The American Committee on Africa has appealed to five American athletes to reconsider their decision to participate in the South African Games, March 23-April 7 in Pretoria in view of the fact that the conditions of this event will comply with existing South African statutes which separate South African athletes according to race.

In a letter addressed to Steve Smith, champion pole vaulter, and four other American track and field stars the Committee states -"as pressures for an end to apartheid in sport mount in South Africa, American athletes can make an important positive contribution by disavowing any athletic competition not conducted according to the Olympic principle of non-discrimination."

Out of 16 American track and field athletes invited, only 5 have applied to the AAU for travel permits. Wrestlers, swimmers, gymnasts, and trampolinists have also been invited, but there is no indication whether any are going.

A further communication (full text attached) has been sent to Allan Cassell and Stan Wright, key track and field officials, pointing out that the U.S. is one of 106 nations to vote for U.N. Resolution 2775D, 29 Nov. 1971 which called upon..."all national and international sports organisations to uphold the Olympic principle of non-discrimination..." and "...calls upon individual sportsmen to refuse to participate where there is an official policy of racial discrimination...

The ACOA statement (full text attached) asking for a boycott of the South African Games underscores that "participation would be a gross affront to the thousands of Black American athletes and millions of Black citizens who are denied entry to South Africa solely because of color."

The American Committee on Africa gives its full support to the Supreme Council for National Sport, ICARIS (International Campaign Against Racism in Sport), and SANCOC (South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee) which is working within South Africa to erase the color bar in sport.

George Houser, Executive Director of the American Committee on Africa, said, "I am greatly encouraged by reports over South African radio that
overseas registration for the Games is down to 124 athletes. The South African government originally had planned to receive 500 athletes. The level of protest inside and outside of South Africa can play a significant role toward creating a climate for change. At this point, however, I do not see the South African government altering the basic structure of apartheid. And so we shall not rest until the artificial barriers which perpetuate injustice and inequality are completely obliterated."

The American Committee on Africa, now in its twentieth year, was organized to give support to Africa's struggle for freedom and independence. Its emphasis now is Southern Africa's struggle against white minority regimes.

The Hon. William Booth, Judge of Brooklyn Criminal Court and former Commissioner of the New York City Commission on Human Rights, is President of the ACOA.

* * * * *

Those who have received communications from the American Committee on Africa:

Mr. Tom Jennings, Pacific Coast Club, Long Beach, California coordinating efforts to assemble a group of track and field athletes to go to South Africa.

Track and Field athletes who have applied for AAU travel permits may be reached through Pacific Coast Club, Long Beach, California.

Mr. Steve Smith
Mr. Al Feuerbach
Mr. Dwight Stones
Mr. Jim Boulding
Mr. John Powell

Mr. Stan Wright - head of AAU track and field
Sacramento State College
6000 Jay Street
Sacramento, Calif. 95819 Tel: 916 454-6208

Mr. Ollen Cassall - track and field man at AAU headquarters
AAU House
3400 W. 86th St.
Indianapolis, Indiana 46268 Tel: 317 297-2900

Mr. Frank Baer - in charge of gymnasts
P.O. Box 4699
University Branch
Tucson, Arizona Tel: 602 622-3865
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of the American Committee on Africa

AMERICAN ATHLETES URGED TO BOYCOTT SOUTH AFRICAN OPEN GAMES MARCH 23 - APRIL 7

Given the fact that the South African Open Games, March 23 - April 7, though described as multiracial, will comply with existing South African racial statutes by separating South African athletes into three segregated categories: White, Black and Coloured.

Given the fact that the American Amateur Athletic Union does bar American teams from participating in South African athletic events, and has adopted a policy of opposing racial discrimination and segregation in sports.

Given the fact that most of the bodies controlling world sport explicitly forbid racial discrimination and that the majority of countries, including the U.S., have shown themselves willing to take action against violations.

Given the fact that South Africa was barred from the Olympic Games in 1964, 1968 and 1972 because of its practices of apartheid in sports.

Given the fact that the U.S. concurred in the strongly worded U.N. General Assembly Resolution which calls upon "...all national and international sports organizations to uphold the Olympic principle of non-discrimination and to discourage and deny support to sports events organized in violation of this principle..." (2775D (26) 29 Nov. 1971).

Given the fact that participation would be a gross affront to thousands of American Black athletes and millions of Black citizens who are denied entry to South Africa solely because of color.

Given the fact that FIFA, the world football controlling body, has just withdrawn permission from overseas teams to play at the South African Games.

We urge the American Amateur Athletic Union in the interests of justice and human dignity to declare publicly that travel permits to South Africa will not be granted to member athletes so long as the edicts of racial apartheid remain the law of the land in South Africa.

We appeal to all athletes who are invited to participate in the South African Open Games to decline and to join in this protest.
March 5, 1973

This letter sent to:
Tom Jennings, Steve Smith, Al Feuerbach, Dwight Stones, Jim Boulding
John Powell, Stan Wright, Ollen Cassall, Frank Baer
(for addresses see page 2 of attached New Release)

Tha Africa Bureau answers several important questions on racialism in the forthcoming South African Games to be held in Pretoria from March 23 to April 7 to which American athletes have been invited.

The South African government aware of its isolation from the mainstream of world sports competitions is making gestures to ameliorate the situation; which, in truth, are evasions and subterfuge, hardly touching the basic structure of apartheid in sports: racial exclusion and segregation. So long as South Africa is able to create an illusion of multiracialism in athletic competition apartheid shall remain the law of the land.

That is why mounting pressure from athletic bodies and athletes throughout the world, as well as within South Africa, can help to bring South Africa into the family of nations which subscribe to the Olympic principle as enunciated in the enclosed U.N. resolution signed by 106 nations, including the United States:

"...Solemnly calls upon all national and international sports organizations to uphold the Olympic principle of non-discrimination..." (3)

"...calls upon individual sportsmen to refuse to participate where there is an official policy of racial discrimination..." (4)

I am sure that you are committed to the principle that all athletes should compete fully on a free and equal footing, and that the auspices under which an international meet is held should be completely free of racial segregation and discrimination.

The added weight of your voice to the enclosed statement will be an effective way of communicating your condemnation of and dissociation from apartheid in sports.

Sincerely,

Ray Gould
for the American Committee on Africa
164 Madison Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10016