

Draft report of the Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation on the solidarity conference in support of Cuba, Palestine and Western Sahara

The Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation (the Committee), having held a solidarity conference in support of Cuba, Palestine and Western Sahara on 6 February 2014, at Parliament in Cape Town, reports as follows:

1. Background

The Committee held a Parliamentary solidarity conference in support of the peoples of Cuba, Palestine and Western Sahara. The solidarity conference was the first of its kind in Parliament. It was the culmination of extensive work carried out by the Committee in response to the call by President Zuma in his successive State of the Nation addresses since 2010, with a message that solidarity is and should feature as a strong element of South Africa's internationalism. The Committee's activities have resulted in Parliament adopting deliberate and conscious resolutions in support of the respective campaigns by these countries for equal treatment and the right to self-determination.

1.1 Objectives

The primary focus of the conference was to make the people of South Africa aware of the common challenges facing the peoples of Cuba, Palestine and Western Sahara, relating to the denial of human rights and the right to self-determination as a people. As a product of international solidarity itself, South Africa has committed itself to the international campaign towards a tangible and lasting reprieve to the suffering peoples of the three nations.

The solidarity conference was also aimed at creating a forum for public participation on these issues. It was further aimed to produce an action-oriented declaration which would form a part of a process aimed at developing a Parliamentary Plan of Action taking the solidarity campaign forward towards a peaceful resolution of the challenges facing the three nations.

1.2 Themes

The theme of the solidarity conference was “Fostering solidarity to build a just and better world”. The theme was a testimony to the commitment by the Committee to support international solidarity in advancing a course of action aimed at intensifying support for the efforts towards lasting solutions in the challenges facing the three countries.

The following sub-themes were dedicated to the three countries:

Cuba: Asserting the right of the people of Cuba to a meaningful and unfettered trade and a call for the release of the Cuban Five;

Palestine: Intensifying the struggle for self-determination and efforts to bring about a lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict; and

Western Sahara: Liberation of Western Sahara, ending colonisation in Africa.

1.3 Structure of the conference

The solidarity conference had two plenary sessions; opening and closing, aimed at having open exchange of ideas and delivering of messages of support to the peoples of the three countries. There were also three commissions/breakaway groups which had dedicated discussions on each of the countries, guided by the sub-themes.

1.4 Attendance

The conference was attended by members of the Committee, Ambassadors of Cuba, Palestine, Western Sahara and Algeria, civil society organisations, media groups, labour unions, academia, faith-based organisations, research institutions and members of the public with interest in the issues discussed. The general public was invited through an advert which was posted in the Sunday newspapers with a wide distribution in the country.

The Committee’s members in attendance comprised the following:

Mr HT Magama (ANC) Chairperson

Prof S Mayatula (ANC) Committee Whip

Ms W Newhoudt-Druchen (ANC)

Mr M Booï (ANC)

Ms P Ngubeni Maluleka (ANC)

Mr E Sulliman (ANC)

Ms F Mahomed (ANC)

Mr B Eloff (DA)

Mr LS Ngonyama (COPE)

Mr MB Skosana (IFP)

Ms C Dudley (ACDP)

Support staff

The support staff who were in attendance comprised Mr L Sigwela (Committee Secretary), Ms L Mosala (Content Adviser), Mr D Madlala (Researcher), Ms N Mooi (Committee Assistant), Mr T Bottoman (Committee Assistant), Ms S Goba (Committee Assistant, Ms A Nkwandla (Committee Assistant), Ms V Makubalo (Committee Assistant) and Ms A Macanda. (Executive Secretary)

2. Opening plenary

The first phase of the solidarity conference was an opening plenary which was moderated by the Whip of the Committee Prof. SM Mayatula. The opening plenary was a forum for solidarity statements from different individuals and organisations. The statements were based on the main theme: 'Fostering solidarity to build a just and better world'. The session began with a welcome address and statement of objectives by the Chairperson of the Committee Mr. HT Magama. His statement set the tone for the conference, and highlighted the challenges facing Cuba, Palestine and Western Sahara, relating to decolonisation denial of human rights and their right to self-determination as a people. With regard to Cuba, the challenge was stated as the United States economic sanctions against Cuba and for the release of the Cuban Five incarcerated in American jails. The issue with Palestine was the denial of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and a lasting viable solution on the Israeli-Palestine conflict. Regarding Western Sahara, the challenge was mentioned as the colonisation of this country by Morocco, and denial of the Saharawi people's right to self-determination. The solidarity conference was seen, Mr Magama added, as a culmination of the Committee's work on the three countries, and as creating a forum for open and maximum public participation in the discussions. The expected outcome was an action-oriented plan

of action which would guide the Committee in its efforts and response towards redoubling the campaign of solidarity with the peoples of the three countries.

The Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Mr Marius Fransman, delivered a statement of South Africa's foreign policy positions on Cuba, Palestine and Western Sahara. He thanked the Committee for taking a step intended to provide the people of South Africa with a platform to learn more about what was happening in Cuba, Palestine and Western Sahara. He further described the core principles of South Africa's foreign policy to underscore the principled positions of the country on the plight of people in the three countries of the Conference. He also discussed the value South Africa placed on issues related to the right of self-determination and humanitarian issues that affect various people around the world. He then gave a brief overview of South Africa's policies regarding each of the countries.

Mr Job Sithole, former Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Foreign Affairs, spoke on behalf of Deputy Minister in the Presidency Mr Obed Bapela who could not attend the conference due to other commitments. He spoke on the human aspects of the struggles facing the people of Cuba, Palestine and Western Sahara. He noted the important role that Cubans played in the liberation movements of the African continent among many others. He highlighted some of his personal experiences on the struggles of Palestinian people in the occupied territories and refugee camps in various countries of the region, and with the Saharawi people under occupation by Morocco.

Mr Ahmad Kathrada representing the Ahmad Kathrada Foundation gave a statement of solidarity with the people of Cuba, Palestine and Western Sahara. He described how important these issues were to the late Former President of South Africa Mr Nelson Mandela and informed those present about the plight of Palestinian detainees and prisoners.

The Ambassadors of Algeria, Cuba, Palestine and Western Sahara also gave narratives on the key theme of the conference. This also presented each of the Ambassadors with an opportunity to articulate the positions of their countries as well as describe South Africa's relations with their respective countries.

Representatives of the civil society organisations also presented messages of solidarity. The messages were in support all the three countries and their peoples.

Following the statements, the Moderator, Prof. Mayatula informed the participants that the conference would break into different groups dealing the three countries. Each breakaway group would have a specific theme and be comprised of a convenor, presentations on the group theme, a

discussion by participants and a summation of discussions from which a series of recommendations would be developed.

3. Commissions/Breakaway group sessions

3.1 Group 1: Palestine

The Convenor of this group was Mr Bongani Masuku, representing the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), and the discussion theme was “intensifying the struggle for self-determination and efforts to bring about a lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict”. Mr. Masuku welcomed participants and presenters in the group

Ms Marthie Momberg, representing Kairos organisation, gave her perspective on the Palestinian question. She emphasized the fact that Kairos advocated non-violent resistance. During her presentation she also noted that the Israeli occupation and the construction of settlements were illegal under international law. She argued that the United States should clearly condemn these activities and reject fundamentalism in all its forms. She called on all violent acts to be stopped and that discrimination against Arabs should be put to an end. Palestinian refugees should have the right to return, the humanitarian crises that result from the blockade on Gaza should be alleviated. In Kairos’s view, the United States should not be the only broker involved in the peace-process. Israel was using its occupying power to destroy Palestinian infrastructure and conduct large scale land grabs intended to reduce the viability of a two-state solution. She advanced that security should not be used as a pretext to conduct human rights abuses and emphasis should be placed on the right to self-determination as well as the protection of human rights and the respect for international law. She argued that in the face of human rights abuses it was immoral to hide behind neutrality. She continued to argue that Israel has been strategically using negotiations to stall and continue to construct settlements. She felt that there should be complete military withdrawal and a shift to diplomatic engagements. The international community should gather financial resources to assist the Palestinian people. She then concluded by highlighting the potential role that could be played by the African Union and the United Nations in spreading information about issues like Palestine across the world.

Mr Naeem Jeena, representing the Afro-Middle East Centre, also presented a paper and thanked the Committee for holding a solidarity conference. He spoke about the Boycott, Divest and Sanction (BDS) campaign. He argued that South Africa should reconsider its position on having trade relations with Israel; and consider an approach that goes well beyond the labelling of products until the situation improves. He argued that Parliament should encourage the government to end trade ties with Israel and play a role in fostering unity among the Palestinian people. As an act of solidarity,

Palestinian students should be given a chance to pursue their studies in South Africa. Programmes to assist Palestinians in health related matters should be extended to the refugee camps, Gaza and the West Bank. There should also be a continuous monitoring of the human rights abuses taking place in conjunction with civil society in South Africa and internationally. He argued that the legitimate rights of Palestinians should be supported and articulated in the United Nations.

Mr Jeena added that the solidarity community should not wait to be guided by regional bloc decisions because that would only delay critical work that needed to be done. He argued that a special court should be established to deal specifically with war crimes committed by Israel. In addition, he argued that South Africans serving as mercenaries or committing human rights violations while serving in the Israeli Defence Force, should be punished for doing so. He saw the role of foreign policy in South Africa as that of creating a space for popular contribution on issues of international importance, as such all political parties should be clear on where they stand on human rights abuses, with particular reference to the plight of Palestinians.

The presentations were then followed by a discussion phase where the participants were invited to make contributions. Participants raised questions about the viability of a two-state solution in the context of continued settlement construction. The point was made that criticising Israel was not the same as being anti-Semitism. It was noted that moderate Jewish people wanted peace. There was also a call for unity among Palestinians to be actively encouraged. There were statements around South Africa changing its position on the BDS campaign and a need for awareness campaigns to be conducted around South Africa about the plight of the Palestinian people. A suggestion was made that a bi-national state where all live in peace should also be considered. It was also suggested that the Jewish community in South Africa be engaged about the human rights abuses being committed against Palestinians.

After the engaging debates on the Palestinian question, the following resolutions emanated from the group/commission:

1. South Africa has a legal obligation under the Rome Statute to set up a special court to deal with war crimes, which needed to be urgently setup. South Africa should expeditiously deal with the "Gaza Docket" and deal with South Africans serving in the Israeli Defence Force;

2. The 2009 Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) report that found Israeli guilty of Apartheid should be adopted by Parliament and by the South African government. The HSRC report should also be referred to international bodies including the International Parliamentary Union, the International Criminal Court, the United Nations and the African Union.

3. South Africa has a legal obligation and should stop all financial transactions with Israeli settlement companies, as well as banks and companies involved in the Israeli settlements. This would be in line with developments in Europe and other countries.

4. On the global arena, South Africa should lobby for the financial and other support of the Palestinians, for socioeconomic development after the end of the illegal Israeli occupation.

5. The South African government should support allow Palestinian students to study in South Africa, as a concrete act of solidarity, similar to how India, Cuba and other countries supported South Africa during the 1980s.

6. Entrance requirements into South Africa for Palestinians should be made easier.

7. The Palestinian health system should be supported beyond people capacity. Infrastructure in Gaza, West Bank and refugee camps should be supported.

8. The solidarity conference should support the Robben Island Declaration for the freedom of Marwan Barghouti and all Palestinian political prisoners.

9. The conference should support the Palestinian-led call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) issued by the majority of Palestinians. Complete military, financial and political sanctions should be applied against Israel until it complies with all applicable United Nations resolutions and international law and ends its occupation.

10. All South African political parties should clearly communicate their stance on the plight of the Palestinian people and make it timeously known in the build-up to 2014 elections.

11. Witness and solidarity visits to Palestine should be encouraged, for example, through the World Council of Churches EAPPI programme.

12. South Africa should build and strengthen an international diplomatic block in solidarity with the Palestinian people.

13. The South African government and Parliament should campaign for Israel to be suspended from the SWIFT banking network.

14. Palestinian reconciliation efforts should be encouraged and supported.

16. The South African government and Parliament should table the above at the African Union, United Nations and Inter-parliamentary Union.

3.2 Group 2: Cuba

The convenor of this group session was Mr Chris Mathlako (Friends of Cuba Society) and the discussion theme was “Asserting the rights of the Cuban people to a meaningful and unfettered trade and a call for the release of the Cuban 5”. Following introductions, Mr Clever Banganayi, Deputy Secretary (Friends of Cuba Society), began his presentation by describing his experiences as one of the students studying engineering in Cuba between 1991 and 1996. He pointed out that during their orientation in Cuba, they were encouraged that on completion of their studies, they should go back to their respective countries to serve and improve service delivery to their poor communities. He then described a colloquium he had attended in November 2013 in Cuba on the issue of the Cuban 5. He noted that Cuba hosts an organisation called the ECUP that works to advance solidarity among the peoples of the world. It serves as a forum for people outside government and outside diplomatic channels to talk and exercise solidarity activities.

Comments from reiterated the need for the government to continuously bring forth the issue of Cuba in its interactions with the US administration and President Obama. Parliament was also urged to undertake solidarity visits and study tours to Cuba to observe and learn about the Cuban society, and observe the humility and the value system there.

During this session, the Ambassador of Cuba spoke on a series of issues. He noted that the Cuban government model was not based on multi-party system. The Cuban government was anchored on community participation. He also noted that Cuban society was peaceful and characterised by tranquillity and confidence of knowing that there is no crime. He noted that the Communist party does not participate in elections in Cuba; instead individuals participated in politics depending on their support from the ground. He noted Cuba as a constitutional democracy, which clarified how its political system of government would operate.

The Ambassador then gave the session a brief historical overview. He noted that in 1960, the American Secretary of State, observing that the majority of Cubans supported Castro, called for generating an environment within Cuba that would de-popularise Castro. This would be approved through creating economic hardships to cause popular disenchantment with the government. The economic embargo took root and was still in place since then. The Ambassador noted that there were no international economic sanctions against Cuba; it was only America that was punishing Cuba. The US has the capacity through its extra-territorial laws to punish Cuba through a third country. The US has a lot of weight to affect Cuba using its economic muscle around the world.

Following the presentations, questions and comments were made from the floor. With regard to the Cuban doctors not operating in the Western Cape, it was said that the Western Cape had two hospitals that were producing doctors in the country, therefore they were not absorbing Cuban-trained doctors because they have capacity. A question was then raised regarding the potential of Cuba ever transforming into a multi-party system in Cuba. It was further noted that the late Former President Nelson Mandela clarified South Africa's position in America when interviewed, saying South Africa would never abandon friends that supported it during the dark days of apartheid. It was then noted that South Africa has never been constrained by American pressure and was currently doing business with Cuba on different platforms.

The following are a series of resolutions that emanated from the discussion phase of this session:

1. There should be increased trade between South Africa and Cuba.
2. There should be increased people to people relations.
3. The government should be more firm in respect to the call for the release of the Cuban five; and Parliament should pass a motion on Cuba on this issue

Parliament should undertake the necessary steps to bring all provinces of the country to participate in the Cuban-South Africa Health Agreement.

3.2 Group 3: Western Sahara

The Convenor of this group was Mr Patrick Baleka (Western Sahara Solidarity Foundation) and the theme was "Liberation of Western Sahara, Ending Colonialism in Africa". He began by welcoming those in attendance to the session and explained how the session would be structured, and called upon Professor Ahmad Khalid who would speak on the legal issues surrounding Western Sahara.

Prof. Khalid began his presentation by noting a speech made by the former leader of the African National Congress Mr. Oliver Tambo who was passionate about the plight of the Sahrawi people. He noted a study discussing the type of weapons used against the people of Western Sahara. He also dedicated some attention to the legal aspects of the right to self-determination. In particular, he spoke about the United Nations General Assembly resolution 1514 and resolution 2029 which emphasised the need for a referendum to be held in Western Sahara. He praised South Africa for its principled position which has been one of unwavering support for the people of Western Sahara. He further argued that the African Union (AU) should be as strong as South Africa in its support and argued for a developed African Court of Justice where issues of this nature could be discussed thoroughly, in addition to a more active AU Peace and Security Council. He described the potential strategic value of universal jurisdiction in holding Moroccan officials accountable for human rights violations.

Ambassador Nhlapo also presented a paper and discussed how comprehensively the issue of Western Sahara was discussed in the African Union. He noted that the composition of United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) is largely not African despite the fact that Western Sahara is an African issue. He argued that Africa has an obligation to take a stand, in particular because there was a growing trend towards either ignoring the issue of Western Sahara or actively campaigning to have it removed from the list of self-governing territories. He argued that Morocco maintained the current limbo in place to ensure that self-determination didn't feature as an option. He was concerned that the issues surrounding Western Sahara were not featuring in the Arab League agenda, and that showed an apathy that was developing.

He further argued that it was important for Africa to not only take a stand but to actively fight for the Wall of Shame to be torn down and for mines to be removed. He noted that the peace process was currently at a stand-still but that should not deter those who care about the situation from actively pursuing a change. He also noted that while Spain, France, the United States and the United Kingdom were the key players, pressure should be exerted against them to ensure that a human rights component be added to MINURSO. France and Morocco recently signed an agreement regarding exploration of oil resources in Western Sahara which they argued will benefit locals. Additionally, solar projects have also been earmarked for the region but some investors have withdrawn their support because of the controversies regarding Western Sahara. He concluded his presentation by arguing that the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa and the Department of International Relations and Cooperation should work together to exert pressure and actively campaign for the human rights component to be added to MINURSO, monitoring and reporting to take place continuously on human rights violations and for an end to the exploitation of resources in Western Sahara.

Upon the conclusion of the presentations, the floor was opened to questions and discussions. During this phase of the session, participants such as Members of the Committee, senior officials from the International Relations and Protocol Division of Parliament, civil society and other individuals commented on aspects of the presentation they felt were important. Ambassador of Algeria to South Africa Mr A-EL-N Belaid gave his country's perspective on Western Sahara and argued for a stronger African voice on this issue.

The following are a series of recommendations that emanated from the discussion phase of this session:

1. The group commended the African Union for mandating the African Union Commission with the responsibility of discussing issues surrounding Western Sahara.
2. An advisory opinion should be sought from the African Court of Justice.
3. Universal Jurisdiction should be used as a tool to hold Moroccan officials accountable for human rights abuses committed against the people of Western Sahara.
4. The Peace and Security Council of the African Union should closely monitor violent acts committed against the people of Western Sahara.
5. Any declaration emanating from the solidarity conference should strongly condemn the human rights violations committee by Morocco.
6. The wall of shame and all mines should be removed.
7. The mandate of MUNURSO should be expanded to include human rights issues.
8. The Parliament of the Republic of South Africa in collaboration with the Department of International Relations and Cooperation should work together in lobbying at multilateral forums for increased pressure to be exerted against Morocco.

9. Countries that collaborate with Morocco in exploiting the natural resources of Western Sahara should be held accountable through a coordinated international effort using a variety of resources including international law, boycotts and solidarity campaigns.
 10. Monitoring and reporting of human rights violations committed against the people of Western Sahara should be continuous and consistent.
 11. All represented in the solidarity conference should accelerate public education efforts.
 12. The African solidarity movement should be given the necessary support to ensure that issues related to Western Sahara are given necessary attention.
 13. A platform should be created for meaningful discussions to take place between the Polisario Front and Morocco.
 14. All detainees and political prisoners should be released.
 15. The blockade on media should be condemned and removed.
4. Closing plenary

The Closing Plenary of the Conference was divided into two sessions. The first session was moderated by Ms. F Mohamed, MP and comprised of reports from the three groups as well as a reading of a declaration. The session began with a presentation of proposed resolutions by Mr Naeem Jeena on behalf of Group 1 – Palestine. This was then followed by Mr Chris Mathlako on behalf of Group 2 – Cuba and Mr Patrick Baleka on behalf of Group 3 – Western Sahara of proposed resolutions.

To conclude the first session the, House Chairperson of International Relations in the National Assembly Ms F. Hajaig, MP read a declaration which would articulate some of the key issues discussed by solidarity groups with respect to the issues affecting Cuba, Palestine and Western Sahara. Concerns were raised by the African Christian Democratic Party regarding the contents of

the declaration and Chairperson Mr. HT Magama explained to those in attendance that the declaration would be discussed thoroughly through Committee processes.

4.1 Declaration

The Declaration read by House Chairperson of International Relations in the National Assembly Ms. F Hajaig was as follows:

We, the participants of the South African Parliament's Solidarity Conference in Support of the Peoples of Palestine, Western Sahara and Cuba express our unwavering solidarity with the Palestinian people, the Saharawi people, and the people of Cuba in their continued struggle for freedom, democracy, human rights, justice and self-determination.

We recall all the relevant resolutions adopted by the United Nation, the African Union and the entire international community, which affirm the support for the Palestinian people in their struggle for self-determination and efforts to bring about a just solution in the Palestine and Israel conflict for the creation of sovereign independent State of Palestine and the right of the Palestine refugees to return to their homeland in accordance with United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194(III).

We recall all the relevant resolutions adopted by the United Nation, the African Union and the entire international community that call for the decolonisation of Western Sahara, the last colony in the African continent, to ensure the inalienable rights of the Saharawi people to self-determination and independence, as provided by UN General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV) and in accordance with the commitments of the 1991 UN–African Peace Plan.

Further recall all the relevant resolutions adopted by the United Nation, the African Union and the entire international community against the illegal economic, financial and trade blockade by the United States of America against Cuba and its people, as well as, the need to intensify the international campaign for the release and observation of human rights of Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Fernando Gonzáles, René Gonzáles and Antonioo Guerrero, “the Cuban Five”, who are jailed in by the government of the United States of America.

We reiterate our commitment to build a just and better world by fostering solidarity with the peoples of Cuba, Palestine and Western Sahara with primary focus to highlight and eradicate their current plight.

We pay homage to Nelson Mandela the international leader who spent his entire adult life dedicated to the fight for freedom, democracy, economic and social development, peace, reconciliation and justice. Mandela declared that “our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians.”

We salute all the international solidarity formations and the progressive institutions of global governance that are ceased with the work of supporting the people of Cuba, Palestine and Western Sahara and we pay our tribute to all the people of the world who contributed to the liberation of South Africa and continue to support Cuba, as we celebrate the 20 years of the South African freedom and the 50 years of the Cuban liberation.

We express our gratitude to the United Nations General Assembly that has proclaimed 2014 as “the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People” and requested the Committee on the Exercise of Inalienable Rights to organise solidarity activities around that observance, in cooperation with the governments, the United Nations system, parliaments, intergovernmental organisations and civil society.

We also congratulate the African Union Peace and Security Council and the African Heads of State and Government on their decisive decision, during their 22nd Summit in January 2014, to place the decolonisation and self-determination of the Western Sahara among the priorities of the work of the African Union.

Within this context, we express our full solidarity and support with the Palestinian, the Cuban and Western Sahara people in their just and legitimate struggle, under the guidance of their leadership.

The participants of the conference organised by the South African Parliament on the theme “Fostering Solidarity to Build a Just and Better World: In Support of the Peoples of Palestine, Western Sahara and Cuba: The conference:

On Palestine: The participants of the conference resolved to:

- **Urge the international community in 2014 the Year of the International Solidarity with the Palestinian People, to intensify the efforts to launch a global campaign to bring an end to Israel occupation, realise the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, and achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive negotiated peaceful settlement;**

- Mobilize world support to ensure the immediate end to the blockade of Gaza, its inaccessibility with respect to the humanitarian aid and the entire humanitarian problem that is caused by the blockage;

- Galvanise international solidarity to stop the Israeli settlement expansion to Occupied Palestinian Territory including East Jerusalem and the West Bank, as this action violates international law and threatens the two state solution to the conflict;

- Welcome the positive findings of the Fact Finding Mission on Settlements dispatched by Human Rights Commission, on the need to for Israel to stop its expansion and urge all Member States to demonstrate solidarity by implementing its recommendations;

- Express utmost concern at the stalemate in the political process and call on the international community to re-engage with Israel and Palestine, remove obstacles to resuming meaningful negotiation of the final status issues – establishment of a viable Palestinian State, existing side by side with Israel with internationally recognised border base on those existed on 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

- Mobilise all the sectors of the society, including youth, workers, faith-based organisations, sporting community, institutions of learning and research, multimedia and social network media to understand the correct narrative of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict.

- We call on the Palestinian political organisations to implement reconciliation agreements in good faith, and for the international community to support Palestinian unity unequivocally.

On Cuba: The participants of the conference resolved to:

- Urge the United States to end the economic embargo on Cuba, as it is the main obstacle to meaningful economic activity with Cuba.

- Mobilise support to ensure the end of the embargo and respect for the economic rights of Cuba as a sovereign nation.

- Express concern at the continued persecution of the Cuban Five.

On Western Sahara: The participants of the conference resolved to:

- Support the view that Western Sahara is the 'last colony' on the African soil, and that Africa is not fully free until Western Sahara is granted its independence.
- Urges the Kingdom of Morocco to recognise the right of self-determination for the people of Western Sahara.
- Calls on the International Community to strengthen its action to pressurise the UN to enforce its resolution on the holding of a referendum where the Saharawi people can exercise their right to self-determination.
- Further call on the UN to extend the mandate of MINURSO to include oversight on human rights abuses on the Saharawi people.
- Mobilise forces in the international community to ensure Solidarity be intensified against the looting of Saharawi natural resources by Morocco and its allies.

As a conference, we commend worldwide solidarity initiatives with the Palestinian people, and we undertake to do our utmost to support them. We will continue to strengthen the programme of activities during the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People and utilise the Mandela International Day to consolidate the solidarity work for the support of the just cause of Cuba and Western Sahara and maximize its impact of these campaigns.

We express our gratitude to the Parliament of South Africa, the Government of South Africa and the people of South Africa for the initiative to convene this important event, which is meant to solidify solidarity efforts towards building the just, equitable and better world.

It was agreed that the resolutions from the breakaway groups would form part of the declaration. The declaration has since been known as the Cape Town Declaration.

The second session of the closing plenary was moderated by Mr S. Ngonyama, MP who introduced the speakers. This session comprised of a statement of closing remarks by Chairperson of the Committee Mr. HT Magama, MP and a Vote of Thanks by Mr B. Elloff, MP who thanked guests for their participation during the conference.

The report to be considered.