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STATEMENT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS,  
OLIVER TAMBO, AT THE 25th OAU ASSEMBLY OF HEADS OF STATE AND  
GOVERNMENT: ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA, JULY 24-26, 1989.

Mr Chairman, President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak,  
Your Excellencies, Distinguished Heads of State and Government,  
Esteemed Heads of Delegations,  
Your Excellency, Javier Perez de Cuellar, Secretary General of  
the United Nations,  
Your Excellency, Ide Oumarou, Secretary General of the OAU,  
Honourable Ministers, Ambassadors and High Commissioners,  
Comrades leaders of the liberation movements,  
Esteemed delegates, comrades, ladies and gentlemen:

First of all, we greet this 25th Assembly of the OAU Heads of  
State and Government on behalf of the ANC, its leaders and  
members and in the name of the millions of the struggling people  
of South Africa.

All of us who live during these times cannot but feel a sense of  
hope and expectation with regard both to our own continent and  
the rest of the world of which it is part.

We salute this august body, the OAU Assembly of Heads of State  
and Government, for the inestimable contribution it has made over  
a period of 26 years to bring about the sense of hope and  
expectation to which we have referred. Without the OAU Assembly  
and without the collective endeavours of the outstanding leaders  
of Africa who have served in its ranks, without the ideas and  
labours of the African patriots who sit here today and the input  
of their predecessors, none can tell where Africa and the world  
would be today.

We salute the contribution that the Government and people of  
Ethiopia have made to our forward movement, through their  
readiness to host these meetings and to receive us in a spirit of  
open welcome, friendship and solidarity. We take this opportunity  
to extend our thanks to the Party, the Government and the people  
of Ethiopia for all they have done for Africa, both now and in  
the past.

We also wish to thank and congratulate President Mengistu Haile  
Mariam, General Secretary of the Workers' Party of Ethiopia,  
President of the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and  
Commander-in-Chief of its Revolutionary Armed Forces, for the  
thought-provoking and moving speech he delivered yesterday. We  
believe that it has helped to set the correct tone for the  
consideration, among others, of the fundamental issue of the  
total liberation of Africa.

We pay homage to the outgoing Chairman of the OAU. His  
Excellency, President Moussa Traore, who has so led this

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Organisation during this past year. Because of his commitment to  
its ideals, his energy, dedication and the quality of his  
leadership, we can say that as the OAU commenced its journey into  
its second quarter-of-a-century, it continued to inspire and give  
comfort to the peoples of our continent. His report has also  
helped to point the way forward in a clear and unequivocal  
manner.

We welcome to the helm the new Chairman, H.E. President Mohamed  
Hosni Mubarak, and extend to him our very best wishes, confident  
that he will lead the OAU ably and selflessly, enabling it by his  
own personal contribution, to take the millions that inhabit our  
dear continent further forward towards the realisation of their  
political, economic and social aspirations. All this was  
confirmed in the well-thought out address he delivered  
yesterday.

The masses of our people send their salutations fully conscious  
of the central importance of the deliberations of this Assembly  
to the future of our continent, our region and our country.  
Throughout their ranks, there is great expectation that this  
august Assembly will take such decisions as will not only advance  
the cause of Africa, but also help us greatly to accelerate the  
general process so visible in our region - a process  
characterised by the defeat of the forces of apartheid, the  
expansion of the frontiers of freedom and progress towards a  
genuine and lasting peace for all our peoples.

It is understandable, Mr Chairman, why our people have  
heightened expectations. After all, as a result of a heroic  
struggle waged by the people of Angola and their army, supported  
by the Cuban internationalist forces, the South African army of  
occupation has now left the People's Republic of Angola.

For the second time within a dozen years, and on the Angolan  
battlefield, the apartheid war machine has been beaten. The truth  
has been confirmed that this army of aggression, occupation and  
repression is not in any way invincible. This historic victory  
has both strengthened our own people in our offensive against the  
apartheid state and its humiliated war-mongers, and opened the  
way for the people of Angola to achieve peace for themselves.

But also of great importance, it has led directly to the  
initiation of the process leading to the long-overdue  
independence of Namibia. Today the reality, which was difficult  
to imagine even a year ago, is that important leaders of SWAPO  
are back in their country. Namibian refugees are going home and  
an election campaign has commenced, as part of an internationally  
agreed process which will lead to the independence of Namibia.

On the eastern seaboard of our region, the Government of the  
People's Republic of Mozambique has adopted new measures aimed at  
ending the terrible scourge of banditry in that country,  
restoring peace and regaining the possibility for economic and



social development.

Farther afield from our region, the international situation seems to be characterised by a new determination to create a climate of mutual understanding among the peoples and a desire to expand the frontiers of freedom. High on the agenda of the nations of the world, and as part of this global process, is the determination to help end the criminal system of apartheid without further delay. The message we hear from all corners of the globe is that enough is enough: apartheid must go!

And so the conviction has grown among our people that South Africa cannot be some solitary island that will, by some miracle, continue to drift against the tide of human history. It can never be that dawn breaks everywhere, except in South Africa.

Indeed, even the representatives of the apartheid regime are encouraging the notion that we are nearing a negotiated resolution of the South African question and have, on the basis of this promise, been received in Western capitals and walked away with the understanding that F.W.de Klerk will be given a chance to implement his programme of so-called reform and negotiation.

In addition to the external, the internal situation has indeed raised the hopes of our people that we are nearing the end of the apartheid system. In this context, the word "hope" might in fact be the wrong one to use. The better to convey the mood among our people, we should rather say that there is a firm conviction that the dark years of apartheid tyranny are about to end.

But whence this optimism! I would like to assure this august Assembly that it derives neither from the promises made by the spokespersons of the apartheid regime nor from any illusion that the major Western powers can, by having cosy conversations with F.W.de Klerk, deliver us from bondage.

A good and honest vision of the reality of what to expect from the apartheid regime is clearly spelt out in the much-heralded 5-year Plan which the National Party announced recently. Fundamental to that Plan is the old apartheid perspective of groups and group rights. The ruling party continues to cling to these concepts and in its Plan says openly that "The South African population consists of a variety of groups..."

When it talks of a new constitution, it speaks of giving "content to the overall juridical and structural protection of groups in constitutional structures." And when it talks of negotiations, it speaks of engaging "recognised leaders of all groups..."

It should thus be clear, Mr Chairman, that the so-called solution that the party of racism offers is nothing but a race federation which will be dominated by the white minority. In short, it offers nothing but apartheid by another name.

To make sure that the point was clear to everybody, the leader of the National Party, F.W.de Klerk, said the following at the Congress of his party which adopted the 5-year Plan:

"I want to give this assurance to the white electorate: the National Party will, in its search for an understanding that offers all South Africans full political participation...closely guard your security and interests, together with those of other groups. The National Party will never let you down."

So there we have it! Let everybody be a South African, but a South African who belongs to a group that has separate group political rights. Yes, let us end apartheid but let us do so by entering into negotiations that must reaffirm the continuation of apartheid with the consent of the representatives of all groups.

But whence these contortions and illogical constructions of schoolboy sophistry! The simple fact is that the apartheid system is in crisis. Even its architects know and admit that it can no longer be maintained. It has to go.

But whereas our people and the rest of progressive humanity are determined to ensure that apartheid disappears in its substance and its entirety, the Pretoria regime desires that it should appear to have disappeared by dressing it in new clothes. What they fail to realise is that, because of our struggle, supported by the international community, apartheid will indeed vanish for ever, despite its new clothes and together with that new apparel, however pretty and well-tailored it might seem.

And thus we come back to the question, whence the conviction that we are nearing this historic outcome - the demise of the apartheid system. That conviction, Mr Chairman, derives from our certainty of the strength of the liberation forces of our country, confidence in their ability to organise themselves and to mobilise the people into united action to destroy the apartheid system, and our unquestionable assurance that the millions of our people remain unswerving in their commitment to liberate themselves through struggle.

In short, it is because of our strength, our capacity to organise, our ability to intensify the struggle and our willingness to sacrifice, that we are confident that our victory is assured. We have no doubt that the confrontation within our country will further sharpen as the enemy fights a rearguard action. But for us and our people, there can be no turning back.

But of course this is not enough to signify that our victory is in sight. The other element that makes up the equation of the balance of forces is, and has to be, the state of the enemy forces. To put it squarely, the apartheid regime has lost the strategic initiative. The struggle has thrown it onto the defensive. Its actions, whatever their intention, only have the



effect of slowing down the speed of its retreat. The enemy can neither halt that retreat nor turn it round into a strategic offensive.

Take the state of emergency for instance. Renewed in June, it is now in its fourth year. Despite its brutality and all it has meant in terms of assassinations of leaders and activists, mass detentions, the banning of organisations and individuals and severe press restrictions, the liberation forces of our country have continued to grow in strength, and have the capacity to bring the country to a standstill, as was demonstrated as recently as last month. Such an achievement is possible precisely because of the unity of the masses of our people, their fighting organisations and their acceptance of the vanguard role of the ANC.

Our people are set to render the state of emergency inoperable simply by defying it. The apartheid regime does not have the political strength to stop this process, once it is joined by the millions of our people. In the end, the apartheid regime will end the state of emergency, not because it will have chosen to do so, but because the people will have decided that they will not observe its provisions. Needless to say, in this eventuality, the regime will still seek to maintain its campaign of repression through the use of other repressive legislation that it has in its arsenal.

Or again, consider the important question of the release of political prisoners and detainees. As the Assembly knows, many detainees have been released because they engaged in struggle, especially by means of hunger strikes which were supported by the South African democratic movement as a whole. Some of the leaders who had been sentenced to life imprisonment have been released.

At some point, the others will also come out of jail. This will happen not because the Pretoria regime has become more humane, but because it no longer has the strength to withstand the intense and continuing internal and international campaign for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners, including Nelson Mandela.

The apartheid regime had hoped to build a buffer around itself made up of black surrogates, paid by Pretoria and owing their allegiance to Pretoria. The fact of the matter is that the buffer is today paper-thin, as the people have continuously asserted their right to total liberation and refused to accept these state employees as their leaders and the structures they man, as legitimate. Confronted by the pressure of the struggle, it is inevitable that many of these apartheid hopefuls will seek to find their way into the camp of struggle for a united, democratic and non-racial South Africa.

Referring to some of these black puppets, and challenging their credentials, the July 2nd issue of the Afrikaans newspaper

"Rapport", which supports the ruling party, had this to say:

"To think that black city councillors or members of the recently formed National Forum will manage (in negotiations) is an illusion. The new situation that has come into being no longer allows for kindergarten politics."

Within the ranks of the white community, there is a rapidly growing resolve to abandon the trenches of racism and apartheid and to search for solutions within the context of the perspective of a non-racial democracy. For this purpose, increasing numbers of whites continue to seek out the ANC. The formation of the Democratic Party in April this year is itself an expression of this progression towards democratic and non-racial positions. We ourselves believe that it is important that we reach our white compatriots to win them away from the parties of racism.

So pervasive and penetrating has become the desire among many whites to end apartheid, that among the white youth, the movement to refuse conscription into the racist army is reaching new heights, with truly large numbers ready to face 6-year jail sentences rather than carry arms in defence of a system they consider unjust and illegitimate.

Add to all this, the impact of sanctions, limited though they might be. They have hit the apartheid economy very hard and helped to deny the Pretoria regime the material means to carry out its programmes of repression, aggression and further entrenchment of the apartheid system. The economic crisis of the apartheid system has indeed become so serious that white unemployment and poverty, unknown for many decades, have become a permanent feature of South African reality.

The recent European Safari by F.W. de Klerk, and P.W. Botha's trip to Europe had the specific aim, among others, to campaign against sanctions and in particular, to persuade the bankers to agree to the most favourable terms for the rescheduling of South Africa's external debt. This demonstrates how effective sanctions are and the extent of desperation they have injected into the ranks of the apartheid regime. Clearly, the OAU has to push for more sanctions, including mandatory and comprehensive ones, imposed by the Security Council.

In essence, what is happening in our country is that the balance of forces continues to shift in favour of the forces of national liberation, democracy and peace. The political forces grouped around the parties of racism continue to diminish and decline in strength. Those representing national emancipation continue to grow in size and effectiveness, and have emerged truly as an alternative power which can never be defeated and which, in reality, sets the agenda for the resolution of the South Africa issue.



It is this permanent shift in the balance of forces within South Africa, in our region and internationally, which has so sharply brought into focus the issue of a negotiated settlement of the South African question.

We are, however, firmly of the view that this Assembly should reject all notions that the change of persons in the top echelons of the Nationalist Party has brought into the leadership, people who, out of conviction, seek genuine negotiations to end apartheid. Equally, the extrapolation does not hold that, because the Pretoria regime helped to negotiate the Angola-Namibia agreement, therefore it is ready to enter into real negotiations concerning South Africa itself.

The hopes held out by the Western powers, as a result of which they plead that de Klerk be given a chance, have as much substance to them as the hopes they held out in the past. The course of action these powers propose and have embarked upon, serves only to buy time for apartheid, encourage duplicity on the part of the apartheid regime and postpone the moment when Pretoria will at last realise that the game is up.

We are concerned that the issue of negotiations should not become a means to divert our people and the world community from the central issue which is ending the apartheid crime against humanity and transforming South Africa into a non-racial democracy. Similarly, it should not be reduced into an issue of political gamesmanship, as the apartheid regime seeks to do.

All African liberation movements, including the ANC, have, without exception, always sought peaceful ways of ending the system of colonial and racial domination. Consistently the oppressed have been forced to resort to arms because the oppressor has made it impossible to bring about peaceful political settlements. The history of the ANC is an outstanding example of the commitment of the oppressed to non-violent struggle and therefore a preference for peaceful solutions. The OAU itself has, at various times, made serious efforts to end colonial and racial domination through negotiations.

We have in the past said this, and we reiterate it today, that we have never been opposed to a negotiated resolution of the South African question. But such negotiations have to be about ending apartheid and transforming South Africa into a united, democratic and non-racial country, and they are complementary to the struggle for the attainment of these goals.

For these negotiations to take place, it is obvious that the necessary climate should exist. To create that climate, we together with the rest of the international community have called on the Pretoria regime to release all political prisoners and detainees, lift all bans and restrictions on proscribed and restricted organisations, and persons, end the state of emergency, repeal repressive legislation, end political trials

and executions and withdraw the apartheid army from the townships.

The apartheid regime cannot claim to be ignorant of these demands. Its own media has come out in support of these reasonable proposals. The newspaper "Rapport" of July 2nd 1989 makes the following observation:

"There are enough indications that many black leaders and organisations that carry weight are willing to participate in probing discussions. However some factors obstruct these possibilities: the state of emergency; detention without trial and restrictions on important people and organisations. Therefore the seriousness with which Mr de Klerk considers the internal discussion will also be determined by the way in which he reacts to these obstructive factors."

If he is serious about negotiations, de Klerk must remove these and other obstructive factors, precisely to create a climate conducive to negotiations. As the distinguished Heads of State who are members of the OAU Ad-Hoc Committee on Southern Africa are aware, the ANC, in consultation with the democratic forces in our country, has been working to elaborate and consult upon a more comprehensive position on the issue of a negotiated resolution of the South African question, a position which gives due recognition to the vital necessity to continue and intensify the internal struggle in all its forms as well as heighten international pressures until apartheid is ended.

We believe very strongly that such a position should, at a later stage, be discussed by and receive the support of - indeed be adopted by - the OAU, so that, as with other fundamental issues that confront the continent, there should be an African position on the important question of a political settlement of the South African question.

His Excellency, President Kenneth Kaunda, spoke in some detail and I thought very persuasively to this point, in the course of his intervention this morning. The matter was also raised by the Hon. Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Senegal at the Ministerial Council meeting, following my mentioning these ideas to him when we met in Paris recently.

The idea that it is sought to elaborate, springs from the knowledge that as apartheid appears to be yielding ground and to the extent that it is, and giving promise of a breakthrough to a new order, many forces in the world, many individuals and organisations, international forces that have been involved in the struggle against apartheid, would want to continue their involvement and contribute to the final onslaught.

There is likely to be a competition of solutions by forces that are rightly concerned and would like to see a solution. In the



process, unless Africa comes in with a solution, with a plan, it might be marginalised and forced in the end to participate in plans worked out in good faith by others but which might not necessarily suit the African interest.

We have thought that the idea should start from the fighting forces in South Africa themselves. They must unite around a plan, a position by which the struggle is advanced further, by agreement, to suit the ends, the interests of the people who have been the victims of this apartheid regime. Therefore consultations about this plan have to begin within South Africa.

We thought there was another dimension to the apartheid problem. It affects, quite immediately, the Frontline States. They become part of the liberation movement in terms of their being a target of this criminal system. They are involved immediately. They must be involved immediately in a solution that must be worked out. Therefore the idea was that whatever we produce within South Africa, would be presented to the Frontline States for their contribution to the ideas so that they adopt the plan too as a regional plan to be brought to Africa. Africa must have the final say.

It would naturally have great regard to the ideas of those who are immediately on the ground. It was these ideas that we outlined to H.E. President Traore and the Senegalese Foreign Minister. Without a plan - because there is no plan as yet; we are in the process of working on the plan - but we appreciate the urgency for us to take the high ground before others occupy it. Therefore there is some urgency in Africa evolving this plan and working out an African position.

I may mention, Mr Chairman, Your Excellencies, that the plan should not be exclusive to Africa. Africa does not necessarily want to monopolise the solution, but to have a controlling hand. It should therefore be a plan that accepts the readiness of the international community to participate in resolving the situation in South Africa. But it would be an African plan that takes in the contributions of other forces who have been our partners in the struggle against apartheid.

Accordingly, we wish to propose that this august Assembly should endorse the idea of the elaboration of such an African plan and mandate its special organs, the Frontline States and the Ad-Hoc Committee on Southern Africa to work with us to produce this African plan. We are convinced that this is urgent and will respond to the deep-seated desire of all the peoples of our continent to end the apartheid system as soon as possible and to do so with the minimum of blood shed and destruction.

Mr Chairman:

The all-round struggle to liquidate the apartheid crime against humanity must continue with even greater intensity. Accordingly,

the ANC wishes to reaffirm its commitment to the escalation of that struggle on all its fronts. I refer of course to the mass political offensive, the armed struggle and the campaign for the total international isolation of apartheid South Africa, including the imposition of mandatory and comprehensive sanctions.

With regard to these issues, we humbly urge this Assembly to approve the resolution on South Africa placed before it by the OAU Council of Ministers. The adoption and implementation of that resolution would constitute an important contribution to the escalation of the offensive against the apartheid regime, the common enemy of all people of conscience.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the OAU which, through its Liberation Committee, has given us the material assistance which has helped us to advance the struggle to the point where it is today.

Similarly, we would like to express our gratitude to the African countries which have given us invaluable assistance at the bilateral level. Needless to say, the ongoing struggle for the liberation of South Africa requires even more support. We shall therefore continue to rely on this Organisation and the sister peoples of Africa to provide us with the means to escalate our offensive for the liquidation of the apartheid system.

We would like to conclude, Mr Chairman, by reaffirming our unbreakable solidarity with SWAPO and the fraternal people of Namibia. As before, we stand firmly with them in the struggle to liberate their country. We shall do everything in our power to oppose all attempts by the Pretoria regime to obstruct the independence process or to destabilise Namibia. We wish our comrades-in-arms of SWAPO all success in the forthcoming elections and look forward to celebrate with them the independence of the dear country. It is a matter of common cause that SWAPO needs everything it can get to enable it to wage an effective election campaign. We therefore appeal for more assistance to be extended to this brother liberation movement.

Similarly, we wish to reiterate our friendship and solidarity with the Polisario Front and the PLO as well as their respective peoples and states. Their victories will be ours as well, part of the human process whereby the emancipation of each people reinforces the freedom of others.

We wish them success in their struggles and express our solidarity with others who fight for their liberation, including the people of El Salvador, Guatemala and East Timor. We do firmly believe that freedom is indivisible and therefore see ourselves as part of the great universal movement which strives for independence, democracy, social progress and peace.

The struggle of the people of Southern Africa for the realisation