

## **A GOLD MEDAL**

By Mr. E. Reddy

I met Jan Nico Scholten soon after the Dutch Parliament adopted a resolution calling for an oil embargo against South Africa. Dr. Scholten had courageously moved this resolution risking his political career, and the summit conference of Organization of African Unity commended him, enthused by the decision of the Parliament of a West European country to impose significant sanctions against apartheid.

Dr. Scholten, along with other West European Parliamentarians, then proposed to convene a Conference of West European Parliamentarians on an Oil Embargo against South Africa, and requested the United Nations support. The Chairman of the Special Committee, Mr. B.A. Clark of Nigeria, and I assured them of full support and joint sponsorship. The Conference, held in Brussels in January 1981, attended by 35 parliamentarians from eight countries, proved a great success. It was followed by the Conference of West European Parliamentarians on Sanctions against South Africa, at The Hague in November 1982. This conference was organized by five Dutch Parliamentarians and co-sponsored by the Special Committee.

Recognizing the importance of action by parliamentarians against apartheid and personal contribution of Dr. Scholten, the United Nations awarded him a gold medal on 5 November 1982, at a special meeting of the General Assembly.

Subsequently in 1984, the West European Parliamentarians organized a conference in Copenhagen. Joseph Garba, then Chairman of the Special Committee, and I attended the conference on behalf of the United Nations and warmly welcomed its decision to establish the Association of West European Parliamentarians for Action against Apartheid (AWEPA). The United Nations maintained close cooperation with AWEPA in pressing for action by governments in support of freedom in South Africa.

AWEPA's contribution to the liberation of South Africa was highlighted by the large number of parliamentarians who volunteered as observers at the democratic elections in April 1994 which ended apartheid tyranny.

Since then I have observed AWEPA's work in developing relations between Western Europe and Southern Africa with admiration, later widening interest to all of Africa. AWEPA's role in promoting personal contacts between West European and African parliamentarians, and understanding between Western Europe and Africa, has been commendable.

AWEPA, I believe, was very wise in choosing "promoting parliamentary democracy" as its main theme in its 25-year commemoration this year. However, it would be presumptuous of me, as an Asian, to comment on priorities which should be decided in consultations of AWEPA with its African partners.