

17 December 1991

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(If needed)

**Statement by Mrs Sadako Ogata,
Personal Representative of the
United Nations Secretary-General,
to the Convention for a Democratic South Africa
Johannesburg, 20 December 1991**

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to represent the United Nations Secretary-General at this historic Convention for a Democratic South Africa. His profound hope is that CODESA be the beginning of a process that will lead to the peaceful end of the apartheid system and to the adoption of a new constitution. It is this new constitution that will herald a united, non-racial and democratic South Africa. In reaching this goal, South Africans will be making a reality of the new South Africa envisaged by the United National Declaration on Apartheid and Its Destructive Consequences in Souther Africa. And in this context, it is important to recall that that Declaration and subsequent United Nations resolutions, prepared under the guidance of the Special Committee against Apartheid, have all been adopted by consensus. Through them, the international community has spoken on South Africa with one voice.

The path to today's Convention has not been easy. It has been marked by difficulties, the most serious of which is the persisting political violence, notwithstanding the National Peace Accord signed last September. It is a source of encouragement that despite those obstacles, the political will of the concerned parties, to engage in the current process of negotiations, has prevailed. I recall, in this context, that the Secretary-General in his Second Report on the Implementation of the Declaration

recognised that, and I quote, "this process may be relatively lengthy and even vulnerable ..." unquote. The Secretary-General would hope that others will join as the process unfolds in line with democratic principles so as to make it inclusive of all those that cherish the ideal of a democratic and non-racial South Africa. The support, not only of all South Africans, but also of all those in the world committed to the advent of a new South Africa will be essential to the success of this process.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Secretary-General and his delegation which represents both the Member States and the United Nations Secretariat to this Convention, I wish to stress that the United Nations stands ready, when requested by the South Africans themselves and the international community, to help in the promotion of this current process and in the provision of assistance during the transitional period and beyond. Indeed, last week, the General Assembly adopted by consensus a resolution which provides a specific political framework within which future assistance to South Africa would be granted.

As CODESA begins its deliberations, the world has entered a special period in its history; it is a period that presents more than ever, opportunities and hopes for the realisation of freedom and peace; yet, this period is also fraught with numerous obstacles that challenge our quest for freedom. A philosopher once said that the history of the world is non other than the progress of the consciousness of freedom. Freedom conceived not merely as an utopian ideal, but as an idea the realisation of which must face both its dangers and possibilities. In this sense, today we are witnessing the emergence in South Africa of a fundamental challenge: the challenge of making freedom a reality in a country besieged for so long by oppression and injustice. It is our hope that you shall succeed in confronting this historic challenge.

I thank you.