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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE DENUCLEARIZATION OF AFRICA

Letter dated 30 October 1990 from the Permanent Representative
of South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the
Secretary-General

I have the honour to refer to the report of the Secretary-General on the nuclear capability of South Africa which was submitted to the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly as document A/45/569 of 18 October 1990 under item 54, Implementation of the Declaration on the Denuclearization of Africa.

My attention has been drawn to the fact that the report contains no reference to any formal statement made by the competent South African authorities nor any indication that they might have been approached with regard to its preparation.

In paragraph 2 of that report it is, however, stated that in order to obtain information that would be of assistance, the Secretary-General had been in contact with the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Organization of African Unity. It is not made clear how information provided by the latter body can be considered as in any way authoritative in this regard.

Under the same item the Secretary-General has submitted another report, document A/45/571 of 22 October 1990, entitled "South Africa's nuclear-tipped ballistic missile capability". While the foreword to this report, which was prepared by a group of experts and, indeed, the report itself contain references to the reform process currently under way in South Africa and to statements made by the authorities in respect of accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), they do not quote those remarks nor place them in the context of the relevant agenda item.

Your Excellency will recall that on 18 September 1990 I brought to your attention the text of a statement issued by the Minister of Foreign Affairs,

Mr. R. F. Botha, concerning South Africa's position on accession to the NPT. The Minister stated clearly in that communiqué: "... the South African Government is prepared to accede to the Treaty in the context of an equal commitment by the other States in the southern African region", thus providing practical evidence of South Africa's search for ways to achieve a nuclear-weapons-free zone in at least one region in Africa.

I would add that South Africa's efforts in the nuclear field have always been aimed at the peaceful application of nuclear energy, as even a cursory reference to the number of official publications demonstrating its research in such fields as medical isotopes and the irradiation of perishable fruit and vegetables, to name only two, would easily reveal. The suggestion that South Africa may now change direction from military to peaceful aims is gratuitous.

In view of paragraph 4 of document A/45/569, I would again draw your attention to my letter of 18 September 1990 and ask that, together with the present letter, it be circulated with its enclosure as a document of the General Assembly under item 54 of the agenda.

(Signed) Jeremy B. SHEARAR
Permanent Representative
Ambassador

Annex

Letter dated 18 September 1990 from the Permanent Representative
of South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the
Secretary-General

In the aftermath of the recent nuclear non-proliferation Treaty Conference at Geneva and on the occasion of the commencement of the current session of the IAEA General Conference, the South African Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. R. F. Botha, has issued a statement indicating South Africa's willingness to accede to the non-proliferation Treaty in the context of an equal commitment by other States in the southern African region.

You will also observe from the statement, which I have pleasure in enclosing, that the South African Government hopes to commence talks with the IAEA on the conclusion of a comprehensive safeguards agreement on the country's nuclear facilities.

(Signed) Jeremy B. SHEARAR
Permanent Representative
Ambassador

Enclosure

STATEMENT ON SOUTH AFRICA'S POSITION ON ACCESSION TO THE NUCLEAR
NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY, ISSUED BY THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN
AFFAIRS ON 17 SEPTEMBER 1990

On 21 September 1987 the South African State President indicated that South Africa hoped that it would soon be able to sign the nuclear non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) and had decided to open discussions with others to this end. He added that South Africa was an important uranium exporting country and also had a well-developed nuclear programme. For these and other reasons consideration of accession to the NPT was a complex matter requiring thorough study and consultation.

Since then various discussions have taken place between South Africa and the three depository States: the United States of America, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United Kingdom, in which South Africa sought clarification on the implications of accession.

During the past year major events of great historical importance have taken place in Central and Eastern Europe and in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics which have led to a lessening of tension between the power blocs of the world.

Various African States have recently expressed the view that the African continent should become a nuclear-weapon-free zone. These views were again aired at the recently concluded NPT Review Conference at Geneva. The South African Government welcomes these suggestions. Indeed, the South African Government has itself consulted a number of African Governments on the desirability of establishing a nuclear-free area at least in the southern African region. Such a move would further remove suspicions and should strengthen the economic and geographical cohesion of the region.

It is of particular significance that one of South Africa's closest neighbours, Mozambique, deposited instruments of accession to the NPT on 12 September 1990.

Following several rounds of discussions with the three depository States on the question of accession to the non-proliferation Treaty, the South African Government is prepared to accede to the Treaty in the context of an equal commitment by the other States in the southern African region.

In the mean time, the South African Government will continue to respect its non-proliferation responsibilities and commitments. For instance, the Government trusts that in the near future talks can commence with the International Atomic Energy Agency on concluding a comprehensive safeguards agreement on the country's nuclear facilities.

Viewed within the context of the Government's irreversible reform initiatives, the proposed action underscores South Africa's commitment to contribute to peace and regional security in southern Africa.

South Africa is hopeful that the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency which is currently meeting at Vienna will reflect carefully on the significance of the direction taken by South Africa in order to facilitate peace and co-operation in the southern African region.

