

Declaration of the International Conference on Women and Children under Apartheid, Arusha, Tanzania, 7 to 10 May 1985¹

The International Conference on Women and Children under Apartheid, organized by the United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid, in cooperation with the Organization of African Unity and the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, met at Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, from 7 to 10 May 1985.

The holding of the Conference coincided with the sharp escalation of the multifaceted struggle, including armed struggle, of the people of southern Africa for their liberation, characterized by the mass upsurge in the urban and rural areas of South Africa; the heroic armed struggle of the South West Africa People's Organization against the illegal occupation of Namibia; the unionization and courageous struggle of the black workers with the support of the oppressed masses; the continuing and growing movement of the women and youth, combined with the political-military resistance of all sections of the oppressed peoples of South Africa and Namibia.

The Conference also coincides with the fortieth anniversary of the victory over fascism. Noting that the ruling Nationalist Party identified itself with Hitler's nazism, the Conference expressed its firm belief that the apartheid regime, which pursues a policy similar to Hitler's nazism, is doomed to failure just as the Hitler regime was destroyed by mankind.

The participants included United Nations bodies, Governments, the southern African liberation movements recognized by the Organization of African Unity (the African National Congress of South Africa, the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania and the South West Africa People's Organization), representatives of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and individuals.

The Conference considered the plight of women and children in South Africa and Namibia and their struggle for national liberation; measures to promote all necessary international assistance to them; and action to demonstrate solidarity with them in their legitimate struggle.

The Conference reiterated that apartheid is a crime against humanity and an intolerable affront to the conscience of mankind.

The Conference commended the peoples of South Africa and Namibia on the heroic resistance they have consistently demonstrated in the face of great odds.

The Conference condemned the continuing massacres, killings and other atrocities against the oppressed people of South Africa perpetrated by the racist regime at Sharpeville, Soweto,

¹ From: United Nations Department of Public Information, *Objective: Justice*, December 1985. UN document A/AC.115/L.623.

Sebokeng, Langa and other townships in South Africa, including the killings in recent weeks of residents of Crossroads who were demonstrating against plans for their forced removal. It further condemned the forced removals which have driven millions of people - the majority of them women and children - off their ancestral lands and dispossessed them, as well as deprived them of their South African nationality.

The Conference rejected the manoeuvres of the racist regime which was conducting a sustained and well-orchestrated campaign to create the illusion that it was introducing change and reform in South Africa. The so-called "new constitution" rejected as null and void by the General Assembly and the Security Council, is aimed at dividing the oppressed people of South Africa and entrenching apartheid. The massive opposition by the so-called Coloured and people of Asian origin to the creation of separate parliaments under this "new constitution" is a clear reaffirmation of the traditional unity of the oppressed people of South Africa and a decisive rejection of the "new constitution".

The Conference denounced the racist regime's attempts to divide the opposition and deflect external pressures by offering to release Nelson Mandela and other imprisoned African leaders, on the condition that they renounced violence as a means of opposing apartheid. In rejecting this deceitful offer, Nelson Mandela, who has spent 21 years in jail, pointed out that it was the regime itself which was responsible for the violence in the country. The Conference unanimously supported the stand of the imprisoned African leaders and hailed their courage.

The Conference calls for all captured freedom fighters to be accorded prisoner-of-war status in accordance with the relevant Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Protocols thereto.

The Conference also denounced the intention of the racist regime to set up a so-called black forum of hand-picked persons for the purpose of perpetuating apartheid.

The Conference expressed deep concern at the militarization of South Africa, including its possession of nuclear capability which poses a serious threat to peace in the region and to international peace and security. The Conference reaffirms the legitimacy of the struggle of the oppressed people of southern Africa and their liberation movements by all means, including armed struggle, for the elimination of apartheid declared as a crime against humanity. It also calls on the Security Council to consider further appropriate action against South Africa, including adoption of comprehensive and mandatory sanctions, in particular the oil embargo, in accordance with Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations.

The Conference, recalling Security Council resolution 560(1985), adopted on 12 March 1985, demanded the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of so-called "high treason" charges against 16 members of the United Democratic Front and other opponents of apartheid in their struggle for self-determination and for the establishment of a united, non-racial and democratic South Africa.

The Conference strongly condemned South Africa's continued occupation of southern Angola while insisting on the unacceptable pre-conditions of its linkage policy, and denounced the latest scheme of the racist regime to form in Namibia a so-called "transitional government". The implementation of such schemes constitutes a flagrant violation of Security Council resolution 435(1978) which, *inter alia*, reiterated the view that any unilateral measure taken by the illegal occupying regime in Namibia, in contravention of relevant Security Council resolutions, is null and void, and declared that no recognition will be accorded either by the United Nations or any Member State to any representative or organ established by that process.

The Conference expressed its firm commitment to support the heroic struggle of the Namibian people for freedom and national independence, under the leadership of the South West Africa People's Organization, their sole and authentic representative.

The Conference commended the Organization of African Unity, in particular the front-line States, the Non-Aligned Movement, the League of Arab States and the socialist countries for the assistance they have given and continue to give to the national liberation movements of southern Africa in order to prosecute their legitimate struggle. The Conference also commended national non-governmental organizations, national solidarity organizations, national women's organizations as well as many anti-apartheid movements for assisting national liberation movements and mobilizing public opinion in their respective countries, as well as the humanitarian assistance rendered to the victims of apartheid by the Scandinavian countries and other international organizations. The Conference also welcomed the growth of divestment campaigns in Western Europe and North America against those companies and institutions collaborating with South Africa.

The Conference condemned the policies of "constructive engagement" and active collaboration with the apartheid regime pursued by the United States. The Conference also condemned some Western States and, in particular, Israel, for their active collaboration with the racist regime, as it encouraged the regime to intensify repression against the people's legitimate struggles in South Africa and Namibia, commit aggression against neighbouring States and defy decisions and resolutions of the United Nations. It called on those States to abandon forthwith such policies and join in the concerted international campaign to eliminate apartheid.

The Conference expressed its grave concern about the situation of women and children under the heinous system of apartheid. It condemned the Pretoria regime for subjecting the women and children of South Africa and Namibia to oppression and humiliation, including forced removals and separation of families and for killing, imprisoning, restricting and torturing women and children for opposing apartheid.

The Conference condemned the cynical manipulation of "family planning" by the South African Government through its agent, the Family Planning Association of South Africa. The programme is nothing more than a population control programme directed against the black majority. The Conference called on all national Family Planning Associations and individuals to work for the expulsion of the South African Family Planning Association from the International

Planned Parenthood Federation.

The Conference was appalled by the fact that the majority of the refugee population in the neighbouring countries consists of women and children fleeing from the barbaric persecution of the apartheid system. It urged all countries committed to the noble cause of the struggle against apartheid to spare no effort in granting asylum, food, shelter, medical care, legal protection and guarantee of fundamental human rights, intensive counselling, education, training and employment to women and children from southern Africa in accordance with the report of the mission of the Special Committee against Apartheid to Angola, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia, undertaken from 3 to 16 April 1985.

The Conference stressed the vital importance that the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women, to be held from 15 to 26 July 1985 at Nairobi, should focus special emphasis on women in South Africa and Namibia in the light of the themes of the Decade: Equality, Development and Peace.

The Conference recognized the critical need effectively to assist women in South Africa and Namibia in the struggle for national liberation. It further calls on all Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to intensify their support and solidarity with the women and children of South Africa, Namibia and in front-line States, in particular to:

- (a) Give the widest possible dissemination of information about the situation of women and children in South Africa and their struggle for equality and justice;
- (b) Intensify and initiate national campaigns for the unconditional release of all political prisoners in South Africa;
- (c) Provide legal, political, humanitarian and other assistance to women and children who are victims of apartheid and their families in South Africa;
- (d) Hold regional and national meetings on the plight of women and children under apartheid;
- (e) Urge Governments to contribute, and/or increase their contributions, to the various funds established by the United Nations and by regional, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations that support the oppressed people of South Africa;
- (f) Provide financial assistance to women in the national liberation movements in South Africa to enable them to attend major international conferences and seminars and undertake speaking tours to further promote international solidarity with the oppressed women of South Africa;
- (g) Support the projects and activities of the southern African national liberation movements recognized by the Organization of African Unity, particularly those

involving women and children.

The Conference commended the Special Committee against Apartheid for giving special attention to women and children under apartheid and for promoting co-ordinated and intensified action in solidarity with the struggle of women in South Africa and Namibia. It also noted with appreciation the programmes and activities of various United Nations agencies in support of women in South Africa and Namibia and called for more co-ordination between them in this regard.

The Conference encouraged the United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid and the International Committee of Solidarity with the Struggle of Women of South Africa and Namibia to redouble their efforts to promote publicity and assistance in close co-operation with the national liberation movements and front-line States. It appealed to all Governments and organizations (particularly women's organizations and organizations concerned with development) to lend their full co-operation to the Special Committee and the International Committee.

The Conference hailed the women and children of South Africa and Namibia for their heroic struggle for liberation and pledged its full solidarity with them.

The Conference also paid tribute to the front-line and neighbouring States for their unflinching support to and sacrifices in assisting the victims of apartheid including women and children.