Dear Friends,

On behalf of the United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid, I wish to commend you for dedicating this meeting to the memory of Steve Biko, who, in his crucifixion by the racists, has become a symbol of the spirit of the black people of South Africa.

When I hear it said that economic sanctions would hurt the oppressed black people of South Africa, I say that Steve and the other martyrs and all the political prisoners in racist prisons in South Africa could have chosen comfort if they were prepared to tolerate humiliation. Steve could have become a doctor and aspired to material prosperity. But he risked his livelihood, his freedom and his life for his dignity, for that of his children and his people.

The black students and workers in South Africa knew when they launched the national uprising after the Soweto massacre that their struggle, that their destruction of symbols of oppression, would lead not only to racist violence, but also to unemployment and hunger. They have chosen the painful sacrifices of the present to build the future.

We should consider what we can do to show them our solidarity, instead of finding specious excuses to continue "business as usual" with South Africa, on the pretence of sparing the blacks of material suffering.

Let me, first of all, express my satisfaction at the policy statement adopted by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America on 10 November.

The Special Committee has always emphasized that action by governments for eradication of apartheid must be complemented by action at the level of all organizations and individuals committed to freedom. I am, therefore, glad that the National Council has decided not only to call for an end to collaboration by the United States Government with Pretoria regime, but also to take direct action. I hope that two crucial measures adopted by the National Council - namely, support to the oppressed people and their national liberation movement, and withdrawal of funds from financial institutions making loans to South Africa - will be fully implemented by all United States Churches and commended to all other organizations and institutions.

I intend to propose to the Special Committee against Apartheid to promote widest publicity to the MCC Policy statement and to invite its leaders and constituents, in the near future, for consultations on further action.
I believe a special responsibility rests on the United States and on Christian Churches in the struggle for freedom in South Africa.

The apartheid regime, as you know, has been claiming to represent the "Western Christian civilization" and to constitute a bastion of the so-called "free world". But its racism corrupts and destroys every human value, and brings the West and Christendom into disrepute unless they dissociate themselves from it effectively.

The struggle of the black people in South Africa is, in a very deep sense, a struggle for Christian values and for freedom for all the people of South Africa.

It is, therefore, not surprising that many brave churchmen have been inspired by the liberation movement and have suffered persecution at the hands of the apartheid regime - including white churchmen like Reverend Beyers Naude and the Reverend David Russell who were banned last month.

The apartheid regime sees the involvement of the church in the promotion of human equality as a menace and has even accused United States church groups of instigating the black consciousness movement in South Africa.

The Special Committee against Apartheid has had occasion to commend the World Council of Churches and national church bodies for their direct support to the liberation movements and for their campaigns against investments in South Africa. A number of United States church groups, we know, have played a commendable role in this respect.

But I would like to lay even greater stress on the need to terminate all economic collaboration with South Africa.

The South African national liberation movement appealed to the world, as long ago as 1958, to boycott South Africa and thereby assist its righteous struggle. Its call has been endorsed by many African and other States, implemented at great sacrifice, but as yet there has been no response from the major Western Powers and transnational corporations.

After the Sharpville massacre, when even some powerful elements in the ruling establishment in South Africa were obliged to advocate a new chapter in South African history, Western banks and corporations infused funds to revive the economy of South Africa and strengthen the Verwoerd regime. They bear a grave responsibility before history for the every-increasing oppression of the blacks and, indeed, for the suicidal course of the white electorate.

I need hardly remind an American audience that the criminals in the era of slavery were not merely the slave drivers and the "genteel" plantation owners of the South of this country, but also the slave merchants and their bankers in the north. By the same token, the criminals today are not merely the white rulers of South Africa, but the distant vested interest which derive hundreds of millions of dollars of profit from the oppression and exploitation of black people of South Africa.

I believe that we have a right to expect that the United States Government and its citizens will, even at this late stage, disengage themselves from the
inhuman system. It is unthinkable that this country—next only to Nigeria in its black population—can continue to profit from apartheid and maintain respect.

I would like to stress that the struggle in South Africa is not for the freedom of the blacks alone but for the right of self-determination of all the people of that country. It is, moreover, the struggle for the final emancipation of the continent of Africa as a whole, and for the dignity of all black men and women the world over.

No African State and no black man or woman can remain indifferent in this final stage of that struggle. It is incumbent on us to take all action within our power to stop the banks and transnational companies from reinforcing apartheid. Nigeria has already given a firm warning of its intention to do its duty: I have no doubt that other countries will do the same.

I would appeal to the churches in the United States to join with the black people of South Africa and with the whole of Africa at this crucial time.

Withdrawal of deposits from banks financing the apartheid regime and its repressive apparatus is but a first step.

*COBLSA feels that this historic message from a leading African country's chief representative should be widely distributed and read.
Organizational Participants*

--The organizations and institutions now participating in the bank campaign are:

Ad Hoc Committee Against Bank Loans to South Africa, (Rochester, New York)
African Agenda
American Committee on Africa
American Friends Service Committee (National)
American Friends Service Committee (Midwest)
Americans for Democratic Action
Asociacion Puertorriquena de Artistas y Tecnico
Black Students Organization - Columbia University
Black Theology Project
Boston Coalition for the Liberation of Southern Africa
Center for International Education
Chicago Southern Africa Bank Campaign Coalition
Church of the Intercession
Clergy & Laity Concerned
Coalition of Concerned Black Americans
District 65 Distributive Workers of America
District Council 1707, AFSCME, AFL-CIO
District 1199 National Union of Hospital & Health Care Employees, AFL-CIO
Furriers Joint Council of New York
Institute for Education in Peace & Justice
Institute for Sport and Social Analysis
International Longshoremen & Warehouse Workers Union, Local 6
International Union, United Automobile & Aerospace Workers (UAW)
Internews
Minnesota Committee on Southern Africa
Namibia Peace Center
National Lawyers Guild
Northern California Interfaith Committee on Corporate Responsibility
Pan African Students Organization in America (PASOA)
Philadelphia Namibia Action Group
Potomac Association, Central Atlantic Conference, United Church of Christ
Resist
Robert R. Moton Institute
Rochester Peace & Justice Education Center
San Antonio Committee Against Mercenary Recruitment
South Africa Freedom Day Coalition
Southern Africa Committee
Stop Bank of America Banking on Apartheid Campaign
The East Organization, New York
United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice
United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE)
Washington Office on Africa
Women's International League for Peace & Freedom

We are actively seeking others to join this growing list.

--The Sisters of Charity did not withdraw their funds from Citibank.
--Congressman Andrew McGuire introduced the bill regarding the Ex-Im Bank.
--It is the National Scholarship Service and Fund for Negro Students and the United Methodist Church Board of Global Ministries that are presently considering withdrawal.

*These are only a few of the participating organizations. A new brochure is being prepared and will include a fuller listing.
The National Council of Churches called upon its 30 constituent denominations yesterday to "undertake" to withdraw all their funds from financial institutions that deal with the Government of South Africa or Businesses there.

The plea to the Protestant and Eastern Orthodox denominations was made by the council's governing board at its fall meeting in the Roosevelt Hotel.

An effort from the floor to call for the summary withdrawal of funds was toned down by the adoption of the word "undertake."

The council's action, the first of its kind, followed an address by Andrew Young, chief United States delegate to the United Nations, who described as "prophetic" the role of religion in the worldwide quest for an end to racial discrimination.

Policy of 'Sinful Life'

Mr. Young said of the South African Prime Minister: "Lord have mercy for the hell which falls on John Vorster, not after death, but in the day-to-day sinful life that he has adopted as national policy in that Government."

Mr. Young, who is an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ, commented at one point that he at times found it difficult to separate his preaching from his diplomacy.

Claire Randall, the council's general secretary, said that the principal of asking churches to undertake to withdraw funds was sound but that the goal was difficult to attain in view of complex financial setups of the member denominations and the council itself.

On November 11, 1977 the National Council of Churches governing board, by a 129-0 vote, adopted the following position:

"THAT WE UNDERTAKE THE WITHDRAWAL OF ALL FUNDS AND CLOSURE OF ALL ACCOUNTS IN FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS THAT INVEST OR MAKE LOANS TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT OR BUSINESSES AND URGE CONSTITUENT MEMBERSHIP TO ADOPT THIS POLICY."