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EXTRACTS FROM REMARKS BY PRESIDENT FW DE KLERK AFTER A CABINET MEETING AT THE UNION BUILDINGS (PRETORIA) ON 5 AUGUST 1992

REMARKS AND ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS BY STATE PRESIDENT FW DE KLERK AFTER THE CABINET MEETING AT THE UNION BUILDINGS ON 5 AUGUST 1992 - THE SAME DAY ON WHICH THE MASS PROTEST GATHERING BY THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS (ANC) TOOK PLACE AT THE UNION BUILDINGS

"Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen

Let me say that today we had our normal weekly scheduled cabinet meeting. It was business as usual. While all the dramatic activities were going on, we were discussing how to make sure that the Transvaal, the industrial heart of South Africa, will have enough water in the year 2004 and 2010. We attended to the great problems created by the drought - the need for proper food distribution and water distribution and all sorts of practicalities in the best interests of all South Africans.

We also focussed on a report back from our cabinet meeting in the bush where we focussed on the constitutional process and the negotiation process. We had a report back, summing up what we discussed there and giving further instruction for the refinement in preparation of the resumption of negotiations. Because we are moving to the resumption of negotiation.

I see from the speech that Mr Mandela has made - from a written copy that I obtained - that he said that today struck a blow for peace and democracy. We need not to strike blows. We need to strike bargains for peace and democracy. And the way to strike bargains for peace and democracy is for us to resume negotiations. I was glad to note from his speech that he recommitted the ANC to negotiation. I look forward to the day when Mr Mandela will once again see me in my office, as he has done often. He needn't speak to me from the lower part of the Union Buildings. There is an open door here. He needn't kick any doors down - the doors are open. The invitation was issued right at the time when the ANC announced that negotiation was suspended by them. I said let us even go to the bush for two full days and have a fundamental discussion. That is what is needed now.

May I also say that the whole basis on which the whole mass action has been justified is really a basis not founded on fact. The basis is an allegation that the Government is delaying the process. That is untrue, for we are in a hurry. The basis is that it was the Government's fault that

there was a break-down in negotiations. It is not true. Even by admission of the ANC, a decision was taken in their inner circles a week before CODESA II to scuttle CODESA. The justification is found in the (alleged) fact that the Government is not in favour of a full democracy. It is simply not true. We say that we need a transitional - call it interim, whatever you want to - government of national unity as soon as possible. We have even made proposals that it must be an elected one. We are not against it. We are not against the concept of a properly elected Parliament which will also act as a constitution writing body - call it constituent assembly if you want to - with regard to a final and permanent new constitution for South Africa. Therefore the whole basis - the whole allegation that the Government needs to be kicked and pressurised into accepting real democracy, full representative government - is a false basis.

We must discuss and negotiate exactly how a transitional government should be constituted and elected. We must discuss how, in a transitional period, the country should be governed, what the legislature should look like. Yes, we believe in checks and balances. But checks and balances doesn't mean a minority veto, as is alleged. And so I could continue.

Therefore I say: walk in through the open door. There is no need to break down any doors. There are no walls which need to be knocked down. The solution lies in resuming negotiations.

Q: The ANC is saying that it won't go back to the negotiating table until the fourteen demands are met. Is the Government planning to address those demands?

A: We have discussed many of those things in public already. We have reacted to the Goldstone Commission's recommendations touching upon a number of the issues - also (issues) raised by the ANC. What we need to do is to sit down and discuss the issues mentioned in documentation which was exchanged between the Government and the ANC. We have furnished them with a fairly detailed reply. They might not be satisfied with everything - so let us discuss it.

Q: So, do you plan to take that further. They have made it quite clear today, it seems, that there is no way they are going to return to the table. (Last part of question unclear).

A: Well, certain discussions have been taking place. And it was - and I am not disclosing a secret - in the past five days there was discussions between the Government and the ANC on specific issues. We need to broaden the discussions also to other issues.

Q: You mentioned the constitutional points but are you prepared to make any more concessions to the ANC on the question of measures to curb violence? That is one of the three core demands that Nelson Mandela today boiled down the fourteen demands to.

A: We continuously try to improve on our already basically good record in efforts through the security forces to curb violence. The Goldstone Commission's appointment was one of those. And yes, the Government is continuously reviewing how it can improve its role - which is a fundamental, a crucial role - in the curbing of violence.

We unfortunately find, however, that when we take certain steps, then we are suddenly criticised for the very steps that we take. For instance, when we recently - at the beginning of the week, over the weekend - deployed an additional more or less 5 000 men in all the troubled spots, we were criticised for doing so. We did it in conjunction with welfare departments in an effort also to restore dignity to the townships. And then we faced criticism. We are not going to be put off by that criticism. We will do our duty but we also emphasise that political leaders also have a crucial role to play in the curbing of violence - by giving a lead to their people.

I am glad that, to a great extent, the mass action thus far - there were very clear definite efforts on the side of the ANC to ensure that they were properly controlled and so on. They didn't always succeed, but nonetheless I appreciate their efforts. Basically of course, we don't think that mass action at this time is what is needed. We think that negotiation is needed at this time, and may I say with reference to mass action: It is undeniable, for instance, that today's march caused damage to people. Many people's businesses were disrupted. They were robbed of normal business and clientele because no cars were allowed to park in front of their shops, everybody stayed away from the (business) areas as a result of fear of violence breaking out.

So, yes, it did cause damage to many people.

Q: Mr President, following a series of independent reports which have been quite critical of the Police during recent months, can you conceive that there might be something in the ANC's complaints of partiality or of something being wrong in the Security Forces?

A: We have never denied that individuals may have transgressed the policy and their instructions. It happens across the world. We have recently charged policemen who were actually (found) guilty and they were sentenced to death.

Further court cases are now in process against policemen who were partial and did participate in the instigation of violence or actually in violence itself. So, we are against it and when we get evidence of it, we take notice of it and we take steps.

So, we have never denied it. But to generalise as if the whole Police Force is part and parcel of a plan to destabilize and actually takes sides and as if the Police Force as such is not impartial, I think, is an unjustified allegation.

Q: Given the differences between the ANC and the Government over the question of violence, do you think there should be a greater role given to the UN? Their presence seems to have had some effect in the diminishing of violence. What are your comments on this?

A: I don't think that the violence can be solved from overseas. We have said and we have proven that we have no problem with observers. They can, through encouragement or whatever, play a constructive role. They are welcome to do so. However, the leaders of South Africa will have to end violence. They have signed a pact with each other how to do it and they must make the mechanisms which they have agreed to and of which they are part - they must make them work and they must ensure that they work successfully. We must upgrade our efforts within the National Peace Committee and we must all give our unqualified support to the National Peace Secretariat. We must all use our influence as political leaders to make sure that the conflict resolving regional committees and local committees work successfully.

We have done all those things. We must now adhere to, firstly, our own commitments. We must stop making inflammatory statements. I haven't made one. You won't trace one that I have made. The Government is not making inflammatory statements. You can analyse statements by others, though, and decide who do it.

That is what we need: we need a spirit and a culture of reconciliation to manifest itself. For that, it takes two to tango. And that means - that commitment and that culture need to be shown and to be exhibited by all political leaders and all political movements. In that regard the Government's hands are clean.

Q: Mr President do you accept the ANC's demands for an interim government of national unity?

A: We have already agreed a long time ago in principle that there must be a transitional government of national unity. There is no fundamental difference of opinion between us. We must negotiate how to get it. I say it must be an elected government of national unity in which all South Africans, white and black, each one of eighteen years and older, will bring out a vote. That is the democratic way in which to get to a properly constituted transitional government of national unity.

We are in favour of it. It is not a demand. Read my speech at CODESA I and you will see that we have advocated it all along.

Q: Are you preparing to launch a fresh constitutional initiative, something to get talks back on the road?

A: Well, we are constantly working at it. But such initiatives are not "launched" in the sense that, maybe, you referred to. We will continue to work for it in various ways and through various means.

Q: But are you confident that you will be talking to the ANC, as some people have suggested today, within weeks?

A: I am confident that negotiations will be resumed. I can't force people into negotiations. You must ask that question to them. I am prepared to sit down tomorrow.

Q: Mr Mandela said that the extent of support for the week of mass action means that you, the Government, you President De Klerk, must now accept the ANC is demanding peace and democracy standing on its feet and not kneeling on its knees. What is your response to that?

A: I have never wanted Mr Mandela or anybody on their knees. I have always spoken to him on the basis of fully recognising his position as an important leader of a large political movement and I have never requested, in any way whatsoever, an attitude on the side of the ANC to be sort of subjective or anything like that. So, once again, I think it is a perception which is being created. It is just not true.

Q: What will the Government do if the ANC refuses to come back to the table? "How long are you prepared not to have negotiations"? (Quoted part of question unclear).

A: Well, I would start out by saying that I take Mr Mandela seriously when he recommitted the ANC today to negotiation and I'll take him at his word and therefore I think it is a speculative question which won't materialise. We will talk again to each other.

Q: You have called a second session of Parliament within two months time. Do you expect new developments by that time? Can we see legislation through Parliament by that time?

A: We have been working very hard. Yes, that session will definitely take place. I haven't called it (only) now. I announced that there will be a session, starting on the 12th of October, and that hopefully we will be able to present to that session the results and the fruits of negotiations. But if not, at least Parliament will be afforded (the opportunity) to discuss the state of the nation as it will be at that stage. And yes, you can expect at least some basic legislation to be put before Parliament. It is not just general legislation, it will be constructive legislation aimed at assisting progress, without us in any way trying to act unilaterally. Let me underline that, please. We are not working on a go-it-alone option.

Q: When Mr Mandela broke away, broke off negotiations with you in June, he was saying pretty much the same thing then he was saying today. When you then responded to him a few days later, you were saying pretty much the same thing you are saying (today). When can we see some movement? When can we expect to see some public movement?

A: I really think you underestimate what has been said in the meantime. I have been on television; I have had a full international press conference; I issued what I think was a five page statement - and all of that, if you analyse it, constitutes progress, constitutes addressing - in a constructive manner - important issues. And some of those important issues were issues also raised by the ANC. So, if he still says pretty much the same thing, I think it is time for the ANC to start reacting constructively to what we have said in a constructive spirit".

(End of questions)

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