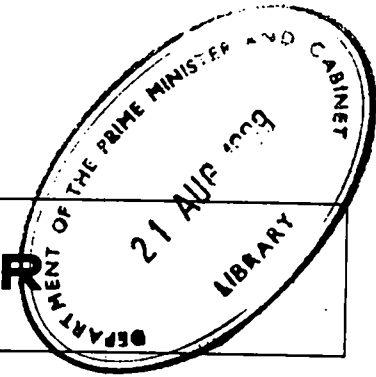




PRIME MINISTER



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**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER
FOURTH MEETING OF THE COMMONWEALTH FOREIGN MINISTERS'
COMMITTEE ON SOUTHERN AFRICA
CANBERRA - 7 AUGUST 1989**

The task ahead of this fourth meeting of the Commonwealth Foreign Ministers' Committee on Southern Africa is an important one for all members of the Commonwealth.

More than that, you are engaged in an endeavour of truly global significance.

The scourge of apartheid is an affront to all humanity.

And eliminating that scourge - bringing to an end South Africa's abhorrent practice of institutionalised racism - is an obligation that demands the most committed involvement of every Government and individual of good will.

The Commonwealth has a proud record of determined and effective struggle against the racist regimes of Southern Africa:

- in the period leading up to the withdrawal of South Africa from the Commonwealth in 1961;
- through the peaceful creation of majority rule in Zimbabwe;
- through the development of the Gleneagles Agreement banning sporting contacts with South Africa;
- through the achievement of the Eminent Persons Group in finding a valid and workable basis for a negotiated settlement in South Africa;
- through our role in developing international sanctions against South Africa and, with the regrettable exception of Britain, through our own co-ordinated imposition of sanctions, including financial sanctions;
- through our active support for the emergence of an independent Namibia;
- and through the continuing important work of this Committee.

Australia is proud of the role it has played in these efforts and, indeed, in the broader international struggle against apartheid.

We remain totally committed to fulfilling our responsibilities in these tasks.

For all these reasons, then, it is a pleasure to welcome to Canberra our distinguished overseas visitors, and to wish this meeting success in the critical work ahead.

We meet against a backdrop of confused signals and expectations about the current situation in South Africa.

We hear talk of the release of Nelson Mandela and suggestions of negotiations with representative black organisations such as the African National Congress.

Of course these would be enormously welcome developments if ever they occurred.

They would be substantial steps down the path towards the elimination of apartheid.

But let us not forget the basic facts.

The massive convulsions of the mid-1980s - in which the black communities of South Africa were once again confronted by the violence with which apartheid represses its own citizens - are no longer, due to censorship, the daily diet of Western media reporting.

But in the face of more than three years of consecutive states of emergency imposed by the South African authorities, the repression continues still.

The grotesque system of apartheid continues - the refusal of basic political rights to the black South Africans who make up 75 per cent of the population, the banning of black organisations, the jailing and exile of black leaders and of others who seek to speak out against the repression, the racially segregated Parliaments, the infamous Group Areas Act with its bizarre injustices of the homelands system.

These are the basic and terrible facts before us.

We can take comfort only from the fact that the internal contradictions of this system will ultimately bring about its demise.

The responsibility of the international community - not least of the Commonwealth - is to try to bring the South African authorities to understand this, so that the inevitable end of apartheid will not be bloody civil war but a peaceful transition to majority rule.

That is the purpose of sanctions : to bring South Africa to its senses, not to its knees.

Leading South African financial spokesmen - including the Governor of the South African Reserve Bank and the Finance Minister - acknowledge that sanctions are working.

South Africa is now facing a net outflow of capital at a time when it desperately needs foreign funding to help support the gross inefficiencies of apartheid.

It cannot service the principal on its debt.

Its agricultural products are subject to boycott in many countries.

It has been forced to halt production of the once prestigious Krugerrand.

It cannot modernise much of its weaponry or its ageing warships and fighters.

Its representative sports players are largely confined to their own country.

All of these factors are telling reminders to white South Africans that their Government and their country will remain the pariahs of the international community until they abandon apartheid completely and forever.

That is the message that must be understood by the President-presumptive F.W. de Klerk and his colleagues.

The way forward has been outlined with clarity and fairness by the Eminent Persons Group.

It is a testament to the work of the Group, led by Malcolm Fraser and General Obasanjo, that they should have made such an accurate reading of the circumstances in South Africa in such a short time.

We will not, and we cannot, settle for apartheid with a so-called human face.

Such a thing is a contradiction in terms.

We insist on real change.

There can be no real change if life in South Africa continues to be premised on the basis that the colour of one's skin determines one's place of residence, one's level of education, one's rights under the law, one's lifestyle, the way one participates in the political process, indeed, one's very place in society.

Some people believe that change can take place in some parts of South African society while leaving the fundamental structures of apartheid intact.

The most obvious case is sport.

Some choose to see the end of segregation in sports arenas and the beginning of efforts to involve young blacks in sports such as rugby and cricket as evidence that South Africa has mended its ways and should be readmitted to international sporting contests.

Nothing could be further from the truth, and now that a rebel British cricket tour has been agreed on, and that a rebel rugby tour is being organised with the possible involvement of Australians, it is even more essential that we do not mistake the appearance for the reality.

The reality is, of course, that the very structure of South African society, and the actions and expenditures of the white minority government, confine non-whites to second-class participation in all aspects of South African life, including sports.

Under apartheid's residential segregation, those granted access to facilities enjoyed by whites have to travel considerable distances and at great cost and inconvenience.

Under apartheid's education system, young whites have access to superior sports facilities while the black school system, starved of funds, cannot offer anything comparable.

The rebel British cricketers, and those in Britain, Australia and elsewhere who condone such tours may believe - some claim they do believe - that these events will actually help break down the barriers of apartheid. Unfortunately, the opposite is the case.

The deception involved in organising such tours, the gloating from South Africa which follows their announcement, the cosmetic and peripheral multiracial events with which they are embroidered all underline the fact that they give comfort and support to the apartheid regime.

Let it be clearly understood that reform, on and off the sporting field, has a long way to run before desegregated sport in South Africa becomes a reality.

Until then, there can be no sporting contacts.

Equally, let it be understood that broader international contacts with South Africa cannot be normalised until apartheid itself is a thing of the past.

In particular, let it be understood - and let this meeting make perfectly clear - that, to achieve this goal of the total abolition of apartheid, sanctions must be maintained against South Africa.

I will have the pleasure tomorrow of returning to the issue of sanctions when I launch the book Apartheid and International Finance by Keith Ovenden and Tony Cole.

The work your Committee is undertaking, and will continue at this Canberra meeting - the work of assessing the impact of sanctions and investigating ways of widening, tightening and intensifying current economic and other sanctions - is fundamental to achieving our goal of a free and just South Africa.

I emphasise again, as I always have, that I and my Government see no virtue in sanctions for the sake of sanctions.

They have no virtue other than as an instrument to bring the South African regime to the bargaining table.

For it is only at the bargaining table that justice can be done - justice that involves not only full democratic rights for all South Africans irrespective of the colour of their skin, but economic justice that will see equality of opportunity for all within a system where the accumulated capital, entrepreneurship and skills of whites will be fully welcomed and employed.

So you have a challenging and exhaustive agenda before you.

You will be continuing your dialogue with representatives of South African opinion and hearing first-hand testimony from a number of witnesses about current trends and developments.

You will discuss South Africa's destabilisation of its neighbours and the costs they have incurred as a result.

African members of this Committee need no reminding from me about the nature of the direct threat apartheid projects beyond its own borders. For you, it is a daily concern that goes to the heart of the security and prosperity of your own societies.

Australia, for one, is committed to continue our efforts to assist those states and to contribute to their economic and social development.

We have recently announced a three-year \$110 million extension to our existing development assistance program in Southern Africa, on top of which we will continue where appropriate an emergency relief assistance involvement.

You will also be discussing the heartening, though still uncertain, movement forward in relation to Namibia and deliberations on how the international community can best assist a smooth and peaceful transition to independence.

Resolution 435 is now being implemented, UNTAG has been deployed and the refugees are returning home.

Australia is pleased to be assisting this process through our contingent of 300 engineers in UNTAG.

The Commonwealth has of course already signalled that we would welcome an independent Namibia into our ranks.

You will in short be preparing the ground for a constructive and thorough consideration of South Africa by the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Kuala Lumpur in October.

I hope that CHOGM itself, at which I look forward to participating personally, will be able to assist the progress of dialogue in South Africa leading to genuine negotiations with authentic representatives of South Africa's people.

~~Against that background, it gives me much pleasure to declare open this fourth meeting of Commonwealth Foreign Ministers on Southern Africa.~~

I wish you success in your deliberations and express the hope that this will be one more step by the international community towards bringing about a genuinely free and multi-racial South Africa.
