisions as a condemnation of the government’s policy of white domination. It congratulated the delegates of India, China and the Soviet Union, as well as the Council on African Affairs, for championing the cause of democratic rights for the oppressed non-European majority in South Africa. It paid tribute to the Indian passive resisters ‘who by their sacrifice directed the attention of the world to the policy of race discrimination’.

7 The delegation was composed of A.B. Xuma, Sorabji Rustomjee, H.A. Naidoo and Senator H. Basner.
8 Xuma reported this to the National Executive Committee of the ANC on 1 February 1947. Minutes of the meeting in Karis and Carter, From Protest to Challenge, vol. 2, 269.
9 Resolution 65 (I).
10 The Council on African Affairs, led by Paul Robeson, helped Xuma and his colleagues to publicise the situation in South Africa. The council organised a demonstration in front of the South African Consulate and a public meeting to denounce the brutal suppression of the African mine labour strike and support the Indian passive resistance. It published a pamphlet opposing the annexation of South West Africa, and sent it to delegations at the UN.
The General Assembly continued discussion of the treatment of Indians in South Africa annually from 1946. The South African government ignored the repeated appeals by the General Assembly and proceeded to enact further discriminatory measures such as the Group Areas Act. But the discussions and resolutions of the General Assembly led to a greater awareness of apartheid and its effects. From 1949, no country wished to be associated with South Africa in opposing the Assembly resolutions on this item. General Assembly Resolution 395 (V) of 2 December 1950 declared that ‘a policy of “racial segregation” (apartheid) is necessarily based on doctrines of racial discrimination’.

Consideration of race conflict resulting from apartheid, 1952-1959

On 12 September 1952 the representatives of Afghanistan, Burma, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Yemen sent a letter to the UN secretary-general requesting that the following item be included in the agenda of the 7th session of the General Assembly beginning in September: ‘The question of race conflict in South Africa resulting from the policies of apartheid of the Government of the Union of South Africa.’\(^\text{11}\) In an explanatory memorandum enclosed with the letter, they wrote that apartheid, the declared objective of the South African government, implied a permanent white superiority over the great majority of the country’s population and must inevitably result in intense and bitter racial conflict. The government had already arrested over 4 000 persons and used physical violence such as flogging in order to suppress a completely non-violent movement against unjust and inhuman racial policies (the Defiance Campaign). They concluded:

> We are convinced that the continuance of such repression will only aggravate race conflict throughout Africa and arouse indignation elsewhere. A new tension is thus being created which is no less serious than others affecting world peace. It is therefore imperative that the General Assembly give this question its urgent consideration in order to prevent an already dangerous situation from deteriorating further and to bring about a settlement in accordance with the Purposes and Principles of the UN Charter.\(^\text{12}\)

These Asian and Arab governments acted in response to the ‘Campaign of Defiance against Unjust Laws’ launched jointly by the ANC and the South African Indian Congress (SAIC) on 26 June. The non-violent campaign attracted the attention of world public opinion and gave rise to expressions of solidarity. Christian Action in London, Americans for South African Resistance (later renamed American Committee on Africa) in New York and the Indian National Congress publicised the struggle of the South African people and raised funds to support it.

\(^{11}\) A/2183. Reports of the Special Committee to the General Assembly and the Security Council have A/- and S/- numbers. India and Egypt took the initiative in obtaining the co-sponsors. The two independent African states south of the Sahara, Ethiopia and Liberia, were not signatories to this letter.

\(^{12}\) Ibid.
The General Assembly rejected South Africa’s contention that the matter was within its domestic jurisdiction and decided, by a vote of 45 to 6, with 8 abstentions, to include the item in the agenda. When the matter was discussed in the ad hoc Political Committee of the General Assembly, the representative of Liberia proposed that Professor ZK Matthews, who was then a visiting professor at the Union Theological Seminary in New York, be invited to make a statement to the committee on behalf of the African people. The chairman, Alexis Kyrrou of Greece, requested the representative not to press for the adoption of his proposal. It would not be fair or proper for the committee, he said, to confront a sovereign state with a private individual, a national of the state. The representative of Liberia could, if he wished, ask Professor Matthews to send a letter to the General Assembly which would, at the request of any delegation and on its responsibility, be circulated as a UN document. The representative of Liberia acceded to the request.

Professor Matthews wrote to the chairman of the committee on 17 November and his letter was published, at the request of the representative of Haiti, as a document of the committee. He said that he had received from the general secretary of the ANC, WM Sisulu, a cable authorising him to speak on its behalf at the UN, and a copy of a memorandum setting forth the views of the ANC regarding the apartheid policy of the South African government which he was enclosing. He added:

I feel bound to point out that ever since it became known in South Africa that there was even a remote possibility that I might be invited to make a statement before the UN on this subject, considerable official pressure has been brought to bear upon me not to accept such an invitation in view of the action which the Union government would feel compelled to take against me. The University College of Fort Hare, in South Africa, with which I am connected, has also been warned that the government ‘will be reluctantly compelled to take a very serious view of the matter as he (i.e., myself) is employed by your college which receives a considerable subsidy from the state’. The authorities of the college, in view of this direct threat, have instructed me not to accept any invitation to appear.

13 On 25 July 1952, the New York Times reported in a dispatch from Johannesburg, that the ANC had sent a letter to the UN secretary-general requesting an opportunity to put their grievances before the General Assembly. Asked about this letter, the chairman of the ad hoc Political Committee said, at the 19th meeting of the Committee on 18 November, that the secretariat was unaware of the existence of such a letter. That was understandable, he added, as the letter had been sent before the request for the inclusion of the item in the agenda.


15 On 20 November, the representative of Haiti, speaking on a point of order, asked if the chairman had received the ANC memorandum and whether it could be translated and distributed. The chairman replied that he had received the memorandum which was about 40 pages long. Its translation into the official languages would take time and involve considerable expense. It would therefore be better if the delegation of Haiti could provide the committee with about 65 copies of the memorandum. The representative of Haiti agreed. Since the vote on the resolutions took place at the same meeting, the memorandum could not have been circulated until the consideration of the item in the committee was concluded. I have not been able to trace a copy of the memorandum.

16 The United States government also pressed Prof Matthews not to insist on speaking at the UN. See George M. Houser, ‘American Supporters of the Defiance Campaign’ at http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/campaigns/houser.html
India and 17 other countries presented a draft resolution to establish a commission to study the racial situation in the Union of South Africa in the light of the Charter and the resolutions of the UN on racial persecution and discrimination, and to report to the next session of the Assembly. Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden moved an alternate draft which made no direct reference to the situation in South Africa. Under this draft, the Assembly would declare that, in a multi-racial society, respect for human rights and the peaceful development of a unified community were best assured when patterns of legislation and practice were directed towards ensuring equality before the law of all persons, and when economic, social, cultural and political participation of all racial groups was on a basis of equality. It would call upon all members to bring their policies into conformity with their Charter obligations to promote the observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Both draft resolutions were adopted by the committee and recommended to the General Assembly.17

In the plenary meeting of the General Assembly on 5 December 1952, the first operative paragraph of the 18-power draft resolution establishing a commission was voted on by roll-call and adopted by 35 votes to 17, with 7 abstentions. All the Western countries voted against or abstained on this paragraph. The draft resolution as a whole was adopted by 35 votes to 1, with 23 abstentions. South Africa voted against and all the Western states abstained. The Nordic draft resolution was adopted by 24 votes to 1, with 34 abstentions.

On the proposal of the president, the General Assembly decided that the commission – named the UN Commission on the Racial Situation in the Union of South Africa (UNCORS) – would be composed of: Hernan Santa Cruz, representative of Chile to the UN; Dantas Bellegarde, former representative of Haiti to the UN, and Henri Laugier (France), former assistant secretary-general of the UN. The commission elected Santa Cruz as its chairman-rapporteur.

The commission was in existence until 1955 and submitted three detailed reports on the situation in South Africa. It studied available information from public documents and press reports. Several governments, organisations and individuals sent communications to the commission and it also heard oral testimony. In 1953, it received statements from the ANC, the SAIC, the Congress of Democrats and Patrick Duncan, among others. E.S (‘Solly’) Sachs and the Reverend Michael Scott were among the six persons heard by the commission.

Reports of the Commission on the Racial Situation in the Union of South Africa (UNCORS)

In the first report submitted in 1953,18 the commission affirmed the competence of the UN to consider the racial situation in South Africa. Giving a detailed account of racially discriminatory laws in South Africa and their effects, the commission declared

17 A clause in the Nordic draft, by which the Assembly would recognise that the methods of members for giving effect to their Charter pledges might vary with circumstances such as the social structure of the states concerned and the different stages of development of the various groups within the country, was deleted as it was rejected by a vote of 20 to 17, with 21 abstentions.
18 A/2505 and Add. 1.
that the South African government had failed to observe its obligations under the UN Charter, and that the apartheid policy had given rise to ever-increasing tension in the country. The commission stated in its conclusions:

It is highly unlikely, and indeed improbable, that the policy of apartheid will ever be willingly accepted by the masses subjected to discrimination … As the apartheid policy develops, the situation it has made is constantly being aggravated and daily becomes less open to settlement by conciliation, persuasion, information or education, daily more explosive and more menacing to internal peace and to the foreign relations of the Union of South Africa. Soon any solution will be precluded and the only way out will be through violence, with all its inevitable and incalculable dangers…

The UN, it felt, might suggest ways and means in which the Union might draw up a new policy, for example, a round-table conference of members of different ethnic groups of the Union. After considering the commission’s report, the General Assembly adopted a resolution requesting the commission to continue its study and suggest measures which would help to alleviate the situation and promote a peaceful settlement.

In its second report in 1954, the commission said that while it was for the South African people themselves to solve their problem, it wished to set out a number of basic ideas derived from plans or projects originating in South Africa which it believed to be consistent with the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, such as: the gradual abolition of the system of migrant labour, restrictions on the settlement of black people in urban centres and the pass laws; elimination of the colour bar, recognition of the principle of ‘equal pay for equal work’, and the reorganisation of the apprenticeship system; enactment of new legislation recognising the right of people of colour to become members of trade unions and to participate with full rights and complete equality in all negotiations for the peaceful settlement of labour disputes; and execution of a long-term plan for the organisation of general education. It suggested that the UN family of agencies offer assistance to South Africa in implementing such a programme. It declared:

Although the commission appreciates the importance of securing equal economic opportunities for all, regardless of differences in race, colour or belief, it feels bound to state its conviction that steps to achieve political equality among ethnic groups are of prime importance and cannot be continually deferred without serious danger.

On 14 December 1954, the General Assembly commended the Commission for its constructive work, invited the South African government to reconsider its position and requested the commission to keep the problem under review.

---

19 Ibid.
20 Resolution 721 (VIII) of 8 December 1953.
21 A/2719.
22 Ibid.
23 Resolution 820 (IX).
In its third report in 1955 reviewing the year’s developments in South Africa, including the adoption of the Freedom Charter by a multi-racial convention, the commission laid special emphasis on education and wrote prophetically:

Apartheid in education, symbolised by the words ‘Bantu education’ – a term detested by all the non-Europeans … – is liable to accentuate even more and to spread among the entire Native population a Bantu nationalism with a strong anti-White orientation. The Commission believes that the Nationalist Government, in carrying its policy of school segregation to extremes, may receive some sad surprises, including a stiffening in the anti-European attitude of the Bantu population. Should this occur, apartheid in this as no doubt in other fields would produce an effect very contrary to the pacification and reduced friction which its proponents say they hope to achieve.24

It observed:

Every day more and more non-Europeans are confronted with some basic facts of international life: for example, they have now become aware that there is not another country in any of the five continents that has set up racial segregation as an absolute and eternal principle or what might even be called a principle of divine right. In no other country of the world is there an ethnic minority labouring to clear up to its own advantage a racial muddle which it has itself created. The South African Government is the only Government in the world which believes that it can carry out such a fabulous experiment successfully and, to quote a familiar metaphor frequently used by Bantu preachers and journalists, that it can ‘unscramble a plate of scrambled eggs’. South Africa is the only country in the British Commonwealth which does not accept universal suffrage even as an objective to be achieved gradually in the distant future. South Africa is the only country in Africa where the Natives are not represented by their own kind in any legislative or consultative assembly. South Africa is the only country in the world where the Natives are rigorously excluded from certain categories of employment by the legislation of a minority intent on reserving them for itself.25

At the next session of the General Assembly that year the Western powers, especially the US, succeeded in scuttling the commission which had greatly helped in publicising the situation in South Africa and in formulating a policy for the UN. A paragraph in the draft resolution providing for the continuation of the commission was not adopted as it failed to obtain a two-thirds majority. The vote was 33 in favour and 17 against, with 9 abstentions. Among the Western states, only Greece voted in favour.

24 A/2953.
25 Ibid.
‘Conciliatory Approach’, 1956 to 1959
The South African government announced after the vote in the committee in 1955 that it had decided to recall its delegation to the UN from that session of the General Assembly. It withdrew again from the next session of the Assembly in 1956 and announced that it would maintain only a token representation at meetings of the Assembly and at UN headquarters.26

With annual requests from governments for the inclusion of the South African item in the agenda, the General Assembly considered the matter at each session. The resolutions were, however, very mild and conciliatory, as a result of pressure by the US and the desire of the sponsors to obtain the support of the US. A significant development during this period was the beginning of decolonisation in sub-Saharan Africa. Ghana became independent in 1957 and soon took over the lead in the debates on apartheid from India. The African Group of states was formed at the UN.

Grave developments had taken place in South Africa since 1955. A total of 156 leaders of the freedom movement were detained in a nation-wide swoop in December 1956 and put on trial on a charge of high treason. The hated pass laws were extended to African women and provoked wide protests. The Minister of Native Affairs was empowered to banish persons without right of trial or appeal; several Africans, including chiefs, were banished to remote and inhospitable areas. The Industrial Conciliation Act of 1956 empowered the Minister of Labour to reserve any job on a racial basis and to order the dissolution of multiracial trade unions. Many thousands of people were uprooted from their homes with the enforcement of the Group Areas Act, and many businesses were ruined.

Despite repression, the liberation movement utilised the extremely limited possibilities for legal action to continue protests against apartheid, for instance by launching the boycott of products of supporters of apartheid. The struggle of the South African people attracted sympathy and solidarity from abroad. Christian Action in London, the American Committee on Africa in New York, and groups in Nordic countries raised funds from the public for the defence of the accused in the treason trial. The African People’s Conference in Accra in December 1958 called for a boycott of South Africa. A Boycott Movement was launched in Britain in June 1959 and organised a consumer boycott of South African fruit and other products.

But, with the dissolution of UNCORS, the UN did not have the benefit of detailed reports on the situation in South Africa. The ANC submitted a long memorandum to the General Assembly at its 14th session in 1959, but it received little attention.27 The resolutions of the General Assembly did not reflect the grave developments in South Africa and the growing international solidarity with the struggle for freedom. Moreover,

26 South Africa resumed full participation in 1958, after the adoption of a ‘conciliatory’ resolution by the General Assembly.
27 The text is at http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/un/ancrev.html. The memorandum was circulated to the members of the Special Committee in English, but was not issued as a document. During the debate in the Special Committee, only Krishna Menon of India referred to it. E.S. Reddy ed., India against Apartheid: Speeches of Krishna Menon at the UN (New Delhi: Sanchar Publishing House, 1994), 113-14. The book is at http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/solidarity/menonti.html.
throughout this period the liberation movement requested only moral support from the UN. It was encouraged by condemnations of apartheid by ever-increasing majorities in the General Assembly. But the situation changed after the shooting of peaceful demonstrators against the pass laws in the Sharpeville on 21 March 1960.

The Sharpeville massacre and its aftermath, 1960-1962

The Sharpeville massacre in March 1960 led to world-wide condemnation of apartheid. Ghana, Malaya, Nigeria and Sudan banned imports of South African goods. Ghana closed its ports and airports to South African ships and aircraft. The Boycott Movement in Britain, renamed the Anti-Apartheid Movement, extended its boycott of South African goods; it was supported by the Labour and Liberal Parties, the Trade Union Congress and several cooperative societies. Anti-apartheid movements were formed in other countries, especially in the West. Dockworkers in Trinidad and Norway refused to handle South African goods. Boycotts spread to many more countries in the next year.28

In the UN, representatives of 29 Asian-African governments requested, on 25 March 1960, an urgent meeting of the Security Council to consider ‘the situation arising out of the large-scale killings of unarmed and peaceful demonstrators against racial discrimination and segregation in the Union of South Africa’. On 1 April it adopted Resolution 134 (1960) in which it recognised ‘that the situation in the Union of South Africa is one that has led to international friction and if continued might endanger international peace and security’; deplored the policies and actions of the South African government which had given rise to the situation; and called upon the South African government to initiate measures aimed at bringing about racial harmony based on equality, and to abandon its policies of apartheid and racial discrimination. It requested the secretary-general, in consultation with the South African government, ‘to make such arrangements as would adequately help in upholding the purposes and principles of the Charter and to report to the Security Council’. The resolution was adopted by 9 votes and none against, with Britain and France abstaining.

The discussion of the matter by the Security Council, the highest organ of the UN authorised to decide on coercive measures to maintain international peace and security, and the recognition that the situation in South Africa ‘if continued might endanger international peace and security’, represented a new stage in the UN consideration of apartheid.

The secretary-general, Dag Hammarskjold, met the South African foreign minister, Eric Louw, in London after the Commonwealth Summit in May. He visited South Africa in January 1961 and held discussions at six meetings with Prime Minister Verwoerd from 6 to 11 January. He reported to the Security Council on 23 January that during the discussions ‘so far no mutually acceptable arrangement has

---

28 The South African Minister of Economic Affairs told the House of Assembly on 23 January 1962 that boycotts of South African goods had been imposed by USSR, ‘Communist China’, India, Malaya, Antigua, Barbados, Jamaica, British Guiana, Surinam, Ethiopia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Sudan. These were actions by governments; public boycotts took place in many other countries.
been found’. He added: ‘The exchange of views in general has served a most useful purpose. The secretary-general does not consider the consultations as having come to an end, and he looks forward to their continuation at an appropriate time’.  

Meanwhile, on 30 March, the day when the Security Council began discussions, the government declared a state of emergency in 80 of 300 magisterial districts, including every major urban area, and mobilised 18 regiments of the Citizen Force to supplement the police, the army and the air force. On 1 April, it extended the state of emergency to 31 more magisterial districts. Thousands of people were detained under emergency regulations. On 8 April, the Unlawful Organisations Act was enacted; the ANC and the PAC were declared unlawful. On 4 May Robert Sobukwe, leader of the PAC, was sentenced to three years’ imprisonment for incitement of Africans to demonstrate against the pass laws. OR Tambo, deputy president of the ANC, secretly left South Africa at the end of March, at the request of ANC, to seek support abroad. Dr Yusuf M Dadoo, a leader of the SAIC, also went into exile, as did several representatives of the PAC. The leaders in exile proceeded to contact governments and public organisations to secure support to the struggle in South Africa. The liberation movement now requested more active support from the international community – through public boycotts and governmental sanctions against the South African government and its supporters.

On 24 June 1960, the Second Conference of Independent African States meeting in Addis Ababa adopted a resolution calling upon African states ‘to sever diplomatic relations or refrain from establishing diplomatic relations, as the case may be, to close African ports to all vessels flying the South African flag, to enact legislation prohibiting their ships from entering South African ports, to boycott all South African goods, to refuse landing and passage facilities to all aircraft belonging to the government and companies registered under the laws of the Union of South Africa and to prohibit all South African aircraft from flying over the airspace of the independent African states’. It invited the Arab states ‘to approach all petroleum companies with a view to preventing Arab oil from being sold to the Union of South Africa’ and recommended that the African states ‘refuse any concession to any company which continues to sell petroleum to the Union of South Africa’. It asked African members of the Commonwealth to take all possible steps to secure the exclusion of South Africa from the Commonwealth and recommended that appropriate measures be taken by the UN in accordance with Article 41 of its Charter.  

When the General Assembly considered the item on apartheid at its 15th and 16th sessions in 1961, the African proposals to request all states to consider taking the specific measures set out in the Addis Ababa resolution failed to obtain the required two-thirds
majority. The Assembly adopted, by an almost unanimous vote, resolutions proposed by India and other Asian states declaring that South Africa’s racial policies were totally inconsistent with its obligations as a member state and urging all states to consider separate and collective action to bring about the abandonment of those policies.32

The United Kingdom, which had voted against all General Assembly resolutions on apartheid until then, voted in favour of these resolutions, declaring that apartheid was now so exceptional as to be sui generis.

At the 17th session of the General Assembly in 1962, the two items on race conflict and the treatment of people of Indian origin were merged into a single item: The policies of apartheid of the government of the Republic of South Africa. The African delegations again moved a draft resolution calling for a series of measures against South Africa. India refrained from proposing an alternate draft. The sponsors opposed separate votes on paragraphs of the African draft and it was then adopted on 6 November 1962, as Resolution 1761 (XVII). By this resolution, the General Assembly requested member states to take the following measures to bring about the abandonment of the policies of apartheid:

(a) Breaking off diplomatic relations with the South African government or refraining from establishing such relations;
(b) Closing their ports to all vessels flying the South African flag;
(c) Enacting legislation prohibiting their ships from entering South African ports;
(d) Boycotting all South African goods and refraining from exporting goods, including all arms and ammunition, to South Africa;
(e) Refusing landing and passage facilities to all aircraft belonging to the South African government and companies registered under the laws of South Africa.

The General Assembly requested the Security Council to take appropriate measures, including sanctions, to secure South Africa’s compliance with the resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council on this subject and, if necessary, to consider action under Article 6 of the Charter.33 The Assembly decided to establish a Special Committee against Apartheid34 to keep the racial policies of the South African government under review when the Assembly was not in session and to report to the Assembly or the Security Council or both, as may be appropriate. Nelson Mandela declared, in his speech from the dock the following day: ‘South Africa is out of step with the rest of the civilised world, as is shown by the resolution adopted last night by the General Assembly of the UN’.35

32 Resolution 1598 (XV) of 13 April 1961 was adopted by 96 votes to 1 (Portugal), with no abstentions. Resolution 1663 (XVI) of 28 November 1961 was adopted by 98 votes to 2 (Portugal, South Africa), with Guinea abstaining.
33 Article 6 reads: ‘A member of the UN which has persistently violated the Principles contained in the present Charter may be expelled from the Organisation by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council.’
34 The Committee was initially named the ‘Special Committee on the Policies of Apartheid of the Government of the Republic of South Africa’. The General Assembly shortened its name in 1971 to ‘Special Committee on Apartheid’, and renamed it in 1974 as the ‘Special Committee against Apartheid’. It is referred to as the ‘Special Committee’ or ‘Special Committee against Apartheid’ in this chapter.
The resolution, however, had been adopted by a vote of 67 to 16, with 23 abstentions. No Western state voted for the resolution. All the major trading partners of South Africa, including Japan, voted against it. Some of those voting in favour expressed reservations on some recommendations. Many African, Asian and socialist countries broke relations with South Africa before or soon after the adoption of Resolution 1761 (XVII). The United Arab Republic withdrew its diplomatic mission from South Africa in May 1961, leaving South Africa with no African diplomatic mission. South African aircraft had to follow the long route around the African continent as independent African states prohibited flights over their territories. But the economic impact of the resolution was limited as the main trading partners took no action.

A spokesman of the South African government noted that the states which voted for General Assembly Resolution 1761 (XVII) accounted for less than one-sixth of South Africa’s foreign trade, while those opposed to it accounted for nearly two-thirds. He claimed, moreover, that South Africa’s strategic position was so important and its role in the ‘cold war’ so significant that the Western powers could not implement effective measures against it.

**Action against apartheid, 1963-1966**

In 1963, with the establishment of the Special Committee, the formation of the OAU and the massive repression in South Africa, apartheid became a major concern of the UN. By that time, the countries supporting sanctions against South Africa and assistance to the liberation struggle – the African, Asian and other non-aligned states, and the socialist states – had a large majority in the UN, and could obtain resolutions by the General Assembly. But in the Security Council, which alone could determine that the situation was a threat to international peace and impose mandatory sanctions binding on all member states, three permanent members who enjoyed the right of veto – France, the United Kingdom and the United States – opposed sanctions.

On 18 February 1963, the president of the General Assembly appointed the following 11 member states to serve on the Special Committee: Algeria, Costa Rica, the Federation of Malaya, Ghana, Guinea, Haiti, Hungary, Nepal, Nigeria, the Philippines and Somalia. The ‘Western Europe and other’ group had declined to nominate any member. This was the first committee of the UN to be boycotted by the Western states.36

The committee held its first meeting on 2 April 1963. Undeterred by the boycott of the Western states, it took advantage of their absence to function as an action-oriented body and was, in fact, able to obtain the appreciation of many Western states. It decided at the outset that the review expected of it was not a mere compilation of information, but a basis for action to secure a speedy and effective solution to the grave situation in South Africa. Ignoring doubts about its competence, it announced

---

36 With the expansion of membership, and the resignations of Costa Rica, Germany and Hungary, it was composed of the following 17 members in 1991: Algeria, Ghana, Guinea, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Nigeria, Peru, Philippines, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Trinidad and Tobago, Ukraine and Zimbabwe. [The German Democratic Republic was an active member for many years, but after German unification in 1990, the government of Germany decided not to take its seat in the Special Committee. Hungary withdrew from the Committee the same year.]
that it would receive memoranda from organisations and individuals and hear those who might be in a position to provide it with information. It wrote to member states for information on the actions they had taken or contemplated in implementation of General Assembly Resolution 1761 (XVII).

**Interim reports of the Special Committee, May and July 1963**

Within days of its establishment the Special Committee decided to submit an interim report to the General Assembly and the Security Council to draw their attention to the serious situation in South Africa – especially to the arrests of thousands of persons suspected of involvement in Poqo (the military wing of the PAC) or the ANC underground, and the great expansion of military forces – and call for urgent and effective action. It was particularly anxious that the Security Council should resume consideration of the matter. The report was adopted on 6 May 1963.

It pointed out that the South African government’s defence expenditure had risen from R44 million in the fiscal year 1960/1961 to an estimated R157 million for 1963/1964, considerably in excess of the expenditure at the height of the Second World War. It expressed ‘its grave anxiety and indignation’ at the continued provision of arms and equipment by other powers to the South African government, and the assistance rendered for the local manufacture of weapons. It recommended that the General Assembly and the Security Council call upon the states concerned:

(a) to halt forthwith all assistance to the government of the Republic of South Africa in strengthening its armed forces; and

(b) to dissociate themselves from South African official claims that they regard the political and strategic importance of the country so highly that they would assist its government in case of any conflict.

The committee pointed out that eight states, including their dependencies, together shared over three-quarters of the exports and imports of South Africa in the first ten months of 1962. They accounted for most of the foreign investments in the country and included the principal suppliers of arms and equipment to South Africa.

This report laid down what were to be the main concerns of the Special Committee throughout its existence: insistence that apartheid is a matter of concern to the entire international community and should not be regarded as a ‘cold war’ issue; demand for an end to all repression and release of all political prisoners; call for a total embargo

---

37 No South African organisation or individual had been heard by the UN until then, except by UNCORS. Committees of the General Assembly heard petitioners only from colonial and trust territories. Potlako Leballo of the PAC had appeared as a petitioner in 1962, but on the situation in Basutoland. Oliver Tambo visited the UN during the 15th session of the General Assembly in 1960 and spoke to delegates from Asian-African states. Vusumzi L. Make of the PAC, who also arrived in New York, was employed by the Ghana Mission to the UN and stayed on until 1962. Neither of them appeared before a UN committee.

38 A/5418 and S/5310. Reports of the Special Committee to the General Assembly and the Security Council have A/- and S/-numbers. Only the A/- numbers are indicated hereafter, as they are the most convenient.

39 The South African government undertook a rapid military build-up in 1960 in response to the march of freedom in Africa. In view of the growing opposition to apartheid in Britain, its traditional supplier of arms, it diversified its sources of supply and developed a local arms industry. France became an important supplier of military equipment.
on military cooperation with South Africa; and stress on the special responsibility of the main trading partners of South Africa.

Soon after the Special Committee approved its interim report, African states, overcoming their differences, met at a summit conference in Addis Ababa and decided to establish the Organisation of African Unity and the African Liberation Committee. The conference endorsed the recommendations of the Special Committee and decided to send the foreign ministers of four countries – Liberia, Tunisia, Madagascar and Sierra Leone – to the UN Security Council to represent all the independent African states in the discussion of the situation in South Africa.40

After the Addis Ababa Conference, the United States representative to the UN, Adlai Stevenson, called on the acting chairman of the Special Committee on 20 June 1963, and stated that the United States government was happy to cooperate with the Special Committee in the performance of its work. He said:

The United States Government recognises the extreme seriousness of the situation in the Republic of South Africa. Its anxiety and concern about the situation is increasing day by day. The United States has made almost continuous representations to the Government of South Africa to persuade it to abandon the policies of apartheid and to fulfil its obligations under the UN Charter. The United States will continue to use its best efforts toward that end through all available official and unofficial means. The United States Government is continuing to enforce the policy of forbidding the sale to the South African Government of any arms, whether from governmental or commercial sources, which could be used by that Government to enforce apartheid either in South Africa or in South West Africa. The United States will be happy to make available to the Special Committee any information in its possession relevant to the mandate of the Special Committee, as appropriate.41

Continuing its work, the Special Committee heard Patrick Duncan, representative of the PAC, on 8 July, and a delegation of the ANC – Tennyson Makiwane, Duma Nokwe and Robert Resha – on 10 July. It adopted a second interim report on 16 July, stressing in particular the need for action by the Security Council for an effective embargo on military cooperation with South Africa as the first and most urgent step to deal with the situation in South Africa. It recommended that the arms embargo should cover the supply of all materiel which can be used for military purposes or for the suppression of resistance to apartheid, as well as all assistance, direct or indirect, for the manufacture of such materiel in South Africa. The Committee also recommended that the Security Council consider, as a second step, an effective embargo on the supply of petroleum and petroleum products to South Africa.42

---

40 The text of the resolution on ‘apartheid and racial discrimination’ was published as a document of the Special Committee (A/AC.115/L.11) and is available at http://www.anc.org.za/un/undocs1a.html#23.
42 A/5453. The report had three appendices, one of which was a detailed note on the expansion of military and police forces in South Africa and the supply of arms and ammunition to South Africa.
Security Council Resolution 181(1963) on the arms embargo, 7 August 1963

On 11 July 1963, 32 African states requested an early meeting of the Security Council to consider ‘the explosive situation existing in the Republic of South Africa, which constitutes a serious threat to international peace and security’. The Security Council discussed the question between 31 July and 7 August 1963.

The United States representative, Adlai Stevenson, announced on 1 August that his government had decided to impose an arms embargo against South Africa. He said:

We expect to bring to an end the sale of all military equipment to the Government of South Africa by the end of this calendar year, in order further to contribute to a peaceful solution and to avoid any steps which might at this point directly contribute to international friction in the area. There are existing contracts which provide for limited quantities of strategic equipment for defence against external threats, such as air-to-air missiles and torpedoes for submarines. We must honour these contracts.

On 7 August, the Security Council adopted a draft resolution introduced by Ghana, Morocco and the Philippines – except for one paragraph calling upon all states to boycott all South African goods and to refrain from exporting strategic materials of direct military value to South Africa43 – as Resolution 181 (1963) by 9 votes in favour and 2 abstentions (France and the United Kingdom). In this resolution, the Council expressed its conviction that ‘the situation in South Africa is seriously disturbing international peace and security’. It strongly deprecated ‘the policies of South Africa in its perpetuation of racial discrimination as being inconsistent with the principles contained in the Charter of the UN and contrary to its obligations as a member state of the UN’. It solemnly called upon all states ‘to cease forthwith the sale and shipment of arms, ammunition of all types and military vehicles to South Africa’.

This was significant as the first decision by the Security Council calling for measures against the South African government, and the first decision for an arms embargo against any government. However, since it was not accompanied by a determination that the situation in South Africa was a threat to international peace and security under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, the resolution was regarded as a recommendation to member states rather than a binding decision, making the embargo voluntary.

General Assembly action on the Rivonia Trial and assistance to families of political prisoners

In September 1963, the Special Committee presented a detailed report to the General Assembly and the Security Council44 reviewing developments in South Africa since the adoption of General Assembly Resolution 1761 (XVII), the growing international opposition to apartheid and the work of the committee. It suggested that they consider

---

43 This paragraph received 5 votes in favour, 0 against and 6 abstentions.
44 A/5497.
a series of additional measures against South Africa. But the Rivonia Trial soon became an urgent concern.

When Nelson Mandela and his colleagues were brought to court on 8 October 1963, the chairman of the Special Committee, Diallo Telli (Guinea), and the African Group at the UN, acted with extraordinary urgency. At the request of Diallo Telli, the African Group met that morning and sent a deputation to the secretary-general to convey its concern. The Special Political Committee of the General Assembly, which met that afternoon, agreed to their proposal to give urgent consideration to the trial and to hear Oliver Tambo, deputy president of the ANC.45 On 10 October, 55 delegations presented a draft resolution which was adopted on the same day by 87 votes to 1 (Portugal), with 9 Western states abstaining, and recommended to the General Assembly. The next day, when the General Assembly voted on the draft in plenary, the nine Western states changed their votes and the draft was adopted by 106 votes, with only South Africa voting against and no abstentions, as Resolution 1881 (XVIII). In this resolution, the Assembly condemned the South African government for its failure to comply with the repeated resolutions calling for an end to the repression of persons opposing apartheid; and requested it ‘to abandon the arbitrary trial now in progress and forthwith to grant unconditional release to all political prisoners and to all persons imprisoned, interned or subjected to other restrictions for having opposed the policy of apartheid’. The resolution helped initiate the world campaign for an end to the Rivonia Trial and the release of political prisoners in South Africa.

Resuming discussion of the situation at the end of its session, as the matter was under consideration in the Security Council, the General Assembly adopted two resolutions on 16 December. In the first resolution,46 it requested the Special Committee to ‘follow constantly’ the various aspects of the racial policies of South Africa. The committee was no longer limited to work between sessions of the General Assembly.

In the second resolution, the Assembly appealed for assistance to families of political prisoners, as recommended by the Special Committee, declaring that such assistance was ‘consonant with the purposes and principles of the UN’. It requested the secretary-general to seek ways and means of providing relief and assistance, through the appropriate international agencies, to the families of all persons persecuted by the South African government for their opposition to the policies of apartheid.

**Discussion by the Security Council and establishment of a Group of Experts, December 1963**

Meanwhile, the Security Council met again from 27 November to 4 December 1963 to consider the report of the secretary-general on the implementation of its resolution of 7 August. Members of the Security Council also took note of a suggestion by the Foreign Minister of Denmark, Per Haekkerup, in a statement in the General Assembly on 25

---

45 Tambo’s statement at this meeting was about the Rivonia Trial. He made his main presentation at the meeting of the Special Political Committee on 29 October. Both statements were issued as UN documents, A/SPC/80 and 84. The texts are also available at www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/or/.

46 Resolution 1978 A (XVIII).
September on behalf of the Nordic states. He had indicated that a policy of sanctions alone may well defeat its own ends and aggravate tension as the great majority of the European population in South Africa wrongly assumed that abandonment of white domination meant abandonment of their own existence. The UN should demonstrate that there was an alternative to catastrophe and that the only way towards this alternative was through the abolition of apartheid. It must also consider how, if necessary, it could, in a transitional period, contribute to the maintenance of law and order and the protection of the life and civil rights of all individuals.

On 4 December, the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 182 (1963), proposed by Norway, in which it expressed ‘the firm conviction that the policies of apartheid and racial discrimination as practised by the Government of the Republic of South Africa are abhorrent to the conscience of mankind and that therefore a positive alternative to these policies must be found through peaceful means’. It requested the secretary-general ‘to establish under his direction and reporting to him a small group of recognised experts to examine methods of resolving the present situation in South Africa through full, peaceful and orderly application of human rights and fundamental freedoms to all inhabitants of the territory as a whole, regardless of race, colour or creed, and to consider what part the UN might play in the achievement of that end’.

The resolution extended the ‘voluntary’ arms embargo to cover equipment and materials for the manufacture and maintenance of arms and ammunition in South Africa, as the Special Committee had recommended. But France and the United Kingdom expressed reservations as regards existing contracts and the sale and shipment of equipment to be used in manufacturing arms against external attack. They claimed that they did not supply arms to South Africa for internal repression, but only for external defence. The United States said that in its view, multi-purpose products did not fall within the scope of the embargo.

Report of the Group of Experts, 20 April 1964

The secretary-general appointed five members to the Expert Group: Mrs Alva Myrdal (Sweden), Sir Edward Asafu-Adjaye (Ghana), Josip Djerdja (Yugoslavia), Sir Hugh Foot (United Kingdom), and Dey Ould Sidi Baba (Morocco). The Group elected Mrs Myrdal as chairman and Sir Hugh as rapporteur.

The South African government refused to cooperate in any way with the Group and rejected a request for a visit by the Group to South Africa. Nevertheless, the Group held extensive consultations and met with representatives of the ANC (Oliver Tambo and Robert Resha), the PAC (Nana Mahomo), the SAIC (Yusuf M Dadoo) and the South African Coloured People’s Congress (Barney Desai, president). It submitted its report to the secretary-general on 20 April 1964, in advance of the due date, ‘because of the rapidly increasing gravity of the situation in South Africa and the urgent need to point the way to an alternative course’.

47 Josip Djerdja resigned from the Group in March 1964.
The Group emphasised the ‘first and basic principle that all the people of South Africa should be brought into consultation and should thus be enabled to decide the future of their country at the national level’. In order to give effect to this essential principle, it recommended that ‘all efforts should be directed to the establishment of a National Convention fully representative of the whole population’ to set a new course for the future. An essential prerequisite for the national convention, it stressed, was an amnesty for all opponents to apartheid, whether they were under trial or in prison or under restriction or in exile. The convention might decide to create a Constituent Assembly and elections to it might perhaps be undertaken with UN assistance and supervision. If the necessity should arise, the UN could ‘contribute to the maintenance of law and order and the protection of life and civil rights’ and thus both allay fears and secure confidence.

The Group suggested that the UN could, in consultation with its specialised agencies, immediately set up an education and training programme for training a large number of South Africans abroad in order to enable as many South Africans as possible to play a meaningful part in the political, economic and social advancement of their country.

As regards proposals within and outside the UN for sanctions against South Africa, the Group felt that an expert examination should be made of the economic and strategic aspects of sanctions. The Group proposed that the Security Council endorse its recommendation for a national convention and invite the South African government to send its representatives to take part in discussions under the auspices of the UN on the formation of the national convention. The Council should also invite all representative groups in South Africa, including the banned organisations, to communicate their views on the agenda for the proposed convention. It should make a renewed and urgent appeal for an immediate amnesty for opponents of apartheid. The Council should furthermore fix an early date by which a reply to the invitation would be required from the South African government, and utilise the interval for the urgent examination of the logistics of sanctions. The Group added:

If no satisfactory reply is received from the South African government by the stipulated date, the Security Council, in our view, would be left with no effective peaceful means for assisting to resolve the situation, except to apply economic sanctions.

Work of the Special Committee, January–June 1964

In the first part of 1964, the Special Committee was engaged in preparing for further action, especially by the Security Council, because of concern over the Rivonia Trial and the death sentences in South Africa. Chief Albert Luthuli sent an appeal to the secretary-general on 9 March 1964 that he use his good offices to avert the tragic crisis threatening South Africa. Death sentences to the nine leaders on trial, he said, would be an African tragedy. ‘It is above all imperative that UN action be devised to compel compliance with UN resolutions and in particular to save the lives of the
nine Rivonia Trial leaders; for with them are arraigned, in the dock, all hopes of a peaceful settlement of the crisis in our country. The Special Committee heard Oliver Tambo and Tennyson Makiwane of the ANC on 12 March 1964. It decided to make an urgent report to the Security Council and the General Assembly, especially since some political prisoners opposed to apartheid had been sentenced to death and others were threatened with the same penalty.

In an interim report on 23 March 1964, the Special Committee recommended, as a first step, that the Security Council should demand that the South African government refrain from the execution of persons sentenced to death for offences arising from opposition to its racial policies, end immediately trials proceeding under arbitrary laws, and grant an amnesty to all political prisoners. It further recommended that, unless the South African government complied within a brief time-limit with those minimum, but vital, demands, the Security Council should take action, under Chapter VII of the Charter, to compel it to comply with the decisions of the Council.

On the same day the Special Committee addressed an appeal to the heads of state or government of member states, as well as a number of organisations and eminent personalities, to exert their influence to induce the South African government to refrain from executing the condemned political leaders and to spare the lives of the persons threatened with the death penalty in South Africa; to put an end to the tortures and the various humiliations inflicted on the opponents of apartheid; to liberate the political prisoners; and to abandon its policy of apartheid.

The Special Committee received a large number of replies concerning action taken in response to the appeal. Moreover, on 27 March 1964, the secretary-general made an urgent appeal to the South African government ‘to spare the lives of those facing execution or death sentences for acts arising from their opposition to the Government’s racial policies, so as to prevent an aggravation of the situation and to facilitate peaceful efforts to resolve the situation’.

In April, the Special Committee sent a delegation to London to participate in the International Conference on Economic Sanctions against South Africa (14-17 April 1964), convened by the British Anti-Apartheid Movement and attended by many governments, organisations and experts. During that visit the delegation held two meetings to hear a number of persons: Barbara Castle, honorary president of the Anti-Apartheid Movement; L John Collins, chairman of the Defence and Aid Fund for South Africa; Barney Desai, president of the Coloured People’s Congress of South Africa; Ruth First, who had recently been released from a long period of solitary detention in South Africa; J. Joost de Blank, former Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town; Thabo Mbeki, son of one of the accused in the Rivonia Trial; Yusuf M. Dadoo, representative

49 Several alleged members of Poqo had been executed by this time. Vuyisile Mini, Wilson Khayinga and Zinakile Mkaba of the ANC were sentenced to death in March 1964.
50 A/5692.
52 Ibid., paragraph 60.
of the SAIC; Leon Levy, national president and official representative abroad of the South African Congress of Trade Unions; and A. Manchanda, representative of the Committee of Afro-Asian Caribbean Organisations, on behalf of six members who had been on hunger strike in protest against the trials and repression in South Africa.

On 25 May 1964, after 58 states requested renewed consideration of the situation in South Africa by the Security Council, the committee submitted a second interim report reviewing the developments since its report on 23 March and transmitting the report of its delegation to the Sanctions Conference.

Meetings of the Security Council, June 1964

The Security Council discussed the situation in South Africa at nine meetings from 8 to 18 June and adopted two resolutions. On 9 June, it adopted Resolution 190 (1964) which the two African members proposed for urgent consideration in view of the impending judgement in the Rivonia Trial. In this resolution, the Council urged the South African government (a) to renounce the execution of the persons sentenced to death for acts resulting from their opposition to the policy of apartheid; (b) to end the Rivonia Trial; and (c) to grant an amnesty to all persons already imprisoned, interned or subjected to other restrictions for having opposed the policy of apartheid.

The resolution received 7 votes in favour and none against. Four countries – Brazil, France, the United Kingdom and the United States – abstained on the grounds that the Council should refrain from any action which might be construed as intervention in the due process of law of a member state. At a meeting on 12 June, after life sentences were imposed on eight of the accused in the Rivonia Trial, the representative of Morocco read a statement by Albert Luthuli.

The Council continued consideration of the matter, especially the reports of the Group of Experts and the Special Committee, and adopted Resolution 191 (1964) on 16 June by 8 votes to 0, with 3 abstentions (Czechoslovakia, France, and the Soviet Union). The Council condemned the apartheid policies of the South African government and the legislation supporting those policies, such as the General Law Amendment Act, and in particular its ninety-day detention clause; and urgently appealed to it to:

(a) renounce the execution of any persons sentenced to death for their opposition to the policy of apartheid;
(b) grant immediate amnesty to all persons detained or on trial, as well as clemency to all persons sentenced for their opposition to the government’s racial policies;
(c) abolish the practice of imprisonment without charges, without access to counsel or without the right of prompt trial.

53 A/5707.
54 France, the United Kingdom and the United States said that they did not consider that there was a threat to the peace calling for sanctions. Ivory Coast and Morocco held that the resolution was inadequate, but voted for it with reservations. Czechoslovakia and the USSR abstained because it ignored the African request for sanctions against South Africa.
The Security Council endorsed the main conclusion of the Group of Experts that ‘all the people of South Africa should be brought into consultation and should thus be enabled to decide the future of their country at the national level’, but not its recommendations concerning a national convention. It established an Expert Committee, composed of the members of the Security Council, to undertake a technical and practical study ‘as to the feasibility, effectiveness, and implications of measures which could, as appropriate, be taken by the Security Council under the UN Charter’. It also invited the secretary-general, in consultation with appropriate UN specialised agencies, to establish the UN Educational and Training Programme for South Africans (UNETPSA). The secretary-general established the UNETPSA in 1965.

The Expert Committee held 38 meetings and submitted a lengthy report on 27 February 1965. France did not participate in the committee. Three proposals for conclusions were submitted to the committee, but none of them obtained the majority required for a decision by the Security Council. The report of the committee was not considered by the Council. In fact, the Security Council did not resume consideration of the situation in South Africa until 1970.

**Deadlock on sanctions but progress on other action**

It was a great relief that Nelson Mandela and the other defendants in the Rivonia Trial had been spared the death sentence. The UN, together with the ANC and the Anti-Apartheid Movement, could derive satisfaction that their efforts to promote international action were responsible for this result. But the situation in South Africa remained a source of ever increasing concern, as numerous political trials continued, as did executions of patriots.

Three ANC members, Vuyisile Mini, Wilson Khayinga and Zinakile Mkaba, were executed on 6 November 1964. The Special Committee had issued a communiqué, when their appeal against death sentences was rejected, demanding that South Africa refrain from the execution of death sentences. The secretary-general conveyed the committee’s statement, as well as the appeals by the African group at the UN and by President Gamal Abdel Nasser of the United Arab Republic on behalf of the Second Conference of the Heads of State or Government of the Non-aligned Countries, to the representative of South Africa on 9 October and expressed the hope that the South African government would see fit to show clemency in the spirit of the Security Council resolutions. There was, however, a setback in the momentum of international action.

The Special Committee, continuing its work, presented a report on 30 November 1964 reviewing developments in South Africa, and provided a detailed account of

---

55 S/6210.

56 The representative of South Africa replied to the secretary-general on 21 October that ‘the South African Government have no intention whatsoever of answering the communications to which your letter gave cover and which are obviously yet another attempt organised under Communist influence by political forces hostile to South Africa to interfere in the judicial processes of a member state’. See A/6825, paragraphs 105-06 and A/AC.115/L.93.

57 A/5825.
The bannings, detentions and trials of members of the liberation movement, as well as reports of ill-treatment and torture of detainees and political prisoners. It made a series of recommendations for action. But the General Assembly could not discuss any substantive issues at its 19th session in 1964 because of a dispute concerning contributions to peacekeeping operations.

The United Kingdom announced an arms embargo in November 1964, after the Labour Party came to power, but it soon became clear that the major Western powers were not prepared to support or implement any further measures against South Africa. A deadlock had been reached on sanctions. France continued to supply military equipment to South Africa. In South Africa, the government was thus able to deal a severe blow to the liberation movements. Most of their leaders were in prison, restriction or exile. The movements required several years to revive their underground structures. The UN, however, was able to keep the issue alive and initiate some significant actions, mainly because of the work of the Special Committee, and its proposals endorsed by the General Assembly.

In October 1964, the Special Committee sent an appeal to governments to contribute to voluntary organisations which were providing assistance to political prisoners and their families in South Africa. Several governments sent substantial contributions to the Defence and Aid Fund and the World Council of Churches in response to this appeal. In December 1965, the General Assembly decided, on the proposal of the Special Committee, to establish a trust fund for South Africa to secure contributions by a larger number of governments. These initiatives led to an unprecedented programme which helped greatly in ensuring the defence of political prisoners and assistance to their families in need, thereby helping to keep up the morale of the activists in the liberation struggle.

The General Assembly, at its session in 1965, endorsed the proposal of the Special Committee for publicity by the UN and its specialised agencies to the inhumanity of apartheid and the international efforts for the elimination of apartheid.58 At that session the chairman of the Special Committee, Achkar Marof, as representative of Guinea, challenged the credentials of the South African delegation. The Assembly decided, by a vote of 53 to 42, with 9 abstentions, to take no decision on the credentials.59

In Resolution 2054 A (XX) of 15 December 1965, the Assembly declared its firm support to ‘all those who are opposing the policies of apartheid and particularly those who are combating such policies in South Africa’. In paragraph 6 of the resolution, the Assembly drew the attention of the Security Council to ‘the fact that the situation in South Africa constitutes a threat to international peace and security, that action under Chapter VII of the Charter is essential in order to solve the problem of apartheid and that universally applied economic sanctions are the only means of achieving a peaceful solution’. This provision – adopted by 70 votes to 12, with 13 abstentions – was of special significance as the Special Committee was anxious to isolate the few main trading partners of South Africa. Several of the

58 Resolution 2054 A (XX) of 15 December 1965.
59 Resolution 2113 B (XX) of 21 December 1965.
smaller Western states were in favour of pressure against the South African regime, but argued that only the Security Council could impose sanctions and that they must be universally applied to be effective. The formulation in paragraph 6, drafted to meet those concerns, was supported by Denmark and Sweden in 1965 and by all the Nordic states in 1966.

With this resolution began the practice of annual consultation by the Special Committee with Nordic states on resolutions on apartheid. An increasing number of smaller Western states began to support the formulation in later years so that the Special Committee could claim that even a large majority of Western states supported sanctions in principle. From 1984, several smaller Western states joined non-aligned states in sponsoring resolutions calling for concerted international action against apartheid.

An International Seminar on Apartheid was organised by the secretary-general, in consultation with the Special Committee and the Commission on Human Rights, in Brasilia from 23 August to 4 September 1966. Apart from representatives of governments, the following individuals participated in the seminar: Robert Resha (ANC), Peter Raboroko (PAC), Colin Legum, Lewis Nkosi, Leslie Rubin, Ronald Segal and L. John Collins. The seminar approved 30 conclusions and recommendations.

The Special Committee, in its report of 21 October 1966, endorsed the unanimous conclusion of the seminar that ‘the UN has a fundamental interest in combating the doctrine of apartheid and should find, as a matter of urgency, ways and means for its elimination’. Taking note of the conclusions and recommendations of the seminar, and recalling its own many-sided efforts to promote action against apartheid, the Special Committee recommended a comprehensive international campaign against apartheid under the auspices of the UN as a demonstration of its determination to take all adequate measures to secure the eradication of apartheid. The General Assembly endorsed the proposal for the international campaign, and approved the recommendation of the Special Committee to establish a special unit on apartheid for assisting UN organs in the campaign.

By then, the arms embargo, assistance to political prisoners, demand for the release of political prisoners and cessation of executions of opponents of apartheid, and publicity against apartheid had obtained almost unanimous support in the UN. The task was to promote greater action on these matters, while at the same time mobilising governments and organisations to confront the few governments and vested interests which continued to collaborate with the South African regime.

The international campaign against apartheid, 1967–1989

The international campaign against apartheid was based on the recognition that the UN had a vital interest in combating the doctrine of apartheid and in ensuring the liberation of South Africa from racist tyranny. Its strategy was to build the broadest
coalition of governments and intergovernmental and nongovernmental organisations to promote all appropriate activities which would assist the South African people in their difficult struggle for a democratic society.

The General Assembly had declared, as noted earlier, that ‘universally applied economic sanctions are the only way of achieving a peaceful solution’ in South Africa. It was essential to reaffirm this conviction, publicise and denounce the collaboration of governments and vested interests with the apartheid regime and its supporters, and to call on them to cooperate in international action. But mere repetition of annual appeals for sanctions, which would be opposed by the major Western powers and other principal trading partners of South Africa, would be futile. It was essential to explore other measures which the UN could take to isolate the South African regime, to support the opponents of apartheid in South Africa and to exert pressure on the recalcitrant governments.

While the major Western powers could veto sanctions which required decisions by the Security Council, the General Assembly – where the friends of liberation commanded an overwhelming majority of votes – could decide on many other actions by the UN and promote solidarity by governments and the public all over the world with the struggle for liberation in South Africa.

The international campaign was a concerted effort at the governmental and public level. The mobilisation of the public in the major Western countries was essential to make their governments heed the appeals of the great majority of member states of the UN, or, at a minimum, restrain them from allying with the apartheid regime against the South African people. For this purpose, the Special Committee recognised, it was essential to encourage boycotts (or people’s sanctions) which had already been organised by the anti-apartheid movements with the support of trade unions, churches and organisations of students, youth, women and other such groups in Western countries. The Special Committee had established close cooperation with Asian and African states, as well as the Nordic states, and with the OAU, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the specialised agencies. It had also developed contacts with a number of anti-apartheid movements and other Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). The international campaign envisaged the extension of these contacts, and consultation on coordination in action.

The campaign was, above all, based on the recognition that the primary force for the elimination of apartheid was the struggle of the South African people for liberation. As the chairman of the Special Committee, Achkar Marof (Guinea) said in a message to the European Conference against Apartheid (Paris, 6 May 1967):

The struggle for freedom in South Africa is certainly the right, the responsibility and the privilege of the people of South Africa. They have not abdicated their struggle or asked for freedom as a gift from the rest of the world. Whatever we do at the international level – whether as governments or in anti-apartheid movements and other popular organisations – we need to recognise in all humility that our role is but secondary. We do not aspire to liberate – which would be tantamount to substituting ourselves to the South
African people – but to assist the liberation, as that is our duty if we are loyal to our own convictions. We can discharge this duty only if we avoid any pity or paternalism and remain at all times responsive to the needs and desires of the liberation movement.

The purpose of international action was to enable the liberation movements to attain their legitimate objective with the least amount of violence and suffering. Partial sanctions and boycotts, recognition and assistance to the liberation movements, humanitarian and educational assistance to the victims of apartheid and publicity against apartheid were all helpful in that context.

The programme for the international campaign emerged in consultations by the Special Committee with governments, the OAU and other intergovernmental bodies, liberation movements, anti-apartheid movements and other NGOs. It was revised and extended from time to time in further consultations in the light of developments in South Africa and internationally.

The consultations were pursued in many seminars and conferences organised or co-sponsored by the Special Committee. Representatives of anti-apartheid movements and other NGOs played a prominent part in the discussions and were even elected as officers of the conferences and seminars. This was unprecedented in the practice of the UN. These forums provided an opportunity not only for consultations by the Special Committee for action by the UN, but for discussions among anti-apartheid groups on coordination of campaigns. They helped to develop contacts and cooperation between anti-apartheid groups, the OAU and governments committed to the liberation of South Africa. National campaigns were often internationalised, and governments cooperated with anti-apartheid groups as a result of these contacts and consultations.

From the Kitwe seminar to Soweto, 1967-1976

The UN organised, on the proposal of the Special Committee, an International Seminar on Apartheid, Racial Discrimination and Colonialism in Southern Africa at Kitwe, Zambia, in July-August 1967. Prior to the seminar, the Special Committee sent a mission to Europe and Africa to consult specialised agencies, the OAU, the ANC and the PAC, anti-apartheid movements and other NGOs. In a paper to the seminar, the chairman of the Special Committee, Achkar Marof (Guinea), wrote:

We can no more speak in the UN, as was done before, of persuading the South African regime to abandon apartheid or dissuading it from racism. That has proved to be impossible. We need to encourage world opinion to support democratic changes in South Africa and a reconstruction of its society by a revolutionary process.
The seminar was attended by representatives of governments and UN bodies, as well as leaders of all southern African liberation movements and other invitees. Several participants stressed that the South African regime – which sought to become a regional power with hegemony over the whole of southern Africa – was the main enemy of liberation and that effective pressure against that regime was essential to facilitate the liberation of colonial territories. The seminar helped to clarify thinking on the situation in southern Africa.

In June 1968, the Special Committee held special sessions in Stockholm, London and Geneva. Oliver Tambo was invited as a special guest to the session in Stockholm, which was attended by representatives of many organisations and prominent individuals from all the Nordic countries. The session in London was attended by representatives of the liberation movements and associated organisations, the anti-apartheid movements of Britain, Ireland and France, as well as other NGOs and individuals. The session in Geneva was devoted to consultations with specialised agencies and NGOs.

A number of conclusions emerged from the discussions at these special sessions. The Special Committee took them into account in its annual report. On its recommendation, the General Assembly declared, in Resolution 2396 (XXIII) of 2 December 1968, that ‘freedom fighters should be treated as prisoners of war under international law, particularly the Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War of 12 August 1949’. But the most important result of the discussions was the decision by the Special Committee, after consultations with the anti-apartheid groups and the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee for Open Sport (SANROC), that the UN should actively support boycotts of South Africa by the public.66

The General Assembly, in the same resolution, requested all states and organisations ‘to suspend cultural, educational, sporting and other exchanges with the racist regime and with organisations or institutions in South Africa which practise apartheid’.

The Special Committee decided in 1970 to recommend a series of draft resolutions to the General Assembly on various aspects of the campaign against apartheid, instead of one resolution which would emphasise division of opinion rather than progress in achieving a consensus on action. From that time onwards, several resolutions on apartheid were adopted at each session of the General Assembly. Resolutions on the release of political prisoners, the UN Trust Fund for South Africa, denunciation of the ‘bantustans’, dissemination of information on apartheid, and women and children under apartheid, received unanimous support; those on the arms embargo, sports and cultural boycotts received overwhelming majorities; and one resolution at each session contained provisions which no Western country was prepared to support. Declarations on the objectives of the UN with regard to South Africa were adopted by consensus. The votes in successive sessions of the General Assembly reflected progress in international consensus on action, and isolated the governments which continued

66 The Special Committee had reported boycotts by anti-apartheid groups, but had not actively promoted the boycotts until then in order to avoid accusations that a governmental body was interfering with sports and cultural activities.
to resist effective action. Some of these resolutions helped to build coalitions on action in different fields.

The Special Committee decided to find ways to approach different segments of the public and encourage concerted action against apartheid. Recognising the importance of action by the trade union movement, it began consultations in 1971 with the confederations of trade unions and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) on the convening of an international conference of trade unions for action against apartheid. After intensive consultations, it was agreed that the conference would be convened by the Workers’ Group of the ILO in cooperation with the Special Committee. The first conference was held in Geneva in 1973. There were further conferences in 1977 and 1983, and these proved effective in promoting action by the trade union movement, as well as action by the ILO. In later years the Committee co-sponsored or assisted international conferences of women, students and youth, and parliamentarians. It also organised regional conferences of governments and organisations in Asia, Latin America, Arab countries and North America.

The UN, recognising the importance of public action, began appealing for international campaigns on various issues. For instance, in Resolution 2923 E (XXVII) of 15 November 1972, the General Assembly invited all organisations, institutions and information media to organise in 1973 intensified and coordinated campaigns with the following goals:

(a) Discontinuance of all military, economic and political collaboration with South Africa;
(b) Cessation of all activities by foreign economic interests which encourage the South African regime in its imposition of apartheid;
(c) Condemnation of torture and ill-treatment of prisoners and detainees in South Africa;
(d) Discouragement of emigration to South Africa, especially of skilled workers;
(e) Boycott of South Africa in sports and in cultural and other activities;
(f) World-wide collection of contributions for assistance to the victims of apartheid and support to the movement of the oppressed people of South Africa for freedom.

The response depended on the extent of consultations by the Special Committee before the appeals. When adequately prepared, these appeals resulted in coordination of action between the UN and the anti-apartheid movements and other NGOs. Another major development during this period was the recognition accorded to the liberation movements (see below).

The International Conference of Experts for the Support of Victims of Colonialism and Apartheid in Southern Africa, organised by the UN in cooperation with the OAU and the government of Norway, was held in Oslo from 9 to 14 April 1973. The recommendations of the conference led to significant decisions by the UN. The conference recommended:
Action should be taken by all UN bodies, the organisations of the UN system, the specialised agencies and other international organisations to ensure full representation and participation by liberation movements as the authentic representatives of their peoples and countries.67

Later that year, the General Assembly declared ‘that the South African regime has no right to represent the people of South Africa’ and that the liberation movements recognised by the OAU were ‘the authentic representatives of the overwhelming majority of the South African people’. It authorised the Special Committee ‘to associate the South African liberation movements closely with its work’. It requested all specialised agencies and other intergovernmental organisations ‘to deny membership or privileges of membership to the South African regime’ and to invite representatives of the ANC and PAC to participate in their meetings.68 At the same session, on 30 November 1973, the General Assembly approved the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid.69

On 21 March 1974, the Special Committee invited the ANC and PAC to attend its meetings as observers.70 They were subsequently invited to meetings of the working group which prepared proposals for action by the committee. They had in fact a greater voice in the drafting of resolutions than the members of the Special Committee as they were represented not only in the Special Committee and its working group, but also in the African group and its Southern Africa Sub-Committee, and the non-aligned group.

In October 1974, at the request of the General Assembly,71 the Security Council considered the ‘relationship between the UN and South Africa’. The ANC, the PAC and other southern African liberation movements were invited to participate in the meetings. A proposal to recommend to the General Assembly the immediate expulsion of South Africa from the UN received ten votes in favour but was not adopted because of the negative votes of three permanent members of the Security Council.72 The representative of South Africa said during the debate that discrimination based solely on the colour of a man’s skin could not be defended and that South Africa would do everything in its power to move away from discrimination based on race or colour. But this promise proved to be merely a manoeuvre to divert attention.

After the failure of the Security Council to take action, the General Assembly rejected the credentials of the delegation of South Africa, and approved the ruling of its president, Abdelaziz Bouteflika (Algeria) that South Africa could not participate

---

68 Resolution 3151 G (XXVIII) of 14 December 1973. The Western powers did not vote for this resolution. It was adopted by 88 votes to 7, with 28 abstentions.
69 General Assembly Resolution 3068 (XXVIII), adopted by 91 votes to 4, with 26 abstentions.
70 As observers they were entitled to speak with the approval of the members. In fact, they were always allowed to speak.
71 General Assembly Resolution 3207 (XXIX) of 30 September 1974.
72 The Security Council consisted of 15 members at that time. Resolutions of the Council required 9 votes in favour, but any of the five permanent members could veto them by voting against. France, the United Kingdom and the United States voted against this proposal. Among other Western members, Australia voted in favour and Austria abstained.
in the work of the General Assembly. South Africa was soon excluded from all other UN bodies and thus effectively deprived of almost all the privileges of membership of the UN. On the other hand, on 20 November 1975, the General Assembly proclaimed that ‘the UN and the international community have a special responsibility towards the oppressed people of South Africa and their liberation movements, and towards those imprisoned, restricted or exiled for their struggle against apartheid’.

Meanwhile, the underground resistance movement in South Africa began to revive and there was a series of strikes by African workers. The independence of Mozambique in 1974 on the border of South Africa was a great encouragement to the South African people in their struggle. Investigations by students and others in South Africa of the miserable condition of African workers in foreign-owned companies received considerable publicity in the West, and led to pressures on the parent companies and their governments to take action.

But the South African regime was able to maintain friendly relations with the Nixon administration in the United States which condoned its aggression against Angola in 1975. It was also able to develop close relations with Israel. Prime Minister Vorster made an official visit to Israel in April 1976 and signed agreements for cooperation in many fields.

**Soweto to state of emergency, 1976-1985**

The police shooting at a peaceful demonstration in Soweto on 16 June 1976 provoked a world-wide reaction against the apartheid regime. The Security Council met on 19 June and adopted by consensus a resolution strongly condemning the South African government for its ‘resort to massive violence against and killings of the African people including schoolchildren and students and others opposing racial discrimination’; recognising ‘the legitimacy of the struggle of the South African people for the elimination of apartheid and racial discrimination’; and calling upon the South African government ‘urgently to end violence against the African people and to take urgent steps to eliminate apartheid and racial discrimination’.

On 3 August, the Special Committee, in a special report on the Soweto massacre and its aftermath, stated that the uprising in South Africa since 16 June represented a new stage in the struggle of the South African people. It said:

> The recent events … have shown that there can be no solution to the grave situation in South Africa without the replacement of the minority racist regime by a government based on the principle of equality and the exercise of the right of self-determination by all the people of South Africa. … The Special Committee considers that all those opposed to apartheid should abandon their vain efforts to persuade the criminal racist regime to abandon racism and should take firm action to isolate the racist regime and assist the oppressed

---

73 A/PV.2281, 12 November 1974.
74 Resolution 3411 C (XXX).
people and their liberation movements in the struggle for the total eradication of apartheid and the exercise of the right of self-determination.\footnote{A/31/22/Add.1.}

While the world was considering further action against the South African regime, the Nixon administration in the United States was engaged in a shuttle diplomacy, ostensibly for peaceful solutions in southern Africa. Henry Kissinger, the United States secretary of state, met Prime Minister Vorster in Bavaria on 23-24 June 1976, in Zurich from 4 to 6 September and in Pretoria from 18 to 20 September. The South African regime saw these contacts as recognition of its leading role in southern Africa and a diplomatic breakthrough. Instead of heeding the demands from the UN, it proceeded with the declaration of ‘independence’ of the Transkei as a step towards denationalising all the Africans of the country and restricting them to a few unviable bantustans with sham independence.

On 26 October 1976, within hours after the Pretoria regime had declared the ‘independence’ of the Transkei, the General Assembly took up the matter, heard Oliver Tambo and adopted Resolution 31/6 A, strongly condemning the establishment of bantustans as designed to consolidate the inhuman policies of apartheid, to destroy the territorial integrity of the country, to perpetuate white minority domination and to dispossess the African people of South Africa of their inalienable rights. It rejected and declared invalid the declaration of ‘independence’ of the Transkei. It called upon all governments to deny any form of recognition to the so-called independent Transkei, and ‘to take effective measures to prohibit all individuals, corporations and other institutions under their jurisdiction from having any dealings with the so-called independent Transkei or other bantustans’. In later years, the General Assembly and the Security Council also condemned the declarations of ‘independence’ of Bophuthatswana (1977), Venda (1979) and Ciskei (1981). No other government recognised these bantustans.

After the Soweto massacre, the governments of Norway and Sweden decided to prohibit new investments in South Africa. This was the first time that any Western state was prepared to impose even partial economic sanctions against South Africa without a Security Council decision. At the next session of the General Assembly, Sweden proposed a draft resolution urging the Security Council ‘to consider steps to achieve the cessation of further foreign investments in South Africa’. Several African and other governments joined as co-sponsors. The resolution was adopted by 124 votes to none, with 16 abstentions.\footnote{Resolution 31/6 K, 9 November 1976.} The resolution was repeated annually and received an increasing number of votes.

On the proposal of the Special Committee, endorsed by the General Assembly, a World Conference for Action against Apartheid was organised in Lagos from 22 to 26 August 1977. Sponsored by the UN, in cooperation with the OAU and the Federal Government of Nigeria, it was attended by representatives of 112 governments, 12 intergovernmental organisations, 5 liberation movements, 51 NGOs, and a number of prominent individuals. The heads of state of Nigeria and Zambia and the prime
minister of Norway addressed the conference and more than 40 foreign ministers and other cabinet ministers were among the participants. The conference was an impressive demonstration of international concern over the situation in South Africa and of commitment to support the struggle of the South African people for majority rule.

President Jimmy Carter of the United States said, in a message to the conference, that ‘South Africa must embark immediately on the progressive transformation of its society to one that accords full and equitable participation in the political process to all its people’. He warned that if there was no significant movement to begin such fundamental change that would affect the relationship between the United States and South Africa. The following month, Vice President Walter F Mondale of the United States met Prime Minister Vorster in Vienna and the talks ended in public disagreement.

The death in prison of Steve Biko that month led to strong protests in the United States and other countries. Vorster declared defiance of world opinion and in October banned 17 organisations and two newspapers, as well as several individuals.

The Security Council met to consider the situation and adopted two resolutions. On 31 October, it adopted Resolution 417 (1977), moved by African states, strongly condemning ‘the South African racist regime for its resort to massive violence and repression against the Black people, who constitute the great majority of the country, as well as all other opponents of apartheid’; and expressing ‘its support for, and solidarity with, all those struggling for the elimination of apartheid and racial discrimination’. It demanded that the regime:

(a) End violence and repression against the black people and other opponents of apartheid;
(b) Release all persons imprisoned under arbitrary security laws and all those detained for their opposition to apartheid;
(c) Cease forthwith its indiscriminate violence against peaceful demonstrators against apartheid, murders in detention and torture of political prisoners;
(d) Abrogate the bans on organisations and the news media opposed to apartheid;
(e) Abolish the ‘Bantu education’ system and all other measures of apartheid and racial discrimination;
(f) Abolish the policy of bantustanisation, abandon the policy of apartheid and ensure majority rule based on justice and equality.

The next day, it adopted Resolution 418 (1977), proposed by Canada and West Germany, instituting a mandatory arms embargo against South Africa under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. It determined that the acquisition by South Africa of arms and related matériel constituted a threat to the maintenance of international peace and security. It decided that ‘all states shall cease forthwith any provision to South Africa of arms and related matériel of all types, including the sale or transfer of weapons and ammunition, military vehicles and equipment, paramilitary police equipment, and spare parts for the aforementioned, and shall cease as well the provision of all types

of equipment and supplies and grants of licensing arrangements for the manufacture or maintenance of the aforementioned. Expressing grave concern that South Africa was at the threshold of producing nuclear weapons, the Council decided that all states ‘shall refrain from any cooperation with South Africa in the manufacture and development of nuclear weapons’. 79

Both resolutions were adopted unanimously. The UN secretary-general stated after the adoption of Resolution 418:

The adoption of this resolution marks the first time in the 32-year history of the Organisation that action has been taken under Chapter VII of the Charter against a member state … It is also significant that this momentous step is based on the unanimous agreement of the Council members. Thus we enter a new and significantly different phase of the long-standing efforts of the international community to obtain redress of these grievous wrongs.

The Security Council decided on 9 December to set up a committee to monitor the implementation of the arms embargo. 80 Hopes that there would be further sanctions against South Africa with the cooperation of the major Western powers were, however, frustrated. The Security Council again discussed the situation in South Africa in January 1978, but the Western powers blocked any further action on the grounds that they needed the cooperation of the South African regime for peaceful settlements in Southern Rhodesia and Namibia.

The General Assembly proclaimed the year from 21 March 1978 as the International Anti-Apartheid Year and the UN promoted activities around the world during the year. One of the initiatives of the Special Committee during the Anti-Apartheid year was to appeal for an international observance of the sixtieth birthday of Nelson Mandela on 18 July 1978, to pay tribute to him for his outstanding contribution to the struggle for liberation in South Africa, to publicise the struggle to which he dedicated his life, and to demand the release of all political prisoners, detainees and those who had been restricted in South Africa. The response was beyond the expectations of the Special Committee. During the same year, with the revolution in Iran, the main source of supply of oil to South Africa, and the decision of the new government to stop collaboration with South Africa, the Special Committee intensified efforts for an oil embargo against South Africa.

But while efforts were being made by a great majority of states in the UN, and by the OAU and other organisations, to increase pressure on the South African regime, it continued to increase repression in the country and to pursue acts of aggression and destabilisation against African states, in the confidence that its trading partners would prevent effective action. ANC cadre Solomon Mahlangu was executed on 6 April 1979 despite the appeals of the Security Council, as well as a number of governments, public organisations and individuals.

79 A Soviet satellite had found evidence in August 1977 that South Africa was planning a nuclear explosion in the Kalahari Desert.

In view of the attitudes of major Western powers, with their cold war thinking and vast economic interests in South Africa, there was apprehension that they might intervene to defend the apartheid regime in South Africa if it was threatened by an advance of the liberation struggle. Responding to the proposal of non-aligned countries for a declaration of solidarity with the South African people’s liberation struggle, which would commit all states to refrain from participating in direct or indirect military intervention in support or defence of the apartheid regime, the General Assembly adopted a Declaration on South Africa on 12 December 1979. Paragraph 3 of the Declaration read:

All states shall solemnly pledge to refrain from overt or covert military intervention in support or defence of the Pretoria regime in its effort to repress the legitimate aspirations and struggle of the African people of South Africa against it in the exercise of their right of self-determination… or in its threats or acts of aggression against the African states committed to the establishment of a democratic government of South Africa based on the will of the people as a whole, regardless of race, colour or creed, as the imperative guarantee to lasting peace and security in southern Africa.

The Declaration was approved without a vote.

In view of the continuing resistance in South Africa and increasing repression against schoolchildren, churchmen and others, the Security Council met at the request of African states and adopted Resolution 473 (1980) on 13 June 1980. It condemned the South African regime ‘for further aggravating the situation and its massive repression against all opponents of apartheid, for killings of peaceful demonstrators and political detainees and for its defiance of General Assembly and Security Council resolutions’; called upon that regime ‘to take measures immediately to eliminate the policy of apartheid and grant to all South African citizens equal rights, including equal political rights, and a full and free voice in the determination of their destiny’; and urgently called upon the regime ‘to release all political prisoners, including Nelson Mandela and all other Black leaders with whom it must deal in any meaningful discussions of the future of the country’. The resolution was adopted unanimously.

In 1981, the Reagan administration came to power in the United States. With its policy of ‘constructive engagement’, it proceeded to attack liberation movements for ‘cross-border violence’ and to oppose condemnation of the apartheid regime for its repeated acts of aggression against frontline states. It was supported by the Thatcher administration in the United Kingdom. Many of the resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council had only the United States, or the United States and the United Kingdom, voting against or abstaining.

---

81 This was proposed at the Extraordinary Session of the Coordinating Bureau of Non-Aligned Countries, in Maputo in January-February 1979, and endorsed by the 6th Conference of Heads of State and Government of Non-Aligned Countries at Havana in September 1979.

82 Resolution 34/93 O.
The UN, on the proposal of the Special Committee, organised an International Conference on Sanctions on South Africa, in cooperation with the OAU, at UNESCO House, Paris, from 20 to 27 May 1981. The conference affirmed that the sanctions provided under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, universally applied, were the most appropriate and effective means to ensure South Africa’s compliance with the decisions of the UN. It noted that an overwhelming majority of states – as well as most governmental and nongovernmental organisations, including trade unions and religious organisations – shared this view. It urged those powers which had so far opposed sanctions to heed the views of the rest of the international community and harmonise their policies in order to facilitate concerted international action.

The conference agreed on a programme of sanctions, attaching great importance and urgency to: (1) the cessation of all collaboration with South Africa in the military and nuclear fields; (2) an effective oil embargo; (3) the cessation of investments in and loans to South Africa; (4) the cessation of purchase and marketing of South African gold and other minerals as well as cooperation with South African marketing organisations for such minerals; and (5) the denial to South Africa of certain essential supplies such as electronic and communications equipment, machinery and chemicals, as well as technology.

The conference urged all states, while vigorously campaigning for action by the Security Council, to take unilateral and collective action to impose comprehensive sanctions against the racist regime of South Africa. It emphasised the importance of action by local authorities, mass media, trade unions, religious bodies, cooperatives and other nongovernmental organisations, as well as men and women of conscience, to demonstrate their abhorrence of apartheid and solidarity with the struggle of the oppressed people of South Africa. It drew particular attention to the constructive value of consumer, sports, cultural and academic boycotts, and divestment from transnational corporations and financial institutions operating in South Africa. The conference was particularly significant as demonstrating that the rest of the world was opposed to the policy of ‘constructive engagement’.

Moreover, shortly before the conference, a new socialist government came to power in France. It supported action against apartheid, so that there were only two intransigent permanent members of the Security Council instead of three. The General Assembly endorsed the Paris Declaration and proclaimed 1982 as the International Year of Mobilisation for Sanctions against South Africa.\(^83\)

In December 1982, the General Assembly, by a large majority vote, expressed grave concern 'at the pronouncements, policies and actions of the Government of the United States of America which have provided comfort and encouragement to the racist regime of South Africa'.\(^84\) While condemning the acts of the South African regime and calling for comprehensive sanctions against South Africa, the Special Committee always emphasised its preference for peaceful change. For instance, after the massacre of South African refugees in Maseru, Lesotho, in January 1982, the

\(^{83}\) Resolution 36/172 B of 17 December 1981.

\(^{84}\) Resolution 37/69 A of 9 December 1982, adopted by 118 votes in favour, 14 against and 11 abstentions.
chairman of the Special Committee not only condemned the barbarity of the regime, but sent a message to the South African people:

I would like to conclude this statement with an appeal, especially to the white people of South Africa, the Africans of European descent…. There is only one sure way for peace and security in South Africa – release Nelson Mandela and all other political prisoners, declare amnesty for all political exiles, and undertake genuine consultations with them on the destiny of the nation. Africa is a continent of reconciliation and I have no doubt that if they follow this course, the white people, now consumed by fear and insecurity, will be surprised at the compassion and generosity of the leaders of the black people… The monopoly of political power enjoyed by the whites must surely end, but it will be replaced by a more secure and glorious future for their children. Indeed, the whole of Africa will welcome them as brothers and sisters.  

But, disregarding all appeals, the South African regime intensified aggression and subversion in southern Africa. The summit meeting of frontline states, held in Maputo on 6-7 March 1982, described the situation as ‘an undeclared war’.

On 2 November 1983, the white electorate in South Africa endorsed ‘constitutional proposals’ of the regime designed to entrench white domination. On 15 November, the General Assembly declared that the so-called ‘constitutional proposals’ were contrary to the principles of the Charter of the UN, that the results of the referendum were of no validity whatsoever and that the enforcement of the proposed ‘constitution’ would inevitably aggravate tension and conflict in South Africa and in southern Africa as a whole; and further that ‘only the total eradication of apartheid and the establishment of a non-racial democratic society based on majority rule, through the full and free exercise of adult suffrage by all the people in a united and non-fragmented South Africa, can lead to a just and lasting solution of the explosive situation in South Africa’.  

The Security Council, in Resolution 554 (1984) of 17 August 1984, rejected and declared as null and void the so-called ‘new constitution’ and the ‘elections’ to be organised that month for the ‘Coloured’ people and people of Asian origin. It rejected any so-called ‘negotiated settlement’ based on bantustan structures or on the so-called ‘new constitution’. It urged all governments and organisations not to accord recognition to the results of the so-called elections and to take appropriate action, in cooperation with the UN and the OAU, to assist the oppressed people of South Africa in their legitimate struggle for a non-racial, democratic society.

The South African regime was able to cause enormous human and material damage to Angola and Mozambique by aggression, subversion and destabilisation. The government of Mozambique felt obliged to sign an agreement on Non-Aggression and Good Neighbourliness with South Africa at Nkomati on 16 March 1984. Prime Minister Botha went on a visit to Europe on 29 March 1984 to break out

85 Ibid.
86 Resolution 38/11.
The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 3, International Solidarity, Part I

of isolation and develop relations with West European governments, but the massive demonstrations organised by anti-apartheid groups frustrated his designs.

Despite the seeming success of the South African regime in intimidating neighbouring states, the spirit of resistance inside South Africa was greater than ever, and international solidarity with the liberation struggle was formidable. The Special Committee was convinced that it was necessary greatly to increase assistance to the liberation movement, as well as the trade union movement, the United Democratic Front (UDF) and other groups inside the country which were resisting apartheid, and to promote the solidarity movement to a new level.

With its encouragement and after extensive consultations, 22 delegations, including some from several Western states,87 tabled a draft resolution in the General Assembly on ‘concerted international action for the elimination of apartheid’. It was moved by Sweden and adopted on 13 December 1984 by 146 votes to 2, with 6 abstentions, as Resolution 39/72 G. Only the United Kingdom and the United States voted against it. The resolution called for a series of measures against the apartheid regime and in support of the liberation movements. It represented a commitment by a majority of Western states to adopt unilateral sanctions. It appealed to all states that had not yet done so, pending mandatory sanctions by the Security Council, to consider national legislative or other appropriate measures to increase the pressure on the apartheid regime of South Africa, such as:

(a) Cessation of further investments in, and financial loans to, South Africa;
(b) An end to all promotion of trade with South Africa;
(c) Cessation of all forms of military, police or intelligence cooperation with the authorities of South Africa;
(d) An end to nuclear collaboration with South Africa.

It also appealed to all states, organisations and institutions:

(a) To increase humanitarian, legal, educational and other assistance to the victims of apartheid;
(b) To increase support for the liberation movements recognised by the OAU and to all those struggling against apartheid and for a non-racial, democratic society;
(c) To increase assistance to the front-line states and the Southern African Development Coordination Conference;
(d) To take appropriate action for the cessation of all academic, cultural, scientific and sport relations that would support the apartheid regime of South Africa as well as relations with individuals, institutions and other bodies endorsing or based on apartheid, while strengthening contacts with those opposed to apartheid.

Resolutions on concerted action were moved in subsequent years, with more requests to member states, and received an increasing number of votes.

87 Australia, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, New Zealand, Norway and Sweden.
Meanwhile, in South Africa there was a tremendous upsurge of resistance when the regime imposed the new constitution. Media coverage of the events, especially by television, made millions of people aware of the brutality of the Pretoria regime and led to demands by public opinion, especially in the United States and the United Kingdom, for urgent and effective action by their governments.

In the United States, a sit-in by three African-American leaders at the South African embassy in December 1984 developed into a Free South Africa Movement – a nonviolent direct action in support of the oppressed South African people – in which thousands of people courted arrest. The Special Committee commended this resistance, invited Walter Fauntroy, one of the three leaders, for consultations and encouraged the movement.

**State of emergency to Harare Declaration, 1985-1989**

The South African regime resorted to mass detentions, even of children, but was unable to suppress the resistance. On 21 July 1985, it imposed a state of emergency in 36 magisterial districts, thereby empowering security forces to search homes without warrants, detain persons and declare curfews. The crisis in South Africa had serious economic repercussions and led to a new level of international action. In mid 1985 several major international banks decided to stop loans to South Africa because of public pressure and the deterioration of the economic situation in that country. Major foreign corporations began to sell their holdings in South Africa.

On 26 July 1985, the Security Council adopted Resolution 569 (1985), sponsored by two Western countries (Denmark and France), urging member states to take action along the lines of the 1984 General Assembly resolution on concerted action against apartheid. It was adopted by 13 votes with none against, but the United Kingdom and the United States abstained. Though the resolution was not binding on member states, it reflected substantial progress in consensus for action and led to meaningful actions by Western states. On 8 September 1985, the president of the United States announced limited measures against South Africa. On 25 September, the twelve governments of the European Communities agreed on a number of sanctions, followed by Japan on 9 October. With increasing public pressure, the United States Congress, overriding the veto of the president, enacted the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act on 2 October 1986.

The UN organised a World Conference on Sanctions against Racist South Africa, in cooperation with the OAU and the Movement of Non-aligned Countries, in Paris from 16 to 20 June 1986. The conference noted with satisfaction that the overwhelming majority of states and world public opinion were now in favour of comprehensive mandatory sanctions against the apartheid regime and support to the people of South Africa in their legitimate struggle for freedom. It called on the Security Council to impose comprehensive and mandatory sanctions against South Africa, and urged the United Kingdom and the United States to cooperate in, rather than hinder, international action. It condemned any attempts to interpret the conflict in southern Africa as an East/West conflict. It declared:
Apartheid cannot be reformed and no encouragement should be given to any so-called reform. It must be totally uprooted and destroyed. The destiny of South Africa must be decided by all the people of the country exercising their right to self-determination – irrespective of race, colour, sex or creed – on the basis of complete equality.88

It stressed that the indispensable prerequisites for a ‘negotiated, just and lasting solution in South Africa’ were:

(a) Acceptance of the objective of the speedy and total elimination of apartheid and the establishment of a non-racial democratic society;
(b) Immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners, abrogation of bans on political organisations and measures that prohibit full and free political organisation and expression, and an end to censorship;
(c) Negotiations with genuine leaders of the oppressed people of South Africa.89

While international sanctions by governments, local authorities, trade unions, churches and other organisations began to have a serious effect on the South African economy, the UN continued to point the way to a peaceful solution.

Moral, political, material and other support

The UN not only condemned apartheid and recognised the legitimacy of the struggle of the South African people for a democratic society, but declared that it had a ‘vital interest’ in securing the speedy elimination of apartheid,90 and that the UN and the international community had a special responsibility towards the oppressed people of South Africa.91 Moreover, it denied the legitimacy of the South African government, recognised the liberation movements as the authentic representatives of the South African people, and called for support to them. Finally, the UN played a significant role in the various campaigns against South Africa: sanctions, the arms and oil embargos, disinvestment and divestment, and other boycotts.

Moral and political support

Condemnation of apartheid and the South African government

From the first session of the General Assembly in 1946, the UN recognised that the racial policies of South Africa were of international concern, and were not in conformity with the UN Charter. In Resolution 1598 (XV), adopted on 13 April 1961, with only Portugal voting against, the General Assembly affirmed that South Africa’s

89 Ibid.
90 General Assembly Resolution 2923 E (XXVII) of 15 November 1972. Further, in Resolution 38/39 A of 5 December 1983, the Assembly declared that ‘the elimination of apartheid constitutes a major objective of the UN’.
91 General Assembly Resolution 3411 C (XXX) of 28 November 1975.
racial policies ‘are a flagrant violation of the Charter of the UN and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and are inconsistent with the obligations of a Member State’.

In Resolution 1881 (XVIII) of 11 October 1963, the General Assembly condemned the South African government, with only South Africa voting against, for not complying with UN demands to end repression of persons opposing apartheid. The Security Council, in Resolution 311 (1972) of 4 February 1972, condemned the South African government for continuing its policies of apartheid in violation of its obligations under the Charter of the UN. In Resolution 2202 A (XXI) of 16 December 1966, and several subsequent resolutions, the Assembly condemned apartheid as a ‘crime against humanity’. On 30 November 1973, it approved the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid.\footnote{Resolution 3068 (XXVIII). Earlier, in the Convention on the Non-applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity, approved by the General Assembly in 1968, ‘inhuman acts resulting from the policy of apartheid’ were qualified as crimes against humanity.}

While the denunciation of apartheid as a crime against humanity did not obtain unanimous support, there was consensus on describing it as ‘a crime against the conscience and dignity of mankind’.\footnote{Declaration on the Occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the UN, in General Assembly Resolution 2627 (XXV) of 24 October 1970; Security Council Resolution 392 (1976) of 19 June 1976.} Both the General Assembly and the Security Council condemned the policies and actions of the South African government in numerous resolutions.

**Denial of the legitimacy of the South African government**

In 1965, the credentials of the delegation of the South African government to the General Assembly were challenged by the African States on the grounds that it persistently violated the principles of the UN Charter, that it did not represent the majority of the people of the country and that it practised racial discrimination. The Assembly decided to take no decision on the credentials.

In 1970, the General Assembly did not approve the credentials of the South African delegation. The president of the Assembly had indicated on 11 November, that a decision not to approve the credentials would mean ‘a very strong condemnation’ of the policies pursued by the South African government and ‘a warning to that government as solemn as any such warning could be’.\footnote{A/PV.1901, paragraph 286.} But it would not mean that the delegation would be unseated and would not affect the rights and privileges of membership of South Africa. Credentials were not approved from 1971 to 1973, but the above ruling was not challenged.

In 1974, the General Assembly called on the Security Council to review the relationship between the UN and South Africa ‘in the light of the constant violation by South Africa’ of the principles of the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Security Council considered the matter at 11 meetings between 18 and 30 October 1974. It extended an invitation to David Sibeko of the PAC and
Duma Nokwe of the ANC, among others, to make statements. A draft resolution to recommend to the General Assembly the immediate expulsion of South Africa from the UN, in compliance with Article 6 of the Charter, received 10 votes in favour, 3 against (France, the United Kingdom, the United States), and 2 abstentions (Austria, Costa Rica), and failed to be adopted because of the negative votes of three permanent members of the Council.

On 12 November, when the General Assembly resumed consideration of the credentials of the delegation of South Africa, the president, Abdelaziz Bouteflika (Algeria) ruled that the consistency with which the Assembly had refused to accept the credentials of the South African delegation was tantamount to saying in explicit terms that the General Assembly refused to allow the delegation of South Africa to participate in its work. He added that the status of South Africa as a member of the UN was left open as a matter requiring a recommendation from the Security Council. The president’s ruling was upheld by a vote of 91 to 22, with 19 abstentions.

Earlier, in 1973, by Resolution 3153 G (XXVIII) of 14 December 1973, the General Assembly declared that ‘the South African regime has no right to represent the people of South Africa’ and requested all specialised agencies and other intergovernmental organisations ‘to deny membership or privileges of membership to the South African regime’. The South African delegation was soon excluded from all UN bodies and from most specialised agencies of the UN. It could only appear in the Security Council with the approval of the Council when matters relating to South Africa were discussed.95

Recognition of the liberation movements

Oliver Tambo, deputy president of the ANC, was heard by the Special Political Committee of the General Assembly in October 1963, setting a precedent. Since then, the ANC and the PAC were heard in the main committees of the General Assembly during the discussion of apartheid in South Africa. Representatives of the two organisations were heard by the Security Council for the first time during the discussion of the situation in South Africa at the session in Addis Ababa in January-February 1972.

In December 1973, the General Assembly declared that the liberation movements recognised by the OAU were ‘the authentic representatives of the overwhelming majority of the South African people’.96 It authorised the Special Committee to associate the South African liberation movements closely with its work, and requested all specialised agencies and other intergovernmental organisations to invite representatives of the liberation movements to participate in their meetings.

The Special Committee decided in 1974 to invite the ANC and the PAC to attend its meetings as observers. Later in the year, on its recommendation, the General Assembly

---

95 The South African delegation presented its credentials to attend the resumed 35th session and the eighth emergency special session of the General Assembly on the question of Namibia in 1981, but the credentials were again rejected.

decided to invite the ANC and the PAC to participate as observers in the discussion on apartheid in the Special Political Committee. It also decided, in a resolution on cooperation with the OAU, to invite representatives of the two liberation movements to participate not only in the main committees of the General Assembly, but also in subsidiary organs concerned and in conferences, seminars and other meetings held under the auspices of the UN which relate to South Africa. It requested the secretary-general to ensure that necessary arrangements were made for their effective participation, including the requisite financial provisions. In 1976, after the Soweto massacre, when the General Assembly decided to consider the problem of apartheid directly in the plenary, it decided to invite the two liberation movements as observers in plenary meetings.

UN bodies repeatedly expressed appreciation of the objectives and sacrifices of the liberation movements and recognised the right of the South African people to struggle by all available means of their choice. The objectives of the UN on the question of South Africa, defined in many resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, were in harmony with those of the liberation movements. For instance, the General Assembly stated, in its Declaration on South Africa, adopted by a unanimous vote on 12 December 1979, that all States should recognise the legitimacy of the struggle of the South African people for the elimination of apartheid and the establishment of a non-racial society guaranteeing the enjoyment of equal rights by ‘all the people of South Africa, irrespective of race, colour or creed’. It reaffirmed that all South Africans should be enabled to ‘exercise their right of self-determination’. It also declared that all states should recognise the ‘right of the oppressed people of South Africa to choose their means of struggle’.

The UN stressed that its objective was not ‘reform’ or ‘relaxation’ of apartheid but its total elimination. The Special Committee stated in its report of 24 September 1975:

The Special Committee wishes to emphasise that the UN and the international community cannot accept mere modifications of racism nor any unilateral solutions imposed by white minority regimes which deny the people as a whole the right to decide the destiny of the country. All necessary steps must be taken to ensure that all powers shall be transferred to the people of South Africa as a whole, in accordance with their freely expressed will and desire, without any distinction as to race, creed or colour, in order to enable them to enjoy complete independence and freedom.

In a statement on 21 August 1985, the Security Council stated:

---

97 The Security Council did not grant observer status to liberation movements. It invited the ANC and the PAC on many occasions, on the proposal of African members of the Council, to make statements on the situation in South Africa and southern Africa. The first invitation was during the session of the Security Council in Addis Ababa in 1972. Potlako Leballo (PAC) and Alfred Nzo (ANC) made statements on 1 February 1972 (S/PV.1623).
98 Resolution 34/93 O.
99 A/10022.
The members of the Council believe that a just and lasting solution in South Africa must be based on the total eradication of the system of apartheid, and the establishment of a free, united and democratic society in South Africa.\(^{100}\)

In Resolution 3411 B of 28 November 1975, the General Assembly recognised ‘the contribution of the liberation movements and other opponents of apartheid in South Africa to the purposes of the UN’. Moreover, in Resolution 3411 C (XXX), it commended ‘the courageous struggle of the oppressed people of South Africa under the leadership of their liberation movements’, took note of the heavy sacrifices made by them and proclaimed that ‘the UN and the international community have a special responsibility towards the oppressed people of South Africa and their liberation movements, and towards those imprisoned, restricted or exiled for their struggle against apartheid’.

**Calls for the release of political prisoners**

The UN, with the unanimous support of its members, repeatedly called for an end to repression in South Africa and the liberation of all persons imprisoned or restricted for their opposition to apartheid or acts resulting therefrom. It publicised information on the ill-treatment and torture of political prisoners, and condemned the South African government for these violations. From 1973, it observed 11 October as the Day of Solidarity with South African Political Prisoners.

The UN called for and promoted the world-wide observance of the 60th birthday of Nelson Mandela in 1978 and supported the Free Mandela Campaign which became a significant component of the solidarity movement.\(^{101}\) It encouraged governments, cities, organisations and institutions to honour Nelson Mandela and other leaders of the struggle against apartheid, as part of the campaign for the release of political prisoners in South Africa. No prisoner in history received awards and honours all over the world comparable to those bestowed on Mandela.

**Publicity against apartheid**

The UN attached great importance to publicising the situation in South Africa, the struggle for liberation and the activities of the UN and other organisations in support of the struggle. The Unit on Apartheid (later renamed Centre against Apartheid) was set up in the Secretariat in January 1967 to promote publicity against apartheid, under the guidance of the Special Committee and in cooperation with the Department of Public Information.

In January 1975, the secretary-general established a Trust Fund for publicity against apartheid, made up of voluntary contributions by governments, to supplement appropriations from the budget for the Centre against Apartheid. The fund was used for producing publications in various languages, for the production of audio-visual

---

\(^{100}\) S/17413.

material and to make grants to anti-apartheid groups for information activities in cooperation with the Centre against Apartheid. The UN produced hundreds of publications and posters, sent scores of broadcasts to radio stations and TV spots to television stations, produced documentary films and distributed films produced by others, organised essay and art competitions, and encouraged governments and organisations to assist in the publicity.

Many of the publications of the UN were written by leaders and activists of the liberation movements and movements of solidarity. The UN published a collection of speeches of Albert Luthuli, the statements from the dock by Nelson Mandela in November 1962 and April 1964, the Freedom Charter and many other documents of the liberation movements in several languages.

The UN observed, and encouraged governments and organisations to observe, international days proclaimed by the ANC – the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (Sharpeville Day, 21 March), the Africa Liberation Day (25 May), the International Day of Solidarity with the Struggling People of South Africa (Soweto Day, 16 June), the International Day of Solidarity with the Struggle of Women of South Africa and Namibia (9 August) and the Day of Solidarity with South African Political Prisoners (11 October). It also observed in some years the South Africa Freedom Day (26 June) and the anniversaries of the ANC and the PAC.

A significant activity of the UN was the launching on 1 March 1978 of daily radio broadcasts to South Africa in English, Afrikaans, Sesotho, Setswana, Xhosa and Zulu. The anti-apartheid unit of the UN Radio Service, staffed mostly by South Africans, produced programmes which not only covered UN activities on apartheid, but included reports on solidarity activities around the world, as well as interviews with representatives of liberation movements and anti-apartheid movements. These programmes were broadcast by several radio stations in Africa and outside which could be heard in South Africa. The General Assembly also appealed to states to provide broadcasting facilities to the liberation movements.

Sanctions and boycotts

Since the Sharpeville massacre and the banning of the liberation movements in 1960, African, non-aligned and socialist states constantly pressed for comprehensive sanctions against South Africa under Chapter VII of the UN Charter concerning threats to the peace, breaches of peace and acts of aggression. It is only under Chapter VII that the UN can impose sanctions binding on all states. Such sanctions require a decision by the Security Council under Chapter VII. The five permanent members of the Council – China, France, Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States – have a right of veto on decisions of the Council.

The General Assembly, which can only make recommendations to states, adopted many resolutions, by large majorities, recommending a series of sanctions by states. The African, non-aligned and socialist states imposed sanctions in the 1960s, some at considerable sacrifice, but their total trade with South Africa was too small for their sanctions to have much effect. Perhaps the most effective sanction by African states
was their prohibition of airlines from South Africa from flying over their air space. The
calls for an oil embargo had a significant effect in the 1980s as most of the oil exporting
states instituted embargoes by the late 1970s. The Assembly’s recommendations for
the cessation of investments in, and loans to, South Africa were implemented by some
smaller Western states from 1976. It was only from 1985 that the flow of loans from
countries with large investments in South Africa stopped.

The boycott movement had begun with a consumer boycott in Britain in 1959,
against South African oranges and other consumer goods, followed by similar
campaigns in some West European countries in 1960. They were effective in educating
the public about the inhumanity of apartheid. The campaign for a sports boycott
began in earnest in 1963. South Africa was excluded from the Tokyo Olympics in
1964 and the Mexico Olympics in 1968. The Anti-Apartheid Movements in Britain
and Ireland, and the American Committee on Africa in the United States, launched
the cultural boycott in the 1960s with declarations signed by prominent writers and
artists. The boycott was soon extended to exclude South Africa from all international
organisations and conferences. The Special Committee lent encouragement to the
anti-apartheid groups which were carrying on the boycott campaigns and had
achieved considerable success. It sent messages of support, invited their leaders for
hearings, and issued statements stressing the support of the UN to the boycotts.

The Special Committee stated in its report in 1989 that some studies suggested that,
without sanctions, South Africa’s economy could have been 20 to 35 percent larger than
it was. The oil embargo, on its own, had cost the South African government an estimated
$22.1 billion in the period from 1979 to 1988. The sports, cultural and other boycotts had
a great psychological effect on the white community in South Africa while boosting the
morale of the opponents of apartheid. In the context of the growing struggle by the South
African people, the actions by the UN were an important factor in persuading the South
African government to negotiate with the representatives of the majority of the population
for an abandonment of apartheid and the establishment of a democratic state.

**Arms embargo**

The arms embargo was the first measure adopted by the Security Council to exert
pressure on the South African government to abandon apartheid and repression. It
was the first and only measure which was made binding on all states under Chapter
VII of the Charter of the UN. The Special Committee and the African states, as well
as many other governments and public organisations, pressed for an arms embargo
in 1963 in view of the rapid military build-up by South Africa to counter the march
of freedom in Africa. Albert Luthuli, president-general of the ANC, made a fervent
appeal for an embargo102 and Harold Wilson, leader of the Labour Party in Britain,
called on the British government to impose an arms embargo.

---

102 The appeal was sent to the Anti-apartheid Movement in London. For text, see: http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/
history/lutuli/lutuli3.html. He said: “I would ask you in particular to unite in protesting, vociferously and
unremittingly, against the shipment of arms to South Africa. On this issue let your voice be clear and untiring: No
arms for South Africa.”
In resolutions on 7 August and 4 December 1963 and 18 June 1964, the Security Council called upon all states to cease forthwith the sale and shipment to South Africa of arms, ammunition of all types and military vehicles, as well as equipment and materials for the manufacture and maintenance of arms and ammunition in South Africa. These resolutions were recommendations, rather than decisions binding on member states. France and Britain abstained in the votes on the resolutions. The British government imposed an embargo after the Labour Party came to power in 1964, but France continued to sell military equipment to South Africa, claiming that it supplied arms for external defence but not for internal repression.

While the decisions of the Security Council were significant, South Africa was able to continue its military build-up. It obtained from France three Daphne submarines, as well as Transall helicopters manufactured jointly by France and West Germany. The French government partly financed the development of the Crotale ground-to-air missile by South Africa. An Italian company sold jet trainers to South Africa and assisted it to manufacture the aircraft, renamed Impala.

The Special Committee, therefore, continued to press for a wider embargo, binding on all states, on any military cooperation with South Africa. It emphasised that any distinction between equipment for external defence and that for internal security purposes was bound to be illusory as the South African government viewed the two aspects as complementary and regarded the defence forces as intended, in the first place, for the maintenance of internal security. Allowing sale of sophisticated military equipment, while banning small arms, was of little value, as South Africa had already developed a local arms industry, with help from Western countries, to meet the needs for repression of the people. Moreover, while expressing appreciation to the states which announced embargoes, especially the United Kingdom and the United States, it pointed out that they continued to honour prior contracts and to supply spare parts for the military equipment sold earlier. They also made an exception for ‘dual purpose equipment’ which could be used for military and civilian purposes.

In July 1970, the Special Committee wrote to the Security Council, drawing attention again to the rapid military build-up in South Africa. It pointed out that the South African government had continued to receive arms and military equipment as well as spare parts for military equipment from a number of countries; that it had been able to obtain licences, technical assistance and foreign capital for a great expansion of its arms industry; and that some countries had continued provision of training for South African military personnel. At the request of 40 member states, the Security Council met in July to consider the situation with regard to the arms embargo on South Africa. Several states expressed great concern over reports that the United Kingdom began to consider a relaxation of the arms embargo after the Conservative Party returned to power.

The representative of the United Kingdom informed the Council that his government intended to consider the export to South Africa of certain categories of arms for the specific purpose of maritime defence related to the security of the sea route around southern Africa in order to give effect to the purposes of the
Simonstown Agreement of 1955 between Britain and South Africa. He indicated that consultations were being held with Commonwealth governments and with the South African government, and no decisions would be taken pending completion of those discussions. On 23 July 1970, the Security Council adopted Resolution 282 (1970), calling upon all states to observe strictly the arms embargo against South Africa, and to strengthen the arms embargo:

(a) By implementing fully the arms embargo against South Africa unconditionally and without reservations whatsoever;
(b) By withholding the supply of all vehicles and equipment for use of the armed forces and paramilitary organisations of South Africa;
(c) By ceasing the supply of spare parts for all vehicles and military equipment used by the armed forces and paramilitary organisations of South Africa;
(d) By revoking all licences and military patents granted to the South African government or to South African companies for the manufacture of arms and ammunition, aircraft and naval craft or other military vehicles and by refraining from further granting such licences and patents;
(e) By prohibiting investment in, or technical assistance for, the manufacture of arms and ammunition, aircraft, naval craft, or other military vehicles;
(f) By ceasing provision of military training for members of the South African armed forces and all other forms of military cooperation with South Africa;
(g) By undertaking the appropriate action to give effect to the above measures.

France, the United Kingdom and the United States abstained on the vote.

The General Assembly considered the arms embargo in October 1970. The Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the OAU had decided in September to send a mission of five foreign ministers, led by President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, to countries selling arms to South Africa or thought to be potential arms suppliers to that country. On 13 October, on the eve of the departure of the OAU mission from New York, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 2624 (XXV) calling upon all states to take immediate steps to implement fully the provisions of Security Council Resolution 282 (1970).

The United Kingdom, however, announced on 22 February 1971 that it would authorise the supply of Wasp helicopters and spare parts to South Africa under the Simonstown Agreement of 1955 between the United Kingdom and South Africa – the only military agreement of any country with South Africa. The Anti-Apartheid Movement in Britain launched a campaign in 1974 for the abrogation of the Simonstown Agreement. The OAU, the Special Committee and several Commonwealth countries also called for the abrogation of the agreement. The Agreement was ended by a Labour Party government in 1975.

Several developments in 1977 – the killing of Steve Biko in prison, the banning of many organisations, evidence of South Africa’s intention to test a nuclear explosion and growing international pressure for sanctions against South Africa – persuaded the Carter administration in the United States and other Western powers to favour a mandatory arms embargo against South Africa.
On 4 November 1977, the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 418 (1977) proposed by Canada and West Germany. It recognised that ‘the existing arms embargo must be strengthened and universally applied, without any reservations or qualifications whatsoever, in order to prevent a further aggravation of the grave situation in South Africa’. It expressed grave concern that ‘South Africa is at the threshold of producing nuclear weapons’. Acting under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, the Council determined ‘having regard to the policies and acts of the South African Government, that the acquisition by South Africa of arms and related matériel constitutes a threat to the maintenance of international peace and security’. The resolution includes a number of stipulations. It:

- **Decides** that all States shall cease forthwith any provision to South Africa of arms and related matériel of all types, including the sale or transfer of weapons and ammunition, military vehicles and equipment, paramilitary police equipment, and spare parts for the aforementioned, and shall cease as well the provision of all types of equipment and supplies and grants of licensing arrangements for the manufacture or maintenance of the aforementioned;
- **Calls upon** all States to review, having regard to the objectives of the present resolution, all existing contractual arrangements with and licences granted to South Africa relating to the manufacture and maintenance of arms, ammunition of all types and military equipment and vehicles, with a view to terminating them;
- **Further decides** that all States shall refrain from any cooperation with South Africa in the manufacture and development of nuclear weapons;
- **Calls upon** all States, including States non-members of the UN, to act strictly in accordance with the provisions of the present resolution.

In December, the Council adopted Resolution 421 (1977) establishing a committee of the whole to monitor the embargo.

The Special Committee, recognising the importance of monitoring the mandatory arms embargo, took steps to assist the Security Council Committee. It appealed to trade unions, anti-apartheid movements and other bodies for information on any breaches of the embargo. It encouraged the setting up of the World Campaign against Military and Nuclear Collaboration with South Africa, with several heads of state and government as patrons, and Abdul S. Minty, a South African, as director. The Special Committee sent information received by it to the Security Council Committee and arranged for that Committee to hear the World Campaign and other NGOs and individuals. This was vital as no government provided the Security Council Committee with information on breaches of the embargo. All the relevant information, and suggestions for action, came from the Special Committee and the NGOs. For instance, information received by the Special Committee from the Antigua Workers Union in 1978 that arms and ammunition were being sent to South Africa through Antigua resulted in stopping one of the major smuggling operations by the Space Research Corporation of Canada and the United States and the conviction of the company involved.

Soon after the adoption of Security Council Resolution 418 (1977), the Special Committee held a series of consultations with experts on various aspects of the full
implementation and reinforcement of the arms embargo, and organised a special session on 30 May 1978 on South Africa’s military build-up and nuclear plans. It transmitted the records to the Security Council Committee.

As a result of the efforts of the Special Committee in drawing attention to loopholes in the arms embargo, violations of the embargo and weaknesses in the monitoring, the Security Council, in Resolution 473 (1980) of 13 June 1980, expressed grave concern about reports of supply of arms and military equipment to South Africa in contravention of Resolution 418 (1977), and requested its committee to recommend measures ‘to close all loopholes in the arms embargo, reinforce and make it more comprehensive’. The committee submitted a detailed report on 19 September on the problems encountered in the implementation of the embargo, and made 16 recommendations for the strengthening of the embargo.103 But the United Kingdom reserved its position on all recommendations; France opposed two recommendations and expressed reservations on six; and the United States reserved its position on 5 recommendations.

The Special Committee repeatedly called for the adoption of all the recommendations by the Security Council and for action to ensure the cessation of all military assistance, direct or indirect, to South Africa. An international seminar on the Implementation and Reinforcement of the Arms Embargo against South Africa, organised by the Special Committee in cooperation with the World Campaign, in London in April 1981, called on the Security Council adopt the recommendations of its committee.104 The International Conference on Sanctions against South Africa, held in Paris in May 1981, endorsed the recommendations of the Security Council Committee and urged that the Security Council adopt them without delay. It added:

The embargo, as so far implemented, has not succeeded in reducing the danger of aggression and repression by the South African regime. To this end it calls upon all States to enact effective legislation or issue appropriate policy directives on the arms embargo, covering all forms of military collaboration, direct or indirect, transfers through third parties and involvement in arms production in South Africa, and including end-user clauses designed to monitor and enforce the embargo scrupulously. Such legislation should also cover the existing loopholes with regard to ‘dual purpose’ items and related materials including computers, electronic equipments and related technology.105

The Security Council did not take note of the report of its committee until 13 December 1984 when it adopted only one of its recommendations in Resolution 558 (1984). It requested all states ‘to refrain from importing arms, ammunition of all types

103 S/14179.
104 A/AC.115/L.547, A/36/190.
105 A/CONF.107/8, paragraphs 242-43. Effective implementation of the arms embargo was prominent in the ‘programme of action against apartheid, approved by the General Assembly in Resolution 38/39 B on 8 November 1983, and in the declaration of the World Conference on Sanctions against Racist South Africa, held in Paris in June 1986 (A/CONF.137/5, paragraphs 53-56 of the Declaration of the Conference).
The United Nations and the struggle for liberation in South Africa

and military vehicles produced in South Africa. The representative of Pakistan, chairman of the Council’s committee, expressed the hope that the adoption of the resolution would be the prelude to the Council’s consideration of the committee’s other recommendations, which it felt were vital for enforcing the arms embargo. But the Security Council did not consider the matter again.

Despite the restrictive interpretations by some governments and the inadequate monitoring which enabled South Africa to obtain some equipment by secret and illicit deals, the arms embargo had a significant effect. South Africa was unable to obtain many items of military equipment it desired and much of its equipment had become outdated by the late 1980s. The arms embargo contributed to persuading the government to seek a peaceful settlement.

Action with respect to South Africa’s plans for nuclear weapon capability

The Special Committee pressed for an end to all nuclear cooperation with South Africa, especially since 1975 when the South African government announced that it had decided to build a uranium enrichment plant. Concern over South Africa’s nuclear plans increased after August 1977 when a satellite of the Soviet Union discovered a possible test site for nuclear explosion in the Kalahari Desert. The Security Council, in Resolution 418 (1977), called on states to refrain from cooperation with South Africa in the manufacture and development of nuclear weapons, but not from all nuclear cooperation.

On the recommendation of the Special Committee, the General Assembly, in Resolution 33/183 G of 24 January 1979 on ‘nuclear collaboration with South Africa’, noted with great concern that ‘the racist regime of South Africa has intensified its nuclear capability’, and ‘considering that the acquisition of nuclear-weapon capability by the racist regime of South Africa would constitute a grave threat to international peace and security’, requested the Security Council ‘to consider measures aimed at effectively preventing South Africa from developing nuclear weapons’.

The Special Committee organised a seminar on nuclear collaboration with South Africa in London on 24-25 February 1979, in cooperation with the AAM and an NGO Committee. The seminar recommended that the Security Council should adopt a mandatory decision under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, ‘to end all nuclear collaboration with South Africa, to require the dismantling of its nuclear plants and to warn the Pretoria regime that any efforts by it to continue its nuclear programme or to build a uranium enrichment plant would result in further international action, including effective collective sanctions’. It said in conclusion:

In the context of the nature of the Pretoria regime and its record, the seminar rejects that any meaningful distinction can be made between ‘peaceful’ and

106 South Africa had by then developed a large arms industry and was trying to export arms. The Special Committee had recommended for many years a ban on arms produced in South Africa as exports would help make the arms industry viable.
‘military’ nuclear collaboration with that regime. It is essential, therefore, that urgent action be taken to ensure, within the context of an international policy of comprehensive sanctions against South Africa, that there is no further collaboration in any form with South Africa, or financial or other assistance to its nuclear programme.107

Following press reports that South Africa had detonated a nuclear device in the area of the Indian Ocean and the South Atlantic on 22 September 1979, the General Assembly adopted a decision on 26 October requesting the secretary-general to investigate the matter and report by 12 November. The secretary-general requested information from governments and presented a report based on replies he received from governments to his enquiry. However, the replies contained no corroboration that South Africa had exploded a nuclear device.108

In Resolution 34/93 E of 12 December 1979, the General Assembly requested the Security Council urgently to consider mandatory measures to prevent the racist regime of South Africa from detonating, developing or acquiring nuclear weapons, and to warn that the acquisition or testing of nuclear weapons by it would be met with enforcement action under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. At the same session, under the item on ‘denuclearisation of Africa’, the General Assembly adopted two resolutions on 11 December.

In Resolution 34/76 A, the Assembly condemned and called for the termination of any nuclear collaboration by any state, corporation, institution or individual with the racist regime of South Africa. It asked the Security Council to prohibit all nuclear cooperation and collaboration with the racist regime, and to institute enforcement action, bearing in mind the recommendations of the seminar on nuclear collaboration with South Africa, to prevent South Africa from further endangering peace and security by acquiring nuclear weapons. The Assembly also demanded that South Africa submit all its nuclear installations to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspection. The resolution was adopted by 128 votes to 0, with 11 abstentions. Several Western states argued that calls to terminate all nuclear collaboration, including cooperation for peaceful purposes, would hurt efforts at encouraging South Africa to accept non-proliferation controls.

In Resolution 34/76 B, the General Assembly requested the secretary-general, with the assistance of experts, to prepare a comprehensive report on South Africa’s plan and capability in the nuclear field. The secretary-general established a six-member Group of Experts on South Africa’s plan and capability in the nuclear field, and transmitted its report to the General Assembly in September 1980. The report listed South Africa’s nuclear fuel-cycle resources, production, and enrichment and research facilities, both

107 S/13157.
108 The United States informed the General Assembly in 1979 that it had had an indication by satellite signal of the possibility of a low-yield explosion in the region on 22 September, but stressed that it had obtained no corroborative evidence that any such explosion had actually taken place. A panel of non-governmental scientists set up by the United States government to look into the event concluded, after examining records of the light signal detected by the space satellite, that the signal was probably not from a nuclear explosion.
safeguarded and unsafeguarded, and analysed the possible place of nuclear weapons in South Africa’s strategy. According to the experts, there was no doubt that South Africa had the technical capability to make nuclear weapons and the means of delivery. They stated, however, that, because of gaps in the availability of reliable information, some of the assessments were subject to an element of uncertainty.

South Africa’s nuclear weapon capability was kept under constant review until 1994 by the secretary-general, the Disarmament Commission, the Special Committee and the IAEA. The General Assembly annually adopted resolutions calling for an end to all cooperation with South Africa in the nuclear field, including provision of computers and technology.

On 18 September 1990, the South African government announced its willingness to accede to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). It deposited the instrument of accession to NPT on 10 June 1991 and signed the safeguards agreement with IAEA. While the IAEA was verifying the completeness of the inventory of South Africa’s nuclear installations and material, President de Klerk announced in parliament on 24 March 1993 that the South African government had been engaged in a 15-year clandestine nuclear-weapon programme. It had produced six crude atomic bombs, and was at work on the seventh when it decided to dismantle its nuclear arsenal in 1989. It had voluntarily dismantled and destroyed all of them before acceding to NPT in 1991. He said that South Africa had never conducted a clandestine nuclear test.

After the director-general of the IAEA reported that verification of the inventory of South Africa’s nuclear installations and material had been completed, the IAEA General Conference, held on 23 September 1994, invited South Africa to resume participation in all IAEA activities. Earlier, on 25 May 1994, the Security Council terminated the mandatory arms embargo and other restrictions related to South Africa imposed by Resolution 418 (1977).109

**Oil embargo**

It was recognised from the beginning of the campaign for sanctions against South Africa that the country was particularly vulnerable to an embargo on supplies of petroleum and petroleum products. The Second Conference of Independent African States in Addis Ababa, in its resolution on 24 June 1960, invited the Arab states to approach all petroleum companies with a view to preventing Arab oil from being sold to South Africa and recommended that the African states refuse any concession to any company which continued to sell petroleum to South Africa.

An oil embargo against South Africa was first proposed in the UN on 13 November 1961 when Pakistan moved an amendment to the draft resolution on apartheid to call upon all member states to refrain from exporting petroleum to South Africa.110 The amendment was not adopted, having failed to obtain the required two-thirds majority. The Special Committee had repeatedly pressed, since its inception, for

---


110 Pakistan suggested that instead of sanctions involving shipping, air services and trade of every kind, which would cause widespread distress, the UN should concentrate on a single commodity.
an oil embargo against South Africa as an important and effective measure to exert pressure on the South African government, as a complement to the arms embargo and a step towards an embargo on all strategic commodities. The General Assembly, in Resolution 1899 (XVIII) of 13 November 1963 on the question of South West Africa, urged all states ‘to refrain … from supplying in any manner or form any petroleum or petroleum products to South Africa’. The resolution was adopted by 84 votes to 6, with 17 abstentions. None of the Western states voted in favour.

The Special Committee sent a letter to the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) on 23 March 1964 for its observations on the appropriate means for achieving an effective embargo on the supply of petroleum and petroleum products to South Africa. Some of the members of OPEC had already applied an embargo while others had informed the General Assembly that they were prepared to take action if all the principal petroleum-exporting countries agreed to an embargo. The secretary-general of the OPEC replied on 13 April that the OPEC’s board of governors discussed the matter and decided to request governments of member countries to communicate their views and comments to the secretariat.111

In November 1973 the Summit Conference of Arab States in Algiers decided to impose a complete oil embargo on South Africa. On 10 December 1975, in Resolution 3411 G (XXX), the General Assembly appealed to all states concerned ‘to take the necessary measures to impose an effective embargo on the supply of petroleum, petroleum products and strategic raw materials to South Africa’.

The oil embargo received further attention in 1977 because of revelations concerning the illegal supply of oil to Southern Rhodesia, as well as a decision of the OAU to establish a special committee on an oil embargo against South Africa. OAU delegations visited several oil exporting countries to appeal for a strict embargo on supply of oil to South Africa. In October 1977, the Commonwealth Committee on Southern Rhodesia recommended an oil embargo against South Africa until Pretoria provided guarantees that oil was no longer passed on to Southern Rhodesia.

While the Security Council never decided to impose or even recommend an oil embargo, the persistent efforts of the Special Committee and resolutions of the General Assembly, as well as actions by the OAU and anti-apartheid groups, led to more oil producing states taking action to stop the supply of oil to South Africa. A major problem was the attitude of the government of Iran which had invested in the oil industry in South Africa and began to supply most of its oil requirements. It rebuffed appeals by the Special Committee and refused to receive a high-level OAU delegation in 1978. The revolution against the Shah’s regime in Iran in February 1979, and the decision of the new government to cut links with South Africa, made an effective embargo more feasible.

The Special Committee appealed to other oil-producing states to reject the overtures of the South African regime for the purchase of oil even at a premium price. It urged the Western powers – particularly United States, the United Kingdom, France and the Netherlands – to take all necessary action to prevent multinational oil

111 The Special Committee was not informed by OPEC about the replies from its member countries.
companies from rescuing the apartheid regime by diverting oil from other sources to South Africa.

Soon after, the committee’s attention was drawn to reports that the United Kingdom government had authorised an exchange system to ensure the supply of oil to South Africa and that British Petroleum had made arrangements to supply its South African subsidiary. On 22 August 1979, the Special Committee issued a statement commending the federal government of Nigeria for nationalising the assets of British Petroleum. The Special Committee recognised that transnational oil companies – Shell, BP, Caltex, Mobil and Total – controlled much of the oil refining and distribution in South Africa, and provided oil for their refineries. They also assisted South Africa in establishing plants to convert coal to oil. These plants, however, satisfied only a small part of the demand for motor fuel. South Africa therefore depended on purchases of oil on the spot market, and on oil which was obtained from tankers which violated the embargoes announced by oil producing states. Refined oil products were shipped to South Africa from several Western countries which opposed the oil embargo.

The South African government set up a large stockpile of oil. It enacted the Petroleum Products Amendment Act, 1979, making unauthorised publication of information on South Africa’s oil supplies, purchases and stocks liable to a maximum penalty of seven years’ imprisonment or a fine of R7 000 or both.

The Special Committee decided that public campaigns, especially in Western countries, were essential to secure an effective oil embargo against South Africa. Accordingly it co-sponsored, with the Holland Committee on Southern Africa and Working Group Kairos (two anti-apartheid groups in the Netherlands), an International Seminar on an Oil Embargo against South Africa, held in Amsterdam from 14 to 16 March 1980. Participants in the seminar agreed on a programme for an international campaign by governments, organisations and individuals. A major development following the seminar was the resolution of the Netherlands parliament in June 1980, moved by Jan Nico Scholten, requesting the government to impose an oil embargo against South Africa and persuade the countries of the European Community to impose a collective embargo.

In the same month a motion was introduced in the Belgian Chamber of Deputies for an oil embargo against South Africa. The ministry of Foreign Affairs announced on 4 July that the government was discussing the matter with its Benelux partners. Norway, an oil exporting country, had prohibited export of its oil to South Africa.

These actions by Western countries led to a new stage in the development of the campaign for an oil embargo. The Special Committee consulted with Jan Nico Scholten and co-sponsored, with nine Western European parliamentarians, a Conference of West European Parliamentarians on an Oil Embargo against South Africa, held in Brussels on 30-31 January 1981, to consult on coordinated action. By then, all the member states of the OPEC and some other major oil-exporting countries had prohibited export of their oil to South Africa. But very few of the shipping countries had taken action to prevent tankers from delivering oil to South Africa. Tanker companies changed names and registry of their tankers to avoid detection. It was even found profitable to sink a tanker after delivering the oil to South Africa.
The Special Committee encouraged and assisted the Holland Committee on Southern Africa and Workshop Kairos in setting up a Shipping Research Bureau (Shirebu) to identify the shipping companies and tankers which were evading the oil embargoes by oil exporting companies and delivering oil to South Africa. The reports of Shirebu exposed the nefarious dealings of a number of companies and underlined the need for stringent measures by oil exporting countries as well as public action in shipping countries.112

The Special Committee welcomed a suggestion by Norway – at the International Conference on Sanctions against South Africa, Paris, 20-27 May 1981 – for a meeting of oil exporting countries which had declared it their policy not to sell oil to South Africa to consider national and international arrangements to ensure the effective implementation of their embargoes. The chairman of the Special Committee visited France, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia in 1982 to consult on the means for an effective implementation of embargoes, and consulted the representatives of other oil exporting countries in New York. These consultations revealed that while most oil exporting countries felt that shipping countries should take action against tankers which violated their embargoes, Norway, both an oil exporting and a shipping country, argued that monitoring and controls would need to be strengthened by the oil exporting countries.113

The General Assembly authorised the Special Committee to appoint a Group of Experts, nominated by governments, to prepare a thorough study on all aspects of the supply of oil and oil products as a basis for the consideration of national and international measures to ensure the effective implementation of the embargoes.114 It requested the secretary-general to organise, in consultation with the Special Committee, meetings of representatives of the oil producing and oil exporting countries committed to the oil embargo against South Africa to consider the report of the Group of Experts and decide on arrangements for an international conference. The Group of Experts met in February and September 1983, but could not reach unanimous agreement. The representative of Norway dissented from the report approved by other members.

The Special Committee continued promoting public campaigns for the oil embargo. It supported the campaign against Shell initiated by the anti-apartheid groups in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The International Conference of Trade Unions on Sanctions and Other Actions against the Apartheid Regime in South Africa, organised by the Workers’ Group of the ILO and co-sponsored by the Special Committee, called for a mandatory oil embargo against South Africa and requested the Special Committee to distribute to unions of dock-terminal and oil transport workers, on a regular basis, lists of tankers and companies supplying oil to South Africa.

112 On the work of Shirebu, see Richard Hengeveld and Jaap Rodenburg eds, *Embargo, Apartheid’s Oil Secrets Revealed* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995).

113 The Norwegian government argued that it would not be possible to control shipping without a Security Council decision. While Norway prohibited supply of Norwegian oil to South Africa, and took action against violators, the tanker companies had a powerful lobby in the country.

The Special Committee also co-sponsored the International Conference of Maritime Trade Unions on the Implementation of the UN Oil Embargo against South Africa in London on 30-31 October 1985, which was convened by unions of seafarers and dockers. The Conference condemned shipowners and shipping management companies (including flag-of-convenience operators), shipping agents and oil companies violating the oil embargo, and warned them that, until assurance was received of their compliance with the embargo, their vessels were liable to trade union action, including boycott. It recommended that transport workers urge governments to make it illegal to supply or transport oil to South Africa.

The Special Committee, in cooperation with the government of Norway, organised the UN Seminar on Oil Embargo against South Africa, in Oslo from 4 to 6 June 1986. One of the recommendations of the seminar was that an intergovernmental mechanism should be established under the auspices of the UN to monitor compliance with the oil embargo. The General Assembly took note of the declaration of the seminar, requested all states concerned, pending a decision by the Security Council, to take a series of measures for an effective oil embargo. It established an Intergovernmental Group to Monitor the Supply and Shipping of Oil and Petroleum Products to South Africa to report on the implementation of the resolution and, in particular, the monitoring of the supply and shipment of oil and petroleum products to South Africa. The Intergovernmental Group began work in 1987. Representatives of ANC and PAC participated in its meetings as observers.

The Group sent a questionnaire to states requesting information on measures they had taken to prevent the supply and shipping of oil and petroleum products to South Africa. The replies showed that in many cases, they had not adopted legislative or other measures for the oil embargo, but had declared a broader policy of sanctions against the apartheid regime. The Group made recommendations for legislative and other measures and, in 1990, proposed a model law for the effective enforcement of the embargo. The Group obtained from the UN Secretariat, and from Shirebu and other NGOs, data on the movement of ships to and from South Africa. It sent enquiries to governments concerned and removed cases of alleged violations when adequate information was received indicating that the ship did not discharge oil in South Africa. It was thus able to identify the companies involved in transporting oil to South Africa and some of the owners of the oil.

Its 1990 report indicated, for instance, that shipping companies based in Hong Kong, Greece and the United Kingdom were the carriers of oil to South Africa. The 1991 report stated that the World Wide Shipping Group based in Hong Kong continued to be a major supplier. The Group, in cooperation with the Special Committee, held hearings on the oil embargo against South Africa in New York on

115 Resolution 41/35 F of 10 November 1986.
116 The law was commended by the General Assembly to the attention of states in Resolution 45/176 F of 19 December 1990.
117 A/45/43.
118 A/46/44.
12 and 13 April 1989. The panel established for the hearings recommended measures for tightening the embargo.

The Group said, in its 1991 report, that the oil embargo had imposed massive costs on South Africa, conservatively estimated at between $25 billion and $30 billion over the preceding 12 years. The embargo was lifted by the General Assembly on 7 December 1993 when the TEC convened for its first formal meeting. The mandate of the Intergovernmental Group was terminated by the Assembly in Resolution 48/159 C of 20 December 1993.

Disinvestment, divestment and ‘people’s sanctions’

Campaigns against loans to, and investments in, South Africa had been launched by anti-apartheid groups in the 1960s – for instance, against Barclays Bank in Britain and against a revolving credit given to South Africa by a consortium of banks in the United States. These campaigns did not have much economic effect on the corporations and banks but helped to educate public opinion.

In the early 1970s, revelations about the conditions in foreign-owned companies in South Africa exposed the propaganda about the role of the corporations and led to demands for investigation and for disinvestment. Church groups and others raised questions at annual meetings of corporations. The decision of the World Council of Churches in 1973 to liquidate its financial holdings in corporations doing business in South Africa encouraged the campaign for disinvestment from South Africa.

The UN-OAU International Conference in Support of the Victims of Apartheid, held in Oslo in April 1973, recommended:

Nongovernmental organisations should publicise the activities of companies involved in southern Africa and organise public campaigns for their withdrawal. Full information on these campaigns should be circulated all over the world in order to promote concerted campaigns in all countries where those companies have interests.

The Special Committee encouraged the nongovernmental campaigns, and publicised information on the corporations and banks with investments in South Africa.

In response to the demands for withdrawal from South Africa, Western governments and corporations produced guidelines for investors in South Africa, such as the Sullivan principles in the United States, and codes of conduct in Britain and the European Community. Anti-apartheid groups rejected these as intended to justify investments instead of withdrawal, while some trade unions demanded strengthening and effectively monitoring the codes.

The campaign developed rapidly after the Soweto massacre of 1976. In the United States, for instance, students and faculty at many universities and colleges demanded

119 The Interfaith Centre for Corporate Responsibility in the United States and End Loans to South Africa in the United Kingdom were most active in confronting corporations.

that they ‘divest’ from corporations involved in South Africa. Anti-apartheid groups and black caucuses lobbied state legislatures and city councils to prohibit contracts to corporations and banks with investments in South Africa.\textsuperscript{121} Pension funds of several trade unions divested from such corporations and banks. The movement for disinvestment from South Africa developed into a major public movement in the United States. Equally widespread was the movement for disinvestment in the United Kingdom.

At the same time, numerous cities in Western countries took action to support the sports and cultural boycotts of South Africa, to honour Nelson Mandela and to show solidarity with the liberation struggle in other ways. Anti-apartheid groups began to refer to all these actions as ‘people’s sanctions’, stressing their importance in countries where the governments opposed sanctions against South Africa.

The UN supported and encouraged these campaigns. Conferences and other events organised by the UN enabled the anti-apartheid groups to meet together and consult on actions. The Special Committee helped in the organisation of a conference of members of state and local legislatures in the United States in June 1981 to consider coordinated action. It held two consultative meetings with student leaders in the campaign for divestment in the United States.

\textit{Other economic measures}

The Special Committee and the African and non-aligned states constantly pressed for economic sanctions against South Africa. The Special Committee welcomed and encouraged campaigns by anti-apartheid groups, especially in the United Kingdom and the United States, to dissuade banks from lending to South Africa and to persuade corporations to withdraw investments in South Africa. While the major trading partners of South Africa opposed sanctions – and smaller Western states refrained from any action on the grounds that sanctions would be ineffective unless the Security Council decided on measures binding on all member states – the efforts of the Special Committee helped to build public support for sanctions.

In 1966, the Special Committee denounced the decision of the World Bank to grant a loan of $20 million to the South African Electricity Supply Commission (ESCOM).\textsuperscript{122} On its recommendation, endorsed by the General Assembly, the secretary-general held consultations with the World Bank which assured him that it would avoid any action that might run counter to the purposes of the UN.\textsuperscript{123} The World Bank refrained from any further loans to South Africa.

In February 1967, the attention of the Special Committee was drawn to reports that a group of major banks in the United States had decided to renew a revolving...

\textsuperscript{121} By 1991, more than 20 states and 70 cities in the United States took action to penalise companies doing business with South Africa. (Report of the Special Committee, A/AC.115/L.675, paragraph 118).

\textsuperscript{122} The Bank had earlier given eleven loans to South Africa, totalling $241.8 million. The General Assembly, in Resolution 2054 A (XX) of 15 December 1965, had requested specialised agencies to deny assistance to South Africa, except for humanitarian assistance to the victims of apartheid.

\textsuperscript{123} See General Assembly Resolutions 2202 A (XXI) of 16 December 1966 and 2307 A (XXII) of 13 December 1967.
credit of $40 million to the South African government. The Special Committee conveyed its concern to the United States representative to the UN, Arthur Goldberg, and requested that the United States government make every effort to prevent the renewal of the credit. Goldberg replied that he would draw the attention of the banks to the concern expressed by the Special Committee, and recall to them the views of the United States government regarding apartheid. The Special Committee learnt subsequently that the South African government had decided not to seek renewal of the revolving credit.124

The Special Committee took action to ensure that the UN and its family of agencies did not provide facilities for banks which made loans to South Africa.125 In 1976, after the Soweto massacre, Norway and Sweden took unilateral measures to stop new investments in South Africa. On the proposal of Sweden, co-sponsored by several non-aligned states, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 31/6 K on 9 November 1976, declaring that a cessation of new foreign investments in South Africa would constitute ‘one important step in the struggle against apartheid’, and urging the Security Council ‘to consider steps to achieve the cessation of further foreign investments in South Africa’.

Similar resolutions were adopted in subsequent years with an increasing number of votes from Western states. Resolution 33/1830 of 24 January 1979, called for cessation of further foreign investment in South Africa, as well as financial loans to South Africa.

In 1979, the Centre against Apartheid published a study commissioned by it on Bank Loans to South Africa, 1972-78. It listed 158 loans, totalling nearly $5.5 billion, made to South African borrowers by 382 banks from 22 countries. The vast majority of the loans had been made by banks with headquarters in five countries: West Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, France and Switzerland. The Special Committee sent the study to the governments of the 22 countries, seeking their cooperation in the discontinuation and prohibition of such loans.

At the session of the General Assembly in 1984, Sweden, with the encouragement of the Special Committee, moved a draft resolution, co-sponsored by several Western and non-aligned states, on ‘concerted international action for the elimination of apartheid’. The ANC and PAC participated in the preparation of the draft. It appealed to all states that had not yet done so, to consider, among other measures, ‘cessation of further investments in, and financial loans to, South Africa’ and ‘an end to all promotion of trade with South Africa’. It was adopted by the General Assembly on 13 December 1984 by 146 votes to 2, with 6 abstentions.126 Similar resolutions were adopted in subsequent years. In 1985, the request to states also included prohibition of sale of Krugerrand and all other coins minted in South Africa, and cessation of sale of computer equipment and oil.127

124 A/6864, paragraphs 40-41.
125 The General Assembly, in Resolution 2506 B (XXIV) of 21 November 1969, called upon all organs of the UN, the specialised agencies and other international organisations ‘to refrain from extending facilities to banks and other financial institutions which provide assistance to the government of South Africa and to companies registered in South Africa.
126 Resolution 39/72 G.
127 Resolution 40/64 I of 10 December 1985.
Meanwhile, on 26 July 1985, the Security Council adopted Resolution 569 (1985) urging states members to take measures such as suspension of new investment, prohibition of sale of Krugerrand and other coins minted in South Africa, suspension of guaranteed export loans, prohibition of new contracts in the nuclear field, and prohibition of all sales of computer equipment that may be used by the South African army and police. The resolution was proposed by Denmark and France, and was adopted by 13 votes to none, with the United Kingdom and the United States abstaining.

About the same time, major international banks began to stop loans to South Africa because of public pressure in their countries and the economic situation in South Africa. Hundreds of corporations sold their investments in South Africa and several governments began to apply economic measures against South Africa.

On 9 September 1985, the president of the United States issued an executive order for certain limited measures such as a qualified prohibition of loans to the South African regime and of supplies of computers to its military and police establishments. Subsequently, the EEC also announced very limited measures. These measures were intended to assuage public opinion which demanded stronger measures. In 1986-87, the Nordic states adopted effective legislative measures to prohibit trade with South Africa. In October 1986, the United States Congress, overriding the veto of President Reagan, adopted the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act providing for selective sanctions. The European Community and Japan adopted some new measures. Combined with the ‘people’s sanctions’ referred to in a later section, these governmental measures had a severe effect on the economy of South Africa.

**Boycott of apartheid sport**

Anti-apartheid movements in Western countries and sports bodies in African, non-aligned and socialist countries began to press for a boycott of sports teams from South Africa, especially from 1963, when SAN-ROC was founded in South Africa. The first big victory was the expulsion of South Africa from the Tokyo Olympics in 1964.

The South African government resorted to repression against non-racial sports organisations, and prevented their representatives from going abroad to inform the international sports federations about the flagrant discrimination against non-white sportspersons and teams. It declared that no one could compete in sport internationally except through white South African sports federations. In February 1965, it issued a proclamation under the Group Areas Act, prohibiting any mixed sports or performances or even audiences, except by permit. In the few cases that permits were granted for

---

128 SAN-ROC was forced to function from London from 1966 because of persecution by the South African government.

129 Earlier in 1956 the International Table Tennis Federation withdrew recognition of the all-white South African federation and decided to affiliate the non-racial South African Table Tennis Board. The South African government denied passports to non-racial table tennis teams and declared that no one could compete in sport internationally except through white South African sports federations. South Africa had to leave the Imperial Cricket Conference (later renamed International Cricket Conference) and the Commonwealth Games when it left the Commonwealth in May 1961. But the ‘white’ Commonwealth countries continued bilateral relations with South Africa, especially in cricket and rugby.
sports, the organisers were required to separate audiences by race, with six-foot wire fences, and provide separate entrances, toilets, canteens etc. In some events, only Coloured people and Indians were allowed, and Africans prohibited.

The UN General Assembly first called for a sports boycott of South Africa in 1968.\textsuperscript{130} It adopted a special resolution on apartheid and sports on 29 November 1971, declaring its unqualified support of the Olympic principle that no discrimination be allowed on the grounds of race, religion or political affiliation. It called upon sports organisations to discourage and deny support to sporting events organised in violation of this principle; and individual sportsmen to refuse to participate in any sports activity in a country in which there is an official policy of racial discrimination or apartheid in the field of sports. It requested all states to urge their national sports organisations to act in accordance with the resolution.\textsuperscript{131}

With these decisions, the UN began active support to the boycott of apartheid sport. Working in close cooperation with SAN-ROC, the Supreme Council on Sport in Africa and the anti-apartheid movements, the Special Committee publicised and denounced all sports exchanges with South Africa, encouraged groups demonstrating against apartheid teams and contacted governments and sports bodies to take action. It organised a series of meetings at which sports bodies, anti-apartheid movements and committed governments could consult and decide on strategy. Apartheid sport became a public issue in every country with which South Africa sought sports exchanges.

There were massive protests against the tours of the South African rugby team in Britain in 1969 and in Australia in 1971. Organised by anti-apartheid groups, they were supported by trade unions, students, churchmen and others. The British government stopped the South African cricket tour in 1970 because of protests by the public and announcements by African countries and India that they would boycott the Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh if the tour went ahead. A Labour Party government which came to power in Australia in 1972 announced an anti-apartheid sports policy which was followed by all subsequent governments. In New Zealand, where the South African rugby tour was scheduled for 1973, widespread protests took place. After African states and India announced that they would boycott the Commonwealth Games in Christchurch in 1974 if the tour went ahead, the prime minister, Norman Kirk, pressed the New Zealand Rugby Union to stop the tour ‘in the larger interest of New Zealand’. These events showed the importance of cooperation between anti-apartheid groups and the governments of countries which supported sanctions against South Africa.

In 1970 South Africa was expelled from the Olympic Movement. It was also excluded from most of the major world championships. Altogether 13 white South African sports bodies had been expelled or suspended from international sports bodies by that year. Apartheid South Africa’s international contacts in amateur sport were reduced to tennis and golf and various minor sports, and bilateral exchanges with a few countries in cricket and rugby.

\textsuperscript{130} Resolution 2396 (XXIII) of 2 December 1968.
\textsuperscript{131} Resolution 2775 D (XXVI).
In June 1976, soon after the Soweto massacre, a New Zealand rugby team toured South Africa despite protests in New Zealand and numerous appeals from abroad. Soon after, in August 1976, African nations, Guyana and Iraq withdrew from the Montreal Olympics in protest against the participation of New Zealand. The boycott had great effect in focusing attention on the issue of collaboration with apartheid sport. Canada and other countries recognised that many other events, including the Commonwealth Games due to take place in Canada next year, would be endangered. To avert a crisis, the Commonwealth heads of state adopted the Gleneagles Agreement in June 1977, pledging to take ‘every practical step to discourage contact or competition of their nationals with sporting organisations, teams or sportsmen from South Africa’.\[^{132}\] A similar declaration was adopted the next year by sports ministers of the members of the Council of Europe.

The Nordic countries decided in March 1978 that contacts with apartheid sports teams should be discontinued. The West European sports ministers, at their meetings in 1979 and 1981, called on sports organisations and sportsmen not to allow themselves to be used by countries which practise racial discrimination. The Irish government banned the South African Barbarians Rugby team in 1979, and vehemently opposed the visit of the Irish rugby team to South Africa in May 1981. These declarations were significant in reducing sporting exchanges with South Africa.

The Muldoon government in New Zealand, however, interpreted the Gleneagles Agreement in the most restrictive way. It did little to discourage sporting exchanges with South Africa except for formal statements drawing attention to the Gleneagles Agreement. The issue again came to a head in 1981 when the South African Springbok rugby team toured New Zealand. There were mass demonstrations and non-violent disruption of matches all over the country and some two thousand people were jailed.

Meanwhile, South Africa developed sports exchanges, especially in rugby, with France and the United States. Rugby authorities in these countries were insensitive to all appeals. After public opposition and international representations, the French government stopped the South African rugby tour of France in 1979, and a French rugby tour of South Africa in 1983. A South African rugby tour of the United States in 1981 was greeted by mass demonstrations, and that put an end to further tours.

During all these events, the Special Committee encouraged the anti-apartheid groups, issued statements of support by the UN and invited their representatives to the UN for consultations. It commended the African and other states for supporting the boycotts and called on the few countries which maintained bilateral relations with South Africa to break such relations. It helped the Quebec Council for Peace to set up an information centre in Montreal during the Olympics to publicise UN support for the boycott of apartheid sport.

By the mid 1970s it became clear that efforts to boycott and exclude South African apartheid teams were not enough. On the one hand, a number of sports bodies and sportsmen, especially in some Western countries, continued to support apartheid

The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 3, International Solidarity, Part I

sport and play in South Africa. Many English cricketers, for instance, chose to spend
their winter months in South Africa. Some international sports bodies, like the
International Tennis Federation, not only rejected proposals to exclude South Africa
but tried to penalise countries which boycotted South Africa. On the other hand,
South Africa, in its desperation, began to offer fabulous sums of money to sportsmen
to play in South Africa. Some sportsmen succumbed to its enticements, especially
because of unemployment.

New types of action were required, involving especially a ‘third party boycott’ –
that is, not merely a boycott of apartheid South Africa alone, but of those collaborating
with apartheid sports.

**International Declaration and Convention against Apartheid in Sport**

In May 1976, in a message to a UN seminar in Havana, Prime Minister Michael
Manley of Jamaica suggested an international convention against apartheid in sport,
which would provide for action against those collaborating with apartheid sport.
The proposal was endorsed by the seminar and by the Non-aligned Summit in
Colombo in August 1976. The UN General Assembly decided on 9 November 1976
to appoint a committee to prepare a draft declaration as an interim measure and to
work on a convention. The International Declaration against Apartheid in Sport,
which was prepared by the committee, was approved by the General Assembly on
December 14, 1977.

The drafting of the convention, however, proved difficult because of apprehensions
about a legally-binding provision on ‘third party boycott’. The Western countries
were, in general, opposed to the convention. The Soviet Union, which was hosting
the Olympics in Moscow in 1980, expressed fear that the third party boycott would be
complicated and might disrupt international sport. After extensive consultations over
several years, the committee completed the draft convention in 1985. It was approved
by the General Assembly on 10 December 1985 and opened for signature on May

The convention laid down that member states should prohibit entry into their
countries of any sportsmen and sportswomen who participated in sports competitions
in South Africa. Also included were administrators who issued invitations to apartheid
sports bodies or teams officially representing South Africa. States who were party to
the convention also undertook to secure sanctions against such people by the relevant
international sports bodies.

**Register of sports contacts with South Africa**

In order to promote further action to secure a total cessation of all sports exchanges with
South Africa, the Special Committee decided to publish periodic registers of sports

133 Resolution 31/6 F of 9 November 1976.
134 Resolution 32/105 M, adopted by 125 votes to 0, with 14 Western states abstaining.
135 Resolution 40/64 G of 10 December 1985.
contacts with South Africa, with lists of sportsmen, administrators and promoters involved in such exchanges. The first register was published on 15 May 1981.\textsuperscript{136}

The initiation of a register was enthusiastically supported by the Supreme Council on Sport in Africa, the SAN-ROC and many other organisations. The Supreme Council urged all its member countries to take action against collaborators with apartheid sport, identified by the UN register, and in particular to deny them entry into their respective countries. The OAU Council of Ministers decided to call upon governments to ban the persons named in the register from entering into their countries. Though the UN did not recommend any specific action by governments or organisations, many African and other countries began to refuse visas to those on the register or otherwise prevent them from playing in their countries. Sportsmen and sportswomen had to choose between making money from apartheid and playing in countries committed against apartheid.

As revulsion against apartheid spread around the world in the 1980s, more countries began to take action against those on the register. Hundreds of city councils and local authorities in Britain and other Western countries decided to deny use of their sports facilities to persons on the UN register. In order to assist those who were unaware of the issues or regretted their errors, the Special Committee decided to delete from the register the name of any sportsperson who undertook not to play in South Africa again. The register became a tool for persuasion and for retaliation. Scores of sportspeople gave undertakings not to play again in South Africa.

\textbf{Cultural boycott}

Anti-apartheid groups promoted a cultural boycott against South Africa several years before the UN called for the boycott in 1968. In \textit{The Observer} of October 1954, Father Trevor Huddleston appealed in an article:

\begin{quote}
I am pleading for a cultural boycott of South Africa. I am asking that those who believe racialism to be sinful or wrong should refuse to encourage it by accepting any engagement to act, to perform as a musical artist or as a ballet dancer – in short, engage in any contracts which would provide entertainment for any one section of the community.
\end{quote}

In 1961 the British Musicians Union adopted a policy decision that its members should not perform in South Africa as long as apartheid was in existence. In 1963, 45 prominent British playwrights signed a declaration announcing that they had instructed their agents to insert a clause in all future contracts automatically refusing performing rights in any theatre ‘where discrimination is made among audiences on grounds of colour’.\textsuperscript{137} The declaration subsequently received adherence from many

\textsuperscript{136} It can now be disclosed that the lists in the sports registers were prepared for the Centre against Apartheid by Sam Ramsamy, chairman of SAN-ROC.

playwrights in other countries. In 1964, the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement promoted a declaration signed by 28 Irish playwrights that they would not permit their work to be performed before segregated audiences in South Africa.

In 1965, the British Screenwriters Guild called for a ban on the distribution of British films in South Africa. The British Actors’ Union, Equity, invited individual members to sign a declaration pledging not to work in South Africa: it was signed by many of Britain’s most prominent actors. A declaration in protest against apartheid and violations of academic freedom was signed by 496 university professors and lecturers from 34 British universities who pledged not to apply for or accept academic posts in South African universities which practised racial discrimination.118

Also in 1965, more than sixty cultural personalities signed a declaration, sponsored by the American Committee on Africa, pledging to refuse any professional association with South Africa ‘until the day when all its people shall equally enjoy the educational and cultural advantages of that rich and beautiful land’.119 Many others signed the declaration when it was revived ten years later.120

The UN did not undertake active efforts to promote the cultural boycott until the 1970s when the South African government and companies began to offer large sums of money to entice musicians and other entertainers to South Africa, and to resort to deceitful propaganda and secret operations to disrupt the boycott. On 16 December 1980, the General Assembly adopted a resolution on cultural, academic and other boycotts of South Africa in which it declared that ‘the suspension of cultural, academic, sports and other contacts with South Africa is an important measure in the international campaign against apartheid’.121 It noted that the racist regime of South Africa was using such contacts to promote its propaganda for apartheid and ‘bantustanisation’.122 The Assembly asked states to take steps to prevent all cultural, academic, sports and other exchanges with South Africa, and requested those which had not yet done so to abrogate and cancel cultural agreements with South Africa.

It appealed to writers, artists, musicians and other personalities to boycott South Africa, and requested the Special Committee to promote boycotts against South Africa. The Special Committee intensified its efforts for the cultural boycott and for persuading cultural personalities to use their talents to promote the movement of solidarity with the liberation struggle in South Africa. Working in close consultation with anti-apartheid groups, it appealed to artists and cultural groups which were reported to be planning to go to South Africa to cancel their engagements. It publicised the declarations of those supporting the boycott.

The Committee encouraged and assisted art competitions against apartheid (in the United States, India, the Netherlands and Bangladesh), art exhibits against apartheid

119 Ibid.
120 In October 1981, the board of the Associated Actors and Artists of America – an umbrella organisation of all major actors’ unions with a total membership of over 240 000 actors – took a unanimous decision that its members should not perform in South Africa.
121 Resolution 35/206 E.
122 Several musicians had been enticed to perform in Sun City, in the bantustan of Bophuthatswana, to nominally non-segregated audiences.
The United Nations and the struggle for liberation in South Africa

(in France, the German Democratic Republic, the United Kingdom and the United States), the production of anti-apartheid calendars (in the German Democratic Republic and the United States), recordings of anti-apartheid freedom songs (West Germany, Nigeria, Sweden, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom and the United States), and essay competitions against apartheid (Ireland). Books of poetry against apartheid were published in Bangladesh and the United Kingdom with the support of the Special Committee. It also provided financial assistance to a committee of community artists against apartheid in New York which organised a number of exhibits and other projects. On 18 March 1982, it co-sponsored a forum on the cultural boycott at the United Nations with the participation of several South African artists and writers in exile.

It paid special attention to the United States as several African-American entertainers were enticed to perform in South Africa. It encouraged the Coalition to End Cultural Collaboration with South Africa, established in 1982 by the National Black United Front in 1982, and the Unity in Action network, set up by the Patrice Lumumba Coalition and the African Jazz Associations and Studios, to organise protests against artists who performed in South Africa. In September 1983, it encouraged and assisted Transafrica and associated groups to establish the Artists and Athletes against Apartheid, under the leadership of Harry Belafonte and Arthur Ashe, to promote the cultural and sports boycott of South Africa.

The efforts of the Special Committee found an encouraging response among governments, cultural organisations and personalities. Japan announced in June 1974 that no visas would be issued to South African nationals for the purpose of interchanges in the field of sports, culture and education. Several countries which had formerly provided visa-free entry to South Africans instituted visas. The Netherlands government, which suspended its cultural agreement with South Africa after the Soweto massacre in 1976, abrogated it in 1981. Associations of artists against apartheid were formed in several countries. A number of musicians rejected very lucrative offers from South Africa.

A register of cultural contacts with South Africa, listing those who performed in South Africa, initiated by the Special Committee in October 1983, was effective in promoting the cultural boycott. The Committee said in the first register in October 1983:

The Special Committee hopes that this register will enable Governments, organisations and individuals to take all appropriate action to dissuade the artists concerned from continued collaboration with apartheid. It should be made clear to them that if they seek to profit from the system of inhuman oppression of the black people in South Africa, they will not be allowed to benefit from the patronage of countries and peoples committed to the struggle against apartheid.

143 UN, Department of Public Information. The UN and Apartheid 1948-1994, paragraph 282.
144 UN Centre against Apartheid. Notes and Documents, No. 20/83, October 1983.
The register had great effect as governments and anti-apartheid groups organised boycotts of entertainers who performed in South Africa. Many governments refused them visas. Hundreds of cities denied facilities to those on the register. A number of persons undertook not to perform in South Africa again and their names were deleted from the register.

The Special Committee organised – in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture of Greece and the Hellenic Association for the UN – a symposium on Culture against Apartheid in Athens from 2 to 4 September 1988. The symposium, attended by prominent participants from the cultural world, adopted an appeal, a message and a statement including a number of recommendations for action. It organised a symposium on cultural and academic links with South Africa in Los Angeles on 11-12 May 1991, at which emphasis was on promoting appropriate assistance to anti-apartheid cultural structures in South Africa.

A major project of the Special Committee was the Art contre/against Apartheid exhibit. In 1981, the Special Committee encouraged the initiative of Ernest Pignon-Ernest, a French artist, in consultation with Mustapha Tli, a UN official, to organise a committee of artists and an international art exhibit against apartheid. The Committee of Artists of the World against Apartheid, which included prominent artists from many countries of the world, with Antonio Saura of Spain as chairman, was established on 10 December 1981. The Special Committee provided financial assistance to enable it to organise the exhibit. It was agreed that the exhibit would be presented as a gift to the free and democratic government of South Africa elected by universal suffrage.

The Art contre/against Apartheid exhibit, with contributions from over 80 of the world’s most prominent contemporary artists, was inaugurated in Paris in 1983. It was shown in 60 museums and galleries in Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, Japan, Spain and the United States, and at the UN Headquarters in New York. A Cultural Foundation against Apartheid, with Nelson Mandela as an honorary trustee, was established by the Special Committee, in consultation with the Committee of World Artists, to promote the exhibit and undertake other cultural activities against apartheid. The exhibit was transferred to South Africa after the democratic elections.

**Material support**

**Assistance to anti-apartheid movements and other NGOs**

The UN recognised the crucial importance of the activities of anti-apartheid movements and other NGOs, especially in Western countries and Japan, in support of sanctions against South Africa and in solidarity with the South African liberation movements. It sent missions to consult them and invited them to hearings, special

---

145 A/43/22, Annexure IV.
146 According to the report of the Special Committee in June 1994, the exhibit was then valued at an estimated $15 million. (A/48/22/Add.1).
sessions, seminars and conferences of the UN, and made financial provision for the travel of some of the representatives. It publicised and commended the activities of the organisations and gave serious attention to their suggestions concerning international action against apartheid. They became, in effect, partners of the Special Committee against Apartheid. After the Trust Fund for Publicity against Apartheid was established in 1975, the Special Committee was able to approve financial grants to them for the production of information material.

In 1978, the Special Committee received a special allocation for projects during the International Anti-Apartheid Year, and was able to obtain similar allocations in subsequent years. It gave grants from these allocations for scores of projects of anti-apartheid groups such as seminars and other events co-sponsored with the Special Committee, and campaigns to mobilise public opinion in solidarity with the liberation struggle in South Africa.

UN cooperation with other organisations

On the initiative of the African and non-aligned states and the Special Committee, apartheid was discussed not only by the General Assembly and the Security Council, but also by several other UN bodies and conferences. The Commission on Human Rights, the Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission on Transnational Corporations, the Economic and Social Council, the Economic Commission for Africa and the Disarmament Commission dealt with aspects of the situation in South Africa and promoted action in support of the liberation struggle. Apartheid in South Africa was one of the subjects considered by the World Conferences on Human Rights, on Women, on Racism and Racial Discrimination, among others. The UN also maintained close cooperation with many intergovernmental and nongovernmental organisations in action against apartheid.

Specialised agencies of the UN

Many of the specialised agencies and other organisations associated with the UN – except the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) which were dominated by the major Western powers through the system of weighted voting – excluded South Africa from membership or meetings, and invited the ANC and the PAC as observers.\(^\text{147}\)

South Africa left UNESCO in 1955, the FAO in 1963, the ILO in 1964, and the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in 1968. WHO suspended voting privileges of South Africa in 1964. The International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) decided in 1971 not to invite South Africa to any of its meetings.

\(^{147}\) The African states did not press for the expulsion of South Africa from the UN, except in 1974, as that required a recommendation by the Security Council where the three major Western powers with the right of veto were opposed to the exclusion of South Africa. Instead, they succeeded in obtaining a decision by the General Assembly to reject the credentials of the delegation of the South African government, thereby excluding South Africa from almost all UN bodies. They pressed for South Africa’s exclusion from other organisations associated with the UN.
except as provided in its convention. The Inter-governmental Maritime Consultative Organisation and the International Telecommunications Union in 1973, and the Universal Postal Union in 1974, decided to exclude South Africa from all their conferences and meetings. South Africa was expelled from the IAEA conference in 1979.

After the UN protested against a loan by the World Bank to ESCOM in South Africa in 1966, it refrained from any further loans to that country. Similarly, after protest against a credit to South Africa in 1982, the IMF gave no further credits to that country.

The Special Committee urged the specialised agencies not to be content with the exclusion of the South African regime but to develop programmes of action against apartheid. UNESCO, ILO, WHO, FAO and UNICEF published studies on the effects of apartheid in their respective fields. UNESCO and ILO, in particular, developed significant activities against apartheid. UNESCO decided in 1970 to investigate NGOs associated with it and exclude those which affiliated South African bodies practising racial discrimination and segregation or cooperating in any way with the apartheid policy of the South African government. It organised or co-sponsored seminars, conferences and other events against apartheid.

The ILO adopted a Declaration concerning apartheid in 1964, and the director-general submitted annual reports on the situation in South Africa in respect of labour matters for consideration by the International Labour Conference. The Workers’ Group of the ILO Governing Body organised international trade union conferences against apartheid, in cooperation with the Special Committee. The recommendations of the conferences led to significant action by the ILO and the trade union movement.

The UNDP and the specialised agencies invited the ANC and the PAC to their conferences and provided assistance to the projects of the liberation movements from mid-1970s.

**Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)**

African and non-aligned states were the driving force behind all UN and intergovernmental action against apartheid. The Special Committee maintained close relations with them and their support to the recommendations of the Special Committee was crucial in obtaining action by the General Assembly and the Security Council.

The first interim report presented by the Special Committee in May 1963 was fully endorsed by the Summit Conference of Independent African States, held in Addis Ababa in May 1963, which established the OAU. The chairman of the Special Committee, Diallo Telli, was chairman of the political committee at that conference and was elected in 1964 as the first secretary-general of the OAU. The principal secretary of the Special Committee against Apartheid was invited several times to visit

148 See Report of the Special Committee against Apartheid on actions against apartheid taken by specialised agencies and other intergovernmental organisations, A/9804, 11 October 1974.
the headquarters of the OAU for technical assistance and advice. On 9 March 1966, the Special Committee invited the OAU to attend its meetings as an observer.149 The chairman of the Special Committee was invited to meetings of the OAU, including its Liberation Committee. The OAU was associated with some of the missions of the Special Committee.


The Special Committee also maintained close relations with Movement of Non-aligned Countries (NAM). All the members of the OAU were members of NAM and the positions of the two organisations on South Africa were almost identical. Draft resolutions for the General Assembly were annually prepared by the Special Committee and were then discussed by the African Group of states at the UN (an organ of the OAU) and the Non-aligned Group, before being sponsored and submitted to the Assembly. The representative of the chairman of NAM was invited to special meetings, seminars and conferences of the Special Committee.

**Commonwealth**

The UN maintained close cooperation with the Commonwealth secretariat. Since South Africa was forced to leave the Commonwealth in May 1961 because of opposition to its racial policies, the Commonwealth repeatedly adopted resolutions against apartheid. The Gleneagles Declaration on apartheid sport in 1977 helped promote the boycott of apartheid sport.

The Commonwealth also considered sanctions against South Africa, especially subsequent to its meeting in Nassau in 1985, despite reservations by the United Kingdom. At the summit meeting in Vancouver in 1987, it decided on a programme of sanctions against South Africa. A Commonwealth Committee of Foreign Ministers on Southern Africa commissioned studies, reviewed the effect of sanctions and made recommendations from time to time on further action. UNETPSA and the Commonwealth Secretariat

---

149 The General Assembly had decided in 1965 to invite the administrative secretary-general of the OAU to its sessions as an observer.
cooperated on education and training of South Africans. The Commonwealth sent observers to South Africa in 1992, at the request of the UN, to help the structures of the National Peace Accord and to observe the democratic elections in 1994.

**Other intergovernmental organisations**

Many other intergovernmental organisations denounced apartheid. The decision of the Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) in 1975 for an oil embargo against South Africa facilitated the UN decisions on the matter. The European Community was helpful during the transition period when it sent an observer mission to South Africa.

**Nongovernmental organisations**

The UN recognised the importance of the role of the NGOs in the international campaign against apartheid, and the General Assembly commended them on several occasions. The Special Committee maintained relations with numerous international, national and local NGOs, invited NGOs to its meetings, conferences and seminars, sent representatives to their conferences, and sent missions to consult with them. It provided grants for their projects against apartheid. The consultations held by the Special Committee with the NGOs led to many significant decisions by the General Assembly and to coordinated campaigns.

The UN maintained close relations with the International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa to ensure assistance to the political prisoners and their families in South Africa. It commended the World Council of Churches which withdrew funds from banks making loans to South Africa, and began in 1970 to give grants to the liberation movements and anti-apartheid groups. While the work of the anti-apartheid movements was of great importance in the Western countries collaborating with South Africa, their effectiveness depended on the cooperation of trade unions and other NGOs. The international NGOs helped in promoting such cooperation and could also reach many other countries in the world.

The Special Committee found that it was desirable to promote nongovernmental centres for specific purposes or to reach segments of world opinion, as they could function without the restraints of UN bodies and supplement the work of the UN. Thus it encouraged and assisted the establishment of the World Campaign against Military and Nuclear Collaboration with South Africa in March 1979, on the initiative of the anti-apartheid movement. The campaign – with Abdul S. Minty as director – made a significant contribution to the monitoring and strengthening of the arms embargo against South Africa.

The Special Committee encouraged and assisted the setting up of the Shipping Research Bureau in Amsterdam by the Holland Committee on Southern Africa and Workgroup Kairos. The Bureau made a great contribution to the monitoring of the oil embargo against South Africa. The committee also assisted the Association of West European Parliamentarian against Apartheid (AWEPPA) – later renamed
Association of West European Parliamentarians for Africa – under the leadership of Jan Nico Scholten.

It also assisted the NGO sub-committee on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Apartheid and Decolonisation in Geneva – with Romesh Chandra of the World Peace Council as chairman and Edith Ballantine of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom as secretary – which organised conferences and consultations with a large number of NGOs. In 1981, the Special Committee set up an International Committee of Solidarity with the Struggle of Women in South Africa and Namibia. Missions of the international committee visited frontline states to look into projects for women refugees from South Africa and the committee sent delegations to many countries to promote contributions to the projects.

UN assistance to the liberation movement and people of South Africa

The UN provided assistance to the people of South Africa and to their liberation movements, the ANC and the PAC, through various programmes and channels.

Assistance to the national liberation movement

The General Assembly repeatedly appealed to states, from 1966, to provide political, moral and material assistance to those combating the policies of apartheid, specifying in later years that assistance be given to the liberation movements recognised by the OAU.

The Special Committee drew attention to various forms of non-military assistance required by the liberation movements for the conduct of the struggle such as assistance to political prisoners and their families; asylum and educational and employment opportunities to South African refugees; funds for the living expenses of activists in exile, maintenance of offices, publicity and travel; broadcasting facilities, transit and travel facilities to members of the movements; funds and technical assistance for projects of the movements in frontline states for education, food production and self-support.

Following advice by the ANC, the committee refrained from proposing a UN fund for assistance to liberation movements, but appealed to governments and organisations to provide material assistance directly or through the OAU. It requested information from governments on assistance provided by them and publicised it in order to encourage other governments to take similar action.

The UN provided fares and subsistence to representatives of liberation movements invited to UN meetings and conferences. The General Assembly decided in 1974 to invite the ANC and PAC as observers to participate in the discussion of the items which related to South Africa in the main committees of the General Assembly and its

150 Provision of fares and subsistence began with the invitations to Robert Resha (ANC) and Peter Roboroko (PAC) to the international seminar on Apartheid in Brasilia in 1966, and to Oliver Tambo to the session of the Special Committee in Stockholm in June 1968. Representatives of the movements had appeared earlier as ‘petitioners’ at their own expense.
subsidiary organs, as well as in conferences, seminars and other meetings held under the auspices of the UN which related to South Africa. It requested the secretary-general, in consultation with the OAU, to ensure that the necessary arrangements were made for their effective participation, including the requisite financial provisions. In 1977, the Assembly authorised the Special Committee to associate liberation movements with its missions. In 1980, it urged all agencies within the UN system to ensure the participation of the liberation movements recognised by the OAU in their relevant conferences and meetings, and to provide financial assistance for that purpose.

On 12 December 1979, the General Assembly decided to authorise financial provision in the budget of the UN to enable ANC and the PAC to maintain offices in New York “in order to ensure the due and proper representation of the South African people through their national liberation movements”. This assistance until 1994, amounting to about $300,000 each year, enabled the liberation movements to participate in meetings of the Special Committee and other UN bodies and to develop contacts with many governments and organisations. The offices in New York also enabled them to expand their activities in the United States. Although the liberation movements had representatives in New York, the Special Committee often invited leaders of the movements, and some individuals in the movements, to special meetings and conferences, and provided fares and subsistence.

Meanwhile, with the encouragement of the General Assembly, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and several specialised agencies of the UN began to develop programmes of assistance to liberation movements in Africa. In 1973, the Netherlands government gave $1.5 million to the UNDP for assistance to colonial countries and peoples. The UNDP established a national Liberation Movement Trust Fund, and included South Africa within its mandate. It allocated $500,000 to the UN Children’s Fund for a health project in Tanzania and Zambia for the national liberation movements, and earmarked the rest for regional projects. The Trust Fund was financed by voluntary contributions, but from 1978 the UNDP made allocations from its funds for this purpose.

The UNDP signed a cooperation agreement with the OAU and consulted with the OAU and the host countries on assistance to national liberation movements. Assistance was aimed on the one hand at education and training with a view to preparing individuals for eventual administrative, technical and managerial responsibilities, and on the other at promoting self-reliance in countries of asylum, through training in

151 Resolution 3280 (XXX) of 10 December 1974.
152 Resolution 32/105 I of 14 December 1977. Under this provision, representatives of ANC and PAC were included in a delegation of the Special Committee which visited Ghana in August 1977. The provision was not used subsequently, presumably as the presence of two rival organisations, emphasising the divisions within the national liberation movement, was not helpful.
154 Resolution 34/93 I, paragraph 4.
155 For instance, former prisoners were invited to speak at the special meetings on the Day of Solidarity with South African Political Prisoners and women leaders to the Day of Solidarity with the Women of South Africa and Namibia.
156 Proposals for such assistance came in the context of decolonisation, but the South African movements were also included in the programmes.
agriculture, food production, settlement planning, health care and vocational trades. It was given to regional projects benefiting several liberation movements, as well as projects benefiting individual movements, including the ANC and the PAC.

Most of the projects were based on requests by the liberation movements. Total assistance amounted to several million dollars. While the UNDP provided the finances, most of the projects were administered by specialised agencies, especially the UN Economic, Social and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). ANC projects received somewhat more funds than those of the PAC.

In 1982, for instance, the ANC received assistance for five projects estimated at $586 551: higher training at universities and similar institutions (30 students), strengthening of a primary and secondary education facility in Tanzania (431 students), training and upgrading of personnel in curriculum development and educational administration (37 trainees), and consultancy advice on human settlements to an ANC settlement in Tanzania. The PAC received assistance to enable 37 students to pursue secondary-level and university studies at a cost of $249 060. In addition, eight joint projects benefited these movements together with the South West Africa People’s Organisation. In 1984, projects for the ANC were valued at $1 014 115, and those for the PAC at $548 949. The Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College of the ANC and Institute of Azania of the PAC were among the institutions receiving assistance.

On 24 January 1979, the General Assembly, in Resolution 33/183 K on assistance to the oppressed people of South Africa and their national liberation movement, appealed to UNDP and all specialised agencies and institutions within the UN system to provide increased assistance and to report annually to the secretary-general. The Assembly further requested the Economic and Social Council to review annually, in consultation with the Special Committee against Apartheid, the assistance provided by those agencies and institutions and requested them to consult with the Special Committee on their programmes of assistance so that there might be maximum coordination. Subsequently, the Economic and Social Council decided, on 2 August 1979, to request its president to consult with the chairmen of the Special Committee against Apartheid and the Special Committee on Decolonisation, with a view to extending maximum possible assistance to the people concerned, and to report to the Council. Meetings of the three presiding officers were held annually thereafter.

157 For instance, the regional educational project at Nkumbi, Zambia, the regional health project at Mtwara, Tanzania, and the regional agricultural project in Zambia.

158 The General Assembly, in 34/93 I of 12 December 1979, drew the particular attention of states to the necessity of assisting the educational and self-help projects of the liberation movements and of meeting the special and pressing needs of refugee women and children.

159 Economic and Social Council, second regular session, 1979. Plenary meeting 39. Several Western countries and Japan opposed such resolutions on assistance to liberation movements. The Reagan administration in the United States, opposing General Assembly Resolution 37/69 A of 9 December 1982, warned that if UN aid to the ANC and the PAC continued, it might withhold its share of funds from UN programmes assisting those organisations. The Netherlands said it supported the efforts of the ANC and the PAC as anti-apartheid movements but did not recognise them as liberation movements, since it did not believe the situation in South Africa was a colonial one.
The secretary-general reported annually to the General Assembly on assistance by specialised agencies and other institutions within the UN family to the national liberation movements, including the ANC and the PAC. The reports contained information provided by the agencies. Assistance to national liberation movements was an important item on the agenda of high-level meetings of the OAU General Secretariat and the secretariats of the UN and other organisations within the UN system which were held annually in the 1980s. There was thus continuing pressure on all agencies with regard to such assistance.

The UN did not set up any fund for assistance to the liberation movements as the ANC advised against such a fund. In August 1969, Alfred Nzo, secretary-general of ANC, told a delegation of the Special Committee that the Special Committee should convince governments to provide assistance and create a favourable atmosphere for the ANC to hold discussions with them on various aspects of assistance and conclude bilateral agreements.160

In 1971, the Special Committee welcomed the decision of the OAU to set up an OAU Assistance Fund for the Struggle against Colonialism and Apartheid for economic and social projects of the liberation movements, considering that the Fund would facilitate contributions by governments which could not provide aid directly to the liberation movements. On its recommendation, the General Assembly appealed for contributions to that Fund.161 The Assembly also called for support to the Africa Fund established by the Movement of Non-aligned Countries in 1986 to assist the frontline states and liberation movements.162

**UN Trust Fund for South Africa**

Assistance for political prisoners and their families was perhaps the most significant assistance programme by the UN during the course of the liberation struggle in South Africa. Assistance was provided through voluntary agencies to all those persecuted by the South African government for their opposition to apartheid, irrespective of their political affiliations.

In 1963, when there were mass arrests, detentions and trials of opponents of apartheid in South Africa, the Special Committee became concerned over the hardships faced by their families. Its attention was drawn to an appeal by Canon L. John Collins, president of the Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, London, for greatly increased contributions to cope with the needs for assistance. It decided to appeal for contributions by governments, and recommended in its annual report in September 1963:

… in view of the persecution of thousands of South African nationals for their opposition to the policies of apartheid and the serious hardship faced by their

---

160 Notes of a UN official accompanying the delegation of the Special Committee. Earlier, in 1965, Robert Resha had advised informally that a UN fund would not be appropriate as the UN was a ‘mixed organisation’ which included governments friendly to South Africa.

161 Resolution 2775 F (XXVI) of 29 November 1971 and many subsequent resolutions until 1990.

families, the Special Committee considers that the international community, for humanitarian reasons, should provide them with relief and other assistance. It recommends that the Secretary-General should be requested, in consultation with the Special Committee, to find ways and means to provide such relief and assistance through appropriate international agencies.163

On 16 December 1963, the General Assembly, in Resolution 1978 B (XVIII), declared that such relief and other assistance was ‘consonant with the purposes and principles of the UN’. It requested the secretary-general ‘to seek ways and means of providing relief and assistance, through the appropriate international agencies, to the families of all persons persecuted by the government of the Republic of South Africa for their opposition to the policies of apartheid’; and invited member states and organisations to contribute generously to such relief and assistance.164 The resolution was adopted by 99 votes to 2; only South Africa and Portugal voted against it.

The secretary-general said before the vote that he would understand the reference to ‘appropriate international agencies’ as follows. If the families concerned had left South Africa, they might be considered refugees; in that case, he would plan to take up the matter with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). With respect to the families within South Africa, he would consult with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to determine what assistance might be rendered under its auspices. The UNHCR indicated, in reply to a letter from the secretary-general, its readiness to cooperate with governments of host countries receiving refugees from South Africa.

The president of the ICRC replied that it appeared from the report of the Committee’s delegate-general, who had visited South Africa, that the South African Red Cross was prepared, in principle, to assist the families of any detainees whatever, in case of need, and that, as regards participation by an international agency in such assistance, the South African government could not agree to any outside interference.165

Recognising that the replies from these organisations did not meet its primary concern, the Special Committee consulted with the liberation movement and obtained information from the Defence and Aid Fund and other voluntary organisations which were providing assistance to political prisoners and their families in South Africa and to South African refugees. After consultation with the secretary-general, it sent an appeal to governments to contribute generously through the existing organisations for legal assistance to persons persecuted for acts arising from their opposition to apartheid, as well as relief for their families. It declared:

163 A/5497, paragraph 513.
164 The Special Committee had no contact with the Defence and Aid Fund in 1963 and knew little of its operations. As a result, the resolution was flawed. It did not refer to legal assistance to the political prisoners. It referred to assistance by international agencies, while the Defence and Aid Fund, which had been providing most of the assistance and was favoured by the liberation movements, was a British organisation.
165 A/5850, 22 January 1985. Before the vote on the General Assembly resolution, the representative of South Africa had claimed that arrangements already existed for granting assistance to dependents, wherever necessary, and that the South African government had already extended an invitation to the International Committee of the Red Cross to visit any of the detainees in question at any time to satisfy itself with regard to conditions under which they were being held. The statement was misleading and false.
… these victims of persecution are entitled to assistance by the peoples of the world, not only because of humanitarian reasons, but also because they have faced persecution in struggle for racial equality which is enshrined in the UN Charter as a fundamental purpose of the Organisation. Indeed, assistance by the peoples of the world would be an effective means to express solidarity with the opponents of racial discrimination and to counter growth of racial bitterness in South Africa.\textsuperscript{166}

The Committee communicated information which it had received from three organisations – Amnesty International, Defence and Aid Fund for South Africa and the Joint Committee on the High Commission Territories – and stated:

The Special Committee notes that the Amnesty International, sponsored by eminent personalities from many countries, ‘adopts’ prisoners and detainees in South Africa who do not advocate violence and also assists refugees from South Africa. The Defence and Aid Fund, established in the United Kingdom in 1956, with Canon L. John Collins as Chairman, has so far contributed about £300,000 to the victims of the policies of apartheid and maintains contact with South Africa through local committees. Its efforts have been appreciated by prominent South African opponents of apartheid, including Chief Albert Luthuli, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize.

The Joint Committee on the High Commission Territories, representative of a number of voluntary organisations, is concerned with the relief and assistance of South African refugees in the High Commission Territories and in Northern Rhodesia. The Special Committee also notes that the World Council of Churches has, in July 1964, earmarked $60,000 for legal aid for political prisoners in South Africa and for assistance to their dependents, and is seeking further contributions for this purpose. The Special Committee wishes to make an urgent appeal to member states to contribute generously to the fulfilment of the purposes of General Assembly Resolution 1978 B (XVIII) through these voluntary organisations or through other appropriate channels of their choice, and to give the widest publicity to this appeal in order to encourage charitable foundations, organisations and individuals in their countries to make generous contributions.\textsuperscript{167}

India announced on 12 November 1964 that it had contributed 25,000 rupees ($5250) to the Defence and Aid Fund.\textsuperscript{168} In 1965, the UN was informed of contributions by several other countries, mostly to Defence and Aid Fund\textsuperscript{169}: Denmark, 250,000 Danish kroner (about $37,000); Greece, $1,000; Hungary, 100,000 forints (about $1,750); Iraq, $2,800; Malaysia, $5,000; Netherlands, 100,000 Dutch guilders (about $27,000).

\textsuperscript{166} The text of the appeal was reproduced in document A/AC.115/L.98.
\textsuperscript{167} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{168} A/AC.115/L.100.
\textsuperscript{169} In 1965, an International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa was formed with the Defence and Aid Fund of Britain and similar bodies in other Western countries as affiliates. Please see chapter 3.
The United Nations and the struggle for liberation in South Africa

760); Nigeria, $1 400; Pakistan, 23 800 rupees (about $5 000); Philippines, $2 500; Sweden, $200 000; and USSR, $10 000.170

The Special Committee suggested, in its annual report of 10 August 1965, that, without prejudice to direct contributions to organisations engaged in providing legal aid and relief, consideration be given to the establishment of a UN trust fund to receive voluntary contributions from states, organisations and individuals. Such a fund could be available to make grants to voluntary organisations, governments of host countries of refugees or other bodies, to supplement their resources and cope with special needs or emergencies. The Committee took this step mainly to facilitate contributions from governments which do not make grants to nongovernmental organisations.

On 15 December 1965, the General Assembly adopted a resolution requesting the secretary-general to establish the UN Trust Fund for South Africa for the following purposes:

(a) Legal assistance to persons charged under discriminatory and repressive legislation in South Africa;
(b) Relief for dependants of persons persecuted by the government of South Africa for acts arising from opposition to the policies of apartheid;
(c) Education of prisoners, their children and other dependants; and
(d) Relief for refugees from South Africa.171

The vote was 95 in favour, 1 opposed (South Africa), and 1 abstention (Portugal). A Committee of Trustees of the Trust Fund – composed of the representatives of Chile, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan and Sweden – was established to promote contributions to the Fund and decide on grants from the Fund.172

At the first meeting of the Committee of Trustees on 21 February 1966, Sverker C Astrom (Sweden), the chairman, stressed that the work of the committee 'is not intended to resolve the political and social problems with which other UN organs are concerned. Its purpose is to meet a limited, albeit urgent and clear, need of a humanitarian character. If it does, in addition, help people in South Africa to view their problems with less bitterness, it will be doubly worthwhile'.173 He said in a statement before the Special Political Committee of the General Assembly on 9 November 1967:

170 A/AC.115/L.112, 134, 135, 142, 144, 148, 153, 157, 158, 159, and 160. Sweden gave $100 000 to the Defence and Aid Fund and $100 000 to the World Council of Churches. Greece made its contribution to the World Council of Churches. All other contributions were to the Defence and Aid Fund. When the Netherlands announced its intention to contribute to the Defence and Aid Fund, there were demonstrations against the Netherlands in South Africa and the South African government informed the Netherlands Government that 'such a gift would be viewed in a serious light, and that it would in no way be helpful in the maintenance of traditional bonds of friendship'. Subsequently, when the Netherlands government decided to transfer the contribution to the UN Trust Fund to South Africa, the South African government warned that it would 'take steps to nullify this attempt at further interference in our domestic affairs'. Statement of Dr. Hilgard Muller, Minister of Foreign Affairs of South Africa on 20 May 1966. Cape Times, 21 May 1966. Despite this warning, the Netherlands contributed $27 584 to the Trust Fund soon after its establishment (A/6494).

171 Resolution 2054 B (XX).

172 The ambassador of Sweden was annually elected chairman and the ambassador of Nigeria vice-chairman.

173 First report of the Committee of Trustees in 1966, A/6494.
... if assistance is given to the victims of apartheid by the joint efforts of the international community, this provides moral support to all those, inside or outside South Africa, who work for racial equality and social justice. ... it is important that this bond of human solidarity be preserved.\textsuperscript{174}

The committee followed the practice of deciding in principle to recognise certain voluntary organisations as possible recipients of grants after taking into account their sponsorship, their performance with regard to relief and assistance in South Africa, and their accounting and other procedures. Before accepting an organisation as recipient, the committee requested it to undertake: (a) to use grants for the purpose indicated by the Committee of Trustees; (b) to report on the use of the grants; and (c) to provide such financial statements as the UN secretary-general and the Board of Auditors may require.

The South African government tried to prevent contributions to the Trust Fund. Its Foreign Minister told the House of Assembly on 7 May 1969:

> During the four years of the Trust Fund’s existence approximately 43 countries have contributed to it. However, most of these countries did this only once. We took up this matter and lodged objections with the governments concerned. We pointed out to them how these funds could in practice be utilised for objects which those governments which had donated the money could hardly support. The result of our representations was that some of these countries made no further contributions to the Trust Fund.\textsuperscript{175}

But because of growing opposition to repression in South Africa and the efforts of the Special Committee to promote the Fund, the objections of the South African regime had little effect and the number of contributors to the Trust Fund continued to increase.

In 1968, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the Committee of Trustees, revised the purposes of the Fund to include legal assistance to banned persons and for rehabilitation of released prisoners.\textsuperscript{176} The revised purposes included:

(a) Legal assistance to persons persecuted under the repressive and discriminatory legislation of South Africa;
(b) Relief to such persons and their dependents;
(c) Education of such persons and their dependents;

\textsuperscript{174} A/SPC/PV.563.

\textsuperscript{175} The only countries which may have stopped contributions in response to South African representations were Israel, the United Kingdom and the United States. According to the annual reports of the Trust Fund, Israel contributed $1 000 in 1966 and made no further contributions. The United Kingdom made only two contributions, $40 000 in 1967 and $108 313 in 1979. The United States, which contributed $25 000 in 1968, did not contribute again until 1979 when it began substantial annual contributions. The Federal Republic of Germany, which made no contributions for several years, began annual contributions from 1973 when the chairman of the Special Committee visited Bonn for consultations on the eve of its admission to the UN.

\textsuperscript{176} Resolution 2397 (XXIII) of 2 December 1968.
Meanwhile, the South African government began to harass and intimidate persons and organisations administering assistance in South Africa and on 18 March 1966 banned the Defence and Aid Fund in terms of the Suppression of Communism Act. Organisations, lawyers and other individuals known to be receiving funds from IDAF, or serving the aims of that Fund, were thereby threatened with persecution.

The Committee of Trustees then decided to keep the list of recipients of grants from the Trust Fund confidential. The annual reports of the Committee indicated only the number, the amount and the purpose of grants. Only the Soviet Union objected to this unprecedented decision. The chairman and the vice-chairman of the Committee of Trustees met with the representatives of the Soviet Union and announced that the committee would provide more information to the donor governments which requested it.178

Despite the ban on the Defence and Aid committees in South Africa, the Committee of Trustees continued to make grants to IDAF. In addition, almost all the direct contributions by governments, encouraged by the Committee of Trustees, went to IDAF.179 The grants from the Trust Fund, and direct contributions by governments to IDAF, helped to secure the release of many persons charged under apartheid laws, or reduction of sentences, and assisted numerous families of political prisoners and banned persons. Moreover, they helped to publicise the repression and resistance, as well as the aspirations of the accused, and the gross violations of the rule of law in South Africa.

In 1990-91, the unbanning of political organisations, the release many political prisoners, the suspension of executions, the lifting of the state of emergency and the repeal of some repressive legislation greatly improved the situation in South Africa. But there was continuing need for assistance as a number of political trials continued. There was also an urgent need to facilitate the reintegration of released political prisoners and returning exiles into the society.

The Committee of Trustees held consultations on 28 February 1991 with representatives of human rights and lawyers’ associations from South Africa about the work of the Trust Fund in the light of the changing needs in South Africa. In December 1991, the General Assembly, acting on the recommendation of the Committee of Trustees, revised the terms of reference of the Trust Fund to include assistance ‘to facilitate the reintegration of released political prisoners and returning exiles into South African society’ and for ‘work in the legal field aimed at ensuring effective implementation of legislation repealing major apartheid laws, redressing continuing adverse effects of these laws and encouraging increased confidence in the rule of law’.180

---

177 On 8 December 1970, by Resolution 2671 E (XXV), the General Assembly authorised the Committee of Trustees to make grants to organisations engaged in providing assistance to persons persecuted in Namibia and Southern Rhodesia and to their families, to the extent that additional voluntary contributions were received for that purpose.

178 The objection of the Soviet Union arose because of a small grant given by the Trust Fund to Amnesty International during the short time after the ban on the Defence and Aid Fund when it had to work out arrangements for confidential operations. The grant was for fares to families of prisoners to visit Robben Island and for the defence of Michael Dingake, a Communist on trial.

179 The Nordic countries were the largest contributors to the Trust Fund and to IDAF.

As IDAF had in the meantime transferred its programmes to organisations inside South Africa and dissolved itself, the Committee of Trustees began to provide grants directly to South African voluntary agencies. It continued its work until the establishment of a non-racial, democratic government which could take responsibility for matters within its mandate. It decided on 31 May 1994 to inform the General Assembly that it had fulfilled its mandate. It stated in its final report:

- Since it was established in 1965, the Trust Fund has spent US$ 50 million on programmes of humanitarian, legal and educational assistance within the purview of its mandate. Thousands of victims of apartheid owe their very survival and hopes for the future to the activities of the Trust Fund.
- In the execution of its mandate, the Committee made grants to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and to voluntary agencies, principally located outside South Africa, whose dedication and commitment has remained exemplary throughout the years: the International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, Amnesty International, the World Council of Churches, the Freedom from Fear International Charitable Foundation, Christian Action (Southern Africa Education Fund), the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights under Law, the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, the International University Exchange Fund, the National Council of Churches of Christ, the South African Council of Churches, the National Council of Churches and the Catholic Institute of International Relations.
- Over the past three years, in the light of positive developments in South Africa and the expanded mandate from the General Assembly, the Committee has provided assistance directly to South African voluntary agencies involved particularly in constitutional and human rights litigation, land and housing issues and legal representation for disadvantaged communities, children’s rights, gender discrimination, needs of marginalised youths and environmental issues. These agencies, which are all based in South Africa and whose professionalism, impartiality and dedication have been widely recognised are the South African Legal Defence Fund, the Association of Ex-Political Prisoners, the Legal Resources Centre, the National Association of Democratic Lawyers and the Black Lawyers Association.
- Through these agencies, the Trust Fund also contributed to the training and deployment of paralegals to assist disadvantaged communities and promote a culture of human rights in South Africa.\(^{181}\)

It may be added that about 90 governments contributed to the Trust Fund. While grants were made to many agencies, IDAF and associated bodies — the Freedom from Fear International Charitable Foundation and Christian Action (Southern Africa Education Fund) — received well over half of the $50 million disbursed from the Fund. On 23 June 1994, the General Assembly dissolved the Trust Fund.

and transferred the balance to the UN Educational and Training Programme for Southern Africa.\footnote{182}

**Assistance for education and training**

The UN provided thousands of scholarships to South Africans through the UN Educational and Training Programme for southern Africans, established in 1965.\footnote{183} As noted earlier, the UN Trust Fund for South Africa gave grants to voluntary organisations for the education of political prisoners and other persons persecuted for their opposition to apartheid and to their dependents. These grants helped the prison education scheme and the South African Committee for Higher Education (SACHED), an independent body committed to the development of education in South Africa. UNHCR general refugee assistance included assistance for children’s education. Emergency assistance to South African refugee students, which began in 1977, was administered by UNHCR. From the 1980s, the UNDP financed educational projects for the ANC and PAC.

**UN Educational and Training Programme for Southern Africa (UNETPSA)**

The Group of Experts on South Africa recommended in April 1964 the establishment of a programme ‘for training abroad of a large number of South African lawyers, engineers, agronomists, public administrators, teachers at all levels and skilled workers, as well as training in such fields as labour education and business and industrial management… The purpose will be to enable as many South Africans as possible to play a full part as quickly as possible in the political, economic and social advance of their country’.\footnote{184}

The Group felt that this was a task which could be undertaken at once as the need for very large numbers of black people to be qualified for the professions and for the civil service and teaching was acute and would become far greater. It pointed out that this programme would provide an opportunity for governments, specialised agencies of the UN, universities and training colleges and public and private organisations throughout the world to participate in helping South Africans who have been deprived of their rights and denied opportunities of education and professional, vocational and scientific training, and thereby assist in bringing influence to bear on the South African government by ‘positive action’.\footnote{185} On 18 June 1964, the Security Council,

\footnote{182} General Assembly Resolution 48/258 B of 23 June 1994.  
\footnote{183} The title of the programme, when originally established in 1965, was UN Education and Training Programme for South Africans. It was changed after the programmes for South Africa, Namibia and Portuguese colonies were integrated in 1967. From the programme’s inception in 1965 to 1 October 1993, UNETPSA granted scholarships to 7,416 South Africans.  
\footnote{184} S/5658. The programme was proposed by Alva Myrdal, chairman of the Group, after consultation with the UNESCO, Z.K. Mathews and others. Scandinavian governments had earlier supported the International University Education Fund which had been set up by student organisations to provide educational assistance to southern African refugees. The Group recommended training outside South Africa as it was strongly opposed to the racial segregation in educational institutions in South Africa and wanted the students trained in non-racial institutions.  
\footnote{185} Ibid.
taking note of the recommendation of the Group of Experts, invited the secretary-
general, in consultation with appropriate UN specialised agencies, to establish the
educational and training programme.\textsuperscript{186}

The secretary-general initiated consultations with the specialised agencies in 1965
after a survey of the bilateral and nongovernmental programmes for the education and
training of South Africans abroad, the location and number of South Africans abroad
who needed assistance to complete higher education and training, the availability of
facilities and the special problems involved in the placement of South Africans.

Pending final arrangements for the programme, he announced on 7 July 1965
that a limited number of fellowships and grants would be provided during academic
year 1965-66 for education at the secondary and college level. For the financing of
that limited programme, a sum of $237 000 was contributed, at his request, by five
member states: Denmark, $37 000; Norway, $25 000; Sweden, $30 000; the United
Kingdom, $70 000; and the United States, $75 000. About 60 grants were made under
this interim programme.\textsuperscript{187} After further consultation with the specialised agencies,
the secretary-general reported to the Security Council on 9 November 1965 that he
had established the UN Educational and Training Programme for South Africans.
He considered it essential that the plans should cover a reasonably long period, and
set a target of $2 million for an initial three-year period.\textsuperscript{188}

He then sent an appeal, on 26 November 1965, to all member states for voluntary
contributions to finance the programme. The response was very poor. Contributions
were received from only 7 governments in 1966 and amounted to $201 126, somewhat
less than contributions for the interim programme.\textsuperscript{189} It was particularly disappointing
that the United Kingdom and the United States which had strongly supported the
programme, and made the largest contributions to the interim programme, were not
among the contributors.\textsuperscript{190} The programme received 475 applications in 1966, but,
after extending existing fellowships, it could only grant 75 new awards.

Plans for a full-time director in New York and offices in Geneva and Lusaka had
to be abandoned. The programme was directed part-time by a director in the political
department and administered by the Fellowship Section. Arrangements were made with
the UNDP and other organisations to operate the programme in Africa and Europe.

In 1967, the General Assembly decided to consolidate and integrate this
programme with the existing special educational and training programmes for South
West Africa and the Portuguese colonies, established in 1961 and 1962 respectively,
under UNETPSA.\textsuperscript{191} Those programmes had been based on offers of scholarships by
member states. More than twenty countries had offered scholarships but many of the

\textsuperscript{186} Resolution 191 (1964), paragraph 11.
\textsuperscript{187} S/6891.
\textsuperscript{188} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{189} Contributions were received in 1966 from: Denmark, $80 000; Japan, $20 000; Kenya, $2 000; Liberia, $5 000; Malawi,
$140; Norway, $13 986; and Sweden $80 000.
\textsuperscript{190} The United Kingdom resumed annual contributions in 1969. The United States contributed in 1968 and from 1975
to 1977, but the amounts were small. In 1978, under the Carter administration, it gave one million dollars and
thereafter annual contributions were substantial.
\textsuperscript{191} Resolution 2349 (XXII) of 19 December 1967.
offers could not be utilised because of language and other problems. The number of persons benefiting from those programmes was considerably less than those under the programme for South Africans. The Assembly requested the secretary-general 'to include in the programme the granting of subventions to educational and training institutions in Africa in order to enable those institutions to provide places for persons who come under the programme and to make it possible for those persons to be trained in Africa as far as practicable'. No subventions were granted from the programme, however, as the funds were not adequate for that purpose.

In 1968, the General Assembly requested the secretary-general to establish an Advisory Committee, composed of representatives of member states, to advise him:

(a) On the strengthening and expansion of the programme, including, in particular, the promoting of contributions;
(b) On the granting of subventions to educational and training institutions in Africa in order to enable them to provide places for persons who come under this programme;
(c) On any other matters concerning the programme on which the secretary-general may seek advice.192

The programme was financed mainly by voluntary contributions, and it tried to utilise the offers of scholarships by governments as much as possible. The General Assembly provided $100 000 a year for several years from the budget of the UN as contributions from member states were inadequate.

Scholarships were granted under the programme for education and training at the higher secondary and university level193 in institutions outside South Africa, with preference given to institutions in African countries. Decisions on awards were based primarily on academic qualifications and interview reports. Financial needs of the applicants were taken into account. Special attention was given to women candidates and to candidates who had suffered persecution for their opposition to apartheid. The scholarships were for academic, vocational and professional subjects, with the following priority fields: agriculture, economic and social development, education, engineering, industrial development, medical and para-medical studies, natural resources, public administration, science, and transport and communications. A limited number of scholarships were made available for post-graduate study and research in fields particularly relevant for the development of South Africa.

While the urgent needs of refugee students had to be taken into account, the programme was not meant to assist refugees only. Especially from about 1973, the programme granted scholarships to a number of applicants from inside South Africa, who could return to South Africa, for study in educational institutions abroad. It gave preference to refugee candidates who showed a willingness eventually to return to South Africa and contribute to its development.

192 Resolution 2431 (XXIII) of 18 December 1968.
193 Under an agreement concluded in March 1970 between the UNHCR and the Director of UNETPSA, UNHCR was to provide assistance to southern African refugees through the first level of secondary education.
The programme maintained close cooperation with the UNHCR, the UNESCO and the OAU Bureau for Placement and Education and Refugees, as well as other scholarship-giving agencies such as the International University Exchange Fund, the African American Institute and the World University Service.

Contributions to the programme increased in the 1970s and the programme was able to grant a greater number of awards. When there was a large outflow of student refugees after the Sharpeville massacre of 1976, the UN set up an emergency student assistance programme, administered by UNHCR. In the 1980s, when there was again a large outflow of refugees, UNETPSA’s resources were inadequate, especially as the costs of education had increased much more than the contributions. The programme increased the percentage of awards in Africa and in other low-cost countries (such as India and Pakistan). It entered into co-financing arrangements with the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation and other scholarship-giving agencies and encouraged universities in the United States, Canada and other high cost countries to provide tuition waivers for South African students.

The Advisory Committee arranged for an evaluation of the programme by an independent expert at the end of 1989. In the light of the recommendations of the expert, the programme began to increase its intake of students from inside South Africa and to show greater concern for the returnability and employability of its graduates.

Emergency assistance for South African refugee students, 1977-1980

After the student revolt and the Soweto massacre in 1976 – and the continued resistance and brutal repression which followed – the segregated universities for black people, as well as some high schools, were closed down and many students were permanently expelled from educational institutions. Hundreds of South African students fled to neighbouring countries. The UN responded with emergency assistance to the refugee students and to the countries of asylum to enable them to cope with the influx of these student refugees.

On 16 December 1976, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 31/126, requesting the secretary-general, as a matter of urgency, to consult with the governments of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland and the liberation movements concerned with a view to organising and providing appropriate emergency financial and other assistance for the care, subsistence and education of the South African refugee students. It called on UNESCO, UNDP, the Office of UNHCR, the UN Trust Fund for South Africa, UNETPSA and other UN bodies and organs, as appropriate, to cooperate fully with the secretary-general in implementing the programme of assistance. The secretary-general designated the UNHCR as coordinator of UN assistance. The

194 The number of South African students studying under the programme increased from 179 in 1970 to 369 in 1975 and 590 in 1980.
195 The reference to consultations with the liberation movements was proposed by Nigeria and was adopted by 98 votes to 0, with 29 abstentions. The resolution as a whole was adopted without a vote.
programme began in February 1977. The UNHCR opened offices in Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, and a series of projects were begun under the programme. After reports by two missions to southern Africa in 1978 to investigate the needs for assistance, assistance was extended to student refugees in Zambia.  

The missions were impressed by the concern which host governments had shown to the refugees, as well as the facilities made available. In spite of considerable socio-economic burdens and the delicate political situations which surrounded them, all host governments had made clear their unwavering intention of giving asylum to those seeking refuge. The missions were convinced that host governments would require, for some time to come, substantial assistance from the international community to help them continue with the care, maintenance and education of the student refugees.

The secretary-general informed the General Assembly in 1980 that government contributions earmarked for refugee aid in those countries, in response to a 1977 appeal by UNHCR, amounted to $15,950,329 as at 24 May 1980 and that an additional $5,323,905 in bilateral assistance to student refugees in Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland had been reported to the High Commissioner. The projects being implemented in cooperation with the UNHCR or proposed for its financing included:

- Botswana: additional educational facilities for 50 student refugees at a campus of the University of Botswana and Swaziland, aid to the multinational refugee centre at Dukwe and a secondary school building programme.
- Lesotho: additional residential and related facilities for student refugees at the National University, the creation of additional facilities in existing secondary and technical schools for 730 student refugees, and new projects for the construction of a refugee transit centre at Maseru and expansion of the Lerotholi Technical Training Institute.
- Swaziland: aid to the refugee reception/transit centre at Mpaka High School and expansion of facilities at the University of Swaziland.
- Zambia: expansion of the facilities at Nkumbi International College

Two missions that visited southern Africa in May and June 1980 had concluded that the international assistance rendered through this programme had done much to improve the conditions of the young, homeless student refugees in the countries neighbouring South Africa and that had lightened the burden borne by the host countries. Outside aid used to expand facilities in the universities and secondary and technical schools in southern Africa had made more places available for student refugees.

The General Assembly, in Resolution 35/184 of 15 December 1980, urged all member states and intergovernmental and nongovernmental organisations to contribute generously to the assistance programmes for these students, through financial support of the regular programmes of UNHCR and of the projects identified in the report of the

---

196 The General Assembly decided in 1979 to enlarge the assistance programme to include student refugees from Namibia and Zimbabwe. (Resolution 34/174 of 17 December 1979).
197 Assistance to student refugees from Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa: Report of the Secretary-General, document A/35/149.
198 Ibid.
secretary-general. While this and subsequent appeals led to continued assistance, it was mostly in the form of bilateral aid by member states to the countries in South Africa.

**Negotiations and transition, 1989-1994**

By 1989, the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM), a coalition of organisations resisting apartheid inside South Africa, was able to launch a Campaign of Defiance to make several apartheid laws inoperative. The liberation movement was not in a position to seize power, while the government was unable to suppress the resistance of the people. The prospect was a protracted and bitter civil war with immense suffering unless a negotiated solution was found. When Cuban and Angolan troops were able to force South Africa to retreat from Cuito Cuanavale in southern Angola the weakening of South Africa’s military power due to the arms embargo was exposed. International sanctions and other measures had begun to have a significant effect on the government and the white community. Important segments of that community, including businessmen, welcomed the opportunity to hold a dialogue with the leaders of the ANC in exile on the future of South Africa, despite threats by President PW Botha. With the end of the cold war, and the rising anti-apartheid sentiment in their countries, the governments of the United States and the United Kingdom found it desirable to cooperate in international efforts for a peaceful solution in South Africa.

In August, P.W. Botha was replaced as leader of the National Party by F.W. de Klerk who favoured negotiations, though for a settlement involving ‘group rights’. At about the same time, after wide consultations, the ANC decided that the conditions were opportune for a negotiated solution. At its request, the OAU ad hoc Committee on Southern Africa – consisting of several heads of state – met in Harare and on 21 August and adopted a declaration based on the ANC position. The Harare Declaration recognised that ‘a conjuncture of circumstances exists which, if there is a demonstrable readiness on the part of the Pretoria regime to engage in negotiations genuinely and sincerely, could create the possibility to end apartheid through negotiations’. It laid down a statement of principles, a list of measures to create the necessary climate for negotiations and guidelines to the process of negotiation. The declaration was endorsed by the Movement of Non-aligned States at its ninth conference in Belgrade, September 4-7, 1989. It was also endorsed by a conference for a Democratic Future in South Africa, held in South Africa on 9-10 December with the participation of 4 600 delegates representing 2 100 organisations.

The UN General Assembly discussed the Harare Declaration in a special session in December 1989. The bureau of the Special Committee prepared a draft declaration based on the Harare Declaration, which was adopted by consensus. The UN declaration – in General Assembly Resolution S-16/1 of 14 December 1989 –

199 The General Assembly had decided in 1988 to hold a special session in December 1989 to discuss ‘Apartheid and its Destructive Consequences in Southern Africa’ in order to consider further action in the light of increased repression in South Africa and aggression against frontline states. The session now turned to consideration of the OAU Harare Declaration.
envisaged the transformation of South Africa into a united, non-racial and democratic state in which all the people enjoy equal rights regardless of race, colour, sex or creed. In order to create the necessary climate for negotiations, it called on South Africa to:

(a) Release all political prisoners and detainees unconditionally and refrain from imposing any restrictions on them;
(b) Lift all bans and restrictions on all proscribed and restricted organisations and persons;
(c) Remove all troops from the townships;
(d) End the state of emergency and repeal all legislation, such as the Internal Security Act, designed to circumscribe political activity;
(e) Cease all political trials and political executions.

The declaration recommended that the parties concerned should then negotiate the future of their country in good faith in an atmosphere free of violence. The process could commence with agreement on the mechanism to draw up a new constitution; on the role to be played by the international community in ensuring a successful transition to a democratic order; and on transitional arrangements for the adoption of a new constitution and for the transition to a democratic order, including the holding of elections. The declaration also included a programme of action to exert pressure on the South African regime until there was clear evidence of profound and irreversible changes in South Africa. The Assembly requested the secretary-general to report on the progress made in the implementation of the declaration.

The declaration was a turning point in UN action on South Africa. For the first time, all member states were able to find common ground and enable the General Assembly and the Security Council to act in harmony and with unanimity. The South African regime rejected the declaration, but was obliged to take measures towards creating a climate conducive to negotiations. It rescinded the bans on the ANC, the PAC, the SACP and other organisations, released Nelson Mandela and a number of other political prisoners, enabled the leaders of banned organisations to return to South Africa, and abolished several repressive measures.

The assistance by the UN in the period of negotiations and transition from 1990 to 1994 was as essential as the efforts since the Sharpeville massacre of 1960 to exert pressure on the South African regime and support the liberation movements. In contrast to sharp disagreements during the earlier period on sanctions against South Africa and assistance to the liberation struggle, decisions in the UN during the latter period enjoyed the unanimous support of all the members so that the Security Council, the General Assembly, the secretary-general and the Special Committee against Apartheid could work in harmony to enable the South African people to attain a non-racial, united and democratic society. They pressed the South African regime to take all necessary steps to create an appropriate climate for negotiations and to stop violence, including violence by sections of its security apparatus, urged all parties to promote peace, and encouraged the widest participation in the negotiations and the democratic elections.
The first talks between the regime and the ANC were held at Groote Schuur from 2 to 4 May 1990. But the government failed to implement all the measures necessary to create an appropriate atmosphere. Moreover, there was an atmosphere of violence in the country, including deliberate attacks directed at members of the ANC by forces opposed to the democratic transformation. The monitoring by the secretary-general of the UN and the Special Committee, as well as by the OAU, and unanimous resolutions by the UN for the full implementation of the declaration were crucial in facilitating progress. The government was under continued pressure as sanctions and other measures remained in force.

In September and December 1990, the General Assembly, considering the reports of the secretary-general and the Special Committee, adopted unanimous resolutions pressuring the South African regime to foster a climate fully conducive to negotiations and free political activity and to ensure effective and impartial action by the security forces. The UN also pressed South Africa on the issue of the return of political exiles, as ANC and other organisations disapproved the guidelines announced by the government on 1 November 1990 requiring the exiles to give full details of all offences committed by them and apply for pardon or immunity. After months of negotiations, the government signed with the UNHCR on 4 September 1991 a Memorandum of Understanding on the voluntary repatriation and reintegration of refugees and exiles which was acceptable to the liberation movements, thereby removing a serious obstacle to negotiations. The accession of South Africa on 10 July 1991 to the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the subsequent conclusion of a safeguards agreement and the report of 4 September 1992 by the IAEA on the completeness of the inventory of South Africa’s nuclear installations and materials removed another source of concern.

**Assistance for return of refugees and political exiles**

Arrangements for the return of refugees and political exiles was a major problem to be overcome after the bans on the liberation movements and other organisations were removed in 1990. The guidelines for their return announced by the government on 1 November were denounced by the liberation movements and the political exiles as they required the exiles to fill out questionnaires giving full details of the ‘offences’ they had committed, and apply for ‘pardon’. After intervention by the UN, the government approached the UNHCR which had been assisting a majority of the estimated 38,000 refugees.

After long negotiations, the government and the UNHCR signed on 4 September 1991 a Memorandum of Understanding on the voluntary repatriation of refugees and political exiles, under which the UNHCR would organise the repatriation operation. The government agreed to grant amnesty for various types of political offences committed before 8 October 1990. Persons granted indemnity could return without risk of arrest, detention, imprisonment or legal proceedings for those offences and would enjoy complete freedom of movement. The UNHCR was assured of free access to the returnees and could make representations on their behalf. This agreement removed one of the serious obstacles to negotiations on the transition to a democratic society.
Procedures for readmission, reception and reintegration were agreed in the light of the memorandum. Returnees were provided cash grants for reintegration. The UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) assisted in reintegration, focusing on the needs of women and children. UNDP also assisted in rehabilitation of the returnees. The UNHCR reported that, by the end of May 1993, 10,957 South African refugees and exiles had registered for voluntary repatriation. The government cleared some 10,730 for return and 6,604 returned to South Africa under UNHCR auspices. Others returned independently.

Member states and regional and other organisations contributed over $27 million through the UNHCR to the repatriation and reintegration effort, including small-scale income-generating training programmes for returnees. The office of the UNHCR announced in 1994 a $1.2 million programme to be funded by Japan, for the training and rehabilitation of returned political exiles. Under the programme, some 500 to 600 returnees were to be selected for training in 1994 and a similar number in 1995.

**Assistance for education and training**

With the political changes in South Africa in 1990, there was a greater recognition that a large trained cadre of black South Africans would play a critical role in facilitating a smooth transition to a post-apartheid society. In December 1991, the General Assembly authorised the programme to initiate, in an appropriate manner, educational and training programmes inside South Africa. As a result, the number of scholarships awarded by UNETPSA rose from 925 in 1991 to 1,787 in 1992; 2,459 in 1993 and 2,568 in 1994.

The programme established contacts with South African-based NGOs and began projects for graduate students and junior faculty in the field of educational management and other short-term specialised training courses to help strengthen black universities. The programme’s Advisory Committee, in conjunction with UNESCO and the Special Committee against Apartheid, organised an International Conference on Educational Assistance to Victims of Apartheid in South Africa (Paris, 25-27 June 1991). The Paris statement adopted by the conference recommended that education and training programmes conducted abroad should consider, to the extent possible, the potential for job placement in South Africa, including self-employment. It also called for support to universities and other educational institutions that promoted educational and training programmes for the black majority. It identified educational needs in post-apartheid South Africa and made a number of recommendations on how they could be met.200

The General Assembly, in Resolution 46/80 of 13 December 1991, welcomed the main thrust of the Paris Statement with special regard to:

---

(a) Supporting and complementing the endeavours of South Africans towards major educational restructuring through quality education, research and development of learning material;
(b) Providing assistance for the training of the managers of educational change at all levels, including teachers’ educators, planners, curriculum specialists and administrators;
(c) Assisting in training programmes in the fields of public administration, policy analysis and planning, and business management, and strengthening the capacity of institutions and organisations.

The programme organised a follow-up conference on international Educational Assistance to Disadvantaged South Africans in New York on 8 and 9 September 1992. The conference, which was attended by 133 experts, representatives of major bilateral and multilateral donors, relevant intergovernmental and nongovernmental organisations and observers, focused attention on the requirements for effective international educational assistance to disadvantaged South Africans during the transition to a post-apartheid society.

In four workshops at the conference, the following points emerged that were of direct interest to the programme:
(a) Establishing linkages between training and educational activities and industry in South Africa;
(b) Supporting and strengthening the historically black and other universities through exchange programmes for graduates and junior faculty;
(c) Continuing to provide educational assistance at the tertiary level in South Africa and to strengthen the institutional technical and financial capacity as well as the decision-making of nongovernmental organisations, community-based organisations and educational institutions that serve the needs and interests of disadvantaged South Africans.201

Areas of priority for UN technical assistance were generally defined as capacity-building of black universities and the NGO sector, tertiary student financial assistance and basic adult education.202

These recommendations were endorsed by the General Assembly in Resolution 47/117 of 18 December 1992. The Assembly welcomed the expanding educational and training activities of the programme inside South Africa and its close cooperation with South African NGOs and educational institutions. The programme revised its priority fields in the light of the new situation in South Africa. In its work plan for 1993-1994, the programme allocated $2.4 million, or 64 per cent of its total budget, for new awards.

202 Ibid.
to projects inside the country, and co-sponsored training programmes with technikons in South Africa. It gave particular attention to enhancing institution-building and to filling South Africa’s human resource needs during the transition period and beyond.

In 1994, with the inauguration of a democratic government and the closing of the UN Centre against Apartheid, the administration of the programme was transferred to the Department for Development Support and Management Services. It financed some graduate studies abroad with special emphasis on such fields of study as public administration and planning, management and accounting, as requested by the new government. In order to integrate the goals of the programme with the overall multilateral development programmes for the region, the management of UNETPSA was transferred in 1996 to UNDP.

The UN and the first democratic elections

On 14 September 1991, the government, ANC, Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and other bodies signed the National Peace Accord. A National Peace Committee was established to monitor the implementation of the accord. A commission of inquiry on the Prevention of Public Violence and Intimidation was set up with Justice Richard J. Goldstone as chairman, to monitor the implementation of the accord. A Conference for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) was convened on 20-21 December 1991, with the participation of the government and 19 political groups. Delegations of the UN, the OAU, the Movement of Non-aligned Countries, the Commonwealth and the European Community were represented as observers. The conference reflected a wide measure of agreement on the transformation of South Africa into a united, non-racial and non-sexist country, and a second session was held in May 1992 after discussions in working groups. CODESA-II, however, ended without agreement.

Meanwhile, violence had greatly increased. The tardiness of the government in taking action against elements in the security forces, which were implicated in violence and criminal activity, heightened suspicion and tension. The ANC launched mass action on 16 June 1992 to press for the establishment of an interim government and elections for a constituent assembly. The next day, armed men, apparently from a hostel for migrant labourers, attacked the township of Boipatong and 40 people were killed. The ANC then decided to suspend bilateral talks with the government and participation in CODESA negotiations. The OAU requested that the Security Council consider the critical situation in South Africa.

The Security Council met on 15-16 July 1992 with the participation of the South African government, the ANC and the PAC, as well as nine other political groups. In Resolution 765 (1992) adopted unanimously on 16 July, the Council emphasised the primary responsibility of the South African government to stop all violence. It asked the secretary-general to appoint a special representative to South Africa to recommend, after discussion with the relevant parties, ‘measures which would assist in bringing an effective end to the violence and in creating conditions for negotiations leading towards a peaceful transition to a democratic, non-racial and united South Africa’. The Council decided to continue to appraise the matter until a democratic,
non-racial and united South Africa had been set up. As the secretary-general Boutros Boutros-Ghali observed:

Thus began the active and coordinated involvement of three of the principal organs of the UN – the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Secretariat – working in harmony as catalysts in promoting peace and reconciliation in South Africa. The resolutions of the Security Council, as well as the principal resolutions of the General Assembly on the implementation of the 1989 Declaration against Apartheid were adopted unanimously, thus carrying great weight.203

The secretary-general appointed Cyrus Vance, former United States secretary of state, as his special representative to South Africa. Vance visited South Africa from 21 to 31 July, accompanied by Virendra Dayal, a former under-secretary-general of the UN. The two held discussions with the government, representatives of all major parties, key politicians, church groups, business and trade union organisations, and leaders of structures set up by the National Peace Accord. Vance arranged a meeting between the justice minister and the ANC on the problem of political prisoners. As there was concern that the general strike planned by the ANC and its allies for 3 and 4 August might lead to violence, he discussed with de Klerk the suggestion of Mandela for UN observers to be sent to South Africa to witness the demonstrations, and obtained his consent. The secretary-general then sent a team of 10 observers whose presence during the mass action had a salutary effect.

On the recommendation of the secretary-general, in the light of the report from Vance, the Security Council, by its Resolution 772 (1992) adopted unanimously on 17 August 1992, authorised the secretary-general to deploy, as a matter of urgency, UN observers in South Africa to work in coordination with the structures set up under the National Peace Accord. It invited him to assist in the strengthening of those structures in consultation with the relevant parties. It also called upon international organisations such as the OAU, the Commonwealth and the European Community to consider deploying their own observers in South Africa. Angela King, a senior official of the UN from Jamaica, was appointed to head up the UN Observer Mission in South Africa (UNOMSA); she took up her post on 23 September. By the end of October 1992, 50 UNOMSA observers were deployed in all 11 regions of South Africa designated in the National Peace Accord.204

UNOMSA

By 22 December, there were 17 observers from the Commonwealth, 14 from the EC and 11 from the OAU in South Africa. UNOMSA’s deployment was weighted towards the Witwatersrand/Vaal and Natal/KwaZulu regions, where 70 per cent of the political violence had occurred. As King wrote in 1993:

203 The UN and Apartheid 1948-1994, 106.
204 The secretary-general stated in his report to the Security Council on 22 December 1992 that there were then 17 observers from the Commonwealth, 14 from European Union, and 11 from the OAU.
The aim (of UNOMSA) is to help open channels of communication between communities, reduce political intolerance and create a spirit of reconciliation among South Africans of all races and ethnic backgrounds. Observers from 36 different countries participate in demonstrations, marches, rallies and other forms of mass action and, over the last year, have covered more than 8 500 events and meetings throughout the country. They also maintain informal contacts at all levels with established governmental structures, political leaders and parties, as well as civic organisations and other groups…205

Some observers had criticised the UN decision on the grounds that UNOMSA was too small to have any effect in a very tense situation in South Africa. But it succeeded because of the urge of the South African people to progress toward a democratic society. It was generally agreed in South Africa that the UNOMSA, the OAU, the Commonwealth and the European Community (EC) made a positive contribution in curbing violence and promoting the transitional process. The UNOMSA in particular helped the structures of the National Peace Accord to end violence in the country. Its observers tried to ensure that demonstrations and other forms of mass action were adequately planned and that the Goldstone Commission guidelines for marches and political gatherings were respected. Working in close consultation with observers from the Commonwealth, the European Union and the OAU, UNOMSA observers had attended more than 9 000 meetings and events by the end of 1993. The international observers were well received by the government and the major political parties, and helped ease tensions. The number of observers was increased in 1993 to 60 in February and 100 in September, as the number of local peace committees served by UNOMSA had risen from 23 to 120 in less than a year.

Two special envoys of the secretary-general visited South Africa after the Vance mission: Virendra Dayal from 16 to 27 September 1992; Tom Vraalsen, assistant secretary-general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway and former representative of Norway to the UN, from 22 November to 9 December 1992. A delegation of the Special Committee, led by its chairman, Ibrahim Gambari (Nigeria), visited South Africa for ten days in March 1993. Their consultations and the urgings by the secretary-general and the General Assembly helped facilitate the resumption of negotiations.

Representatives from 26 parties and organisations held a multi-party planning conference at Kempton Park on 5 and 6 March and agreed to start constitutional negotiations as a Multi-party Negotiating Council. Negotiations began on 1 April. On 2 July, the Negotiating Council adopted by consensus 27 constitutional principles which, along with a bill of rights, would be included in the constitution. It decided, by sufficient consensus, that elections would be held on 27 April 1994.206 On the recommendation of the Negotiating Council, the South African parliament passed a

206 Representatives of Bophuthatswana, Ciskei, KwaZulu, the IFP and the Conservative Party opposed the date and withdrew from the talks.
bill on 23 September providing for the creation of a Transitional Executive Council (TEC) to oversee government operations and facilitate the transition to a democratic system of government by holding free and fair elections.

The next day, at a meeting of the Special Committee in New York, Mandela said: ‘The countdown to democracy in South Africa has begun. The date for the demise of the White minority regime has been determined, agreed and set’. He appealed to the international community to lift economic sanctions against South Africa in response to these historic advances.

On 8 October, by Resolution 48/1, the General Assembly called upon states to terminate restrictions on economic relations with South Africa immediately, and end the oil embargo once the TEC became operational. The Multi-party Negotiating Council approved the interim constitution and the electoral bill on 18 November and decided to establish the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), the Independent Media Commission (IMC) and the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) to ensure free and fair elections. The TEC decided, at its first meeting on 7 December to request the UN to provide a sufficient number of international observers to monitor the electoral process and to coordinate, in close cooperation with the IEC, the deployment of international observers provided by the OAU, the European Union, the Commonwealth, governments and nongovernmental organisations.

Two days later, the secretary-general dispatched a ‘needs assessment team’ to South Africa to assess the needs with regard to the role envisaged for the UN in the electoral process. After consultation with the Security Council, he appointed Lakhdar Brahimi, former minister for foreign affairs of Algeria, as his special representative for South Africa to assist him in the implementation of Security Council decisions and to coordinate the activities of other international observers. Brahimi visited South Africa from 16 to 23 December 1993 and held extensive consultations. Considering the findings of the assessment team and Brahimi, the secretary-general, on 10 January 1994, submitted a report to the Security Council with recommendations on UN assistance during the electoral process. He proposed that the mandate of UNOMSA be expanded to include monitoring the electoral process at every stage and assessing the ultimate freedom and fairness of the elections.

The secretary-general suggested the creation of a coordinating committee comprising the chiefs of the four intergovernmental observer missions, and indicated that UNOMSA would try to establish a cooperative relationship with foreign NGOs, which were expected to send a large number of observers. He said he would create a special Trust Fund, made up of voluntary contributions, to finance the participation of observers from African and developing countries so that there would be a balance in the geographical distribution of foreign observers.

On 14 January 1994, the Security Council adopted Resolution 894 (1994) welcoming the secretary-general’s report of 10 January 1994 and endorsing his proposals. The
General Assembly, in Resolution 48/233 on 21 January 1994, encouraged member states to respond positively to his call for election observers. It subsequently approved an expenditure of $38.9 million for UNOMSA operations, to be financed from the regular budget of the UN. Lakhdar Brahimi directed UNOMSA during the election process. Angela King, UNOMSA’s chief of mission, was designated deputy special representative.

The deployment of the observers proceeded rapidly, reaching a total of 1985 UN observers, including staff members of the UN and specialised agencies, and recruits from about 120 member states, at the time of the elections. This was the largest electoral mission which had been organised by the UN. Other intergovernmental organisations provided 596 international electoral observers – the OAU, 102, the Commonwealth, 118, and the European Union, 322. Individual governments provided 600 observers and 97 NGOs provided well over 2,000 observers. They included nearly 400 parliamentarians sent by the Association of West European Parliamentarians for Action against Apartheid.209

International and South African NGOs assisted the IEC in a massive voter education programme as over 70 per cent of the nearly 23 million eligible voters had never voted before and many were functionally illiterate.

On 26 April, the special voting day set aside for the elderly and the infirm, the UN observers visited 2,960 polling places. On the next two days, the regular voting days, they visited 7,430 of 8,478 voting stations. The UN Electoral Assistance Unit provided observers at 120 overseas polling stations in 57 countries.210 A polling station was set up at the UN Headquarters in New York, staffed by South Africans and UN personnel. UNOMSA observers also witnessed some of the vote counting. This was perhaps the most closely observed election in history. About 6,000 international observers monitored the elections in addition to 9,000 South African monitors trained by the IEC.

UNOMSA was financed from the budget of the UN. On 23 December 1992, the General Assembly approved $13,121,300 for the period from mid-September 1992 to 31 December 1993. In December 1993 and February 1994, it authorised the secretary-general to enter into commitments of about $39 million for the period from 1 January 1994. On 23 December 1994, it approved another appropriation of $19,266,00. The total expenditure for UNOMSA was thus over $70 million.

The day after the voting ended, Brahimi and the heads of other international observer missions said in a joint statement that the people of South Africa had clearly demonstrated their commitment to the end of apartheid and the transformation to non-racial democracy by turning out in enormous numbers to vote – most for the first time in their lives. They expressed satisfaction that the people of South Africa had been able to participate freely in the voting. ‘A people who have, in the past,
been systematically separated came together in an historic national expression of their determination to create a peaceful, non-racial and democratic South Africa’. In a final statement on 5 May, they said:

The international community has lent its support to the struggle for democracy in South Africa. But South Africans themselves have managed the entire transitional process – from the start of negotiations through the organisation and conduct of the elections. In this, South Africa is unique. Despite the problems encountered, the strenuous efforts of the IEC, combined with the patience and determination of the South African people, have borne fruit. While taking into account the difficulties noted in this and our earlier statement, the international observer missions share the collective view that the outcome of the elections reflects the will of the people of South Africa.211

On 9 May, South Africa’s newly elected National Assembly unanimously proclaimed Nelson Mandela as president of South Africa. A Government of National Unity was established the next day and Mandela was inaugurated as president.

On 25 May, the Security Council, responding to a request from President Mandela on 18 May,212 terminated the arms embargo, the last remaining sanction against South Africa. A fact-finding mission of the Special Committee against Apartheid, led by its chairman, visited South Africa from 6 to 10 June. After considering the mission’s findings, the Special Committee reported to the General Assembly and the Security Council that apartheid had been brought to an end and that the mandate of the Special Committee had been successfully fulfilled. On 23 June, the General Assembly accepted the credentials of the South African delegation led by the new foreign minister, Alfred Nzo.

In its last resolution on apartheid – Resolution 48/258 A, adopted on the same day without a vote – the General Assembly congratulated ‘all South Africans and their political leaders on their success in bringing apartheid to an end and in laying, through broad-based negotiations, the foundations for a new, non-racial and democratic South Africa with equal and guaranteed rights for each and all’. It welcomed South Africa back to the community of nations and called upon specialised agencies and related organisations of the UN system to take all necessary actions to re-establish full membership of South Africa.213 It appealed to member states and the international community to provide generous assistance to the government and people of South Africa in the implementation of the reconstruction and development programmes of their country. South Africa re-entered the UN and the international community

213 South Africa was readmitted to the FAO in December 1993, to the WHO on 2 May 1994 and to the ILO on 7 June 1994. It resumed participation in the IAEA after it signed the Safeguards Agreement in September 1991. It was admitted to the OAU on 23 May and to the Movement of Non-aligned Countries on 31 May. It resumed its membership of the Commonwealth on 1 June.
as a respected member with an enormous goodwill which had been generated in the many years of international solidarity with its people.

Conclusion

International action in solidarity with the liberation struggle of the South African people was a collaborative effort of the UN and other intergovernmental organisations, governments and numerous NGOs. The UN helped build this broad coalition against apartheid. It provided a forum for discussion and coordination of actions and was able to make a significant contribution in spreading the solidarity movement to every region of the world. Apartheid in South Africa was an issue on which the UN promoted the widest range of actions and worked in closest cooperation with numerous NGOs. Some campaigns, like the sports boycott, were initiated by NGOs, and the UN facilitated governmental support. In other actions like the arms embargo, the NGOs made a valuable contribution supplementing the efforts of the UN.

---

214 This was reflected, for instance, in the unanimous decision of the General Assembly – in resolution 50/83 of 15 December 1995 – to waive South Africa’s arrears in contributions to the UN budget from 1974 to 1994. In effect the other member states agreed to share the burden of almost $100 million – in addition to the hundreds of millions of dollars spent by the organisation in its efforts towards the elimination of apartheid.