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2122nd MEETING

Held in New York on Thursday, 8 March 1979, at 10.30 a.m.

President: Mr. Leslie O. HARRIMAN (Nigeria).

Present: The representatives of the following States: Bangladesh, Bolivia, China, Czechoslovakia, France, Gabon, Jamaica, Kuwait, Nigeria, Norway, Portugal, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Zambia.

Provisional agenda (S/Agenda/2122)

1. Adoption of the agenda
2. Question concerning the situation in Southern Rhodesia:
Letter dated 28 February 1979 from the Permanent Representative of Equatorial Guinea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/13121)

The meeting was called to order at 12.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Question concerning the situation in Southern Rhodesia:

Letter dated 28 February 1979 from the Permanent Representative of Equatorial Guinea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/13121)

1. The PRESIDENT: In accordance with the decisions taken at the preceding meetings, I invite the representatives of Angola, Benin, Botswana, Cuba, Ethiopia, Ghana, Sri Lanka and Yugoslavia to take the places reserved for them at the side of the Council chamber.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. de Figueiredo (Angola), Mr. Houngavou (Benin), Mr. Modisi (Botswana), Mr. Roa Kouri (Cuba), Mr. Seifu (Ethiopia), Mr. Sekyi (Ghana), Mr. Fernando (Sri Lanka) and Mr. Komatina (Yugoslavia) took the places reserved for them at the side of the Council chamber.

2. The PRESIDENT: Members of the Council have before them the revised text of the draft resolution sponsored by Bangladesh, Bolivia, Gabon, Jamaica, Kuwait, Nigeria and Zambia, contained in document S/13140 dated 7 March. It is my understanding that members of the Council are ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution.

3. The representative of Portugal has asked to speak before the vote, and I now call on him.

4. Mr. FUTSCHER PEREIRA (Portugal): Once again I have asked to speak in the course of the present debate, and I hope I shall be forgiven for doing so.

5. In my previous statement, on Friday last, [2119th meeting], I wished first and foremost to express the solidarity of my Government with the countries of southern Africa—namely, Angola, Botswana, Mozambique and Zambia—which have been for many years, but still more so in the recent past, the target of intolerable and murderous aggressions by the forces of the illegal régime in Southern Rhodesia. I then said that I reserved the right to return, at a later date, to the substance of the problem with which we are confronted today.

6. Now is the time to do so, before we vote on the draft resolution before us, which my delegation has considered with the utmost attention. I shall limit myself to a few remarks, but first I should like to state and underline once more the basic position of my Government on the question of Southern Rhodesia.

7. For more than a decade now, Southern Rhodesia has been one of the constant concerns of the United Nations and, in particular, of the Security Council, as well as of the countries more directly affected by the development of its international situations.

8. As long ago as 1968, the Security Council declared that the situation in Southern Rhodesia did indeed constitute a threat to international peace and security. Since then more than a decade has gone by, during which, year after year, debate after debate, more than 20 resolutions have been adopted by the Council. They all bear witness to the growing apprehension and indignation of the world in the face of the continuation of a situation of rebellion and of abuse of power. Some will say that the United Nations has done all that was in its power. But others might also think, and rightly so, that whatever we did has been disappointing, if we are to judge the value of our action by the meagre results that have been achieved so far.

9. My Government also considers illegal the régime in Southern Rhodesia. We also deem it a duty of the international community to support the fight of the Patriotic Front for a free and independent Zimbabwe. Likewise, the Government of Portugal is fully conscious of the need to comply, in the strictest form, with the sanctions decreed against the Southern Rhodesian régime. Nor are we less conscious of the imperative of denouncing—in the United Nations and in any other international forums—its illegality, its injustice, its racism and repressive policies, its intolerable lack of respect for the most elementary human rights, as well as for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of neighbouring States.

10. That being our unequivocal position regarding the present régime in Southern Rhodesia, we are bound to give full support to the initiative of the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity to request, through the African Group, the present meeting of the Security Council. We think this meeting totally justified not only by the recent acts of aggression committed by Southern Rhodesia against its neighbours but also by the urgent need to denounce once again the so-called internal settlement of Southern Rhodesia—all the more so on the eve of developments aimed at confusing or misguiding the less informed sectors of world opinion.

11. The Portuguese Government indeed cannot consider as valid the elections scheduled to take place next April in Southern Rhodesia, in which the Patriotic Front will not be allowed to participate, which will take place under martial law, and which will be promoted under a constitutional law devised to continue to ensure all sorts of unjustified privileges to a small minority—the same minority that 14 years ago seized power and has since used all kinds of unacceptable means to retain it, against the will of the very peoples upon whom it imposed its rule, and totally indifferent to its condemnation by the world.

12. From the experience of a not too distant past, we know well enough in Portugal—without needing other countries as examples—what value to attribute to elections in which only a single political force can participate, where censorship makes impossible the free expression of opinion and the aim of which is only to consecrate and maintain a state of affairs, dictated by a political minority, transformed into absolute master of a collective destiny.

13. From all that I have already said, it can of course be rightly inferred that we shall vote in favour of the draft resolution submitted by Bangladesh, Bolivia, Gabon, Jamaica, Kuwait, Nigeria and Zambia [S/13140].

14. Portugal will not accord any kind of recognition to the forthcoming elections to be held in Southern Rhodesia. However, I should like to point out that, although we do not know of any Portuguese entity that might intend to send observers to follow those elections, there is no law in my country preventing anyone from doing so. My Government will not fail to make it known that, should such an action be envisaged, it would meet with its strongest disapproval, but can hardly go further.

15. We hope that the draft resolution on which we are about to vote will be adopted by a significant majority, whatever difficulties some countries might encounter in its formulation.

16. We shall then be entitled to say that we have performed our duty. But have we really performed it to the very end? Have we indeed exhausted all the possibilities available to us in trying to contribute in a positive way to finding a lasting solution for the tragedy of Zimbabwe? Once again we have denounced the régime of Ian Smith as illegal and his so-called internal settlement as null and void. Once again we have condemned all its evil aspects and actions and expressed our indignation at them. Is there anyone around this table who might sincerely believe that what we have achieved does correspond to what the world at large expected from us? Let us not delude ourselves by believing

it. What the world and the many victims of the tragedy of Zimbabwe have the right to expect from us is more than condemnations and expressions of indignation and solidarity, no matter how justified they may be.

17. For its part, my delegation fully shares the point of view expressed here last Monday by the representative of Bangladesh [2120th meeting], when he said that the Council should once again press forward towards new efforts and new initiatives at the diplomatic level, not only to preserve human lives but also with a view to achieving a lasting and peaceful settlement of this question.

18. The Council should not, in our view, condone violence, and we feel that it would even betray the very ideals of the Charter of the United Nations were it to encourage the use of force to achieve the restoration of legality in Southern Rhodesia. Force might indeed overthrow the illegal Smith régime. But this achievement, although the first and basic condition for the self-determination and independence of Zimbabwe, will not by itself ensure the lasting solution which it remains our duty to seek.

19. With deep dismay, we heard the representative of the United Kingdom declare here that, following his visit to southern Africa and various African States, Mr. Cledwyn Hughes, special representative of the British Prime Minister, had come to the conclusion that at the present stage there seemed to be not prospect of convening a successful meeting of all the parties to the conflict to negotiate a new settlement. It might well be so. But that can never serve any one of us or the Council as an excuse to give up.

20. The best way to prevent the present escalation of violence and to try to ensure an independent Zimbabwe, where all its nationals will be able to live freely and peacefully, is, in our view, the one referred to by the representative of the United Kingdom in the same statement and I quote:

“... the best prospect of ending the conflict and of achieving a return to legality and a peaceful settlement in Rhodesia lies in an attempt to find a wider agreement involving both sides in the conflict and incorporating such essential features of the Anglo-American proposals as a cease-fire and a neutral administration for the conduct of free and fair elections under United Nations supervision. Such elections, held under impartial control, should determine the wishes of the people of Rhodesia as a whole and be conducted in a manner which would command the acceptance of the international community.” [Ibid., para. 19.]

21. We are well aware of the difficulties of such a task. But it seems to us to be the duty of the Council to appeal endlessly to the parties and to exert upon them whatever pressure might prove necessary to make them come to an agreement on those bases.

22. The PRESIDENT: I shall now put the draft resolution in document S/13140 to the vote.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour: Bangladesh, Bolivia, China, Czechoslovakia, Gabon, Jamaica, Kuwait, Nigeria, Norway, Portugal, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Zambia

Against: None

Abstaining: France, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The draft resolution was adopted by 12 votes to none, with 3 abstentions.¹

23. The PRESIDENT: A number of representatives have asked to be allowed to speak following the vote, and I shall now call on them.

24. Mr. RICHARD (United Kingdom): We abstained in the vote on this draft resolution although there are some parts with which we are in agreement. But, regrettably, the text contains features which make it impossible for us to vote for it. Indeed, had it not been for the fact that some changes had been made to make it less objectionable, we should have had to vote against it.

25. The United Kingdom's position on the matters dealt with in the resolution is clear. In the first place, as I stressed in my statement of 5 March [2120th meeting], we wholly condemn the attacks made by the illegal régime on the territory of neighbouring States, just as we condemn all violence within Rhodesia, which has such tragic effects on the civilian population, both African and European. We deplore both the shooting down of civil aircraft and the threats which have been made to do so outside Rhodesia.

26. We share the view expressed in the resolution on the resumption of executions by the illegal régime. These are, in our view, abhorrent to all civilized opinion. We condemn such executions in the strongest terms and have made this clear to the Salisbury régime. Although so long as that régime exists there are no practical steps which the United Kingdom Government can take to prevent them, we join with other members of the Council and with the whole international community in expressing our utter condemnation.

27. In my last statement I also set out the British Government's views on how best to continue trying to achieve a settlement incorporating such essential features of the Anglo-American proposals as a cease-fire and a neutral administration for the conduct of free and fair elections under international supervision. It is a major defect of the resolution that it does not include a renewed call for a settlement along these lines. The absence of such a call leaves the resolution wholly unbalanced, and this is one of the reasons why we have not been able to support it.

28. Certainly the elections which the Salisbury régime proposes to hold in April are unlikely to bring a peaceful solution. It is hard to see how it is possible to talk of holding free and fair elections in present circumstances in Rhodesia. We have made clear—and I reiterate it—that we have no intention of being officially involved as a Government in sending observers to monitor the elections. The British Government has not accepted that the internal settlement holds out any real prospect of peace and the orderly and genuine transfer of power in Rhodesia. The fighting is likely to continue and the need for negotiations will remain. The British Council believes that after any elections are held there will be a need to bring the internal and external leaders together around a negotiating table. We intend to continue our work with all the parties for real peace.

29. But it is a matter of principle for us that we cannot accept language such as the resolution contains which seeks to circumscribe the functioning of our parliamentary democracy. We cannot and will not accept that the British Parliament can be fettered in any way as to how it may decide to inform itself about the situation in Rhodesia. We cannot and will not accept that we should prevent or discourage any United Kingdom citizens, whether Members of Parliament or whatever their status, from visiting Rhodesia to inform themselves about the situation in that country. Nor, although we deplore the existence of press censorship in Rhodesia, do we think it right to try to dissuade journalists or television commentators from informing themselves or our public about the situation in Rhodesia. In this context we reject any implication in the eleventh preambular paragraph that we are already subject to any obligation in that sense, whether deriving from resolution 423 (1978) or otherwise, and, with reference both to that paragraph and the tenth preambular paragraph, I remind the Council of the limited scope of that resolution, as I made perfectly clear in my explanation of vote when it was adopted [2067th meeting]. I would also remind the Council that, as resolutions adopted by the Council have stated time and time again, Britain has a specific responsibility in relation to Rhodesia and, therefore, the British parliament must be able freely to exercise its judgement.

30. In these circumstances we must make it absolutely clear that we do not interpret or accept the operative paragraphs of this resolution as precluding visits to Rhodesia by private persons or Members of Parliament to observe the elections, or by anyone to inform themselves about the situation in that country; or as in any way circumscribing the rights of the United Kingdom Parliament freely to exercise its responsibilities in relation to Rhodesia, having regard to its own judgement of the wishes of the people of Rhodesia as a whole.

31. It remains my Government's overriding concern to continue to work for a settlement on lines which could end the war and command the acceptance and support of the international community, and which would offer hope for the stability and the economic and social prosperity of an independent Zimbabwe. We will do nothing which is counter to this broad objective or which in any way represents a concession to racism, violence or illegality.

32. Mr. ÅLGÅRD (Norway): Norway voted in favour of the draft resolution just adopted by the Council. I should like, however, to emphasize in relation to paragraph 3 that the Norwegian Government, in accordance with its long-standing policy, will continue to provide only humanitarian and economic assistance.

33. Mr. YOUNG (United States of America): In a few moments the United States delegation will be making available to members of the Council copies of testimony provided yesterday by the United States Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. That testimony contains a full explanation of our views on the issues discussed in the resolution just adopted.

34. However, the position of the United States on the question of Zimbabwe has been stated and restated. The United States, together with the United Kingdom, has participated in a sustained effort, spanning several years, to bring about a negotiated settlement leading to genuine inde-

¹ See resolution 445 (1979).

pendence for Zimbabwe. The Anglo-American proposals, which call for free and fair elections under United Nations supervision, are familiar to the Council. Those proposals still embody the fairest, most comprehensive approach to the question of Zimbabwe and my Government continues to stand by them.

35. The internal elections scheduled to take place in Rhodesia in April will not end the conflict or provide a just and lasting solution, nor will they meet the test of international acceptability. These elections will take place on the basis of a constitution on which recognized political groups were in no way consulted and which has been approved only by a white minority that has sought to preserve a disproportionate share of power and influence. The April elections are the result of a process in which principal political groups have not been allowed to participate on an equal basis. The United States will not give its support to the Salisbury parties in their efforts to institute arrangements which do not appear to meet the criteria for a genuine transfer of power to majority rule and from which recognized political groups are effectively excluded.

36. Turning to the resolution, the United States supports its over-all thrust and in particular its condemnation of the raids into Zambia and Angola. However, there are various aspects of the resolution regarding which my Government has reservations, and the United States therefore abstained in the vote. We recognize that the majority of the Council are interested in expressing a point of view regarding the important issues involved with which in the main we sympathize.

37. I wish to make it clear that, in the view of the United States, this is not a mandatory resolution; it does not give rise to binding obligations. The resolution's references to the responsibilities of Member States refer, in my Government's view, to the enforcement measures decided upon by the Council in the past. Those provisions of the resolution having to do with observers must be considered in the light of the arrangements, limitations and responsibilities defined by the Constitution and the public and legal practice of each Member State.

38. We do not believe that this resolution is intended to raise obstacles or barriers to the negotiation of a peaceful and just settlement of the Rhodesian problem. The United States does not interpret this resolution as endorsing the use of force from any quarter or approving measures that support the use of force. This resolution must be interpreted in the light of Charter obligations to settle international disputes by peaceful means and to ensure that armed force shall not be used save in the common interest.

39. Mr. LEPRETTE (France) (*interpretation from French*): As I emphasized in my statement on 5 March [2120th meeting], France unreservedly condemns the raids carried out by Southern Rhodesian forces against the neighbouring States. Hence, the provisions regarding those actions that are contained in the draft resolution submitted to the Council today meet with our full approval. Similarly, France considers that the consultation envisaged by Ian Smith for 20 April is not truly democratic—and only a democratic consultation could transfer power to the majority in Rhodesia. Therefore, we cannot approve the sending of observers to those elections.

40. Nevertheless, the drafting of the eleventh preambular paragraph, which immediately follows the one reaffirming resolution 423 (1978), introduces, regrettably in our view, some confusion between resolutions and decisions of the Council. My delegation cannot approve such an assimilation.

41. Finally, and above all, the call made on all States in paragraph 7 "to take appropriate action to discourage organizations and institutions within their respective areas of jurisdiction" is contrary to the freedoms expressly guaranteed by the Constitution of the French Republic.

42. In those circumstances, my country was regretfully unable to vote in favour of the draft resolution, although we approved of its spirit and motivations.

43. Mr. SIKAULU (Zambia): I have the honour—and, I might say, the unpleasant duty—of speaking after the vote to try to make the situation clear. I am speaking on behalf of the delegations of Bangladesh, Bolivia, Jamaica, Kuwait and Nigeria, as well as on behalf of my own delegation. All these delegations are among the sponsors of the draft resolution just adopted.

44. We are disappointed that in these extremely critical times in the situation in Southern Rhodesia such a mild draft resolution has not commended itself to unanimous adoption by the Security Council. We note in particular that two of the countries that abstained on the draft resolution are the proponents of what are called the Anglo-American proposals, proposals that have been on the table for a long time and are rapidly losing, if they have not already lost, their relevance because they have not been pursued with the necessary vigour and determination.

45. I listened to the explanations of vote. Three points were stressed: one was the absence of a reference to the Anglo-American proposals; the second was the condemnation of all violence in Southern Rhodesia; the third was the need for certain countries and their publics to inform themselves of the situation in Southern Rhodesia.

46. Let me take the last point. The situation in Rhodesia is not a new one. What is involved is obvious. There is an illegal régime that has, for the last 14 years, entrenched itself in power. No other information can be required. All that is required is for us to address ourselves to the reality that the problem of Southern Rhodesia can be solved only through the removal of the illegal régime and the return of Rhodesia to legality, or, indeed the granting of genuine independence to Southern Rhodesia.

47. It is therefore amazing that now, in the light of specific Anglo-American proposals that are on the table, emphasis should be placed on the need for people to inform themselves, when they know that the Anglo-American proposals have not gone anywhere because of the intransigence of the Ian Smith régime.

48. One would have wanted and expected the draft resolution that has been adopted by the Council to be co-sponsored by the very proponents of the Anglo-American proposals. That is an initiative that they, not we in the Group of Non-Aligned States, should have taken, because the events in Southern Rhodesia, the so-called elections that are to take place next month and the violence that is going on are contrary to the Anglo-American proposals.

49. Regarding the violence in Southern Rhodesia, it is, in the view of the sponsors, an over-simplification to talk purely in terms of violence in Rhodesia. The violence there is being caused by the existence of the illegal régime. It is Smith who is committing wanton murders, wanton killings of the people of Zimbabwe. And the people of Zimbabwe are reacting. So I think it is not justified to equate the people of Zimbabwe engaged in a struggle for liberation with the actions that Smith is taking against them.

50. We hope that the delegations that abstained on this resolution will still, nevertheless, take seriously the important elements contained in it, especially the need for Member States to refrain from sending observers to Southern Rhodesia to observe the so-called elections, because the Security Council has already taken a position on the fact that the so-called elections are contrary to the very purposes of the United Nations and the genuine aspirations of the people of Zimbabwe.

51. It should be borne in mind that the war in Southern Rhodesia is escalating. The front-line countries, and my country is one of them, have exercised much restraint in the situation, but it is quite clear that the Smith régime is seeking to generalize the conflict in southern Africa and to involve the front-line countries in the conflict directly. The question is for how long the front-line countries can allow their people to be maimed, to be bombed and to be killed. For how long can the front-line countries allow their sovereignty and their territorial integrity to be violated with impunity by the Smith régime?

52. I leave it to those who have abstained seriously to ponder these questions. I hope that, as the situation in Southern Rhodesia progresses, those who have taken action which does not help the international community to achieve its desire of resolving the conflict in Southern Rhodesia will not escape responsibility.

53. Mr. YOUNG (United States of America): It really should not be necessary to add this, but I think that what we tried to say in our explanation of vote was that our objection was essentially to the idea that the Council could decide for citizens of the United States where and when they should travel. I think that one of the things that my country has always stood for—and we get into trouble when we depart from this—is that we should not restrict the rights of our citizens to go anywhere in the world they want, to see anything in the world they want to see. We usually find that the democratic process works for us. This does not influence policy negatively. In fact, I think it creates what is an enlightened and progressive policy. So it is one thing for the Council to take decisions that would advise and govern the travel of our citizens and another for us, in the debate, within our form of government, to decide what our policy is. Our abstention is essentially related to protecting those elements of our national sovereignty and our democratic process which we feel to be very important and is in no way a determination of the legality or illegality of the régime in Rhodesia.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.

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