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HUMAN RIGHTS AND SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Written statement submitted by the International Movement
for Fraternal Union among Races and Peoples, a non-governmental
organization in consultative status (category II)

The Secretary-General has received the following communication, which is
circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council
Resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[14 July 1988]

The island of Annobon forms part of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea;
it is situated at 1°25' latitude south and 5°36' longitude east of Greenwich,
and has an area of approximately 20 square kilometres and a population of
5,000. This island will soon die. The authorities of Equatorial Guinea have
signed a contract with a firm in Buckinghamshire, in Great Britain, to dump
one million drums of toxic materials annually, for 10 years, on its territory.

Hitherto, the inhabitants of this little dream island have lived in
peace, enjoying good climatic and environmental conditions; they have lived
on products of land and sea in quasi-idyllic conditions: the water in the
rivers and in the Mazafin lake is pure ...

The Government of Equatorial Guinea, by signing this contract, is making
this earthly paradise into a hell of toxic and dangerous wastes.

The international community is gravely concerned by these events and the scandals which have recently occurred on the African coast of the Atlantic Ocean. While a number of Governments have signed agreements with firms for the dumping of toxic and dangerous products and wastes - as has been the case in Equatorial Guinea - thus violating the right of the inhabitants to life and health, other Governments have discovered on their own territory clandestine deposits of such toxic and dangerous products and wastes, dumped by firms which have thus violated the sovereignty of the territory of these countries and the right to life and health of their inhabitants, as in the cases of Liberia and Nigeria.

All these facts have been confirmed in the Secretary-General's report to the Economic and Social Council entitled "Illicit traffic in toxic and dangerous products and wastes", contained in document E/1988/72 of 16 May 1988.

The Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, in his statement to the Economic and Social Council on 11 July 1988, also confirmed the truth of reports regarding this illicit traffic.

The issue has assumed such proportions that not only the Organization of African Unity (OAU), but also the West African Economic Community, at their most recent summits, held last May and June respectively, discussed the problem and adopted resolutions.

It is no secret that most of the African countries suffer from drought, continuing desertification, famine and political régimes which show little respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. If these evils are compounded by others resulting from the dumping of toxic and dangerous products and wastes, how is the future of this continent to be safeguarded?

We request that the Governments which have signed contracts with firms for the dumping of toxic and dangerous products and wastes should:

Be permitted to revoke them without prejudice;

Register hazardous industrial activities and adopt and implement laws, regulations or directives concerning the safe operation of industrial plants, as well as the transportation, handling and elimination of dangerous materials;

Plan the use of the soil and ensure that such plans are effectively applied and respected;

Pledge that their own firms will not threaten the environment or the health of their inhabitants.

It is also urgent that the United Nations and the specialized agencies should make joint efforts with a view to:

Completing the preparation and signature of a world convention to control the transboundary movements of toxic and dangerous products and wastes;

Registering the exact location of earlier dumps of toxic and dangerous products and wastes and the materials contained therein in order to save the lives of millions of people.