

# A trip into past and future

**With the second UN World Conference on Human Rights pending, African delegations gathered for a preparatory meeting in Tunis. Idasa's KOBUS VAN LOGGERENBERG was there.**

I CAN well remember how the issue of human rights in the Calvinist institutions where I have received almost all of my education was always viewed with some suspicion. We were told that human rights were based on a humanist, non-Christian world view and were just used as an excuse to interfere with South Africa's domestic affairs.

The world, I was made to believe, was uninformed about our situation and acted upon malicious propaganda aimed at



*TOGETHER IN TUNIS...Kobus van Loggerenberg (left) with*

Coming from this background, therefore, my visit to Tunisia was quite an ironic experience. I went to Tunis early in November for the Africa regional meeting held to prepare for the World Conference on Human Rights to be held in Vienna in June 1993.

Being from the tribe that has one of the most infamous human rights records in the world, and listening to how Africa is far from convinced that there are any significant changes in South Africa, I felt myself constantly carrying the collective guilt of white South Africa.

To add to the irony, it was largely due to the able assistance of Angela Melo, the Juridical Assessor to the Mozambican Minister of Justice, that I managed to get a visa to enter Tunisia - it still being one of the countries that strictly prohibits South Africans or Israelis - and it was Angela's language and negotiating skill that helped me through customs at the Tunis airport. It was ironic bearing in mind the destructive

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As a representative of Idasa I was only one of two people representing an NGO from South Africa (the other person was Frans Kekana from the Institute of Contextual Theology). There was at least one other South African – the very inspirational Shun Chetty who is now the deputy director of the High Commission for Refugees, based in Geneva.

Shun was involved as a lawyer in numerous political trials in the seventies before he went into exile towards the end of that

***'There is virtually no African country that does not produce or receive refugees'***

decade. Shun uses as a barometer of the human rights situation in Africa the more than 5 million refugees on the continent today. There is virtually no African country, according to him, that does not either produce or receive refugees.

The conference also produced a very strange reunion for me – it was a surprise in a language environment dominated by French and Arabic suddenly to be addressed in Afrikaans. This came from Hazel de Wet, representing the Namibian government.

Even more surprisingly, Hazel and I discovered that we had almost met more than five years ago when I was chairperson of the SRC of the University of the Orange Free State and we were to meet the SRC of the University of the Western Cape. But, on our arrival at the UWC campus (all dressed up in our official university blazers), we were told that the UWC SRC was no longer willing to meet us (being an establishment, "system" institution). Hazel served on that SRC as the Namibian representative!

# Africa meeting human rights

By KOBUS VAN LOGGERENBERG

**P**REPARATIONS for the second United Nations World Conference on Human Rights got underway at a meeting held in Tunis from 2 to 6 November.

The UN General Assembly decided that 25 years after the first World Conference on Human Rights, held in Teheran in 1968, the UN Human Rights Programme needs to be reviewed to ensure its greater effectiveness in promoting and protecting human rights. The conference will thus chart the course for the UN Human Rights Programme into the next century.

The preparatory meeting in Tunis considered the role of governments, individuals, groups, institutions and non-governmental organisations in the promotion and protection of human rights.

The meeting also considered issues of particular importance to Africa, like the elimination of apartheid, new forms of racism, discrimination, xenophobia and religious extremism.

The conference adopted the Tunis Declaration which reaffirms the African states' commitment to the principles set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, two international Covenants on Human Rights and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights. Although some delegations argued for flexibility in the

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