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Container **S-0042-0001: OLA - General (incl. Trust Fund for ICJ disputes)**

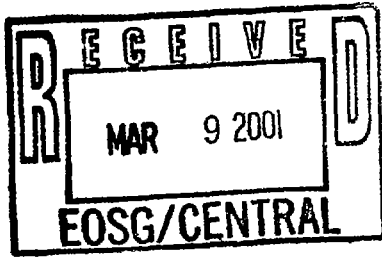
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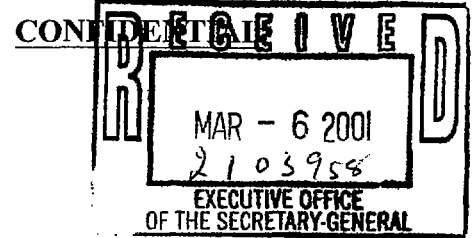




PRIORITY

Note to the Secretary-General

Through Mr. Iqbal S. Riza



World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance

1. As previously agreed, I spoke this morning by telephone with the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mrs Mary Robinson and asked her about the international compensation scheme for slavery provided for in paragraph 88 of the Draft Declaration for the World Conference on Racism and based upon the African Regional Preparatory Conference in Dakar, Senegal. I asked her what strategy she had in mind for dealing with this paragraph as negotiations proceeded and whether she thought that its language could be modified or dropped.

2. Mrs Robinson explained that the Draft Declaration was a compilation or "building blocks" of the Draft Declarations of the regional conferences that took place in Dakar, Senegal; Santiago, Chile; and Teheran, Iran. Paragraph 88 reflected a strong view held by the Africa Group as reflected in Dakar and supported by the regional conferences in Santiago and Teheran that regard should be had for the effects of slavery on those of African descent. Mrs Robinson explained that the general feeling at the Preparatory Conference in Geneva was that the language in paragraph 88 was "far too mild." A lot of discussion was anticipated around this particular provision and African countries in particular, supported by the "Africa Diaspora" which included countries from Latin America, the Caribbean and the African-American group in the United States felt that it was time to deal with the issue of compensation for slavery. Thus, it was impossible to get the wording of paragraph 88 dropped. However, it was unlikely, in light of the complexity of the matter that arrangements for setting up an international cooperation fund for compensation for slavery would be finalised at the World Conference in Durban.

3. I asked Mrs Robinson whether she had received any indication from the United States or other Western Governments on their position on the matter. She indicated that Sweden as Chairman of the European Union was trying to find "some common ground" at the Conference.

4. I then asked whether, in light of the above the United States and other Western Governments might withdraw from the Conference. Mrs Robinson indicated that currently they were still part of the negotiations on the text and that there was no indication at this stage that they would withdraw. The US however, had indicated that the issue should be put off to allow time for fuller consideration.


5. I asked Mrs Robinson whether the issue of compensation for slavery would not be a highly polarizing item in the Commission if it were referred there. Mrs Robinson

explained that establishing a fund would be exceedingly complex and would have to be discussed in detail for example, in an Expert Working Group. Consequently, final proposals for such a Fund would definitely not be adopted in Durban.

6. Finally, Mrs Robinson indicated that the thrust of the current debate at the Preparatory Conference was towards a hardening of the language in paragraph 88 of the Draft Declaration driven by African countries with support from countries in Latin America, the Caribbean and Asia. She said that she had forwarded a brief summary of today's interventions to you for information.

7. As part of her overall briefing on the Conference she will address these issues at the Senior Management Group tomorrow.

6 March 2001

 Ralph Zacklin

cc: Mrs Elisabeth Lindenmayer