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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA  
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COMMUNICATION RECEIVED BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL FROM THE PERMANENT  
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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DOCUMENT

NO TO BE TAKEN OUT

12 December 1958

Sir,

I have the honour, by direction of the Minister of External Affairs of the Union of South Africa, to reply as follows to the letter No. EC 144/2 1st Session of the 27th October 1958, from the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa,

The Union Government has given full and careful consideration to the question of membership of the Economic Commission for Africa. In doing so it has paid special attention to the terms of reference of the Commission as set out in the resolutions adopted by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

In these terms of reference Africa is dealt with as a single and indivisible region. The Union Government has always held the view that there is a clear division between the interests of the countries of the African continent south of the Sahara and the interests of those bordering on the Mediterranean. Apart from the similarity of problems in the territories south of the Sahara, there are also ethnological and cultural differences between the two regions which cannot be ignored. Moreover, since the earliest times the African Mediterranean countries have been more closely associated with Europe than those falling within the region south of the Sahara. It is in the latter region, as you are aware, that the Union Government is making a considerable contribution to the cause of inter-African co-operation through existing regional bodies of which it is a member.

It is the view of the Union Government that the Commission's terms of reference may well make overlapping with the functions of these bodies, which are doing valuable work, inevitable, and it would wish to study this matter further.

For this reason the Union Government has decided for the present not to participate in the work of the Commission. Should the scope of the Commission's activities become clearer, the Union Government might be able to reconsider its decision.

Please accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE