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OPEN MEETING WITH EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTARIANS

Address by Mangosuthu G. Buthelezi
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Mr. President, the Vice-President Lady Elles, and members of the European Parliament, I thank Lady Elles for inviting me to come here to Strasbourg to meet you and to exchange views with you on the situation in my country.

When I visited the European Parliament in 1980, my main message was that there are a number of different directions in which the country could go in the medium and long term. I said that the struggle against apartheid is a political struggle, where those pursuing different political options compete for power and where political leaders have to build strong constituencies.

Black politics in South Africa, like politics the world over, revolves around leaders and parties campaigning for public support for what they believe the public aspire to. The Black South African population, like populations the world over, are divided in their opinion about the ideals we strive for and about how to achieve ideals. I have again and again stressed, and I say now with a great deal of urgency, that the international community should observe the South African scene and perceive the political realities which are there among ordinary people. All too frequently persuasive celebrity leaders, and media representations of those leaders' popularity, dominate in the formation of perceptions about South Africa. All too seldom do foreign observers seek to understand the underlying realities of the South African political situation. For me politics is about gaining the support of the people and about giving ordinary people the political machinery with which they can seek to serve that which they aspire to, and influence the process of government in their country.

Inkatha is the largest Black political movement ever to have emerged in the history of South Africa and which now has over one million card-carrying paid-up members. No Black leader has ever gathered the constituency support in Black South Africa which I today enjoy. This massive membership of Inkatha is dominated numerically by peasants and workers. It has branches scattered across - the length and breadth of the country - and it is as

representative of Blacks in urban areas as it is of Blacks in rural areas. It is as representative of the old as it is of the young. Inkatha's Youth Brigade is the largest youth organisation ever to have emerged in the history of the country. Its Women's Brigade is the largest women's brigade ever to have emerged in the history of the country.

Inkatha is intensely democratic. Its supreme authority is the Annual General Conference where policies are determined and where tactics and strategies are accepted and rejected. Inkatha's leadership is elected by its ordinary members. At branch, regional and national levels Inkatha's representatives are chosen by the people, and its Annual General Conference is a conference of representatives chosen to be there by the people. I never ever speak for myself on public issues. I reflect only that which Inkatha's membership has endorsed. There is nothing that I will say today which does not have the solid endorsement of Inkatha. The point I am making is that when Black South Africans are given the freedom to choose and are given democratic machinery through which to exercise their choices, and through which to determine tactics and strategies in the Black struggle for liberation, choices are made which make a mockery of the media representation of South Africa.

Inkatha was launched in 1975 and had to break into the political scene in the very difficult and turbulent years of 1976 and 1977. When I was last at the European Parliament in 1980, the world still felt the aftermath of the publicity shock waves of the Soweto uprisings of 1976/77. It only slowly dawned upon people in Europe that the flames of anger of Soweto's youth had not been able to produce any real changes in the apartheid system. In 1980 however, South Africa had already entered the phase in which Whites started to realise that apartheid could not last forever - the Verwoerdian era was over.

When Mr. P.W. Botha came to power, he set out to change the constitution of South Africa in such a way that it entrenched White supremacy and domination. He set up the President's Council to give constitutional effect to the blueprint for a new Parliament which had evolved in the National Party's caucus. He simultaneously attempted to establish a Black Advisory Council which would serve to legitimise any change in the constitution because Mr. Botha would then be able to claim that the changes were made in consultation with Blacks. This move was a failure from the start. The Black Advisory Council had at least to appear to be representative for it to serve its purpose. A great deal of pressure was put upon me to serve on that Council. The State President, then Prime Minister, announced a meeting date which I adamantly refused to attend and he had to abandon the Black Advisory Council.

As subsequent events proved, the new constitution was designed to eliminate the constitutional legitimacy of Black participation in the formation of a government in South Africa which would have total control over something like four-fifths of the surface area of the country and over the economy, transport system, communications, the civil service, the armed forces and the police. It was designed to put Whites in a commanding position to continue to control the economy, domestic policy and foreign policy. Black South Africa rejected the notion of this new constitution and continues to reject it in part and in whole now that it has become a reality.

I campaigned vigorously against this constitutional plan because it changed the policy of apartheid from being the policy of the Government in power to making apartheid a cornerstone of the constitution. My warnings against the consequences of the new constitution for the country angered the State President, and politically I have remained totally estranged from him ever since. In fact during the last four years I have met the State President formally only once, where I told him very clearly that as a Black leader I would not be able to negotiate with the Government within the framework of the new constitution.

The new constitution introduced in 1983 has further polarised South Africa. It has deepened Black anger and it has radicalised Black

politics. So much so that when the South African economy went into a deep decline, after the new constitution had been introduced, the frustration and despair which has always characterised the millions of jobless and impoverished Blacks in South Africa, took on violent political undertones and overtones. The last 18 months has seen an escalation of violence in South Africa.

In many ways, this violence is leaving Europe under the same impression which it had in the late seventies. The media has portrayed Black South Africans as revolting in such numbers that the country is on the brink of being ungovernable, and that the days of the Government are numbered. On the other side, Whites are portrayed as being unable to come to terms with the situation, and as resorting to destructive violence, and stubbornly continuing on their disastrous path. These perceptions are indeed valid, but valid only if they are seen as part of the total reality. The majority of South Africans do not fall into either of these categories. I would like to spell out to you what the real situation in South Africa is.

South Africa is a country of 1 221 037 square kilometers. While, comparatively speaking, violence has broken out sporadically in many areas, continuing destructive violence is only present in a few areas surrounding Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and Johannesburg. The distance between Johannesburg and Cape Town is 1457 kms; between Johannesburg and Port Elizabeth it is 1098 kms and between Cape Town and Port Elizabeth it is 788 kms. Translated into

European distances, it means that violence and protests occur in places as far apart as Bonn, Paris and Rome. The oppressive machinery of the South African Government is devastatingly efficient and fully capable of dealing with a situation like this.

Up to now only a fraction of its capability has been tested. In reality, protest and violence will not be permitted to escalate into a serious revolution. Those who think that the South African

Government is on the run are literally playing with fire.

I am not saying these things to minimise what is in fact a very

serious situation. Analysis must start from realities, however, and it is just not true that South Africa is about to go up in flames. The ANC Mission in Exile has now for more than 25 years

attempted to mount an armed struggle and Mr. Oliver Tambo himself has now said that they have achieved nothing during those 25 years through the employment of violence. That is why the ANC Mission in Exile is now desperately trying to generalise the violence which has broken out in South Africa, and that is why all the emphasis in his organisation's propaganda to Black South Africa is on the need to develop a bloody people's war to create chaos and ungovernability. The ANC Mission in Exile is doing its best to ferment violence, but it is the violence of mob behaviour and not the violence of disciplined military or political action which he

is now hoping for. The present unrest is far from a "popular uprising." It is mainly carried out by youngsters under 20, taking advantage of the situation. A lot of Black-on-Black intimidation

is employed by the ANC Mission in Exile though the United Democratic Front working in collaboration with it.

Where violence does break out it mostly takes the form of mob behaviour and the people in the environment experience indiscriminate violence and killings. Normal life is disrupted: buses cannot run; shops are destroyed and looted and ordinary people have to endure harsh consequences for their neighbourhood. The facts of the matter are that there are less strikes in South Africa than there are in Europe. This must be understood as having two reasons. One is that Black trade unionism is still in the evolution and trade unions are generally impoverished and generally cannot afford to sustain workers while on strike. The other reason is, however, that in desperate poverty-stricken situations cash wages are vital in making the difference between life and death for families. It is the Black worker who is keeping South Africa's factories and mines running. Generally speaking, the South African mines have been very stable during the last 18 months of violence.

When Mr. Jacques Poos, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Luxemburg, Mr. Giulio Andreotti, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Italy, Mr. Hans van den Broek, Minister of Foreign Affairs, The Netherlands and Mr. Willy de Clerq, Commissioner for External Affairs of the European Commission visited South Africa last year, I met them on the 30 August and I told them that the ANC Mission in Exile's criticism of their visit did not express the sentiments of the average Black South African. The demands laid down for preconditions before the

Mission in Exile would be prepared to talk to the South African Government were the following:

The lifting of the state of emergency in parts of the country.

The release of all political prisoners.

Permitting the ANC and other banned organisations to operate openly in South Africa, and

The halting of the political process and the granting of amnesties to all refugees in exile.

I pointed out that these demands were unrealistic as preconditions. We had to make progress while they were not yet met, and we needed European influences to be exerted while we did so. I pointed out that Black South Africans could possibly choose to support the armed struggle if it would bring about radical change without destroying the foundations of the future. I pointed out, however, that Black South Africans simply did not believe that the armed struggle would succeed in the foreseeable future and they sought to bring about change through non-violent and democratic tactics. While the ANC Mission in Exile and some internal groupings such as the ÆUnited Democratic Front are working to make the country ungovernable, the majority of the people were involved in the politics of national reconciliation. I asked that European Governments do not prescribe for us what we should be seeking as goals but they should support that which Black South Africans had elected to do.

I pointed out that those who were committed to the armed struggle and who were seeking to bring about change through violence, had now turned to using violence against their fellow Blacks who did not opt for the armed struggle. This means they are turning against the vast majority of Black South Africans. I pointed out that Black South Africans have to be subjected to violent intimidation before they agreed not to go to work to meet the political demands of some organisations. I said that whatever transpired and however the National Party failed to bring about change, Inkatha's commitment had thus remained to bring about change through non-violent means. I pointed out that I and the whole of Black South Africa rejected the new constitution, and negotiations could not get off the ground in South Africa until the Government ceased acting unilaterally and worked within a framework of a Declaration of Intent that Blacks and Whites could subscribe to. I said that no matter how many of the reforms already introduced were in fact meaningful to Black South Africans in their daily lives, the State President had taken no step towards tackling the real issues before us. I pointed out that the State President has not yet begun to seek to establish a national government based on broad popular support. He was seeking to entrench White interests.

It is Blacks who keep the civil service running and who keep the South African Transport system running. The world must understand that we are not talking about people from outer space when we talk about Black South Africans. We are talking about human beings behaving as human beings. We are talking about human behaviour in industrialised society. The average factory worker in South Africa is working because he needs to work to feed his family and to survive. He works because he needs to educate his children. Black

workers in South Africa, like workers the world over, do not suspend their personal, family and social responsibilities for ideals they do not believe in. It is only with the gravest difficulty and with a great deal of intimidation that strikes can be successfully organised. Black South Africans have been subjected to propaganda favouring violence for many decades. We

know what little has been produced in the past and we know what little is being produced now by violence.

It is this side which Europeans do not want to acknowledge or which they conveniently tend to brush aside as "South African Government propaganda." The outcome of the late seventies seems to be forgotten in Europe, or has never been properly analysed. Where it is referred to it is claimed that the present unrest is nationwide, has all-round popular support and that the country is well under way to becoming ungovernable. These are false assumptions and therefore Europeans are apt to arrive at wrong conclusions and choose strategies to deal with South Africa which are more harmful than beneficial to the situation.

Reality has proven time and again that it is the difficult task of organising and mobilising people to bring them together which really matters. In times like these people are willing to rally behind those leaders who make demands which can be met but whose final goals are a democratic, non-racial and free South Africa. I and Inkatha have proven this time and again. In 1976/77 Inkatha's policies proved to offer real alternatives and scored successes in the struggle for liberation. Inkatha doubled and tripled its membership in that time and at present we again see a tremendous growth and support for our policies. Inkatha has continued to grow since that time. As I have said, it now has a paid-up membership of over a million. Inkatha is a people's organisation and it thrives on mass support.

Other organisations, like affiliates of the UDF or the SACC, hold their meetings in English which cannot be understood by the ordinary Black women and men whereas we always use the local Black language and, if necessary provide translations into other languages for those who cannot understand.

During my visit here I said that the future of South Africa was going to be strongly influenced by Black leaders who correctly assess opportunities and dangers and that it would also be strongly

influenced by White responses to initiatives from Black leaders. Again there is the need for a realistic and analytical assessment to be made as to which Black leaders provide the best initiative.

My campaign against the proposals for the Tri-cameral Parliament led me to address large crowds of Black and White people. As a Black politician I was invited by Whites to spell out to them the attitude of Blacks towards the proposals, and the consequences which would lie ahead if they consented. This I did across the length and breadth of the country. At that time, unfortunately, the majority of Whites were not persuaded to reject the new proposals and the National Party Government received a Yes vote in the Referendum which was held in November 1983. However much I hoped and prayed for another result, all my predictions at the time that the new constitution would herald a new era of violence have now become a reality. The prestigious South African weekly, the Financial Mail, which itself campaigned for a Yes vote admitted last month: "It is difficult for those today who supported a Yes vote to quarrel with Buthelezi's predictions."

While Mr. P.W. Botha and the National Party were devising a new constitution to entrench apartheid, I set about seeking consensus between Black and White on how we should proceed away from apartheid. I there established the Buthelezi Commission and charged it with:

lars In terms of the requirements of peace, stability, prosperity and equity, to consider fully and appreciate the present position of KwaZulu and Natal with a constitutional and political structure of South Africa, taking into account possible or likely future developments, and with due cognisance of alternative constitutional forms and modes of political organisation and development.

lb. To assist and evaluate the rationality, desirability and viability of the present constitutional, social and economic situation of KwaZulu and Natal in the light of historical development, and the current and emerging political reality of South and Southern Africa.

2. To enquire into and report and make recommendations on the constitutional future of the areas of KwaZulu and Natal within the context of South Africa and Southern Africa.

I also asked it to make detailed recommendations of a practical nature which could be implemented during a process of transitionâ\200\231 from apartheid society to an open society.

The Commissioners who accepted my invitation to serve on it formed a very representative multi-racial body of opinion. These Commissioners deliberated for over a year and then produced their findings and recommendations which are published in two volumes. The recommendations themselves rise above Party politically-defined positions and provide a blueprint which is having great utility " in on-the-ground developments between Parties and between race groups in the KwaZulu/Natal region. A Conference is being organised here in Europe for later this year where the role of Inkatha in South Africa will be examined, and where there will be some discussion about the Buthelezi Commission's recommendations to illustrate the realism with which Inkatha is tackling the urgent need to commence with the politics of reconciliation in South Africa.

In May last year, I wrote to some 5 000 influential South Africans, of all colours and language groups, asking them to comment on the political options of Inkatha and on the tactics and strategies which it has chosen as the most sensible road to walk. I received an overwhelming response which was very dominantly positive. At the same time an opinion poll carried out by the major Afrikaans newspaper, "Rapport", observed that 75,5 per cent of the Whites agree with me and the Inkatha leadership.

Whatever the stubborn attitude of the South African Government may be, White South Africans are ready for real dialogue and negotiation. There is a vast reservoir of goodwill among all South Africans and they support negotiations which would lead to power-sharing. The movement towards the process of negotiation cannot and will not be stopped by the stubborn attitude of the South African Government.

I, representing millions of Blacks, have openly stated that I am prepared to start negotiations as soon as the Government has made a statement of intent on power-sharing between all population groups. I do not demand a time-table. I simply demand a clear commitment towards that final goal. In the end, the South African Government will have to give this commitment as they need me and my support for radical and positive change more than anything else. To quote once more the Financial Mail: "In terms of realpolitik in South Africa, if there is anybody in a position to break the logjam and get dialogue moving, it is Buthelezi."

The South African Government only needs to take the relatively small step of announcing its commitment to power-sharing together with Black leaders, and not only will the majority of South Africans, but indeed the whole world, will applaud them for doing so. We are all anxiously awaiting this moment and there is a great deal which people in the international community can do to assist us in bringing this nearer. Firstly, we expect Europeans to support the forces for non-violent change and reconciliation which are found in Inkatha, with everything you can and not to hamper the politics of negotiation or play it down.

The threat of sanctions has had beneficial results in our country, just as the threat of the escalating use of violence has had beneficial results. But to actually employ violence on a scale large enough to force the Government to its knees, or to actually employ disinvestment as a strategy on a scale large enough to damage the South African economy would be absolutely disastrous not only for many generations of South Africans but for the whole sub-continent. I ask you who are Foreign Ministers to guard against Europe and North America overplaying its hand.

It must be appreciated that Zimbabwe's biggest trading partner is South Africa, which is why they have a Trade Mission in Johannesburg; that are hundreds of thousands of Black citizens of independent states in Southern Africa working in South Africa; that the Nkomati Accord has enabled Mocambique to trade with South Africa openly and that many African countries are trading with South Africa covertly and clandestinely. The economies of the independent neighbouring States of Mocambique, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Swaziland and Botswana are so interwoven with the economy of South Africa that if disinvestment takes place, the citizens of these countries would suffer even more than their Black brothers and sisters and Whites of South Africa.

Disinvestment is not a strategy which EEC countries should employ. What we know from painful experience here on the ground in South Africa must be respected by people in Europe. Not only should they listen to Black South African views and observe the way our Black neighbours break every rule of the boycott and embargo game, but they should also think very seriously about doing an in-depth study of the interdependence of neighbouring States in Southern Africa. One often hears mention of interdependence but when it is looked at closely, it will be seen that there is a total dependence on South Africa by neighbouring States. The EEC should undertake a very serious and major enquiry into the effects of a successful disinvestment campaign and of the consequences of the economic isolation of South Africa.

That means in concrete terms: increase support for assistance to Black organisations which have shown that they are serious about negotiations and have committed themselves to non-violence, so that they can implement their projects for basic needs such as

education, housing and food production. This in itself will increase Black power and give Black people more hope for a better future. That has to be combined with an increase in jobs for Blacks, which precludes sanctions which would have a negative effect on job creation. All these things can be done in the area of KwaZulu/Natal for instance in the framework of the new

initiatives taken to evolve a multi-racial area and to give Black people the possibility of helping themselves in self-reliance projects.

When Mr. Poos, Mr. Andreotti, Mr. van den Broek, and Mr. de Clerq, discussed South Africa with me last year, I told them:

"As a Black South African leader I would like to convey to the Governments of the European Economic Community our great appreciation for the very considerable pressures which the international community is now bringing to bear on the State President and the South African Government. This country must take its place in the Western civilised world and it simply must prepare itself to earn the right to take that place as a respected nation, and as a nation which has a contribution to make and not a nation which has to make demands to make good that which was destroyed in the process of bringing about change. We have to eradicate apartheid and we have to bring really fundamental changes to our country's political system, and we have to create circumstances in which there is a massive redistribution of wealth through the distribution of the equality of opportunity across racial barriers. We have to liberate our country while at the same time building it up and preparing it to take its meaningful place in the modern industrialised world. We can therefore not afford to respond positively to just any pressure on the South African Government, no matter what its implications hold for progress and in particular for economic progress. The struggle for liberation is meaningless unless change results in increasing standards of living for ever-increasing numbers of people. Not just any pressures are called for, and this is why I find myself having to reason with Western Governments on the question of disinvestment. The disinvestment strategy is a strategy which some Blacks may want to employ in their deeper moments of anger, but it is not a strategy which on balance over time Blacks have supported. It is certainly not a strategy which my constituency asks me to employ, and of all the Black politicians in the country I have certainly got the largest constituency.

The threat of sanctions has had beneficial results in our country, just as the threat of the escalating use of violence has had beneficial results. But to actually employ violence on a scale large enough to force the Government to its knees, or to actually employ disinvestment as a strategy on a scale large enough to damage the South African economy would be absolutely disastrous not only for many generations of South Africans but for the whole sub-continent. I ask you who are Foreign Ministers to guard against Europe and North America overplaying its hand.

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Mocambique, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Swaziland and Botswana are so interwoven with the economy of South Africa that if disinvestment takes place, the citizens of these countries would suffer even more than their Black brothers and sisters and Whites of South Africa.

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That means for you the challenging task of analysis, of selecting those South Africans and those organisations who are prepared, and who have proven to be working for radical change along peaceful

lines. It means encouraging them and giving them platforms on which they could convey to the world the realities in South Africa and the essence of the struggle for liberation. If you members of

the European Parliament want to have a worthwhile influence and to assist the process of change in South Africa, then you must take into account the realities of the South African situation as I have laid them before you today. If you want to ride on the easy tide of media propaganda, you will have to face the responsibility of a South Africa with thousands and thousands more deaths; a country in which the economy will be destroyed and therefore not a welcome partner any more for Europe; and a country where, like Mocambique and Angola, we will need several generations to build up a new future on the foundations destroyed during the process of liberating the country.

I know and I applaud the decision of the European Parliament to set extra funds aside for support for Black education and other projects in South Africa. This is an important first step but its value can be greatly increased by the process of selecting the right partners in South Africa. The crucial question for you to decide is whom are you going to help with your money. Will you choose for an extra push in the direction of peaceful change or are you going to assist those who want violence and destruction to make the country ungovernable?