ANTI-APARTHEID COMMITTEE HEARS STATEMENTS BY UNITED STATES STATE LEGISLATORS
ON ACTION TAKEN AGAINST INVESTMENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Also Hears Reports on Three Missions Undertaken by Committee Members

The Special Committee against Apartheid this morning heard statements by 16 United States state legislators who have played an important role in the campaign against apartheid, in particular in legislative action against investments in South Africa.

Also this morning, the Committee heard reports on three missions undertaken recently by members of the Special Committee. James Gbego (Ghana) reported on his mission to the Conference for Local Authorities against Apartheid, held in Sheffield, United Kingdom, and to the Conference on Scotland and Apartheid, held in Glasgow, Scotland. Maria Lopez (Philippines), Chairman of the Task Force on Women and Children, reported on her participation in the Delegation of Women Leaders which visited Paris, the Hague, Brussels, Rome and Tunis.

In another action, the Committee decided to authorize the Chairman to send a letter of appreciation to the Committee of Youth Organizations of the Soviet Union for its statement, issued on 1 April, concerning death sentences imposed on freedom fighters of the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC).

The Committee also authorized the Chairman to send a letter of appreciation to the International Students' Organization of India for its letter, dated 31 March, strongly condemning the imposition of death sentences on freedom fighters.

In addition, the Acting Chairman, Vladimir Kravets (Ukraine), informed the Committee this morning that the film "Gandhi" was to be shown in South Africa to segregated audiences. The Chairman of the Committee had denounced that action and sent a message to the director of the film drawing his attention to the serious implications of the matter, he said.

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He further informed the Committee that the Chairman had condemned a boxing match to be held on 27 May in "Sun City" -- a "so-called" independent bantustan -- at which the American singer Frank Sinatra was scheduled to give a concert.

Making statements in support of actions taken by the United States legislators were Enuga Reddy, Assistant Secretary-General of the Centre against Apartheid; Dumisani Kumalo of the American Committee on Africa; and Ahmed G. Ebrahim, Permanent Observer from the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC) as well as the representatives of Nigeria, Algeria and Sudan.

United States state legislators making statements this morning were Senator Jack Backman (Massachusetts), Councilwoman Joan Specter (Philadelphia), Representative Virgil Smith (Michigan), Representative Perry Bullard (Michigan), Councilman John Ray (Washington, D.C.), Representative Norman Justice (Kansas), Representative Marcia Coggs (Wisconsin), Senator Ernie Chambers (Nebraska), Representative Randy Staten (Minnesota), Senator Thomas Mann (Iowa), Senator Joe Neal (Nevada), Representative Larry Evans (Texas), Senator William Bowen (Ohio), Representative Sylvania Woods (Maryland), Representative Tyrone Brooks (Georgia) and Representative Ed Leek (Oregon).
Items before Committee

The Special Committee against Apartheid met this morning to hear United States state legislators report on actions taken in their states regarding divestment from companies doing business with South Africa; to hear reports of missions of the Committee to the United Kingdom and Portugal; as well as on the mission of women leaders to European capitals and Tunis.

Hearing of United States Legislators

The Acting Chairman, VLADIMIR KRAVETS (Ukraine), then welcomed United States state legislators who had played an important role in the campaign against apartheid.

The first speaker, JACK BACKMAN, Senator of Massachusetts, reported that the state of Massachusetts had recently passed a divestment law which required the state to sell all of its investments in companies doing business with South Africa, and to reinvest those monies in firms doing business in Massachusetts. The slogan in Massachusetts was, "Make it in Massachusetts, not in South Africa".

The amount of the divestment amounted to $91 million of stocks and bonds in 27 major companies. Senator Backman said he strongly supported divestment and saw it as contributing to the realization of the dream of a non-racial South Africa.

JOAN SPECTER, City Councillor from Philadelphia, said that in 1981, she introduced two bills requiring all pension systems in Philadelphia to divest holdings in companies that had investments in South Africa and to prevent any future investments in companies with dealings with that country. Initially, she had limited the bills to those companies that were not adhering to the Sullivan principles, but eventually widened the scope to include all companies which did business in South Africa.

She said that divestment became law in June 1982. Today, approximately $58 million remained to be divested and would be divested as soon as market conditions were favourable.

All companies in Philadelphia which sold bonds had informed the companies of the reasons for that divestment, she said.

VIRGIL SMITH, State Representative from Michigan, said his state had passed an act for divestment in corporations doing business with South Africa. He said the people of Michigan had recognized that their state was a leading investor in the apartheid regime, and had endorsed the decision to withdraw all such dollars.

He said the fight for divestment was begun in 1979 and was continuing. On 18 April he would introduce a bill in the legislature requiring that Michigan pension funds be withdrawn from corporations doing business with South Africa.

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PENNY BULLARD, State Representative from Michigan, said he had sponsored legislation which, when it became law in 1984, would prohibit all educational trust funds in Michigan from being invested in companies with stock options in South Africa. Next week, he was co-sponsoring a bill to prevent pension fund investments in companies operating in South Africa.

The aim of his actions was to educate United States foreign policy-makers, change United States foreign policy and educate corporate decision-makers in America so that they would withdraw their corporate investments from South Africa.

JOHN RAY, City Councilman of Washington, D.C., said legislation on divestment provided states with the opportunity to take strong action against apartheid. A bill he had introduced in the City Council would require the withdrawal of all public pension funds from corporations doing business with South Africa. That bill, which would be enacted later this year, was similar to others adopted in other parts of the country.

It was different, however, in that the United States Congress would have to consider the bill and would have to go on record as to whether it supported or opposed divestiture legislation, he said.

The bill would have national and international ramifications, he said. He was confident that it would get through the Congress because he and the citizens of his city believed that that was the right thing to do.

HORMAN JUSTICE, State Representative from Kansas, said that in 1982 a bill for divestment passed the Kansas House of Representatives but failed in the Senate. An amendment to a successful bill did, however, stipulate that $60 million invested in South Africa by Kansas concerns had to be divested and reinvested in Kansas.

In 1983, a divestment bill again failed, but an amendment was passed so that $134 million of Kansas state pension fund money would now be divested from South African holdings.

HARCIA COGOS, State Representative of Wisconsin, said she had introduced divestment legislation on three occasions to the Wisconsin Legislature, and would continue her efforts to have such legislation passed.

While there were many problems which her constituents faced, she said she was committed to fighting discrimination, racism and apartheid wherever she found it.

ERIE CHAMBERS, State Senator from Nebraska, said that some South African leaders had invited a delegation from Nebraska to come and see how much progress had been made under the apartheid system. However, when Mr. Chambers asked for guarantees of freedom within that country, he no longer was included in the invitation.

While divestment was good, it was not enough without also giving encouragement to the black people in South Africa, he said.

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RANDY STATEN, State Representative from Minnesota, said that for a decade the state of Minnesota had gone through an educational process which would shortly bring the state to a point where some meaningful legislation on divestiture of investments in companies with holdings in South Africa would be passed.

THOMAS HARN, State Senator from Iowa, said the United States was committed to the concept of rights. Yet there were institutions in the country which ignored those rights by associating with South Africa.

He said that apartheid meant racism in its worst form — absolute political and economic domination of black people. Iowa condemned that policy. It condemned the forced movement of Africans, the unfair taxation against blacks, the South African education policy, the pass laws restricting black movement in urban areas, the policy of deliberate under-construction of housing facilities which forced blacks to live under the worst conditions, and the illegal occupation of Namibia.

He said he and other legislators had introduced three separate measures in the Iowa Legislature, requiring divestment from companies doing business with South Africa. Those bills had not been acted upon but would be eligible for consideration again at the 1984 legislative session.

He and his colleagues would continue their efforts to enact such legislation and he was sure that in the end their efforts would succeed.

JOE NEAL, State Senator from Nevada, said that people in his state were becoming aware of the connections between business in the United States and those in South Africa. At present there was a bill before the Nevada Senate which would disallow any funds from being invested in any corporations with investments in South Africa.

LARRY EVANS, State Representative from Texas, said that during the past two sessions of the Legislature, bills had been introduced which would prevent investment of state funds in any companies with holdings in South Africa.

A bill introduced this year would prevent any educational funds in the state of Texas from investment in concerns having dealings with South Africa.

A further bill, dealing with the divestment of state pension funds amounting to $10 billion, was also before the state Legislature and he was optimistic about its passage.

WILLIAM BOWEN, State Senator from Ohio, said there were currently legislative attempts in Ohio which would limit investments in concerns having dealings in South Africa. An amount of some $2 billion in Ohio state retirement systems, pension funds and educational funds would be effected.

SYLVANIA WOODS, State Representative from Maryland, said there were currently attempts to have enacted in the Maryland General Assembly
legislation which would provide for the termination of all state investments in institutions which made loans to, or had any dealings with, companies that dealt with South Africa.

TYRONE BROOKS, State Representative from Georgia, said that people throughout the country were finding that public monies were being used to further apartheid in South Africa. He would continue work in the Georgia Legislature to formulate legislation that would move Georgia into the twentieth century.

He said that at the 1984 session of the Georgia Legislature, he, in the Georgia House of Representatives, and Julian Bond, in the Senate, would be sponsoring legislation to prohibit public monies controlled by the state of Georgia from being invested in South Africa.

ED LEEK, State Representative of Oregon, said that at the recent session of the legislature, divestment legislation had been considered for the third time in the state of Oregon. Although there were some positive actions at the city level, there were a number of negative factors. Retirees were beginning to feel that they were being forced to choose between morality and security. That was not the case, but actions by the Reagan Administration in connection with pension funds recently had made people nervous. However, the main problem was that it had "not occurred" to most people in Oregon that there was a connection between their pension monies and the situation in South Africa.

DUNISANI S. KUMALO, Project Director, American Committee on Africa, said the issue of South Africa had drawn together a new coalition of Americans who supported legislation of divestment from companies doing business with South Africa. It was clear that the South African Government could no longer sell its propaganda and lie to the American people that change was taking place in South Africa.

The movement against divestment was growing all over the country, he said, as was evidenced by the conference on divestment which would be convened in Boston today.

Other Statements

KENNEDY F. APOE (Nigeria) welcomed the efforts of the state legislators to put pressure on the United States Government to fall in line with other United Nations Members and put pressure on the Government of South Africa to change its apartheid practices.

MAJID BOUGUERRA (Algeria) thanked the state legislators and hoped that transnational corporations, other businesses and the United States Government would make efforts to halt their collaboration with South Africa.

AHMED S. KARAHIN, Permanent Observer from the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC), thanked the legislators -- men and women of conscience of America -- who were engaged in a struggle which was closely related to that being experienced by the oppressed people of South Africa.

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He said that those who invested in South Africa did not do so to assist the black majority. The real reason for such investment was the high profits they earned. In apartheid South Africa, the profit return was the highest in the world. That had prompted a businessman to declare that "apartheid is abominable but profitable".

It was largely because of such large profits that athletes and entertainers had been enticed to go to South Africa, he added.

The investments carried out in South Africa did not aim at promoting equality, he said, as inequality existed at the very core of the society, for example, in education and in ownership of land.

The efforts of the legislators would greatly assist the struggle being waged in South Africa. The people of South Africa were struggling for human equality, as men had done throughout history, he concluded.

EMUGA REDDY, Assistant Secretary-General, Centre against Apartheid, thanking the legislators for their efforts, said the movement for sanctions against South Africa had begun in the Western countries some 25 years ago. Berkeley was the first United States city to withdraw funds from investments in South Africa.

He was encouraged by the actions discussed today, especially by the fact that most of the funds affected by divestiture so far had been pension funds of public employees.

JAGZIB E. ABDELWABAB (Sudan) said the repression being waged by South Africa would not prevent the continuing struggle of the freedom fighters for justice and equality in that country.