

Statement by Mr. Thabo Mbeki, First Deputy Vice-President of South Africa, at the 3379th meeting of the United Nations Security Council

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This eminent body is meeting today to close a particular chapter in the history of the relations between our country, South Africa, and the nations of the world, as represented by the United Nations.

We trust that, at the conclusion of its meeting today, the Security Council will terminate the mandatory sanctions imposed against South Africa under the terms of resolutions 418 (1977), 558 (1984) and 591 (1986).

We are most grateful to the Council for the opportunity it has kindly granted to our delegation to participate in its proceedings, and would like to take this opportunity to convey to you, Mr. President, and to the other members of the Council, the greetings of our President, Nelson Mandela, and the rest of the Government of democratic South Africa.

We are indeed moved by the fact that the Council is meeting on Africa Day to consider the specific matter on its agenda of lifting the arms embargo against South Africa.

When this embargo was imposed pursuant to the provisions of Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, it was because the prevailing system of government in our country and the actions carried out by that Government constituted, demonstrably, a threat to international peace and security.

We therefore view the decisions that the Council will take today as an acceptance by the world body that we have become a democratic country, and a country that can be counted on to subscribe and adhere to the pursuit of the important goals of international peace and security. Like millions of other people across the globe, we count on this body to continue to act as the principal protagonist in the global struggle for peace, security and stability.

We firmly commit our country, as a Member of the United Nations and as a responsible citizen of the world, to live up to its obligations in this regard and, consequently, to contribute what it can to the making of the peaceful world which is the right of the peoples. Our Government and people are determined to ensure that within our borders we banish from our national life all those things that make for war and violent conflict.

The successful transition to a democratic order constitutes the firm foundation for peace which our people have yearned for, for generations. It constitutes also the basis from which we will move in the search for a negotiated, just and stable regional security system for all the peoples of southern Africa, which would guarantee the sovereignty of all the countries of our region and ensure that never again should any country fall victim to aggression and destabilization.

Our Government has also begun discussions to see what further contribution we can make to the search for peace in Angola and Mozambique, in support of the efforts of the United Nations and the Governments and peoples of those two countries. We are also committed to participating to the full extent of our abilities in the efforts spearheaded by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to address the related issues of peace, security, stability, cooperation and development on our continent.

We are accordingly ready to begin discussions with the OAU, the United Nations and all concerned with regard to what can and should be done concerning the tragic situation in Rwanda.

And as we have said, we are otherwise determined to discharge our responsibilities as a Member of the Organization in the collective effort to secure peace for ourselves and for the peoples of the world. We must, in this context, mention the fact that serious steps have already been taken to address the matter of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the regulation of the sale of conventional weapons. Among other things, this has been marked by accession to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention, as well as the passage of domestic legislation relating to these matters.

Our Government is determined to ensure that we do indeed honour all the obligations which derive from these international agreements, including such agreements as may regulate the movement of equipment and technology which can be used in the production of missiles capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction. South Africa is also in the process of converting its military technology to civilian application. We would greatly appreciate the assistance of the international community with regard to this matter. Our Government is also keen that a treaty for an African nuclear-weapons-free zone be concluded as soon as possible.

We would also like to take this opportunity to extend our sincere thanks to the Security Council, to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali and the United Nations as a whole for the outstanding contribution this Organization has made in bringing South Africa to the happy situation in which it is today. This, of course, has included the dispatch of observers to help us deal with the matter of political violence and the observers, who played such an important role in ensuring a successful first democratic and non-racial election.

The victory that has been won in South Africa belongs as much to the people of our country as to this Organization and the peoples of the world. As we proceed to confront the enormous challenge of consolidating this victory, we shall continue to count on your support. Precisely because we are conscious of what the world has done for us, we too are determined to contribute what we can to the making of a better world for all.

We are especially pleased that today we meet under your (Mr. Kingibe of Nigeria) presidency, Sir, end apartheid's crime against humanity and to give birth to a society that is determined to live up to the ideals contained in the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Please count on us to behave as a exemplary Member of this Organization, in which the hopes of millions reside.

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