

UNITED NATIONS



1968



International Year for
HUMAN RIGHTS

Distr.
GENERAL

A/CONF.32/36
12 May 1968

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Dual distribution

STATEMENT BY THE RAPPOREUR OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE
TO THE TWENTY-FOURTH PLENARY MEETING OF THE
CONFERENCE, 11 May 1968

Note by the Secretary-General

At the request of the Plenary Assembly of the Conference, the Secretariat has the honour to issue herewith the text of the introductory statement made by the Rapporteur of the First Committee, Mr. Saadollah Ghaoucy (Afghanistan) when he presented his report on the work of the Committee (A/CONF.32/33) to the Assembly.

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Mr. President,

I have the honour to put before you the report of the First Committee (A/CONF.32/33). Three topics were assigned to the Committee for examination: (1) the question of racial discrimination in general and apartheid in particular; (2) the question of colonialism; and (3) the question of slavery. The report is divided up into seven parts. The first four parts deal with questions of organization; the fifth part contains the various draft resolutions submitted to the Committee together with the relevant amendments. The sixth part is concerned with the voting on the drafts, and the last part contains the resolutions as adopted by the Committee.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 2292 (XXII), I have not included a special chapter on the matters covered in the course of the discussions. In any case, the views of the distinguished representatives in the Committee are given in the summary records of the meetings.

Ten draft resolutions were put before the Committee. Seven were adopted, two were rejected, and the tenth was withdrawn by the sponsors.

The Committee carried out its functions earnestly, in full awareness of the importance and gravity of the problems with which it was called upon to deal. In its resolutions, it advocated constructive measures aimed at the eradication of the evils of apartheid and racial discrimination.

The distinguished representatives in the Committee were unanimous in the view that the complete elimination of racial discrimination in all its forms and manifestations was the most urgent task facing the international community. However, while noting that the existence of racism, in varying degrees, in many parts of the world formed a decided stumbling-block to the creation of a more just world, the Committee placed the main emphasis on the odious and intolerable situation which at present obtains in southern Africa.

Throughout the discussions, apartheid and the systematic policy of racial discrimination and segregation applied in Southern Rhodesia and in the Portuguese-administered African territories were denounced and censured in the strongest terms.

For the overwhelming majority of the delegations, that policy represents a crime against humanity and a threat to peace and international security. Some delegations ranked it with nazism. Others saw in apartheid a form of slavery based on colour and found it to be a direct consequence of the colonialist system, while others again considered that the policy of apartheid led inevitably to genocide. All recognized that apartheid and the systematic policy of racial discrimination pursued in Southern Rhodesia and the so-called Portuguese colonies was inconsistent with the accepted ideas of fundamental human rights as laid down in particular in the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenants recently adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, and that the tragic situation in southern Africa constitutes the vilest and most flagrant violation of human rights ever recorded in history.

The great majority of delegations considered, however, that the international community should abandon the line of recrimination, since the facts had been long since brought out into the open and clearly established. The state of degradation to which the African populations in this region were reduced was no longer open to doubt. The time had therefore come resolutely to take specific and effective measures to bring about with the minimum delay the total eradication of the scourge prevailing in southern Africa. The general opinion was that it was no longer enough to issue mere verbal condemnations.

Repeated references were made to the efforts exerted by the United Nations since 1946 and the persistently defiant attitude of the South African Government. It was stressed that apartheid, far from being on the wane is spreading beyond the frontiers of South Africa and that the racist regimes of Southern Rhodesia and Portugal are strengthening their grip.

A number of delegations, speaking of the bitterness caused in their countries by the ineffectiveness of the measures taken by the United Nations, queried the reasons for the apparent impasse in which the international community finds itself. Referring particularly to the resolutions which advocate sanctions against South Africa and Southern Rhodesia, they emphasized that the measures taken by the United Nations are valid and would have been effective if they had been faithfully applied.

Many delegations expressed the view that the basic cause of the setback of the United Nations is to be sought in the attitude of South Africa's main trading partners. According to them, by maintaining diplomatic, commercial, economic and military relations with South Africa those Powers are in fact giving support and encouragement to the minority racist regimes of southern Africa. Several delegations said they were convinced that without such assistance those regimes would have collapsed long since, and they therefore called upon South Africa's main trading partners to translate their condemnation of apartheid and racial discrimination into action. They pointed out that the equivocal attitude of those Powers has created an atmosphere of suspicion, which could have serious consequences, between the free States of Africa and those which in their opinion benefit and profit from apartheid and racial discrimination.

The majority of the delegations, however, took the view that despite all difficulties the international community should persevere in its efforts with a view to avoiding widespread recourse to violence by the oppressed inhabitants. They considered that the United Nations should adopt positive and effective measures with a view to putting an end to the policy of apartheid and racial discrimination in southern Africa. A number of suggestions were made in that connexion, including the suggestion that the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights (E/CN.4/949/Add.1-5) should be adopted en bloc.

Although some delegations questioned the effectiveness of coercive measures, the majority expressed the conviction that total economic sanctions had to be imposed and suggested that the Conference should recommend the Security Council to declare that the situation in southern Africa constitutes a threat to peace and international security and to invoke the provisions of Article 41 of the Charter.

The majority of the delegations also expressed the view that the Conference should denounce and vigorously condemn not only the racist minority regimes of southern Africa but also all States which, directly or indirectly, give them support and assistance of any kind. With regard to Southern Rhodesia, the responsibilities of the United Kingdom was stressed repeatedly, and the majority of delegations held the view that the Conference should call upon the United Kingdom to use every

possible means, including force, to put down the rebellion. A number of delegations also suggested that the international community should recognize the legitimacy of the armed struggle against the racist minority regimes of southern Africa and should require those regimes to grant prisoner-of-war status to freedom fighters.

Several delegations also considered that the Conference should recommend intensified efforts by the United Nations and the specialized agencies in respect of education and the dissemination of information on the problem of apartheid and racial discrimination.

The question of the recrudescence of nazism was also discussed in the Committee. Although some questioned the importance of that problem, a number of delegations, linking nazism and apartheid, expressed the view that the Conference should follow the example of the United Nations General Assembly and make a pronouncement on the question.

On the subject of colonialism, many delegations expressed regret that despite resolution 1514 (XV), adopted by the General Assembly eight years ago, recommending the speedy granting of independence to countries and peoples under colonial domination, colonialism continues to flourish in various parts of the world. They pointed out that colonialism and the denial of the right of self-determination is a negation of the dignity of man and therefore violates the principles proclaimed in the Charter and the Universal Declaration. Accordingly, they considered that the Conference should demand that the States concerned should observe and give immediate effect to the provisions contained in the above-mentioned General Assembly resolution.

The foregoing are the various points of view embodied in the seven resolutions adopted by the Committee. I should like to take this opportunity to thank the distinguished representatives in the First Committee who expressed their confidence in me by electing me Rapporteur. I should also like to thank his Excellency, Mr. Taïeb Slim, Chairman of the Committee, Mr. İlhan Lüem, Secretary of the Committee, and many other fellow-officers for their co-operation.