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FORTIETH YEAR

# 2609<sup>th</sup>

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## 2609th MEETING

Held in New York on Monday, 30 September 1985, at 4 p.m.

*President:* Sir. John THOMSON (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland).

*Present:* The representatives of the following States: Australia, Burkina Faso, China, Denmark, Egypt, France, India, Madagascar, Peru, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

### Provisional agenda (S/Agenda/2609)

1. Adoption of the agenda
2. Letter dated 26 September 1985 from the Permanent Representative of Botswana to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/17497);

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 568 (1985) (S/17453).

*The meeting was called to order at 4.20 p.m.*

### Adoption of the agenda

*The agenda was adopted.*

Letter dated 26 September 1985 from the Permanent Representative of Botswana to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/17497);

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 568 (1985) (S/17453).

1. The PRESIDENT: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Botswana in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure.

*At the invitation of the President, Mr. Legwaila (Botswana) took a place at the Council table.*

2. The PRESIDENT: Members of the Council have before them the report of the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 568 (1985) [S/17453]. Members of the Council also have before them the text of a draft resolution

submitted by Botswana, Burkina Faso, Egypt, India, Madagascar, Peru and Trinidad and Tobago [S/17503].

3. The first speaker is the representative of Botswana, on whom I now call.

4. Mr. LEGWAILA (Botswana): Sir, the friendship between our two countries is so deep, so real and so meaningful that you can take it for granted that I am extremely pleased to see you as President of the Security Council in this very busy month of our United Nations year. Under your leadership we are confident that the Council will once again live up to our expectations. We also congratulate your predecessor for the skilful manner in which he presided over the deliberations of the Council last month.

5. We have come to the Security Council to perform a simple and straightforward task. We have come to ensure that our case against South Africa arising from that country's unprovoked and unwarranted attack against our capital on 14 June 1985 is pursued to its logical conclusion. The Council has before it the report of that tragic incident. Pursuant to resolution 568 (1985), the report confirms the very serious charges brought to the Council by my country against South Africa on 21 June [2598th meeting]. Unadorned and without any exaggeration, the report details all the facts about the incident as we saw them then and as seen and observed by the United Nations mission subsequently. In other words, the report is a simple and clear portrayal of what actually happened on the night of 14 June in the capital of the Republic of Botswana. The report is completely devoid of embellishments or cover-ups.

6. It is quite clear that the attack was unprovoked and unwarranted. Not only were the houses attacked scattered all over an open town but the victims, the refugee families who were murdered in cold blood, were found in their beds, asleep, as the bullet marks in the bedrooms have shown. None of those families was found armed and ready to defend itself as guerrillas would have been. And yet, in their pyjamas and natural state, they were brutally riddled with bullets and bombed to death in the most merciless fashion. The report confirms this fact.

7. The attack on our capital was, as the Council knows, blamed on the alleged use of our country by "ANC [African National Congress of South Africa] terrorists". It was alleged that our capital had become the nerve centre of the ANC's armed campaign against *apartheid* and that incidents that had occurred in places as distant as Cape Town

had originated in our capital. We have denied this preposterous allegation, for it is nothing but preposterous, given the location of our capital *vis-à-vis* the South African border. But what is even more supportive of our innocence is the very fact that since the attack on our capital the situation has gone from bad to worse in South Africa. A state of emergency has been declared in spite of the destruction of the "ANC nerve centre in Botswana". This proves quite conclusively that South Africa's problems are South African-made, and not a consequence of an external conspiracy. The ANC's guerrilla bases are in Soweto, Langa, Guguleto and all over South Africa, and not in foreign capitals, let alone the capital of Botswana.

8. Quite obviously, therefore, our capital was attacked unjustly on 14 June, and it is our right to demand compensation for the damage caused to life and property and for the very serious injury inflicted on the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of our country. The question of proving the culprit's culpability has never been an issue. Pretoria itself celebrated the brutal murder of the 14 June victims as soon as the heinous deed was done. So our case has been proved beyond all doubt, if any proving was ever necessary.

9. As paragraphs 83 and 84 of the Secretary-General's report attest, the invasion of our capital in the middle of the night was a traumatic experience for its inhabitants and refugees alike, besides the carnage it left in its wake. If our country is an island of peace and tranquillity, as it is well known to be, it is in many special ways personified by its capital situated so close to the edge of a seething volcano—not only an island of peace and tranquillity in the turbulence of southern Africa but, in addition, a show-piece of non-racial harmony so close to the citadel of racism.

10. Yet there is today in that capital a great deal of fear, and, understandably, gone is the unquestioning hospitality our capital had long been known to accord refugees from a South Africa to which we are inseparably joined by geography, history and culture. A gateway to freedom for victims of *apartheid*, the town of Gaborone is not about to abandon its humanitarian tradition, however; but it has been forced to be more circumspect in its generosity. Our refugee policy has not changed, but we have every reason to dread a repetition of the 14 June experience. We will never abandon our values and respect for the rule of law, but in carrying out our international obligations towards refugees, we should not and cannot be left to our own devices.

11. That is why we feel very strongly that the attack on our capital by South African commandos on 14 June was a serious challenge not only to our weak and powerless country but also to the international community as a whole. As the Secretary-General's report states:

"At stake is the right of . . . asylum countries to be secure from attack or coercion by refugee producing countries." [S/17453, para. 86.]

Indeed, at stake is a fundamental principle cherished by all civilized humanity; the right of political asylum in peace

and security. This is a right which we believe the international community has the obligation to defend and protect, for without it human civilization would suffer grievously.

12. We therefore expect to be assisted in strengthening our security if we are in turn expected to provide security for the refugees resident in our country. Security for the refugees is dependent on the security of the receiving State, and not the other way round. We know that with the kind of neighbour we have to the south of us it may not be possible for our country to be so secure as to be able to prevent acts of aggression such as that which was perpetrated against our capital on 14 June. But at least the international community must not be seen to be helpless in the face of a brutal violation of a régime of international treaties and conventions it holds so dear. For it would be tragic if the refugee-receiving countries were to be forced to seal their borders against refugees for fear of attacks by refugee-producing countries.

13. Our request for assistance, the report shows, is modest by any standard of measurement, given the enormity of the security problem we face in the strife-torn area which southern Africa has become. It is more than reasonable, for it has to be borne in mind that our country would not have had the slightest inclination to create refugee centres such as the Dukwe settlement, lost in the middle of nowhere, if we had no refugees to look after. It costs us a lot of money and manpower to provide security and other services for the Dukwe settlement, and we have neither: we have neither the manpower nor the money to do so.

14. So, every request for assistance we have made in this report is genuine and heartfelt. It is a direct consequence of the added burden imposed on our limited resources by the presence in our midst of so many refugees, victims of political circumstances who have sought asylum in our country.

15. South Africa has threatened to repeat its 14 June performance, and we take the threat very seriously indeed, since our country will always be a refugee-receiving country. We cannot change our values, and it is not our intention to do so. Our doors will always remain open for genuine victims of political circumstances, even as it is our earnest and cherished prayer and hope that reason and sanity will soon prevail in South Africa so that a new society, free and democratic, can see the light of day in that tortured land.

16. Let me conclude my statement by saying how deeply grateful we are to the Secretary-General for the report and for his forceful appreciation of the problems and quandaries of a front-line State. My country will forever be indebted to him for having dispatched to Botswana so promptly a mission composed of so dedicated and efficient a team of United Nations officials.

17. Let me also thank the Security Council in advance, since I have no reason to doubt that this draft resolution will be adopted unanimously. Let me thank the Council for the invaluable support it will render us and that it has

rendered us in the past in our hour of trial and tribulation. We thank you all very much indeed.

18. Mr. RABETAFIKA (Madagascar) (*interpretation from French*): I should first like to discharge the pleasant duty of asking you, Mr. President, to transmit to Sir Geoffrey Howe, the Minister for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom, our congratulations and profound gratitude for the exceptional way in which he conducted the work of our last meeting, which was held to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the United Nations. I wish also to take this opportunity to tell you, Sir, how privileged we are to be holding our deliberations under your guidance once again.

19. As Chairman of the Group of African States, I should like to express to the Secretary-General our particular satisfaction for the diligence he displayed in dispatching a fact-finding mission to Botswana under the terms set forth in resolution 568 (1985). We should also like to thank the Government of Botswana for the assistance it provided the mission, thereby greatly facilitating its task.

20. It is not our intention to recall all the facts that led to this mission to Botswana. They are well known and were quite rightly condemned by the Council. Nevertheless, in analysing the report now before us our attention has been drawn to two particular points, namely, the economic burden created by the assistance being provided by the Government of Botswana to the refugees and the risk to its own security being run by that country because of the presence of those refugees on its territory. Those points deserve emphasis in order that we may better understand Botswana's concern at the current development of the situation inside South Africa.

21. Indeed, notwithstanding its economic problems, particularly those created by the drought, Botswana, because of its geographical situation and, as its representative has noted, its African traditions and its international and regional commitments, has found itself obliged to be a land of refugees for South Africans victims of *apartheid*. The Government of Botswana has just reaffirmed its allegiance to that policy in spite of the problems being encountered in satisfying the needs of those refugees and in spite of the threats and pressure being exercised by the racist régime of Pretoria to dissuade it from continuing.

22. We are all aware of the current practice to the South African authorities of attacking neighbouring independent States in an effort to camouflage its own internal troubles. Indeed, on 20 September last the Council condemned the South African racist régime for its premeditated and unwarranted armed attacks against the People's Republic of Angola. What assurances do we have that the same hostile acts will not be perpetrated tomorrow against another front-line State? Today, the threats are real and persistent, given the brutality with which the Pretoria forces of law and order daily repress anti-*apartheid* demonstrations, a brutality that may well produce a new influx of refugees into the countries bordering on South Africa.

23. It is in that context that we considered the report submitted by the mission to Botswana. The information

furnished by the Government of Botswana is enlightening and demonstrates its determination to carry out its legal and humanitarian obligations and perform its moral duty towards those who have decided to suffer the atrocities of *apartheid* no more.

24. In this connection we should like to emphasize the following points: first, the commitment of the Government of Botswana to continue, as a signatory of the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees signed at Geneva in 1951<sup>1</sup> and the Convention of the Organization of African Unity Governing Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa concluded at Addis Ababa in 1969<sup>2</sup>, to honour its obligations as a State of asylum; secondly, the co-operation between the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Government of Botswana in order to strengthen and improve the census of refugees; thirdly, Botswana's concern regarding the security of South African refugees, who are vulnerable targets of acts of reprisal on the part of the racist police forces of Pretoria; fourthly, the desire to improve the capacity of refugee settlements in the Dukwe region and in other large towns of the country, including the capital.

25. We are grateful to the Government of Botswana for the tremendous efforts it has made to ensure the safety and well-being of the refugees residing in its country despite an unfavourable, if not hostile, economic and political environment. It is now our duty to decide on the assistance the international community can give Botswana to help it step up its capacity to receive and shelter South African refugees. Our recommendation is that the Council endorse the recommendations and conclusions in the mission's report. The damage and loss of human life involved in the unprovoked attack by South Africa against Gaborone have been assessed. We have to make sure that the Pretoria régime makes reparation for that damage and the other harm that has resulted as a result of its act of aggression committed on 14 June 1985. Furthermore, the competent bodies of the United Nations should also, each within its respective purview, participate in that assistance to the Government of Botswana.

26. It is in that spirit that the delegations of Botswana, Burkina Faso, Egypt, India, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago and Madagascar have sponsored the draft resolution in document S/17503.

27. The solution to the problems of southern African can only be found through the elimination of the policy of *apartheid* in South Africa. South African refugees will continue to be scattered throughout the countries of that region of Africa as long as acts of brutality and violence remain the daily lot of the long-suffering people of South Africa. We believe that the Council should react forthrightly to the sort of situation that has just been experienced by Botswana, as is emphasized in the conclusion of the mission's report:

"At stake is the right of refugee asylum countries to be secure from attack or coercion by refugee producing countries: this is a fundamental principle of the interna-

tionally agreed régime of international treaties and conventions dealing with refugees." [*Ibid.*]

28. The PRESIDENT: It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution contained in document S/17503. Unless I hear any objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

*A vote was taken by show of hands.*

*The draft resolution was adopted unanimously [resolution 572 (1985)].*

29. The PRESIDENT: There are no further speakers for this meeting. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on the agenda.

*The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.*

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NOTES

<sup>1</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 189, No. 2545.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, vol. 1001, No. 14691.



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