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To: DAC
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Fr: Office of the President

Date: 3 December 1992

Please receive attached communication addressed to the President, we would appreciate your comments as soon as you possibly can.

DIE SUID-AFRIKAANSE AKADEMIE
VIR WETENSKAP EN KUNS

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THE VIEWPOINT OF THE
SUID-AFRIKAANSE AKADEMIE VIR WETENSKAP EN KUNS

on

THE POSITION OF AFRIKAANS
IN A NEW POLITICAL DISPENSATION

Die oogmerke van die Akademie as multidisiplinêre organisasie is die bevordering van die wetenskap, die tegniek, die kunste en die bevordering van die gebruik en gehalte van Afrikaans.

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30/6

11 November 1992

Mr Nelson Mandela
President
ANC
P.O. Box 61884
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Dear mr Mandela

— Included you will find a document concerning the Akademie's views on Afrikaans as an official language in this country.

You will notice that this is a document based on fact and logic rather than on sentiment and emotion. The latter has its place in society but in this case the Akademie took the former approach.

Please do not hesitate to contact us should you wish to discuss the contents or require any further elucidation.

Yours sincerely

L. Alberts

L. ALBERTS
CHAIRMAN: SA AKADEMIE VIR WETENSKAP EN KUNS

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1. INTRODUCTION

The objectives of the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns - as stipulated in the Act on the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns - are the fostering of the arts, sciences and technology, and the promotion of the use and quality of the Afrikaans language. In the Act it is also stipulated that the Akademie can determine norms for the promotion of the use and development of the Afrikaans language in all its roles.

The Akademie does not present this document because it believes that the future of Afrikaans as an official language must become part of the negotiation process. It is taken for granted that the present position of Afrikaans as a countrywide official language will be respected.

2. POINTS OF DEPARTURE FOR DISCUSSIONS ON THE POSITION OF AFRIKAANS IN A NEW POLITICAL DISPENSATION

The Akademie accepts the following as points of departure for discussions on the position of Afrikaans in a new political dispensation:

- 2.1 that language rights are human rights and therefore they should be protected;
- 2.2 that the existence of a multilingual situation in South Africa is an asset;
- 2.3 that the value of all South African languages is recognised and that the speakers of a specific language can themselves negotiate a role for that language;
- 2.4 that a language plan for Afrikaans must form part of a comprehensive language plan for South Africa which must take into account the broader national objectives;
- 2.5 that a language plan for Afrikaans must take into account the entire Afrikaans language community;
- 2.6 that Afrikaans must be retained as a countrywide official language.

3. CRITERIA FOR THE COUNTRYWIDE OFFICIAL STATUS OF A LANGUAGE

The following criteria taken from international scientific literature can be used to determine the possible countrywide official status of a language:

- 3.1 that the language has a standardised variety, of which the spelling, orthography and vocabulary have been stabilised;
- 3.2 that the language is well documented in explanatory monolingual, bilingual and multilingual dictionaries, so that speakers of other languages can have ready access to knowledge about this language;
- 3.3 that the language is in general use throughout the country;
- 3.4 that the language can function as an effective vehicle for management and administration on a countrywide basis;
- 3.5 that the language has the vocabulary for the administration of justice;
- 3.6 that the language has the vocabulary to serve as a medium for education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels;

- 3.7 that the language is a means of communication transcending cultural and linguistic boundaries in the country concerned;
- 3.8 that the language has symbolic value, either for all the people or for a significant percentage of the people of the country;
- 3.9 that there are enough trained people - or that there will be enough such people in the near future - to teach the language as a school subject in all schools that ought to teach it.

There are other subsidiary features that argue in favour of a language that lays claim to countrywide official status. Such features include:

- (i) that the language has a rich and thriving literature;
- (ii) that the language is international;
- (iii) that the language is intertwined with the religions of either all the people or of a significant part of the people of the country;
- (iv) that the language is being spoken by people who render technologically and economically valuable services for the well-being of the people;
- (v) that the language has the vocabulary to pursue the sciences.

4. AFRIKAANS AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF CRITERIA FOR THE COUNTRYWIDE OFFICIAL STATUS OF A LANGUAGE

4.1 The language must already have a standardised variety, of which the spelling, orthography and vocabulary have been stabilised.

- ° Afrikaans is a mature standard language that, through continued modernisation, holds its own at secondary and tertiary levels of education.
- ° The Act on the Akademie, Act 54 of 1959 as amended, stipulates that the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns has the power to determine norms for the promotion of the use and development of the Afrikaans language in all its roles.
- ° The Taalkommissie ("Language Committee") of the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns gives guidance about the spelling, orthography and vocabulary of the Afrikaans language, subject to ratification by the Akademieraad ("Council of the Academy"). The Taalkommissie compiles the Afrikaanse woordelys en spelreëls ["Afrikaans wordlist and spelling rules"],¹ revises it from time to time, gives general language guidance to individuals and bodies, and strives for the recognition and advancement of Afrikaans.
- ° One of the objectives of the National Terminology Services (Dept. of National Education) is to create a functional technical vocabulary for Afrikaans. The NTS has a substantial influence on the technical language practice in the country as it concerns itself with ascertaining the needs and priorities in the field of terminology. A large variety of Afrikaans technical dictionaries are available.²

- 4.2 The language must be well documented in explanatory monolingual, bilingual and multilingual dictionaries, in order that speakers of other languages can have ready access to knowledge about this language.

Several explanatory Afrikaans dictionaries are available, of which the Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal ("Dictionary of the Afrikaans Language", abbreviated as WAT)³ is perhaps the best known. The Bureau of the WAT is situated in Stellenbosch. Another well-known explanatory Afrikaans dictionary is the Verklarende Handwoordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal ("Explanatory Desk Dictionary of the Afrikaans Language", abbreviated as HAT)⁴. A well-known bilingual dictionary is the one by Bosman, Van der Merwe and Hiemstra.⁵ Several other dictionaries are available, explanatory as well as bilingual and multilingual. The wide range of technical dictionaries has already been mentioned under point 4.1.

- 4.3 The language must be in general use throughout the country in the sense
 (a) that it is used throughout the whole area of the geographical state, and
 (b) that it is used by a significant percentage of the citizens, be it as a first, second or later language.

From research done by the HSRC, it is clear that Afrikaans as a dominant language is spoken and understood throughout the whole area of the geographical state.⁶ By "dominant language" they mean "... the home language which in absolute numbers has the strongest support in a specific district." As opposed to this, other South African languages are geographically restricted, each to a few districts.

According to the LiCCA document Language Planning for a Post-Apartheid South Africa of March 1991,⁷ the South African figures (including the national states and selfgoverning areas) for home languages and for second-language proficiency are as follows:

(a) (i) Present official languages (1990)			
	Afrikaans	6 188 981	15.66% of the population
	English	3 432 042	8.68%
(ii) Nguni languages			
	Ndebele	799 216	2.02%
	Swazi	926 094	2.34%
	Xhosa	6 891 358	17.44%
	Zulu	8 541 173	21.61%
(iii) Sotho languages			
	Northern Sotho	3 437 971	8.70%
	Southern Sotho	2 652 590	6.71%
	Tswana	3 601 609	9.11%
(iv)	Tsonga	1 349 022	3.54%
(v)	Venda	763 247	1.93%
(vi)	Other languages		4.26%

(b) Second-language proficiency in South Africa

(i) Speaking knowledge of Afrikaans (in 1980)

Asians	37 644	29.58% of the Asian population
Blacks	6 604 112	29.37%
Coloureds	2 566 698	35.50%
Whites	3 882 763	86.04%
Total:	13 291 224	43.59%

(ii) Speaking knowledge of English (in 1980)

Asians	779 873	97.07%
Blacks	6 149 230	26.34%
Coloureds	1 459 695	54.31%
Whites	3 934 511	87.19%
Total:	12 323 309	40.42%

[From: Schuring, Gerhard K. 1990. Language Planning for a new South Africa. Research Paper, HSRC, Pretoria.]

4.4 The language must be able to function as an effective vehicle for management and administration on a countrywide basis.

Amongst other things this signifies that the language must be able to function as a day-to-day working language for policy making officials, e.g. for sessions of Parliament and of national councils. Unesco's definition of an "official language" is a language that is used "in the business of government - legislative, executive and judicial".⁸

Afrikaans has been an official language, i.e. a language of Parliament and the state, since 1925. In every state department, national council, legislative, executive and judicial institution, Afrikaans is one of the official languages.

By administration we mean: the management of public and private enterprises, regarding matters posited in deeds, documents, forms, etc., and all correspondence concerned.

~~AA~~ Afrikaans has the complete vocabulary to perform this role. Also, a wide range of technical dictionaries is available. Afrikaans is indeed being used in deeds, documents, forms, notices, agendas, letters, reports, etc., in public as well as private enterprises. The language is fully developed and equipped for this function.

4.5 The language must have the vocabulary for the administration of justice.

By vocabulary for the administration of justice we mean: sufficiently specialised vocabulary for the drafting, interpretation and application of acts, regulations, proclamations and rules of the state, of regional authorities, of municipalities and of town councils.

The well-known facts are that Afrikaans is a medium in the administration of justice, that it has a well-developed technical vocabulary for this administration, that quite a range of Afrikaans technical dictionaries and glossaries are available in this field, and that acts, regulations, proclamations, rules, etc., can be drafted, interpreted and applied in Afrikaans. Cf. e.g. the trilingual legal dictionary of Hiemstra and Gonin.⁹

4.6 The language must have the vocabulary to serve as a medium for education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

Through continued modernisation of its lexicon, Afrikaans has a mature standard language variety that is holding its own at the secondary and tertiary levels of education. It is the medium of instruction for thousands upon thousands of school children at primary and secondary levels. *Amun.*

Afrikaans is the sole medium of five universities in South Africa, viz. Orange Free State, Potchefstroom, Pretoria, Rand Afrikaans University and Stellenbosch. Three universities, viz. Port Elizabeth, Unisa and Western Cape, use both of the present official languages as media of instruction.

There are at least 250 Afrikaans technical dictionaries. [Cf. Combrink 1991.]¹⁰ Technical terminology has been and is being created in relation to the scientific, technical, economic and industrial development of a country. The creation of technical terminology in a specific field is indispensable for the technical communities of a country to communicate in certain spheres of science or technology. Several bodies and organisations, amongst others the National Terminology Services (NTS), are continuously creating functional technical terminology, updating and revising technical glossaries, drawing up and disseminating sets of norms and criteria, and serving the community with its questions and queries about terminological and linguistic matters.

4.7 In the country concerned, the language must be a means of communication transcending cultural and linguistic boundaries.

A means of communication transcending cultural and linguistic boundaries is a lingua franca among people who belong to different cultural or linguistic groups and who don't know one another's languages, at least not well enough. About 15 million Dutch, 10 million Flemish, several million speakers of Low German, and millions of Dutch-speaking people in e.g. Indonesia and Suriname understand Afrikaans. Afrikaans is also being taught in many countries (e.g. in the USA and Russia).

Afrikaans has an unquestionable status as a lingua franca. According to Prof. F.I.J. van Rensburg (Naweek-Volksblad, March 31, 1991), Afrikaans is the language known and understood by the greatest number of people in South Africa.¹¹ [Cf. also Language Atlas of South Africa.]¹² He even claims that Afrikaans is a more authentic symbol of Africa than English.

Over the years there has been a growing understanding of Afrikaans (Schuring 1990: 11).¹³ In 1946, 35% of the total population (TBVC countries included) could speak Afrikaans. In 1980 it was 44% (against 28% and 40% respectively who could speak English). The level of bilingualism of the Southern African population with respect to Afrikaans has also risen over the years. In 1990, 34.21% of the total population (TBVC countries included) were au fait in both Afrikaans and English. It has

Red herring

been estimated that by the year 2000, 37.99% of the total Southern African population will have a speaking knowledge of both Afrikaans and English.

*It is single
not a Black
language*
Taking into account that in 1980 only 7.4% of all South African Asians, Coloureds and Whites could help themselves in a Black language, the utilitarian value of Afrikaans becomes even more clear.

4.8 The language must have a symbolic value either for all the people or for a significant percentage of the people of the country.

Afrikaans does have symbolic value for a significant percentage of the people of the country. To ensure the political and civil co-operation of that section of the people, it is desirable that Afrikaans retains its position as an official language. It has a strongly indigenous character.

4.9 There must be enough trained people - or there will be enough such people in the near future - to teach the language as a school subject in all schools that ought to teach it.

There is no doubt about the availability of trained teachers who are teaching and who could teach Afrikaans as a subject at primary and secondary levels.

OTHER SUBSIDIARY CRITERIA THAT COUNT IN FAVOUR OF A LANGUAGE AS OFFICIAL LANGUAGE ARE THE FOLLOWING:

(i) if the language has a rich and flourishing literature.

Through its literature, Afrikaans takes its place, literally and figuratively, amongst the literatures of the world. Many contemporary Afrikaans works of literature have been translated into foreign languages, and others are considered to be classics.

The quality of literature created in a certain language, more than any other manifestation in that language, is universally considered as a factor of great weight when decisions about its status as an official language have to be made. The most important written literature of South Africa has been created in Afrikaans.¹⁴

7 (ii) If the language is international.

Afrikaans opens a window on the international world by means of language affinities in Europe, Suriname, Indonesia and the Antilles.

Understanding Dutch and Low German opens up the world literature in all fields for speakers of Afrikaans. Quite apart from the possibilities of study, valuable information in scientific and technical fields can be exchanged. In this way communication at an international level can be stimulated and promoted.

(iii) If the language is intertwined with the religion of either all the people or of a significant part of the people of the country.

In 1933 the Bible was translated into Afrikaans for the first time and in 1983 a new translation appeared. A new translation of the Hymn Book has also been published. With the appearance and launching of the Sakramentarium in March 1990, a new milestone was reached in the creation and usage of Roman Catholic Afrikaans liturgical language. Afrikaans is also being used widely over the radio and on television.

The three Sister churches in South Africa, the Apostolic Faith Mission and other denominations have Afrikaans as their medium of ministry - again extending over the whole of the country.

The Koran also speaks to many thousands of people in Afrikaans.

- (iv) If the language is being spoken by people who render technologically and economically valuable services for the well-being of the people.

218 Some of the largest and leading business ventures in South Africa are headed by Afrikaans speaking people, e.g. SASOL, ISCOR, SANLAM, VOLKSKAS, etc. Immaterial of the types of political structures that come into existence in a new political dispensation in South Africa, economic growth will be a prerequisite for survival and development. Alberts (1981)¹⁵ has proved clearly that technological and industrial growth is inextricably tied to countrybound, indigenous leadership. Afrikaans speaking entrepreneurs such as Van der Bijl, Rousseau, Meyer, Wessels and many others have made a major contribution to the South African economy and industry.

The maintenance and growth of Afrikaans is a very important incentive in keeping this type of entrepreneur in South Africa, for the benefit of all of its peoples.

- (v) If the language has the vocabulary to pursue the sciences.

Afrikaans is the language medium of many accredited scientific periodicals, e.g. the Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe ("Journal for the Humanities"),¹⁶ the Tydskrif vir Natuurwetenskap en Tegnologie ("Journal for Natural Sciences and Technology"),¹⁷ and many others.

Afrikaans is well equipped to pursue the natural sciences and the humanities. Proof of this is the large numbers of textbooks, publications, articles, technical dictionaries, etc., that are available and that are being produced on a daily basis. A large variety of Afrikaans scientific textbooks and educational aids are available. E.g. the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns made available within a few years more than 70 000 Afrikaans scientific textbooks on Chemistry,¹⁸ Physics¹⁹ and Mathematics²⁰ to university students.

5. THE STANDPOINT OF THE AKADEMIE ON AFRIKAANS AS A COUNTRYWIDE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

The standpoint of the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns is that Afrikaans as a countrywide official language has to be able to realise its full functional potential in any possible future political dispensation.

6. CONCLUSION

The Akademie is ready and willing to elucidate its standpoint at any time.

Yours faithfully

.....
DR L. ALBERTS
CHAIRMAN

.....
DR D.J.C. GELDENHUYS
GENERAL SECRETARY

Notes

1. Afrikaanse woordelys en spelreëls. 1991. Compiled by the Taalkommissie, commissioned by the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns. Eighth, revised edition.
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5. Bosman, D.B., I.W. van der Merwe & L.W. Hiemstra. Tweetalige Woordeboek. Bilingual Dictionary. Nasionale Boekhandel Ltd.
6. Grobler, E., K.P. Prinsloo & I.J. van der Merwe. 1993. Language Atlas of South Africa. P. 53, Map 17.
7. Schuring, Gerhard K. 1990. Language Planning for a new South Africa. Research Paper, HSRC, Pretoria.
8. Combrink, J.G.H. 1992. Study document on the criteria for the countrywide official status of a language. Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns. (Unpublished.)
9. Cf. Hiemstra, V.G. & H.L. Gonin. 1986. Trilingua: Legal Dictionary. Juta & Co. Ltd. Cape Town.
10. Combrink, J.G.H. 1991. Paper at the one-day seminar on language planning by Unisa. January 29, 1991.
11. Van Rensburg, F.I.J. 1990. Volksblad. March 31, 1990.
12. Ibid., p. 53.
13. Schuring, Gerhard K. 1990. Language Planning for a new South Africa. (Research Paper delivered on August 9, 1990 at the HSRC.) Pretoria.
14. In this section use has been made of data in a paper by Prof. Réna Pretorius, Head of the Department of Afrikaans at the University of Pretoria. "The Continued Existence of Afrikaans: Language, Dialect, Fossil?" Bloemfontein study group of the SA Akademie, June 5, 1991.

Some interesting facts about literature that contribute to the status of Afrikaans are the following:

The Bible in Afrikaans - a valuable spiritual possession of the speakers of Afrikaans - has been for years the best-seller in the country: of the 1933 translation more than 7 million copies have been sold; of the 1983 translation more than 1 755 033 Bibles have been sold: that means an average of 695 Afrikaans Bibles per calendar day. In 1990 172 000 Bibles were sold: the 1990 impression of 172 000 Bibles was not big enough to meet the demand. The Bibliathon 91 Project will make a larger impression possible. The Koran has also been translated into Afrikaans, and it is in daily use.

Increasing interest for the Afrikaans literature by outside groups becomes obvious from the number of prizes (18 of them) - the highest for any literature in South Africa - that is awarded annually for a certain period of production, e.g. the Hertzog Prize, the Eugène Marais Prize, the Scheepers and Alba Bouwer Prizes, the Literary Awards by Nasionale Pers, the Sanlam Prize for Youth Literature, the ATKV Prize for Popular Prose, the Old Mutual Literary Prize, the novel competition of De Kat, the CNA Prize, the Ingrid Jonker Prize, the Volkskas Bank Prize for Youth Literature and the Rapport Prize.

Since the Soweto riots of 1976, which had the slogan "Kill Afrikaans", about 85 Afrikaans poets have published more than 350 new volumes of poetry (collected works excluded).

The high quality and prestige of the Afrikaans literature is evidenced by the acknowledgement that Afrikaans poets and authors have received from abroad:

Elisabeth Eybers was honoured with the Herman Gorter Prize by the city of Amsterdam, and in 1978 she received the Constatyn Huygens Prize for her poetry: on February 26, 1991 she was awarded the highest Dutch literary award, the P.C. Hooft Prize, for her poetic oeuvre in Afrikaans (received on May 31, 1991).

In his own lifetime, N.P. van Wyk Louw was considered by experts to be the greatest poet of the Afrikaans-Dutch-Low German language family: this is still the case today: his works have been translated into many languages.

Breyten Breytenbach is being read in many languages, e.g. French, Dutch and Portuguese.

Uys Krige is an artist who opened up the road for Afrikaans to the world outside, e.g. to Russia.

Etienne Leroux's novels have been translated into many world languages and Etienne van Heerden's novel Toorberg is considered to be one of the greatest contemporary novels in world literature: Wilma Stockenström's novel Die kremetartekspedisie has been translated into many languages and is considered to be an extraordinary text. This book has also received a prize in Italy.

André P. Brink is the most celebrated Afrikaans author abroad. In 1980 he received the Prix Medici for Foreign Literature in Paris: in 1983 he was created Knight of the French Legion d'Honneur for his contribution in the field of culture: in 1987 he was created an Officer in the Order of Arts and Sciences of the French State. Some of his books have been translated into English, American, Dutch, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, Norwegian, Finnish, Polish, Roumainian, Turkish, Italian, Japanese, Yiddish and also into Xhosa. In 1979, 1980 and 1982 he was nominated for the Nobel Prize.

"... Translation always (remains) one of the most important instruments of a living language" (Van Wyk Louw 1982: 75). A rich harvest of world literature - literature over many centuries, of many nations and by diverse authors - has been made available in Afrikaans through discerning and resourceful translations. The rich treasure chest of translated works, especially dramas, has made a valuable contribution to Afrikaans literature. The following translated texts have been awarded prizes by the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie: Ilias and Odyssee by Homer, Aeneas by Virgil, Die vroue van Troje by Euripides, Antigone and Elektra by Sophocles, and Poëtika by Aristotle.

In ingenious ways and in diverse tones and styles Shakespeare has been made to speak Afrikaans - translated texts include Macbeth, Die Twaalfde Nag and Koning Lear. There are excellent translations in Afrikaans of texts by Molière (e.g. Jakkalsstreke van Scapino), Goethe (Faust), Garcia Lorca's great national dramas (Yerma and Die Huis van Bernardo Alba): texts by the Swiss Dürrenmatt, the Frenchmen Anouilh, Ionesco and Robès, the Scandinavian Strindberg and the German Hoffmann.

Moreover, prose and poetry texts by Daleda, Supervielle, Lewis Carroll and Eugenio Montale have been translated, and also a large group of poets from the Spanish-American literary world, that was introduced to Afrikaans readers mainly by Uys Krige. For Krige, who received six Akademie awards for his translations, translating was an important aspect of his creative activity. If Afrikaans survives, André P. Brink said in 1977 (Rapport 5.2.77: 5), Uys Krige will be one of the reasons for it.

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SUMMARY

This document states the viewpoint of the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns ("South African Academy for Science and Art") on the position of Afrikaans in a new political dispensation, viz. that Afrikaans must be able to realise its full functional potential as a language used countrywide.

The objectives of the Akademie are the fostering of the arts, sciences and technology, and the promotion of the use and quality of the Afrikaans language. The Akademie has been commissioned and obliged by law to strive for the promotion of the use and quality of Afrikaans.

The Akademie accepts

- that language rights are human rights and therefore they should be protected;
- that the existence of a multilingual situation in South Africa is an asset;
- that the value of all South African languages is recognised and that the speakers of a specific language can themselves negotiate a role for that language;
- that a language plan for Afrikaans must form part of a comprehensive language plan for South Africa and must take into account the broader national objectives;
- that a language plan for Afrikaans must take into account the entire Afrikaans language community;
- that Afrikaans must be retained as a countrywide official language.

Taken from international scientific literature, a number of criteria that a language must meet in order to qualify for countrywide official status were drawn up by experts of the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie. Afrikaans was then tested against these criteria, and it was concluded that Afrikaans measures up to the criteria to such an extent that it is well qualified to have the status of a countrywide official language in South Africa in future.