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occasional paper

THE
SOUTH
AFRICAN
INSTITUTE
OF
INTERNATIONAL
AFFAIRS

DEVELOPMENTS
IN
SOUTHERN
AFRICA

NEIL VAN HEERDEN

MR N. P. VAN HEERDEN is well known to most South Africans as Director-General of the Department of Foreign Affairs. As a career diplomat he served in many positions including that of Ambassador to West Germany before returning to South Africa as Deputy Director-General. He played a prominent role in the Angolan and Namibian negotiations in the last two years.

This paper is based on the talk he delivered at the Witwatersrand Branch of the Institute at the Annual General Meeting held on 27 November 1990.

It should be noted that any opinions expressed in this article are the responsibility of the author and not of the Institute.

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NEIL VAN HEERDEN

ISBN:0-908371-85-3

December 1990

The South African Institute
of International Affairs
Jan Smuts House
P.O. Box 31596, Braamfontein 2017, South Africa

Thank you for the invitation to speak to you today. My talk will focus on developments in southern Africa, but to preface my comments, to put them into a certain context as it were, I would like to make a few general remarks.

There can be no doubt that the world has reached the threshold of a new era in international affairs. After all, there is no continent on earth in which new relationships and important structural changes are not taking place. The last vestiges of the Cold War are being swept aside and the resultant lowering in global tensions has led to a suspension of hostilities in several key areas. Excepting current events in the Gulf, the whole world would appear to be moving towards what one is tempted to see as a permanent state of peace and co-operation.

Even with the Gulf crisis the virtual unanimity of the international community in its opposition to Iraq's actions, demonstrates that the age of domination and aggression has passed and is being replaced by a universal quest for peace.

Because of this strong thrust towards peace it would seem that in the coming decade, ideological and military issues are likely to recede. Economic factors will predominate and themes such as human rights and environmental concerns will grow further in importance. These are compelling issues which define the "Zeitgeist" with which the nations of the world will increasingly have to align themselves.

All the world's peoples are in the same leaky boat, for better or for worse, and if we are to survive, we shall have to think beyond exclusive ideological and national frontiers. Traditional exclusivity is making way for greater inclusiveness.

The dramatic change in direction in South Africa's domestic policies in the past year has been followed by a significant change in the quality of South Africa's international relations. As far as Africa is concerned, the new approach by the South African Government has already had a considerable positive impact. South African Trade Missions exist in several African countries and the recent visits of the State President to Madagascar, Morocco and Senegal are good examples of the new climate of acceptability and co-operation which characterise the relations between South Africa and the rest of our continent.

In southern Africa, a primary task of South African diplomacy is to convince our neighbours that South Africa is committed to peace and stability and has the will, the capacity and most importantly, the heart, to be a good partner. In doing so, however, we shall have to guard against creating false expectations or making promises which in the end we cannot keep. Our diplomacy must be honest and realistic. South Africa cannot hope to match the West in development assistance - we have neither the manpower nor the capital. What we do have is indigenous and therefore acclimatised technical expertise and scientific knowledge which has been tried and tested on African soil under African conditions. Our contribution to the region's developmental needs will be qualitative rather than quantitative. South African expertise in the fields of health,

food production, mining, energy, animal production and veterinary services, engineering and conservation is increasingly being utilised, not only in southern Africa, but in Africa as a whole. And in our involvement in these various areas, we follow one simple philosophy, namely that partnership and training is preferable to charity and dependence.

There can be no greater demonstration of our commitment to peace and stability in the region than our participation during the peace process in Namibia. South Africa co-operated actively in the negotiation and the implementation of the peace plan and the related agreements with Cuba and Angola, thereby establishing our integrity as a reliable negotiating partner. In fact it is generally accepted that without this co-operation the implementation of the settlement plan would simply not have been possible.

Namibia's independence, of course, has not changed the physical realities in southern Africa. The economic infrastructure which has been established in that country over many decades is a great asset and the envy of most African and other developing countries - we know this because their representatives tell us so. This infrastructure is a great asset which Namibia will want to continue to preserve and expand. Over and above these realities, there are extensive cultural and personal bonds which link and will continue to link Namibia with South Africa. If we are to be sensible, we will maintain and build upon these inter-relationships which, after all, came about as a result of historic, economic and other realities. These realities will remain.

Namibia's strategic location also places the country in a pivotal role as regards the development of the economies of the SADCC family of nations. Land-locked states in southern Africa will undoubtedly look towards Namibia as a new gateway to markets in the West. Independence for Namibia thus also implies strategic changes to traditional development and trade patterns in the region that will test the sub-continent's ability to rise to this challenge in a spirit of mutual acceptance and respect.

South Africa stands ready to define a constructive relationship with its newly independent neighbour. We wish to engage across a wide spectrum and enjoy all the benefits of full interstate co-operation, such as the sharing of acclimatised technology and the potential for our economies of private sector involvement.

Relations between the two states will to a large extent be determined by the manner in which crucial issues such as Walvis Bay and the Orange River border will be dealt with bilaterally. Judging from the current state of play, eight months since independence, the prospects are good for a constructive and sensible relationship.

In Angola there appears to be a measure of debate within the ruling MPLA party about movement towards a multi-party

democracy. In late October the Central Committee of the MPLA party announced that it had adopted a programme of action which would lead to a multi-party system in Angola as well as general elections.

However, the fine print of the press communiqué revealed that as a first step there would be a partial review of the constitution by the end of the first quarter of 1991, followed by a more comprehensive review and a general population census over the next twelve months. Finally the MPLA envisaged general elections only after three years.

Clearly the winds of change are blowing very gently indeed in Angola. What is encouraging though, is the fact that the MPLA continue to engage in direct talks with UNITA. UNITA has for instance, recognised the state of Angola, the authority of President dos Santos and the legitimacy of the MPLA, and has indicated it will not insist on a role in any transitional government.

Although the parties have not yet reached agreement over the timing of a cease-fire between MPLA troops and UNITA, it appears that both sides are in agreement that a cease-fire be signed at the same time that a document on the political principles are agreed to by both parties.

On our side, we have everything to gain from peace in Angola - the prospect of economic co-operation to name but one aspect - and we are supporting mediation efforts where we can.

Bilateral developments between South Africa and Mozambique continue their positive momentum. Regular high level meetings continue to take place within several formal bilateral structures. Informal ministerial discussions, including with President Chissano, are held on a regular basis.

The Frelimo government formalised its move away from its previous Marxist/Leninist philosophy when the Mozambican parliament adopted a new constitution on 2 November 1990. This constitution, which was unanimously accepted by all members of Parliament, confirms the seriousness of the commitment of President Chissano's government to a new course of democratic government. The constitution, which inter-alia accepts the tenets of a multi-party democracy and human rights provisions, should go a long way in addressing the reservations that RENAMO had. The new Constitution will become operative on 30 November.

While RENAMO has criticised the new constitution in that they had no say in drawing it up, one could possibly consider this response as part of their negotiating posture. What is encouraging though is that, according to latest reports from Rome, the FRELIMO and RENAMO delegations are meeting again after some previous hiccoughs and one can be cautiously optimistic that the talks will continue with the assistance of the new mediators under the auspices of the Italian government.

South Africa has made it clear, to the parties and to the mediator, that it is prepared to continue to play a positive facilitating role in the process.

With regard to Zimbabwe, I am pleased to note that recent events have provided an indication of an improvement in the relations between our countries. The events that I allude to include:

- the lifting of the State of Emergency in Zimbabwe. Previously, the Zimbabwean authorities cited South African destabilisation as one of the principal reasons for the continued renewal of the State of Emergency;
- cautious but positive recognition by spokesmen of the Zimbabwean government to the changes that have taken place in South Africa since 2 February;
- the recent release by the Zimbabwean government of the two South Africans who were incarcerated in Harare, namely Mr. Lesia and Miss Odile Harington;
- the steadily increasing access of our Trade Representative to senior officials of the Zimbabwe government;
- in addition South Africa has also recently received the green light to enter into negotiations for the purchase of a centrally situated property in Harare which is to be developed to house our Trade Mission offices - currently we are located in premises which have become completely inadequate for the volume of work handled by the Mission.

Recently, a SACOB delegation attended the Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries Conference and also some 100 South Africans attended the World Energy Council Forum in Harare in November. The attendance of South Africans at these high profile events represents further positive developments in creating a climate of trust and contact and also, I believe, indicates movement towards normality in our relations.

I have no doubt that the approximately one-quarter of a million visas that are issued annually to Zimbabwe citizens to visit South Africa has also played its part in extending contact and improving understanding.

A marked feature of the growing rapprochement between South Africa and our neighbouring states is the sense of realism which prevails. Future regional relations, both political and economic, will evolve through a process which, in my opinion, is likely to unfold slowly and progressively. Nevertheless, there is already a consensus emerging as to the need for closer co-operation between the states in the region.

Our sub-continent is endowed with great potential wealth. It has abundant and complementary natural resources. In particular, southern Africa is a treasure house of valuable strategic

minerals. It also has more than adequate agricultural resources and therefore the potential to become one of the more prosperous regions in the world.

There is a changing mood in our region, including within South Africa. There is a growing realisation that true independence and a national identity can only be reached once economic stability has been achieved. This was reflected at the World Economic Forum conference in Geneva at the beginning of October where general consensus was reached that stability in the region was a prerequisite for progress. That entails bringing peace to Angola and Mozambique and, as delegates pointed out, also within South Africa. Stability is infectious and regional stability cannot be divorced from domestic stability in individual states in the region.

South Africa is the economic power and motor-force in the region. But, despite our economic pre-eminence, the benefits of interaction with neighbouring states are not one-sided.

Existing regional ventures such as the Cahora Bassa Hydro-electric scheme, the Lesotho Highlands Water Project, and the Sua Pan Soda Ash project in Botswana, all of which have foreign funding, have set a pattern for interaction from which the entire region will benefit.

It is essential, in my opinion, for the very survival of the region that we share resources and present a dynamic and stable market to the world. This is the only way in which we will be able to attract the investment needed for our region's economic upliftment. A point which I must emphasise is that South Africa can only be detrimentally affected by economic debilitation amongst its neighbours. South Africa's destiny is inextricably linked to that of its neighbours and it will be dragged down inevitably if, in regional terms, economic revival cannot be achieved.

The new tide in world affairs has brought in a season of political and economic pragmatism in southern Africa. South Africa must use this new climate to demonstrate that it is neither an adversary of nor a competitor to its neighbours. We have to instill confidence in our neighbours that we can be their best partner.

We agree with the assessment of "The Economist" magazine earlier this year that "the most powerful idea in the world at the end of the 20th Century is the huge advantage of economic togetherness".

But, as I mentioned earlier, South Africa does not have the financial resources to replace or even supplement, development aid which is desperately needed in southern Africa and beyond. We are therefore engaged, through various means, in persuading Western Europe and the European community in particular, to co-operate with the countries of southern Africa in developing

the resources of the region. The objective of the Development Programme for Southern Africa (DEPSA) is to attract development assistance and investments to the region.

To achieve this goal we advance the case that:

- Investment and development aid is necessary for the region;
- Southern Africa can be a coherent and viable economic and commercial entity;
- the South African economy, its technology, management and skills' resources are available for the benefit of all in the development of the region;
- co-ordinated infrastructural development programmes should be designed to improve economic prosperity within the countries of the region;
- there is an existing infrastructural interdependence in the region which should be better utilised for the benefit of the region and its people; and
- trilateral development projects and investment for the economic benefit of the region as a whole are called for.

During the State President's recent visits to Europe and the United States it became clear from discussions at the highest level that these leaders are prepared to give southern Africa a chance. It is now up to us, the countries of this region, to get out act together and to present the kind of face to the world that will ensure that we are neither overlooked nor forgotten.

Printed by:
Central Printing Unit
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
1 Jan Smuts Avenue, Johannesburg