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STATEMENT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL
CONGRESS ON THE 17TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE 1976 STUDENTS
UPRISING

ONCE AGAIN, FREEDOM LOVING SOUTH AF RICAN S AND
DEMOCRATIC MANKIND THE WORLD OVER COIvfMEMORATE JUNE
THE 16TH, THE DAY ON WHICH UNARMED STUDENT PROTESTERS
WERE MASSACRED IN SOWETO, 17 YEARS AGO.

THE RALLY THIS MORNING IS ONE AMONGST MANY GATHERINGS
ORGANISED THROUGH THE LENGTH AND BREADTH OF THIS
COUNTRY TO MARK THIS OCCASSION.

LOOKING BACK AT THE EVENTS OF THE LAST 17 YEARS, WE CAN SAY
WITHOUT FEAR OF BEING CONTRADICTED BY HISTORY, THAT JUNE
16, 1976 HERALDED THE BEGINNING OF THE END OF THE CENTURIES-
OLD WHITE RULE IN THIS COUNTRY. THE RESPONSE OF OUR PEOPLE
TO THE MASSACRE OF UNARMED STUDENTS WAS TO RALLY BEHIND
THEIR ORGANISATIONS FOR LIBERATION.

THROUGH ITS BRUTAL RESPONSE, THE APARTHEID REGIME HOPED
TO SUPPRESS ALL RESISTANCE TO ITS DIABOLIC SCHEMES.
HOWEVER, THE EVENTS OF JUNE 16TH AND AFTER INJECTED A NEW
LIFE INTO THE STRUGGLE AGAINST APARTHEID RULE. HUNDREDS
OF THOUSANDS OF OUR PEOPLE COMMITTED THEMSELVES TO THE
STRUGGLE. THOUSANDS TOOK THE DECISION TO JOIN THE RANKS
OF THE LIBERATION MOVEMENT. THE RANKS OF UMKHONTO WE
SIZWE AND THE UNDERGROUND PRESENCE OF THE ANC WERE
SWELLED BY THE BEST SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF OUR
MOTHERLAND.

THROUGH OUR SACRIFICES AND STRUGGLE WE HAVE ADVANCED TO A POINT WHERE A NON-RACIAL DEMOCRACY IS NO LONGER SIMPLY A CRAVING OF THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN VICTIMS OF APARTHEID, BUT A DEMAND OF ALL SOUTH AFRICANS. IN THE STRUGGLE FOR THE LAST 17 YEARS, OUR YOUTH HAVE MADE A MAGNIFICENT CONTRIBUTION, BE IT IN OUR PEOPLE'S ARMY UMKHONTO WE SIZWE, IN OUR UNDERGROUND WORK OR IN THE MASS STRUGGLES WAGED UNDER THE BANNER OF THE UDF, COSATU AND MANY OTHER DEMOCRATIC FORMATIONS. MANY OF OUR YOUTH AND STUDENTS LAID DOWN THEIR LIVES ON JUNE 16, 1976. MANY THOUSANDS MORE OF OUR PEOPLE HAVE IN THE LAST 17 YEARS, PAID THAT SUPREME SACRIFICE IN PURSUANCE OF DEMOCRACY AND THE LIBERATION OF OUR MOTHERLAND. HOW MANY MORE SHOULD STILL LOOSE THEIR LIVES BEFORE IT CAN DAWN ON THE POWERS THAT BE THAT ENOUGH IS ENOUGH. HOW MANY MORE SHOULD STILL LOOSE THEIR LIVES OR FACE A BLEAK FUTURE WITHOUT EDUCATION AND WORK BEFORE IT IS REALISED THAT WE NEED DEMOCRATIC RULE IN THIS COUNTRY. COMPATRIOTS, AS WE MEET HERE TODAY, TO MARK THIS OCCASSION, THE CAUSES OF THE SOWETO UPRISINGS CONTINUE TO BE WITH US. THE EDUCATION CRISIS HAS IN THE LAST 17 YEARS CONTINUED TO DEEPEN. A FEW IRRESISTIBLE QUESTIONS MUST BE PUT TO THE GOVERNMENT. FIRSTLY, WHAT ACCOUNTS FOR THE FACT THAT SEVENTEEN YEARS AFTER A CRISIS OF THE MAGNITUDE OF THE 1976 PROTESTS, THE QUALITY AND CONDITIONS OF BLACK EDUCATION HAVE FURTHER DETERIORATED?

WHY SEVENTEEN YEARS LATER THE ATTITUDE OF GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES TO EDUCATION GRIEVANCES AND DEMANDS IS STILL TYPICAL OF THE BEHAVIOUR WHICH PLUNGED THIS WHOLE COUNTRY INTO A CRISIS? WHY HAS THE GOVERNMENT ADOPTED AN UN-CARING ATTITUDE AS EDUCATION INCREASINGLY BECAME A PRESERVE OF THOSE FAMILIES WHO COULD AFFORD TO PAY? AND WHY IS THE GOVERNMENT REFUSING TO MOVE AWAY FROM SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT IN EDUCATION WHILE AT THE SAME TIME CONTINUING TO CLAIM THAT APARTHEID IS DEAD AND BURIED? THERE IS INDEED LITTLE DOUBT THAT IF LEFT UNATTENDED, THE RECENT DEMANDS BY TEACHERS AND STUDENTS WOULD HAVE EFFECTIVELY LED TO A TOTAL COLLAPSE IN WHAT REMAINS OF APARTHEID EDUCATION. IT IS NOT AN OVERSTATEMENT TO SAY THIS PROBLEM WAS FAST APPROACHING PROPORTIONS SIMILAR TO THE 1976 CRISIS IF NOT WORSE.

WHILE THE GOVERNMENT HAS MET SOME OF THE DEMANDS RAISED BY STUDENTS AND TEACHERS THERE ARE STILL SEVERAL OTHER IMPORTANT PROBLEM AREAS IN EDUCATION THAT MUST BE ADDRESSED. IN THIS REGARD, THE SPEEDY CONVENING OF THE PROPOSED NATIONAL EDUCATION FORUM IS OF CRITICAL IMPORTANCE. ONCE MORE LET US HASTEN TO WARN THE GOVERNMENT THAT THIS FORUM CAN ONLY SUCCEED IN ITS FUNCTION IF IT ENJOYS SOVEREIGNTY FROM THE INCUMBENT AUTHORITIES AND IS UNHINDERED IN ITS DUTIES. IF THIS FORUM HAS TO MAKE A MEANING FULL CONTRIBUTION TO THE RESOLUTION OF THE IMMENSE PROBLEMS PLAGUING THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN THIS COUNTRY, IT MUST NECESSARILY BE VESTED WITH POWERS CONGRUENT WITH THIS JOB.

COMRADES, WE WISH TO SEE THE CONVENING OF A REPRESENTATIVE AND EMPOWERED FORUM ON EDUCATION WHICH WILL BRING ALL STAKE-HOLDERS TOGETHER SO THAT THE TASK OF DISMANTLING THE PRESENT FRAGMENTED EDUCATION AUTHORITIES CAN COMMENCE IN EANNERST.

A FORUM THAT WILL BEGIN TO WORK TOWARDS A CENTRALIZED EDUCATION BODY DESIGNED TO MEET THE NEEDS OF ALL. THIS NEED CAN NO LONGER AWAIT THE RESOLUTION OF ALL OTHER PROBLEMS. THE TRUTH IS THAT THE LONGER WE TAKE TO ADDRESS THIS PROBLEM, THE MORE WE DRIFT TOWARDS AN ABYSS OF DESPAIR AND THE MORE IS THE FUTURE OF OUR CHILDREN UNDERMINED . IN THIS REGARD, THE CHALLENGE WE FACE AS A PEOPLE IS MORE THAN THE SIMPLE RESTORATION OF A CULTURE OF LEARNING IN OUR NATION AND TO A TRADITION OF VALUING ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AMONG OUR YOUTH.

AS WE MOVE CLOSER TO A DEMOCRATIC ORDER IN THIS COUNTRY, EDUCATION BECOMES ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT OCCUPATION FOR THE MILLIONS IN WHOSE NAME WE HAVE PROSECUTED THIS STRUGGLE. IT IS THEREFORE NO LONGER ENOUGH TO CRITICISE. THE VALUE OF OUR YOUTH SHOULD BE MEASURED BY THEIR LEVEL OF DISCIPLINE AND COMMITMENT TO THEIR STUDIES.

IT IS WITH THIS IN MIND THAT WE TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO CALL UPON THE STUDENTS TO APPROACH THEIR STUDIES WITH ALL SERIOUSNESS. EDUCATION IS VERY CRUCIAL FOR YOUR FUTURE AS IT WILL ENABLE YOU TO BETTER SERVE YOUR COMMUNITIES AND OUR COUNTRY DURING THE DIFFICULT PERIOD OF RECONSTRUCTION.

COMPATRIOTS,
ONE OTHER CATEGORY OF YOUTH WHOSE CONDITIONS OF LIFE
CONTINUE TO BE OF GREAT CONCERN TO US IS THE MILLIONS OF
YOUTH WHO ARE OUT OF SCHOOL AND OUT OF WORK. OVER THE
LAST ONE AND A HALF DECADE OUR COUNTRY HAS WITNESSED THE
EMERGENCE OF A GENERATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAVE
FILTERED THROUGH THE CRACKS THAT BEGAN TO EMERGE FROM
THE SOCIAL FABRIC OF OUR COMMUNITIES. FRUSTRATED BY THE
LACK OF OPPORTUNITIES UNDER APARTHEID, WITHOUT EDUCATION
AND JOBS, MANY OF THEM HAVE BEEN ENTICED BY THE SHORT-
LIVED ADVENTURES OF CRIMINAL LIFE. A DEMOCRATIC SOUTH
AFRICA HAS A RESPONSIBILITY OF NOT ONLY GIVING HOPE TO
THESE YOUNG PEOPLE, BUT ALSO TO OFFER THEM REAL PROSPECTS
IN A NEW SOCIETY, WHERE ALL SHALL HAVE EQUAL
OPPORTUNITIES. THIS IS WHAT THE ANC IS FIGHTING FOR. WE MUST
THEREFORE DEVISE MEANS OF REACHING OUT TO THESE YOUNG
PEOPLE, EITHER THROUGH SKILLS TRAINING, JOBS, EDUCATION,
SPORTS, AND OTHER MEANINGFUL OCCUPATIONS.
NATURALLY, AS WE COMMEMORATE TPMS DAY, WHAT
IMMEDIATELY SEIZES THE MINDS OF ALL PERSONS OF CONSCIENCE
IS THE NEED TO BRING AN END TO THIS INHUMAN SYSTEM. LAST
YEAR WE MARKED JUNE 16 AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF A
RAISED TEMPO OF CONFLICT.

THIS SCENARIO WAS EPITOMISED BY THE DEADLOCK AT CODESA 2, THE BOIPATONG MASSACRE, OUR SUBSEQUENT PROGRAMME OF MASS ACTION AND THE BISHO MASSACRE. TWELVE MONTHS LATER WE MARK JUNE 16 WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF RESUMED NEGOTIATIONS, WHEREIN THE CARDINAL POINT OF THE TRANSITIONARY PROCESS AS PROPOSED BY THE ANC AND ITS PATRIOTIC FRONT ALLIES CAN NO LONGER BE DENIED. OF NO LESS IMPORTANCE IS THE JOINING OF MULTI-PARTY NEGOTIATIONS BY MORE POLITICAL PARTIES INCLUDING THOSE WHO INITIALLY SCOFFED THEM AS A WASTE OF TIME. THESE DEVELOPMENTS SERVE TO UNDERSCORE THE FACT THAT DESPITE THE NUMEROUS HICCUPS, SOUTH AFRICA HAS ONLY ONE ROUTE TO GO, THE PATH OF POPULAR NON-RACIAL DEMOCRACY. IN THIS REGARD THE TENTATIVE AGREEMENT ON THE ELECTIONS DATE IS A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. AND THERE IS NO TURNING BACK. NO - ONE AND NO - ONE SHALL BE ALLOWED TO DELAY THIS PROCESS AND PROLONG THE AGONY UNDER WHICH OUR PEOPLE LIVE.

TO THE YOUTH IN SECURITY FORCES

AS WE COMMEMORATE THE MASSACRES OF 1976, WE WISH TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS THE ROLE PLAYED BY THOSE YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE IN UNIFORM AS MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT SECURITY FORCES. THE THOUSANDS OF LIVES LOST SINCE 1976 CAN IN NO SMALL MEASURE BE ATTRIBUTED TO THE HOSTILE ATTITUDE OF MANY OF THESE YOUNG PEOPLE TOWARDS OUR COMMUNITIES. EVEN AS WE STAND AT THE THRESHOLD OF A NEW ERA IN OUR COUNTRY, THERE ARE STILL MANY ELEMENTS WITHIN THE ARMY AND THE POLICE WHO CONTINUE TO CONDUCT THEMSELVES AND DO THINGS IN THE OLD WAY.

TO THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE KILLINGS IN KATLEHONG, PROTEA,
BISHO AND EVERYWHERE ELSE, TO ALL THE YOUTH IN THE POLICE
AND THE ARMY, ESPECIALLY
THE BLACK YOUTH, WE SAY THE TIME IS NOW FOR YOU TO REALISE
THAT YOUR CAREERS AND PROFESSIONS ARE NOT EQUAL TO
APARTHEID. INDEED, AS WITH ALL OTHER PROFESSIONAL CIVIL
SERVANTS, WHETHER AS TEACHERS OR TRAFFIC OFFICERS, YOUR
PROFESSIONALISM AND THE LOOMING NEW ORDER DEMANDS A
COMMITMENT THAT TRANSCENDS THE TRAPPINGS OF APARTHEID.
COMPATRIOTS, AS WE COMMEMORATE THE SACRIFICE OF THE JUNE
16, 1976 MARTYRS, LET ME INVOKE THE LEGEND OF THE TRIAL-
BLAZERS OF THE HEROIC YOUTH AND STUDENT MOVEMENT OF OUR
COUNTRY, IN THE NAME OF OUR BELOVED OLIVER TAMBO, ANTON
LEMBEDE, PETER MDA AND MANY OTHERS IN CALLING UPON OUR
YOUTH AT THIS RALLY TO PREPARE OUR PEOPLE FOR THE
ACCOMPLISHMENT OF ONE OF THE HARDEST TASK TO FACE OUR
PEOPLE - THE ELECTIONS FOR THE FINAL DECOLONISATION OF
SOUTH AFRICA. ONCE MORE THE CAPACITY OF OUR MOVEMENT TO
TAKE US FORWARD WILL BE DETERMINED BY THE COMMISSIONS
AND OMISSIONS OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE. THEY ARE BETTER
PLACED NOT ONLY TO PROVIDE THE MILLIONS OF OUR
COMING GENERATIONS WITH VOTER EDUCATION BUT ABOVE ALL TO ENSURE
THAT THOSE WHO ARE IN NEED FEEL OUR LOVE, UNDERSTANDING
AND COMPASSION. AS YOU GO OUT TO MOBILISE OUR PEOPLE FOR
THE FINAL BATTLE THROUGH THE BALLOT-BOX THEY MUST FEEL
THAT YOU ARE THEIR EQUALS, AND NOT THEIR TUTORS AND
MASTERS. AS THE HONOURARY LIFE PRESIDENT OF THE ANCYL,
COMRADE O.R. TAMBO SAID "WE CAN BE WISE IN KNOWLEDGE AND
HUMBLE IN APPROACH".

COMRADES, AS WE ENTER THE LAST MILE TO OUR PROMISED LAND
LET US ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT WITHOUT DISCIPLINE THERE CAN
BE NO ORGANISATION, AND WITHOUT ORGANISATION THERE WILL
BE NO STRUGGLE. OUR ABILITY TO FUNCTION AS A COHESIVE
FORCE AND COMBATIVE MOVEMENT DEPENDS ON THE DISCIPLINE
WE ARE ALL ABLE TO MASTER AS INDIVIDUALS AND AS AN
ORGANISATION IN OUR DAILY WORK. TODAY THE AFRICAN
NATIONAL CONGRESS IS EIGHTY-ONE YEARS OLD - EIGHTY ONE
YEARS OF STRUGGLE AND SACRIFICE. MANY NOBLE SONS AND
DAUGHTERS OF OUR LAND HAVE LAID DOWN THEIR LIVES FOR THE
GOAL OF FREEDOM AND TODAY HISTORY HAS CHOSEN US TO BE THE
MIDWIFE OF THEIR DREAMS. AS FOR ME, NOTHING WILL GIVE ME
FULFILLMENT THAN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT AS A PEOPLE WE HAVE
SACRIFICED OUR ALL TO PUT OUR YOUTH IN THE POSITION WHERE
THEY CAN DECIDE THE FUTURE OF OUR COUNTRY ON THE BASIS OF
EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES.
LONG LIVE THE SPIRIT OF JUNE 16.