

face the Nation

Working for peace in South Africa



face the Nation speaks to Angela King, head of the United Nations' Observer Mission to South Africa (Unomsa). King says that local peace structures, which are presently dominated by businessmen, need the participation of women, youth, and representatives from grassroots structures to make them more representative and effective. She also believes that an interim government is essential - "it may not end the violence right away, but it would send a signal that the process of change is moving forward"



Angela King, head of the United Nations Observer Mission in South Africa (Unomsa) is an experienced diplomat and academic who has had a long association with the world body.

She was born on August 28, 1938, in Jamaica, West Indies and read history at the University of West Indies.

Further academic work earned her an academic diploma in Education and an MA in Educational Sociology from the University of London.

She did graduate studies in Administration at New York University and Legal Studies at Gray's Inn, London.

Her first exposure to the UN was in 1963 when as a Jamaican Foreign service diplomat, she served in that country's Permanent Mission to the United Nations.

She officially joined the UN in 1966.

Her work has included social development, the advancement of women and their integration in development (1973-77); resources and programme planning (1978-82) and first chief of the UN central evaluation unit.

She was then appointed recruitment and placement director (1978-1990) and later staff administration and training director (1990-92).

NEW NATION: How many people have you deployed in the country, where and at what cost?

ANGELA KING: There are 40 UN peace observers - representing 30 nationalities - and 10 administrative staff. Two observers are deployed in every region, three in the Orange Free State, four in the Ciskei, 12 in Durban and 15 in the PWV, because the latter two were identified as flash points when we came.

Notably, 26 of the 40 are women - the largest contingent of women ever represented on any UN mission.

The secretary-general, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, allocated US \$1-million for this mission. The normal procedure would be for him to make a financial statement about a mission, but the urgency of this one required that he act promptly. He simply announced that funds would be drawn from the existing resources. We could not wait for, say, a donor conference because in that case we would still be in New York.

Can you restate the purpose of your mission to South Africa and evaluate its efficacy in the light of your experience here?

Our mission was the result of UN Resolution 765, which came as a result of the Boipatong massacre and the consequent breakdown of constitutional negotiations.

Prior to that, for two years, the international community thought South Africa was moving towards normalcy.

The secretary-general was concerned when Boipatong happened and there was a breakdown in negotiations.

On the recommendations of special UN envoy, Cyrus Vance, this mission was dispatched to strengthen the structures of the National Peace Accord (NPA).

The purpose was to assist the NPA structures and reduce tensions.

The secretary-general asked specifically that we should observe the fencing of hostels, monitor the conduct of the security forces - especially how the police conduct investigations - and monitor the activities of political organisations to reduce tensions.

Since the signing of the NPA more than a year ago, violence has not abated. How do you think your input is going to change the situation for the better?

The NPA is like the Universal Declaration on Human Rights or any other such document - it depends on the signatories and other interested parties to make it work.

The limitations 'have been'

recognised and a lot of work is being done to strengthen it.

The NPA chairperson, John Hall, and Peace Committee chairperson, Antonie Gildenhuys, have worked hard at correcting the limitations of the NPA structures.

While I have not heard anyone say these are not men of integrity, there is concern that the Peace Accord is there for somebody else. That is, it is there to keep "us" - the black people and coloured people who are directly affected by the violence - quiet.

Gildenhuys has estimated that approximately only five per cent of the population knows about the NPA.

Efforts to popularise the NPA have included recording the peace song and making a video. Plans are also afoot to engage a professional publicity company to undertake a publicity campaign.

The monitors have also drawn from their experience to strengthen the structures of the accord. Many have been in similar situations before.

Proposals have been put forward where there was a perception that shortcuts were possible.

An example: the monitors pointed to the Namibian experience where people went to schools to teach children about voting procedure and brought together students and the white farmers - who either opposed change or were apprehensive about the future - to talk.

What strategies do you think should be put in place to facilitate your work and, necessarily, that of the NPA?

A week ago I was at a meeting of the chairpersons of the Regional Dispute Resolution Committees. There was a feeling that more people could get involved, especially from the grassroots organisations - whether they be political, church or civic - if they had the means.

So far the people involved are businessmen who have the means, although we are aware that some have done so at great expense to their businesses.

I am not saying because business people are involved it is a bad thing, but that it is skewed. To try and restore the balance, a stipend will be offered in the next months. That is the first thing.

Secondly, I see very few women in these structures. There already exists in South Africa the National Coalition of Women from which non-partisan representation can be drawn.

Failing that, there will always be this distinct feeling that women's contribution is being overlooked. The women I met at Meadowlands were very vocal and

had clear ideas of how they could contribute to the process.

If the peace structures are to be stronger, those who signed and those who did not must be brought together, and women must play a role.

A third area is the involvement of the youth, who seem to be outside the structures.

For the future of the country, the youth must clearly get involved in the peace process.

What are the implications of your six-months timeframe: does it mean the violence should be ended by then and a political settlement arrived at?

That was never how it was intended to work. We have a very open mandate that said we would work here for six months.

Once our work is done, a different mission - comprised of electoral experts who can assist in preparing for elections - will probably come. That is the usual process.

Another option is for a UN peacekeeping force should the situation deteriorate. But, I do not think it will come to that here.

Another factor in our stay is, of course, the government. We can only stay if the government wants us here. We know, though, that the eyes of the world are on the government and they will not interfere with our stay.

Have you discerned any patterns to the violence?

Two months is too little to have discerned patterns.

We have noted that a large proportion of the violence is criminal. Of course we realise that at the core of that is the political dilemma, which has resulted from the lack of equity in the society and the legacy of apartheid's deprivation of sections of the community.

With regard to the so-called political violence we have heard many stories, sometimes with conflicting solutions proposed.

In Ciskei, grassroots people said 'keep the defence force away, bring in the police'; in kwaZulu they said 'remove the police - the kwaZulu Police and the South African police, we want the defence force'.

I cannot give any answers.

We have heard of the movement of guns from Renamo in Mozambique to kwaZulu. We have heard that the ANC's Umkhonto weSizwe (MK) and other armies in South Africa are stocking the violence.

We have noted reports of security force involvement in the violence.

We have also seen the professional massacres that have taken the lives of people like ANC Natal

Midlands leader Reggie Hadebe.

But we have not been persuaded that there is a third force. A third force would have to be an extremely well-organised force.

I think a combination of factors lead to the incessant violence.

UN Resolution 765 said the South African government bears the ultimate responsibility for ending the violence and urged the speedy resumption of negotiations. Do you think there has been compliance to the letter and spirit of this resolution?

On the question of what the UN said about the role of the government - we feel that as long as there are the homelands with all their security structures there cannot be peace.

On negotiations, there has been a lot of posturing and leaders wanting to be seen as important.

I would like to point out that tremendous work has been done by John Hall and Antonie Gildenhuys.

As regards the political parties - even if they agree to disagree they must get together to show their followers that they can get together.

Do you share the perception that the sense of urgency that characterised South Africa's and the UN's intervention in the wake of Boipatong has been lost.

Absolutely not. The UN Security Council is monitoring the situation. We send weekly reports that are keeping the secretary-general abreast of events.

Just this week there will be a discussion of apartheid attended by a number of political parties from within the country.

The secretary-general regularly writes to leaders in the country and is also in telephonic contact with them.

Even though the policy is not to recognise the homelands, the secretary-general has written letters to all the homeland leaders.

He is concerned that the South African crisis is resolved and that it becomes a democratic and non-racial country.

What do you think will happen to South Africa if there is a delay in the resumption of negotiations?

I cannot predict exactly what will happen - but naturally we want a solution sooner, rather than later.

In this context, we think an interim government must be introduced without delay. It may not end the violence right away, but it would send a signal that the process of change is moving forward.

ANC 'pushing for early end to sanctions'

THE African National Congress is holding discussions with a view to having the Transitional Executive Council set up before legislation is passed in Parliament to enable the organisation to lift sanctions, according to its president, Nelson Mandela.

He was addressing an End Conscription Campaign peace festival at Wits University last night.

Mandela said the ANC would take

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the proposal to multiparty negotiations after discussing the matter. If sufficient consensus was reached, the ANC would then call for the lifting of sanctions within two or three weeks.

Mandela said his organisation had been unable to lift sanctions because legislation on the creation of the TEC and its duties had not been passed during the last parliamentary session. — Sapa.

SUNDAY TIMES 8/8/93 The lessons of war in Bosnia

Sunday Times Reporter

STRIKING parallels can be drawn between the war in Bosnia and racial conflict in South Africa.

This emerged from a lecture by award-winning Guardian war correspondent Maggie O'Kane at the End Conscription Campaign's 1993 Peace Festival at Wits University last week.

Serbian leaders had engaged in a calculated campaign to create ethnic tension in the former Yugoslavia. Ethnic hostility

was manufactured to provide the spark for conflict, said Miss O'Kane.

"Masked, armed men burst into houses and opened fire, indiscriminately killing men, women and children. These tactics caused insecurity and fear, and turned a united Yugoslavia into a killing field."

These acts of terrorism echo indiscriminate killings in South Africa.

Miss O'Kane said she came to South Africa "to explain how South Africans can learn from a war which could have been avoided".

Debate on Bill of Rights is crucial

MARIANNE MERTEN

A BILL of Rights should become part of ordinary people's lives and of a future educational culture, ANC national executive member Albie Sachs said yesterday.

At the End Conscription Campaign's (ECC) Peace Festival in Johannesburg, Sachs said the human rights debate should include representations from, among others, women, homosexuals and the disabled.

It was crucial to decide whether a Bill of Rights was interpreted by "a branch of the white, male-dominated, conservative judiciary" or a new court with a constitution and thinking that were non-racial and non-sexist.

The anti-apartheid movement had developed a body of people with the skills, sensitivity and seriousness to make good judges, he said.

Parliament should be involved in human rights protection in education, health and resource allocation. It had no role to play when it came to human rights considerations such as ending torture, Sachs said.

Two draft Bills were being discussed: one was part of the constituent assembly's constitutional principles and the other dealt with fundamental rights and freedoms during transition.

Sachs described the second document as a stop-gap measure. It only formed an equality clause and did not forbid specific types of discrimination.

This did not appeal to South Africans who had experienced discrimination.

The omission of freedom of expression and the right of conscientious objection from both documents was a serious one, he said.

He paid tribute to the ECC for its peacemaking activities.



ANC NEC member Albie Sachs speaking on the development of a human rights culture at the End Conscription Campaign's Peace Festival in Johannesburg yesterday. Picture: GARTH LUMLEY

ECC closes its doors on fighting conscription

20/1/93 Daily News

Johannesburg: The End Conscription Campaign closed the door on 10 years of fighting conscription as its Peace Festival drew to an end yesterday.

But related aspects of the work the ECC started in 1983 will continue with an anti-militarisation group formed at the end of the conference held at Wits University this weekend.

Since the last whites-only military call-up has probably taken place, the ECC used the conference to examine a range of issues related to peace in South Africa.

Delegates took part in several workshops organised under the themes of peace-keeping in South Africa, armed forces in transition, and developing a peaceful society.—Daily News Correspondent

ANC 'pushing for early end to sanctions'

Sachs 1/1/93

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