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NEW STAGE IN THE STRUGGLE FOR
LIBERATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Need for vigilance by the solidarity movement
Intensify offensive against strongholds of apartheid

by

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Comrade Chairman,

Distinguished members of the Presidium,

Comrades delegates and friends,

There is a special significance which attaches to this conference of the International Committee against Apartheid, Racism and Colonialism in Southern Africa (ICSA): It takes place between two major events in the history of our common struggle. The one event is the glorious victory of the people of Zimbabwe, dramatized by their voting the Patriotic Front alliance into power, giving a special mandate to Comrade President Robert Mugabe of ZANU-PF. The other event is the forthcoming emergence of the African Independent State of Zimbabwe.

The ICSA, therefore, which was established at that great international conference held in Lisbon on June 16, 1977, and attended, amongst others, by the co-leaders of the Patriotic Front - Presidents Nkomo and Mugabe, and by President Sam Nujoma of SWAPO, assembles here today, in a sense to celebrate what is, in effect, the victory of ICSA itself. I trust, Comrade Chairman, that this meeting will agree on an appropriate resolution to be addressed to the Government and the people of Zimbabwe on their great and historic victory.

I should like to specially associate the African National Congress with any such message, sent to our colleagues, who by their stubborn struggle, by their determination and courage, have brought the hour of victory not only to the Zimbabwe people, not only to the people of Africa, but also the whole of the progressive world.

This conference also takes place in a country which has played a most significant role in the development of the national liberation struggle in Southern Africa, and in Africa generally. With its ever-increasing material assistance to the liberation movements, Sweden has been, and continues to be, in the forefront of many of the countries whose support has contributed to the victories of our just struggles against apartheid, racism and colonialism. In this connection, let me mention the Socialist countries whose substantial material assistance, especially in the form of arms, has ensured victory over Portuguese colonialism and white minority rule in Zimbabwe. No less essential for the great advances in the liberation process has been the support of the international solidarity movement, of which ICSA constitutes a leading component.

I consider that my task today is not to make what you, Comrade Chairman, have referred to as a complete analysis of the situation in Southern Africa, but rather to direct attention to the areas of danger for the continuing struggle in that region of Africa. I could not meaningfully improve upon the analysis made by the earlier speakers. But there are dangers which call for vigilance even at this very moment of triumph, this hour of glory for Zimbabwe, for Southern Africa and for all of us.

You may recall the frantic manner in which the racist minority regimes of Southern Africa and the imperialist world reacted to the dramatic and historic victory of the people of Mozambique, Angola, Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde over Portuguese colonialism in the mid-seventies. Imperialism's priority task was to seek and gain time - time to adjust to the new reality, to re-group with a view to halting the revolutionary avalanche, and launch a counter-offensive to reverse the popular gains and regain lost ground.

Under the slogan of what he termed "detente", the then racist Prime Minister, John Vorster, accompanied by Eschel Rhoodie and the head of BOSS, General Van den Berg, reportedly embarked on a series of nocturnal excursions into Africa in a bid to win friends and allies for the apartheid regime, and thus isolate the peoples still fighting against apartheid, racism and colonialism in Southern Africa. We all remember how, with abounding confidence, Vorster called on the international public to give him six months, and he would stun the world with an impressive array of his newly-found friends and allies in Africa.

In the meantime, the structures of apartheid remained intact, the national leaders of the oppressed in Namibia and South Africa were kept securely imprisoned, and violent repression against the people mounted.

The massive but ill-fated invasion of the People's Republic of Angola by the South African racist army completely unmasked the advocates of "detente", exposing them for what they have always been and continue to be - sworn enemies of African independence, who sought the friendship of African States as cover for deadly designs against national liberation and independence. The progressive world, including Africa and in particular the frontline countries, rallied behind the liberation forces and the attack on the racist regimes continued with growing intensity. Today, John Vorster, Hendrik Van den Berg and Eschel Rhoodie are on their way to oblivion. They leave behind them a liberated Zimbabwe, the home of all who live in it - Black and White.

But the Zimbabwe victory, in its own way, has been both dramatic and historic. Like earlier victories, it occurs in the context of a continuing struggle against apartheid, racism and colonialism, this time with Namibia and South Africa as the last and main battlefields; and like earlier victories, it has evoked responses from the Pretoria regime, which seek firstly, to halt the advance of the liberation forces immediately; secondly, to play for time; and thirdly, to pursue its great strategic objective in Southern Africa, which is to isolate and destroy the revolutionary movement and the struggle of the people for national liberation and genuine independence.

It has never been a part of fascist South Africa's **strategic** thinking that it should treat its struggle for survival as a domestic affair involving violent conflict within Namibia and South Africa only. The notorious role of the South African Army in the Zimbabwe liberation war, and in the air raids and military invasions against Mozambique, Zambia and Angola is explainable only in terms of the racist regime's central objective of isolating and destroying the revolutionary movement led by the Patriotic Front alliance in Zimbabwe, by SWAPO in Namibia and the ANC in South Africa. As the enemy saw it, the struggle for the control of Salisbury was at once the struggle

for the control of Pretoria and Windhoek. Terrorizing the entire region of Southern Africa, the Pretoria regime sought to compel the independent States of this region to withdraw their support for the liberation movements; it sought to turn these countries against liberation, making of them allies of colonial, racist and apartheid domination of the people.

The attempt failed. But the intention remained.

This year, reacting to the certainty of Zimbabwe's independence, and anticipating a heightened offensive by SWAPO and the ANC, the regime has increased its aggression against Angola; its troops have raided and are provocatively occupying Zambian territory, while its racist forces are massed on the borders with Mozambique, threatening to invade that country unless the Mozambican Government stops "harbouring ANC 'terrorists'." It has threatened reprisals or "hot pursuit" against other neighbouring States, accusing them of responsibility for ANC activities inside South Africa.

Last year, the South African news media reported that Botha had invited the West to join the racist minority regimes in "uprooting and eliminating" what he called terrorists and communists in Southern Africa, but that the West had shown no interest, and that South Africa had therefore decided to proceed on its own, to eliminate the terrorist and communist threat to the survival of apartheid, racism and colonialism in Southern Africa. As is well known, during last year, the ANC, but to a much lesser degree than SWAPO and the Patriotic Front, was subjected to air raids and bombings.

The South African regime today poses a most dangerous threat to the security of the Southern African States, because it has reached the level of desperation reflected in racist Prime Minister Botha's bellicose declaration last year that he would invade the new Zimbabwe if the Patriotic Front alliance was elected to power.

It is not without reason that the Pretoria regime is desperate. The military might of South Africa has failed to prevent the rapid escalation of SWAPO's armed struggle within Namibia. The ANC, overcoming enormous difficulties and now firmly embedded in the mass of the people throughout the length and breadth of South Africa, is posed to strike telling blows for national liberation and for power. Its armed operations are demonstrably on the increase and are destined to grow and envelop the whole country. Besides, the regime is fully aware that the entire people of Southern Africa, like the rest of Africa and most of the world, are irreconcilably opposed to the domination of the Black majority by a white racist, apartheid and colonialist minority in South Africa and inevitably take their positions on the side of the national liberation movement.

It is essential that the international progressive movement should appreciate the tremendous pressures bearing upon the independent States of Southern Africa as a result of both the Zimbabwe victory and the inevitably continuing struggle in South Africa and Namibia.

We do not think these African countries can afford to ignore the belligerent threats by a notoriously aggressive fascist regime. Least of all do we think they should provoke a racist regime armed to the teeth and harbouring imperialist designs against them.

On the other hand, struggle from slavery to freedom through sweat, blood and tears has become Africa's way of life, more so now than at any time in its history, because today, this struggle involves, as partners and comrades-in-arms, the whole of progressive mankind and is assured of victory, no less in Namibia and South Africa, than in Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Certainly, for the oppressed and exploited masses, the struggle continues.

The weakness of the Southern African countries, and the source of danger, in relation to the apartheid regime, lies in their possible isolation from the rest of that part of the world which is anti-imperialist and genuinely opposed to the apartheid system in South Africa - that part of humanity which is outraged by the inhumanity of apartheid colonialism.

Their strength will grow with the increasing impact of international pressures on the South African regime and the popular struggle for the transfer of power to the people as a whole. It will grow with the successful implementation of internal reconstruction programmes, and in the viability of African unity, reinforced, as at all times, by Africa's enduring commitment to the total liberation of the Continent, including Namibia and South Africa in particular. The need for strength is the reason why the ANC has, in the interests of our continuing struggle, consistently called on the world community to provide material assistance to the frontline States, including Swaziland and Lesotho. We trust the day is not far when this group of States will include Madagascar.

It is in this perspective of the Southern African scene that we have explained to ourselves some of the statements made recently in Southern Africa, which tended to fortify the positions of Botha, Vorster and other leaders of racist South Africa, who have accused the United Nations and the international community of meddling in the domestic affairs of the South African criminal regime.

Yet another development with serious implications for the strategy of isolating South Africa is the unfolding campaign, spearheaded by the Western powers, to bring the South African regime out of isolation and have it received as a worthy member of the world community. This campaign, taking advantage of the atmosphere of peace generated by the end of the Zimbabwe liberation war, bases itself on the erroneous belief that precisely as a result of the victorious conclusion of that war, the South African masses will meekly surrender to white minority domination. But for all that, it is a campaign capable of posing severe problems for the opponents of the racist regime and the struggle for liberation in both Namibia and South Africa. It should be noted, in this connection, that South Africa is itself employing every means and exploiting every possible opportunity for breaking out of its growing encirclement.

The apartheid regime has another approach to the goal of destroying the national liberation movement as an essential pre-condition for its survival. It consists in promoting the false notion that the structures of white minority domination in South Africa are being demolished by the racist regime itself. The whole South African situation, it is claimed, resolves itself into a purely domestic question of human rights. Botha's meetings with Bantustan

leaders, his visit to Soweto, some cosmetic changes in the law, a call for a multi-racial conference, and the recruitment of some Blacks into the South African Army, are all presented as evidence of change within the framework of a domestic situation in which neither Africa nor the world community has any right to interfere. It will soon be argued by the allies of racist South Africa, that the United Nations, in supporting the liberation movement and the people of South Africa in their struggle against the perpetrators of a crime against humanity, is itself committing a serious breach of international law.

A significant development, following the victory of the Patriotic Front forces in Zimbabwe, is the recent meeting of the Heads of Government of majority-ruled States in Southern Africa, held in Lusaka, to develop a strategy for securing their economic liberation, particularly from the dominance of the South African regime.

This move demonstrates the correctness of the thesis that it is only under a democratically elected people's government that South Africa will cease to dominate, and begin to serve, the economic interests of the countries of Southern Africa, thus contributing to the economic liberation of Africa. But the process of reducing economic dependence on racist South Africa will not be easy. The fascist regime can be relied upon to try and weave itself into the economic fabric of the independent States in a bid to take it over and put it to the service of Botha's "constellation of Southern African States". Therefore, a new front of struggle has been opened in Southern Africa. The prospects for victory lie in the political motivation behind this initiative; for, the central issue is that of total independence, which, for each member country, is realizable only in the context of the complete independence of every other member country.

We come to this meeting to urge maximum vigilance on the part of the international solidarity movement. The great momentum of struggle built up over Southern Africa, and which has helped bring about radical transformations, in the lives of millions of people for the first time in centuries and decades, should not only be maintained, but should now be given a new ascendancy. This, as far as we can see, is the most effective way of giving protection and strength to the independent African countries facing harassment and aggression from Pretoria. It is the key to the eradication of apartheid, racism and colonialism anywhere in the world. It is the best means of supporting Zimbabwe, as her Government and leaders strive to forge a united nation, to consolidate the people's victory and to bring the fruits of independence to the masses who by their heroic sacrifices created independence. It is the best guarantee for victory in Namibia and South Africa, and for peace in the region and in Africa.

At a recent meeting held between SWAPO and the ANC, we together felt the urgent need for a special solidarity campaign in Europe particularly, but also in the United States, Asia and elsewhere, to rally our supporters and friends behind SWAPO at this crucial phase of the Namibian struggle. We therefore call on ICOSA to vigorously take up the Namibian issue.

In South Africa, a campaign of massive dimensions is in progress, in which the masses of the people throughout the country are demanding the release of political leaders, but specially focusing on ANC leader, Nelson Mandela. It is a campaign which is part of the struggle of the people for a popular government, a campaign which is an expression of the demand for the transfer of power to the majority of the people of South Africa.

We call for international support for this campaign. The situation in Africa today and in Southern Africa, the requirements of eventual peace, demand the active involvement and participation of the national leaders of the people in the crucial issues of today. Self-seeking, power-hungry friends of our foes, camouflaged as national patriots, with a mission to confuse and divide the people, are inevitably rejected by the masses, who are fighting for genuine liberation, and will settle for nothing less.

We call upon all the countries, international bodies, support groups and all our friends to intensify the offensive against the remaining and toughest strongholds of apartheid, racism and colonialism in Southern Africa.

For our part, as you know, while SWAPO of Namibia is involved in negotiations for the return of Namibia to the Namibian people, it is simultaneously escalating the war to end racist South African occupation of Namibia.

Also, as you know, the ANC, combining political struggle with armed actions of growing magnitude and scope, is committed, as an integral part of the people of South Africa and the custodian of their destiny, to continue the struggle with every means at its disposal, with the people and militants ready always to make the supreme sacrifice for the seizure of power in our country.

Comrade Chairman, ICOSA has done valuable work in the brief period since its establishment. It has lived honourably to the decisions of the great conference of Lisbon which was followed by another great conference, the World Conference, in Lagos. We have all made advances in our struggle in varying degrees. We shall continue to be encouraged by the support and are confident that we shall continue to be encouraged by the work of this committee and all the friends and comrades who are involved with it. We are confident that some day soon, we shall be congratulating SWAPO and the people of Namibia on the victory of their valiant struggle. I am confident that the day is not far off, either, when we shall together be celebrating the liberation of South Africa. This may sound like a remote dream at the moment. But I am making a statement which was made in 1973 and 1972 and in 1971 about the struggle against Portuguese fascism, a statement which has been made repeatedly about the struggle of the people of Zimbabwe. I am merely repeating that statement.

And so let us continue to march together conquering one victory after another. The future belongs to all of us.

Thank you.