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ADVANCED EDUCATION AND HIGH LEVEL TRAINING FOR BLACK SOUTH AFRICANS

The Need for a Commonwealth-wide Initiative

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SUMMARY

1. The attached proposal sets out the rationale and means to establish a network of organisations within the Commonwealth willing to work together to support high-level administrative and professional training for black South Africans.
2. The proposal is presented by the South Africa Education Trust Fund¹ and the Southern African Advanced Education Project². SAETF and SAAEP were established independently during 1988 with the goals of supporting training activities which will enhance the management capabilities and experience of the black majority.
3. It is well known that black South Africans lack the opportunity to gain middle and senior level experience in the public and private sector in any significant numbers in South Africa. Existing international efforts to respond to the needs of black South Africans have tended to focus on the provision of secondary and tertiary education, rather than the acquisition of management experience. It is, therefore, necessary to develop alternative means by which black South Africans, from within and outside the country, can develop such skills.
4. The development of this initiative has its natural locus in the Commonwealth, in which the full range of private sector and public institutions necessary for the training are to be found. The SAETF and SAAEP are therefore seeking, through a consultative process, to identify non-governmental partners elsewhere within the Commonwealth interested in mobilising the involvement of such institutions.
5. As part of this work, representatives from the SAETF and SAAEP plan to visit interested Commonwealth countries during October/November to carry out these consultations, with a view to convening a Commonwealth-wide consultative meeting of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in early 1989 to make recommendations on the best means to realise the programme.

SAETF is a Canadian NGO which was established under the Chairmanship of Archbishop Edward Scott in September

1987 to provide education and training for black South Africans in Canada. SAETF receives financial support from the Government of Canada.

SAAEP is an independent UK-based educational charity established to provide high level training and placement for selected black South Africans, who have the potential to become senior managers and administrators. SAAEP is chaired by Lord Chitnis.

BACKGROUND

6. The educational disadvantages suffered by black South Africans are generally well known. Some 50% of black students drop-out of secondary school by the end of Standard Two and blacks are 100 times less likely to finish secondary school than whites. These problems have been further compounded in recent years by the disruption in many children's schooling caused by the continuing unrest in the country.

7. During the past decade the South African Government has earmarked greater, though still inadequate, resources for education. This expansion is, however, failing to produce the desired results because of the weak base on which it is being developed, in terms both of inadequate facilities and - even more important - of the lack of trained teachers. Even so, over

28,000 blacks obtained a school leaving certificate in 1985; an increase of 21,000 on the 1978 figure. Similarly, in 1986, some

12,000 achieved qualifications which would permit them entry to University, compared to 4,000 in 1978. However, to put these figures in perspective, it was estimated in 1985 that there were only some 10,000 blacks with University degrees (0.04% of the black population) compared with 250,000 whites.

8. A particular problem is that the racial bias of the South Africa educational system is apparent in relation to the opportunities which blacks have to learn science-based subjects. As a result of the basic weaknesses in the educational system, and the general difficulties which blacks have in gaining their higher education, there are very few black South Africans with degree level qualifications in science related subjects. At the present moment, for instance, there are only 33 black registered engineers in South Africa, out of a total of 15,000. Similarly, there are only 17 chartered accountants, out of 11,000.

9. In 1983 the Stellenbosch University Research Unit for Economic Demography estimated that, by the end of the century, South Africa would have a shortage of 545,000 managerial and highly skilled technical personnel. Whatever happens in South Africa the black community must provide the overwhelming bulk of this shortfall. Although these figures should, of course, be treated with great circumspection they do provide an indication of the scale of the problem.

10. The importance of developing programmes to address this complex of problems is evident to all those concerned about the future development of South Africa.

11. Given the nature of South Africa's industry and mining, and indeed of its commercial agricultural sector, this shortage of black professionals represents a major potential constraint on the ability of the black community - even after apartheid has been dismantled - to participate fully in the direction and control of the economy; and, indeed, of society as a whole. This lack of skills also has a direct impact on the strength of black institutions in the process of change and, therefore, on the nature and effectiveness of that struggle.

12. This acute shortage of professionally qualified managers must also be a major concern for all who wish to ensure that, as changes does take place in that country, the basic economic, infrastructural, and service institutions of society continue to function unimpeded.

13. In addition, given the skill shortages already apparent in South Africa, and the critical shortages foreseen, the maintenance of a viable economy will, to a significant extent, depend on the degree to which black South Africans, with the appropriate aptitude and training, are given the opportunity to follow such careers. This is of particular importance for those neighbouring States which remain dependent on the South African transport network.

14. The importance of developing a programme to address these problems relates to the fact that, in South Africa, blacks have been systematically excluded from positions of authority, especially in the public sector; or from gaining the experience that will prepare them to shoulder these responsibilities. This is also true, though to a lesser extent, of the business sector.

THE NEED

15. Clearly, therefore, there is an urgent need to help increase the number of black South Africans with high level professional and administrative skills so that black institutions can continue to contribute to a process of change towards a non-racial democratic society; and so that, as change does takes place in that country, there will be available a larger pool of competent and experienced black managers and administrators. In identifying South African with potential to benefit from such training it is necessary to look both within and outside the country.

16. The problem is not simply one of training but also relates, crucially, to the need to help candidates gain the practical work experience which is an essential part of the development of a senior manager. There are significant numbers of black South Africans, some of the them living in exile, with University education but for whom there are no immediate opportunities to

use their education, broaden their expertise, or gain practical experience in their chosen disciplines.

17. It is, therefore, necessary to help prepare black South Africans for senior administrative and management positions by promoting training in the main branches of administration and management. In order to achieve this, it will be necessary to have a mechanism to:

- * identify candidates with the necessary aptitude,

educational background and/or experience;

- * identify appropriate training courses within the

Commonwealth, or beyond; or, where necessary, make special arrangements for tailor-made courses;

- * identify public institutions, such as local authorities, or enterprises, willing to grant placements for such candidates in order to provide on-the-job training and management experience; and

- * identify institutions or enterprises willing to provide

candidates who have benefited from such training with employment for specific periods.

SPECIAL ROLE OF THE COMMONWEALTH

18. There is a strong justification for Commonwealth-wide action in this area:

- * The international community - and especially the

Southern African region - has a strong interest in ensuring that, as change does come, there will be a sufficient cadre of mature, experienced senior managers and administrators able to ensure that Government policy can be implemented and that the essential

infrastructure continues to operate.

- * Given the fact that English will be the lingua franca

of South Africa, and given the close links which exist between South Africa and the Commonwealth, and are likely to deepen as political change takes place, the Commonwealth has a special role to play in assisting the formation of such potential leaders.

- * Given the sensitivities involved in the development of

a programme of this nature, both the obvious security difficulties and problems related to competition for jobs and training opportunities, it would be difficult to base the programme in the Southern African region.

+ mobilisation of resources to meet the coordination

and programme costs of any new or existing initiatives recommended by the task force.

21. It is anticipated that this programme will be carried out in two phases. Discussions will be held in Commonwealth countries prior to convening a consultative meeting in early 1989 of all Commonwealth institutions interested in becoming actively involved in the elaboration and development of this initiative.