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AHI suggests use of Sasria fund for apartheid's victims

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Pretoria — A portion of the South African Special Risks Association (Sasria) fund should be used for reparation for apartheid, the Afrikaanse Handelsinstituut (AHI) said in its submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

The fund stands at about R9 billion and originated mainly from business.

"Sasria is a unique creation of the apartheid years to cover losses incurred through political unrest.

That risk has now largely fallen away," said the submission, which was released yesterday.

"It would seem logical that some of the accrued funds should be utilised for the reparation decided upon and for human development through focused skills training.

"Special emphasis should be assigned to reclamation of the 'lost generation'," it said.

However, the AHI stressed that in addition to the key issue of the macroeconomic prudence of reparation, the difficult question in respect

of reparation was to ascertain who should receive reparation and from whom.

That was the responsibility of the TRC, but if reparation was decided on, the funding "becomes difficult as the tax burden in South Africa is already very high and impedes economic growth".

The AHI said in its submission that with the benefit of hindsight, it was clear that the AHI had committed major mistakes.

"The AHI supported separate development in the belief that it

would bring about acceptable results for all in the country. It did not.

"Separate development in the end meant social engineering with brutal human costs and enormous wastage of resources," it said.

The organisation said a further major mistake was one of omission. It said no moral or economic objections to apartheid were lodged for years and, at the time, there was insufficient appreciation for the hardship and suffering caused by apartheid.

Commenting on its insensitivity to issues involving human rights, the

AHI said although there were frequent references at AHI conferences to the importance of good labour relations, training, proper wages and productivity, there was for many years an acceptance of the absence of proper labour law that made provision for worker rights for all and of the lack of training and other discriminatory measures.

"This is also regrettable. A similar omission occurred in regard to discrimination against women. The AHI could have helped to remove the barriers for women much earlier," it said.

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