

Year of Democratic Elections for a Constituent Assembly



***Statement of the
National Executive Committee on the
occasion of the 80th anniversary
of the African National Congress
January 8, 1992***



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*Fellow South Africans,
Comrades and compatriots,*

Today, January 8, we celebrate the 80th anniversary of the formation of the African National Congress.

Through the length and breadth of South Africa and in many parts of the world, anti-apartheid fighters and democrats – young and old, black and white – join hands to reflect on the history of struggle against racial oppression and tyranny and to take stock of the tasks that lie ahead. This is the case because the African National Congress has been and remains the torch-bearer of the aspirations of the overwhelming majority of South Africans.

We take this opportunity to congratulate the people of our country who successfully implemented the programme outlined in our statement on the occasion of January 8 last year, registering new advances in our struggle to attain democracy.

The commemoration of our anniversary this year bears a quality and content different from all previous years. A new spirit is abroad in our land. The successful convocation of the first sitting of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) is a great achievement for all South Africans.

However, we are under no illusion that the transition to democracy will be plain-sailing. The more serious business of this Convention has just started; and the historic duty of ridding our country of the criminal system of apartheid still awaits accomplishment.

Road to Democracy

It is a reflection of the advances we have made that South Africa is now firmly on the road to democracy. Properly organised, no force can stop our people from achieving democracy in the shortest possible time.

Those on the extreme right of the political spectrum who cling to the past with threats against negotiations might possibly delay transition to

democracy. But they cannot stop it. Attempts to block the march of history and use violence to perpetuate discredited apartheid policies or even modified apartheid will only lead to a replay of conflict which will cause greater devastation on our whole society.

In the last instance, those who seek to subvert democracy will lose because democracy will surely triumph. Our destiny as a people – black and white – is intertwined. We owe it to future generations to rebuild our country afresh as our common heritage.

The formation of the ANC was in large measure a response to the 1910 Act of Union. This act represented an illegitimate agreement at an earlier convention between British imperialism and the colonial settlers to unite South Africa on the basis of the racial exclusion of the majority of its people.

Today we celebrate our 80th anniversary after the adoption of a Declaration of Intent containing constitutional principles which unequivocally reject the policies and practices of apartheid and racial domination. For the first time ever, as a result of struggle, representatives of the oppressed people and the apartheid regime have together committed themselves to jointly explore the creation of democratic institutions in South Africa.

Founding Conference

It is not with a spirit of self-congratulation and undue optimism that we assert that the policies of the founders of the African National Congress are being further vindicated before our very eyes. The 80 years of uninterrupted struggle led by the ANC are about to bear fruit.

The founding conference in Mangaung, Bloemfontein on January 8, 1912 brought together great patriots such as John Langalibalele Dube, Pixley ka Izaka Seme, Sol Plaatje, Sam Makgatho, Walter Rubusana, Charlotte Maxeke, Thomas Maphikela and Edward Tsewu. In recognition of the role of their forefathers in the wars of resistance and the contribution they could make in forging the future, Solomon ka Dinizulu of the Zulu, Montsioa of the Barolong, Lewanika of the Lozi, Letsie II of the Sotho, Lobatsibeni of the Swazi, Dalindyebo of the Thembu, Sekhukhuni of the Pedi, Khama of the Tswana and other traditional leaders participated on that historic day to help establish the African National Congress.

We pay special tribute to one of the first honorary presidents of the ANC, that patriotic leader of our people, King Dinizulu ka Cetshwayo who, in his absence, was given this accolade in recognition of his commitment to the struggle against white domination in general, and his role in the

armed anti-Poll Tax revolt of 1906, in particular.

We salute these and other great leaders and organisers of the ANC who saw to its development in the early years. We pay tribute to the workers, civics, women, youth, religious leaders, traditional leaders, business-people, the rural masses and others, for their relentless struggle which has brought us to this phase where we can with confidence say that the future is more than ever before within our grasp.

The imperative of national unity through struggle was pinned to the mast of the African National Congress from its very inception. In the long years of the wars of resistance, the African people in particular were defeated as different ethnic units. Their heroic spirit was weakened by their disunity. The formation of the ANC constituted an important break with the past: the adoption of new forms of struggle as a united people. It signalled the beginning of a process to remove a key obstacle to freedom which our founders correctly described in 1912, as "the demon of tribalism".

It is a matter of great pride for us that at the founding conference of the ANC were leaders of the people of the sub-continent. This underlined then, as it does today, that the people of our region and Africa as a whole share a common destiny. As we enter the transition to democracy, we are well aware that we are fulfilling the dream of hundreds of millions on our continent to rid Africa once and for all of the scourge of racism and colonialism.

Relentless Struggle

The African National Congress and the oppressed and democratic forces of our country look at the future with confidence because we base ourselves on the foundation of eight decades and more of unrelenting struggle. We are determined to learn from our successes and our failures.

In these 80 years, we have become keenly aware that only in active struggle can the democratic movement shift the balance of forces in favour of the oppressed people. The staying power of our movement rests on firm links with the mass of the people. This is the only guarantee of victory.

From the early years – in the campaigns against passes for women, the Land Acts and Hertzog Bills, in the passive resistance campaign of the Indian Congresses, the Great Miners' Strike of 1946 and other actions – the ANC and its allies asserted the rights of the people in actual struggle.

Although there were militant demonstrations on several occasions before, it was with the adoption of the Programme of Action in 1949 that the ANC set itself firmly on a course of active mass resistance to the system

of white domination. This found expression in the Defiance Campaign, organisation and mobilisation for the Congress of the People where the Freedom Charter was adopted in 1955, uprisings of the landless rural masses, women's actions against passes, stays-at-home, bus boycotts and other actions.

In the decade of the 50s, the ANC, hand-in-hand with its allies – the South African Congress of Trade Unions, South African Indian Congress, Coloured People's Congress, Congress of Democrats and the then underground South African Communist Party – grew to become the single-most powerful voice against the system of racial tyranny. It was during this decade that non-racial unity was consolidated in struggle, laying the foundation for the development of the ANC into the truly non-racial national organisation that it is today.

Umkhonto we Sizwe

When the time came to resist arms in hand, the ANC did not shirk its responsibility. Despite the fact that the odds were weighted against the democratic forces and the setbacks suffered in the early years of underground operation, efforts were made to build the people's army, Umkhonto we Sizwe, and root it among the people. Over the years Umkhonto developed to become a reliable cutting edge of the people's struggle for freedom and justice. It therefore occupies a place of honour among the forces which have brought South Africa to this dawn of a new era – as an army of the voteless and democratic majority.

At this historical juncture, it is incumbent upon cadres of the people's army, MK, to take active part in the life of their communities. They should seek all the time to be true examples of a people's security force, that respects the communities and imparts the necessary skills to ensure that the people can protect themselves. They should continually improve their own skills and prepare for the central role they will play in the defence and police forces of a democratic South Africa and in the transition.

The bedrock of the development of Umkhonto was the mass actions of the people in defiance of apartheid repression. From the late 1960s and especially in the two decades that followed, popular actions made it impossible for the apartheid regime to continue ruling in the old way. The call by the ANC and its allies to make the country ungovernable was answered with vigour. As mass and armed actions dovetailed into a generalised popular offensive, the crisis of apartheid deepened and the regime's retreat routes narrowed.

On this day, we pay tribute to the heroes of the people's army, whose

selfless contribution to the overall struggle made it possible for us to reach the decisive phase we are at today. We lower our banners in memory of our martyrs, some of whose remains lie buried in faraway lands. We salute the fighters of the mass democratic movement who lost their lives in the line of duty.

We owe it to all these heroes to ensure that the process we have now embarked upon is neither derailed nor delayed. We owe it to their memory to move with deliberate speed to the democratic South Africa for which they made the supreme sacrifice.

Mass Action for Transfer of Power

We have just emerged from yet another eventful year in the calendar of our struggle. 1991, the Year of Mass Action for the Transfer of Power, was so designated because of the realisation that mass action has become more crucial than ever before in our struggle. Without mass action we cannot move forward. Without the people in constant political motion, our demands at the negotiations table will sound hollow. Without mass action, the process we have entered into will be relegated to an exchange among leaders. It will lack the decisive input of the people.

Throughout this past year, we have had to fight every inch of the way in the effort to realise free political activity and ensure a fair and just transition to democracy. Central in these actions – from the marches on the opening of parliament, consumer boycotts, rallies and general strikes – is one crucial message: that the apartheid regime does not have the right to rule our country even one day longer.

A special place among these actions belongs to the general strike and other actions against Value Added Tax, led by COSATU which united the widest possible spectrum of social forces. In its unilateral decision to impose this tax, the regime sounded an important warning to the people of our country. This warning is that we cannot focus our attention solely on the constitutional and political issues of transition.

At virtually all levels of the economy, the regime and big business are engaged in a concerted drive to restructure the economy at the expense of the poor. Privatisation, VAT, proposed mineral laws and other plans are among the many measures they hope to use to ensure that a new democratic government will be left without the means to redress the historical socio-economic injustices brought about by apartheid.

The anti-VAT general strike served an important notice that the people will not allow this legalised plunder. In the coming months, it will be necessary to strengthen our intervention in socio-economic matters to stop

the regime's programmes and initiate measures that will help lay the basis for a democratic economy.

Vibrant Organisation

1991 saw the development of the ANC into a vibrant organisation, a pace-setter in the streets as well as in negotiations and an example of democratic practice.

The African National Congress has re-established itself as a truly national organisation. From the southern tip of the continent to the Limpopo, in both rural and urban areas, ANC branches are being set up. Black and white democrats: women, youth, workers, religious personalities, traditional leaders, business-people – all these forces and others have swelled the ranks of the ANC because it voices their aspirations.

At our first ever National Conference within South Africa in more than 30 years, we reviewed the state of the nation and our organisation and charted the way forward. It is common cause that this conference was infused with a democratic spirit, unprecedented in the history of this country. We emerged from the 48th National Conference stronger and with a clearer purpose and vision. It is no exaggeration to say that the events unfolding today owe their success to the contributions of the branches and mandated delegates to that historic conference.

Yet we must improve our organisational capacity if we are to meet the new challenging tasks. The environment within which we have to operate is changing all the time. Many weaknesses remain, making it difficult for our structures to fully harness the support that the ANC enjoys among the people. We are still not doing enough to generate among our members and supporters the much needed resources for our operations. Adequate leadership must be exercised not only from national office. All our structures must become the tribune of the people, capable of giving leadership and guiding the search for viable remedies to the people's plight.

The all-round clarity and consistency of our pronouncements, the vitality of our political life in the lowest structures and our links with the masses are the only means to guarantee the growth and development of our organisation. As we enter the new and uncharted terrain of open political contest in the build-up to democratic elections, we need to combine all these qualities with the necessary expertise that these new forms of struggle demand.

Political Violence

But our efforts will be limited if the atmosphere for normal political activity has not been realised. The violence engulfing our country is the major impediment in this regard. During the course of the past year, thousands of our people were killed and maimed in senseless carnage directed at members of the ANC and its allies and black communities in general.

The sheer scale and brutality of the killings and the seeds of hatred being sown will leave a terrible blot on the soul of the whole nation.

The African National Congress initiated and took an active part in the preparations for the National Peace Convention because we value life and seek harmony among our people. We are not only involved in the structures set up by the Peace Accord; we seek to speed up the process and place all these structures on a sound operational footing in the various regions.

But it is quite clear that these structures and the codes of conduct adopted will be meaningless if the killings continue.

In the communities bearing the brunt of this violence, evidence of police collusion and disregard of the agreed codes abounds. The media continue to uncover facts about the involvement of the apartheid army and police in perpetrating violence. Public funds have been used to support parties implicated in the violence. There is an evident reluctance on the part of the regime to outlaw the carrying of dangerous weapons in public, despite the alarming death toll.

All these developments point to one reality: the white minority regime is talking peace on the one hand while colluding in the war against its opponents on the other. In this way, they hope to exact from the liberation movement compromises that will leave the system of apartheid essentially unchanged. The irresponsible statements and threats of civil war from certain political leaders also attest to this heinous strategy.

Open Letter

When the ANC issued the Open Letter to the government in April of last year, we sought to sensitise the public about the seriousness of this danger and to nudge the regime into taking the necessary measures to deal with this horrendous situation. Their half-hearted measures and refusal to clear other obstacles demonstrate that the apartheid rulers are neither willing nor capable of bringing about free political activity. The racist regime is the major obstacle to the process of fundamental change. It must make way for an Interim Government of National Unity.

Therefore, while we intensify the implementation of the agreements contained in the Peace Accord and take all necessary measures to bring peace to our communities, we must redouble our efforts to put in place an Interim Government which enjoys the confidence of the people as a whole.

Broad Patriotic Front

The phase of struggle we have entered requires the widest possible unity of all forces opposed to apartheid. No single organisation, no matter how powerful, can shoulder the burden of the challenges facing the country alone. The urgent task confronting all the people of South Africa today is the transfer of power from the white minority regime to the people.

The ANC's approach to the Broad Patriotic Front initiative is guided by this perspective. When the patriotic front conference was finally held in October, it signified the culmination of efforts by the ANC and other organisations to empower the overwhelming majority of the people for the task of transfer of power. This historic achievement should be consolidated in actual struggle.

Basing itself on the decisions of this conference, the ANC took the initiative in calling for the immediate convening of an All-Party Congress which was realised in the holding of CODESA. We placed before this forum the demands of the patriotic forces for a Constituent Assembly and impartial transitional mechanisms. In this endeavour, the ANC enjoys the support of the overwhelming majority of the organisations which took part in that conference: political parties and organisations, trade unions, youth and students' structures, women's organisations, professional associations, business organisations and others.

The solemn pledge from the patriotic front conference was to pursue the objective of transfer of power with all deliberate speed. Those who approach the front with the seriousness it deserves cannot therefore be embarrassed, as some seem to be, by the advances South Africa is making in this direction. It is the duty of the ANC and all other forces who subscribe to that historic declaration of the patriotic front conference to ensure that we act together to achieve the demands contained in it. It is also our duty to win over as many forces as possible into this front.

Freedom will be won nowhere else but in struggle, including, as the patriotic front conference resolved, in the theatre of negotiations. All efforts need to be directed at consolidating unity against the primary enemy of all South Africans: the apartheid system. The ANC's purpose in entering negotiations also remains unchanged: the transfer of power from

the racist minority to the people as a whole.

International Community

As 1991 drew to a close, the Commonwealth of Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the United Nations General Assembly all unanimously took far-reaching decisions regarding their support for the struggle against apartheid. These decisions reflected in part the leadership role of African states and the Organisation of African Unity, whose commitment to our cause we shall always cherish. It is a measure of the stature of our movement and the correctness of its approach that the resolutions taken by these august bodies correspond with our own policy positions as reflected in the decisions of our 48th National Conference.

Basically, the international community is saying that the system of apartheid and its perpetrators should continue to be isolated as has been the case before. However, the new organs of the transition that are being born in struggle should be given maximum support. This should include relevant measures against those who violate agreements of the National Peace Convention and CODESA.

The concrete programmes emerging from this process seek to relate the lifting of isolation to specific steps in the direction of a democratic South Africa.

The presence of eminent representatives of the OAU, the Commonwealth, NAM, UN, European Community and the International Committee of the Red Cross at the first sitting of CODESA is one example of the moral and political support these forces can give to the process now under way. Certainly, as the process unfolds, their involvement will have to be increased in accordance with concrete needs and agreements reached among various parties within South Africa.

Their expertise in transitional processes, the moral power of their supervision and monitoring, the strength of their voice in the verification of the outcome of various stages of the transition will not only help guarantee fairness in the process. It will also ensure that what finally emerges enjoys international legitimacy. After all, it is in no small measure thanks to the efforts of anti-apartheid forces the world over, responding to the massive build up of internal struggles, that South Africa today is entering the stage of transition to democracy.

We salute the anti-apartheid movement worldwide for its role in advancing the democratic struggle in our country. As we enter this crucial phase, we call on all these forces to intensify their efforts against apartheid in all its manifestations, including that of political violence. Their support for

the process now under way will not only ensure a free and fair transition, but will also help speed up the realisation of a democratic South Africa.

Interdependent World

Precisely because we live in an interdependent world, we are duty-bound to learn from and take advantage of developments in other regions of the world.

In this regard we take heart at the first steps taken in the Middle East towards a peaceful negotiated settlement. The right of the Palestinian people to statehood is not only morally just; it is a necessary prerequisite for peace in that embattled region. Similarly, we are encouraged by developments towards a negotiated settlement in El Salvador, underpinned, among others, by the restructuring of the security forces and the prominent role of the United Nations. In Western Sahara, positive steps are also being taken in this direction.

We reiterate our solidarity with the people of East Timor and elsewhere in their struggle for national self-determination.

In Eastern Europe, upheavals of major proportions are afoot. In the final analysis, the prerogative to choose, amend and change a status quo belongs to the people of any given country. We express our gratitude to the peoples and governments of the former Soviet Union and other countries of Eastern Europe who gave us all-round support during the most difficult days of our struggle. We welcome the formation of the commonwealth of former Soviet Republics and hope that relations between them and the struggling people of our country will remain firm, in the common endeavour to rid the world of racism and apartheid.

We pledge our solidarity with the people of Cuba and express our unqualified support for their right to determine their destiny without foreign interference.

We join the people of Africa and the world in welcoming developments on our continent towards a multi-party democratic culture. It is our fervent hope that these events will lead to the improvement of the conditions of the mass of the people. Multi-party democracy can only be meaningful within a culture of political tolerance free of intimidation and unwarranted secular or clerical pressures on the electorate.

The right of nations to determine their destiny without foreign interference and domination is enshrined in our policy documents and forms the bedrock of our practice. We therefore stand opposed to brinkmanship, the use of arms and financial domination as an instrument of foreign policy by any state, big or small.

Towards Negotiations

As we ring down the curtain on 1991, we can say with confidence that the general crisis of the apartheid system has never been deeper. During the past year, the democratic movement consolidated its hold on the strategic initiative.

With the successful conclusion of the first sitting of CODESA, the people of South Africa have taken an important step towards a negotiated resolution of their problems. The declaration adopted at CODESA signifies an important step into the transition. However, while the Declaration of Intent constitutes an admission of failure on the part of the regime and the moral superiority of our cause, it remains but a declaration. How decisive this break is will be determined in the struggles of the year ahead.

Precisely because the new phase is about the central question of our struggle – the question of transfer of power – resistance by the white ruling bloc will be more intense. We should expect more showmanship, attempts at disruption, counter-revolutionary violence and systematic propaganda against the liberation movement. Though the struggle will take new forms, it is likely to remain difficult.

Interim Government

Transition will begin in earnest with the installation of an Interim Government of National Unity. Such a body should be sovereign, with effective impartial mechanisms to ensure freedom and fairness.

It is a measure of the strength of the democratic movement and our international supporters that the regime has conceded that it cannot be referee and player in this process. By acknowledging the need for an Interim Government, the apartheid rulers have objectively accepted that their regime is illegitimate and incapable of supervising the transition. However, as can be expected from such an illegitimate and illegal regime, where it is forced to retreat, it does so to new lines of defence.

This is what the convoluted constitutional process proposed by the De Klerk administration amounts to. To have a referendum in which the only voice that will count is that of whites is to perpetuate the criminal system of apartheid. To hold an election for a transitional parliament and government is to deliberately complicate and delay what should otherwise be a simple and manageable transition.

The democratic movement demands an Interim Government of National Unity because the regime cannot supervise democratic elections and fairly undertake other tasks of the transition. Therefore, the regime's

proposal for a referendum and election before such an Interim Government is in place pitifully begs the question. It is to state the obvious to assert that there cannot be any democratic elections in our country while the apartheid regime is still in power.

Behind the regime's proposals lies a more sinister scheme: an attempt to legitimise an undemocratic constitution, parliament and regime and prolong the transition by ten years and more. It is a device to keep the essential content of the 1983 constitution in place for as long as possible. In this period, power will remain essentially in white hands.

The African National Congress and other democratic forces demand a multi-party Interim Government whose composition should be negotiated in the Convention for a Democratic SA. Its mandate will be to supervise the transition to democracy which should be accomplished in the shortest possible time. Such a government will ensure free political activity, fairness in the treatment of all political organisations and parties and supervise elections for a Constituent Assembly.

It is therefore crucial that the Interim Government be sovereign and have a limited time-span. Such a government would have, among others, the following attributes:

- sovereign control over at least all the armed forces and police, state media, electoral processes, budget and finance; and
- forums to take decisions on and supervise the management of socio-economic issues during the transition.

Immediate Implementation

Once agreement has been reached regarding Interim Governmental control over security forces, the electoral process, budget and finance, state media and other areas so identified, these decisions should be immediately implemented and preparations started for elections for a Constituent Assembly. Negotiations over other aspects of government should be facilitated as much as possible, but they should not delay movement towards a Constituent Assembly.

The implementation mechanisms of CODESA are meant to ensure that legislation drafted by its relevant structures is not vetoed by the tri-cameral parliament or the present regime. This includes relevant amendments to the current constitution. In any case the majority of parties in this parliament and regime will be party to these decisions. The ANC rejects attempts by the National Party regime to grant a minority within broader South African society veto powers over the future of the whole nation, simply because they are white.

We put forward these proposals with the aim of ensuring speedy and balanced movement towards the central objective of negotiations: the drafting of a democratic constitution and the setting up of a democratic government.

Constituent Assembly

The issue of a Constituent Assembly is therefore central to our approach to the transition. This demand derives from the universally accepted principle that sovereignty in any country resides with the people. A new constitution, based on the broad principles adopted by CODESA, should be drafted by mandated representatives of the people on the basis of one-person, one-vote on a common voters' roll.

Nothing less than a democratically-elected constitution-making body will enjoy legitimacy in the eyes of our people and ensure that the overwhelming majority respect the final product. There cannot be any point in setting up an Interim Government if this principle has not been adopted.

Given a commitment on the part of all parties to realise the democratic constitutional principles adopted by CODESA, the process of transition can be accomplished within a reasonably short period. The ANC will strive for the setting up of an Interim Government in the first half of this year, and elections for a Constituent Assembly to be held by December 1992. Therefore, South Africa could for the first time in its history have a democratic government within the immediate future. We urge all South Africans to strive for the accomplishment of this objective.

Inclusive Process

The process of reshaping South Africa should involve all its people without exception. This by definition includes millions of our people residing in the so-called "independent homelands", relegated to patches of arid land by the designs of the apartheid regime. Therefore, transitional mechanisms and elections into the Constituent Assembly should be inclusive of South Africa as a whole, of which the TBVC territories are part.

The transitional process would be incomplete without the input from sectoral formations. The trade union movement, religious bodies, youth and women's organisations, traditional leaders, civic associations, business bodies and others have an important role to play in shaping the future that we all seek to build. While many of these bodies align themselves with one or other political party, it is absolutely necessary that they should

intervene in their own right especially in matters that affect their sectoral interests.

Democratic Values

Betrayed by the British government and representatives of the white minority in South Africa in 1910, the cause of democracy found a home in the national liberation movement. This movement became and continues to be the custodian of democratic values, principles and practice in our country. The national liberation movement is the upholder of democracy because we recognise its intrinsic value as a basis for good government coupled with justice. The essential premise that has inspired the evolution of the ANC and the rest of the democratic movement is stated unequivocally in the preamble of the Freedom Charter: "... no government can justly claim authority, unless it is based on the will of all the people..."

The ANC, its allies and supporters have fought to preserve these values in the hostile environment of censorship, banning orders, banishment, imprisonment and hangings because of their universally-recognised liberatory substance. These core values such as multi-party democracy, regular elections and protection of citizens' rights are at the centre of our political programme, and they form the basis of the draft constitutional principles, structure of government and bill of rights that we have put forward to society for discussion. We have always embraced the principle of protection of the language and cultural rights of all communities, black and white. There is no basis for any individual or group in our society to fear democracy.

It is these principles which should form the basis of an enabling, all-South African constitution to which all its people will owe allegiance. Consistent with these principles, the ANC espouses many other basic rights which all citizens should enjoy.

Socio-economic Rights

It is our firmly held view that the well-being of a nation should not be something subject to the fickle whims of fortune and personal economic circumstance, but should be the responsibility of the state. In the field of health, this must translate into a national commitment to provide an accessible public health service, focussed on prevention rather than cure. Decisive steps need to be taken against such rampant epidemics as tuberculosis and AIDS. Of equal importance would be an expanding

programme to provide decent housing to all citizens.

To the thousands of South Africans who daily trudge the streets in a vain search for employment, the right to work is more than an abstract principle: it is as essential as the right to life. To the millions who struggle every day to make ends meet, the right to a living wage, fair taxation, affordable rents and service charges and low prices are a necessary condition for democracy.

Those who have been the victims of a system designed to perpetuate ignorance and illiteracy know that the right to education requires an equitable, non-racial system of free primary and secondary education and a system of tertiary education with strong backing from the state. Such an educational system should enable all South Africans to fully realise their talents.

The children of our country, in whatever shade of colour they happen to be born, deserve the right to adequate and sensitive care by society. They must develop in an atmosphere free of homelessness, malnutrition, harassment of any kind and violence.

To be meaningful, these and other measures will have to be backed by a programme of affirmative action aimed at empowering those sectors of our society disadvantaged by the system of white domination. Particular attention in this regard would have to be paid to the position of our women compatriots who have been relegated by years of race rule and male-dominated society to the lowest rung of the social ladder. This principle does not have to wait for the distant future for its realisation. It is an absolute necessity now, in the transition and in a democratic society – both within our organisations and in society as a whole.

These are rights which our people will have to struggle for today and even after a democratic government is in office. Their attainment can only uplift the quality of life for the country as a whole. Their realisation will rely on a growing economy in which the wealth of the nation serves the needs of the people as a whole and not a privileged minority.

Mass Involvement

The changes that have been wrought thus far are a result primarily of the actions of the people. Their continued active involvement is not merely politically expedient, but will impact upon the content and legitimacy of the transition.

Openness in the negotiations process is an important prerequisite to the involvement of the people. An informed public is better able to make an informed choice and itself take part in the debates about society's future.

The ANC views freedom of the media and its right to unlimited access to information about negotiations as crucial to a democratic culture. As a contribution to the shaping of future media policy and to the approach that should guide the transition, we have issued a draft media charter for discussion and amendment by the public. The role that state-owned media plays in the transition should also receive urgent attention as part of the process towards a democratic information policy.

We believe that all the parties engaged in negotiations ought to ensure accurate briefings to their constituencies. On its part, the ANC will strive at all times to ensure that our members and the public as a whole are informed about and contribute to this crucial national debate.

The fundamental decisions about Interim Government, Constituent Assembly, time frames and unqualified implementation of CODESA decisions will not depend solely on the strength of our arguments and eloquence of our presentations. All-round pressure, in particular systematic mass action, will be decisive.

Already, some quarters have obstinately rejected the principles that CODESA stands for. Without mass action, tyrants of all hues will try to stop the inevitable and deny people their right to self-determination. This should be challenged.

Urgent Demands

We mark the 80th anniversary of the ANC – two years after the unbanning of the movement – with some of the cadres who contributed immensely to the current changes still languishing in apartheid jails. The voice of all peace-loving South Africans must be heard demanding the freedom of Mthetheleli Mncube, Mzondeleli Nondula and others on Death Row. Robert McBride and other political prisoners must be released.

In the context of an end to the Cold War it is a silly anachronism for the South African government to insist on the continued imprisonment of Commodore Dieter Gerhardt. He should be released from prison without further delay.

Talk of free political activity will remain empty if there are still political prisoners in apartheid jails; while repressive legislation is still in force; when violence continues and state-owned media remain under the control of one party during negotiations.

Despite the formal repeal of some apartheid legislation, this system is still in place. The squalor in black areas, unequal pensions to our senior citizens, undemocratic local government and other ills of apartheid are some of the grim reminders that apartheid is alive and well. While formally

the apartheid land acts have been repealed, millions of Africans remain landless, victims of years of dispossession and forced removals.

Only consistent struggle can change this state of affairs.

We call on workers to further strengthen the democratic trade union movement and facilitate the process towards a united trade union federation. Their demands for the rights of farm-workers, a living wage, fair employment practices and comprehensive training programmes form an important part of the struggle for a democratic economy in a democratic society.

The people in the rural areas face the challenge of realising their demand for land and adequate services in action. Traditional leaders have an important role to play in these struggles as part of the people.

It is also necessary for structures involved on the education front to exert pressure for the abolition of all racist measures. Needless to say, however, the overriding aim should be to create better conditions in which intensive learning can take place, rather than to disrupt the educational process. We join democratic students' and teachers' organisations and parents in calling for a massive return to school. If the aim of the racists is to keep us ignorant and under-qualified, as the disastrous matric results have shown, we should challenge this by improving our performance even within this limited environment. At the same time, we must broaden the space for the introduction of democratic, non-racial and equal education for all.

1991 saw greater self-assertiveness on the part of South African women. Within the ANC and in broader society the voice of women is loud and clear. But their aspirations will be realised only at the instance of stronger organisation, deliberate education of society as a whole and greater unity in action around gender issues.

We salute the ANC Youth League for its successful relaunch more than 30 years after its banning by the regime. The militancy that the Young Lions so heroically demonstrated in the years of repression is required today as we enter this decisive phase of struggle. They are expected, more than ever before, to master new forms of struggle – with the agility that has earned them a special place in our history – and ensure that democracy is attained in the shortest possible time. As part of this endeavour, it is necessary to unite various youth formations around issues that affect the youth most, including education, recreation, crime and drug abuse.

The challenge to confront the ills of apartheid, secure peace among the people and speed up the realisation of a democratic and prosperous society affects these and all other sectors of our people – religious, business, professional and otherwise.

National Question

It is a challenge which faces all communities in whatever category apartheid sought to place us. It is a challenge that the coloured and Indian communities so ably met in the fight against the tri-cameral constitution, local management structures, gutter education and so on. Today, as we move towards the accomplishment of the dreams of all oppressed South Africans, it is crucial that we redouble our efforts against all manifestations of apartheid. The place of all who cherish peace and democratic rights is in the front ranks of struggle: in the ANC and other democratic mass formations.

On this our 80th anniversary, the ANC once again extends a hand of friendship to those of our white compatriots who have been made to doubt their place and role in the democratic process now unfolding. It is time for them to realise that their interests can only be served by the attainment of lasting peace and stability. We address our call particularly to those sectors of the Afrikaner community such as farmers and workers who historically have been misled only to be dumped by self-seeking politicians for a cause that has no future: the time to take a decisive step into the fold of the broader South African society and insure their future in democracy is now.

The achievements of various sports codes in forging unity and introducing development programmes has deservedly opened the door to acceptance in international sport. This is a victory not only of the anti-apartheid struggle, but for all South Africans. We join all other South Africans in wishing the national teams at the coming world events the best, and demand that public resources should be made available without discrimination for the programmes that non-racial sport-bodies are undertaking. Through such programmes, the sporting fraternity can ensure that, within a short space of time, teams representing South Africa will be truly national – reflecting the best sporting talent of society as a whole.

Along with these developments, the issue of a national flag, anthem and symbols has naturally aroused passionate public debate. At the centre of this debate is the search by all South Africa for an apartheid-free identity, a process which those who profess a rejection of this system should support. Naturally, it is an issue which should be handled with the greatest sensitivity and on the basis of the widest possible consultation. But, like the broader transitional process, it is an issue that can no longer be avoided. The initiative taken by NOCSA in this regard needs to be commended.

National Liberation Contest

The most eloquent expression of mass involvement in the transition will be the exercise of people's sovereignty in elections for a Constituent Assembly. Contrary to what representatives of the regime want us to believe, this will be a contest not simply among individual political organisations for political office. In the final analysis, the issues such an election will address will make it a decisive contest between apartheid and democracy, between white domination and national liberation.

Victory for the liberation movement in such elections cannot be taken for granted. It depends on what we do to transform support and sympathy for the democratic cause into organisational strength and a vote for democracy.

In gearing ourselves for this decisive contest, we need to further transform the ANC into a well-oiled machine in constant touch with the mass of the people. An ANC branch which educates its members in the policies of the movement and recruits in large numbers is fulfilling only part of the overall purpose. The quality of our structures should also be felt in their concern for and involvement in the day-to-day problems of our people. It should be seen in their leadership of the people in struggle.

The alliance of the ANC with the SACP and COSATU must be a living reality on the ground. Our links with mass democratic structures should find expression in joint actions around agreed programmes. The vibrancy of the broad patriotic front should come not only through pronouncements in the media, but in day-to-day struggle. ANC members should be seen to promote peace and political tolerance in the communities.

Security Forces

As we enter the transition, the issue of effective security for this process and the future democratic order stands out in even bolder relief. On this question hinges the very survival of the whole negotiations process. The African National Congress calls for effective control of all security forces by an Interim Government of National Unity precisely because we want the negotiations to succeed.

Ultimately, the forces which will secure democracy will themselves have to be representative of all South Africans from the lowest to the highest rank. The new defence and police forces of a democratic South Africa should be professional bodies paying unquestioned allegiance to the constitution that elected representatives of the people will have drawn up. They will emerge in earnest under the new democratic government, and

they will include the contingents found in Umkhonto we Sizwe, APLA, AZANLA, the SADF, the SAP, bantustan armies and police units and other forces in existence today.

This process should naturally begin under an Interim Government, and should include the placing of all personnel and armaments under the control of competent structures of this government.

The ANC once more calls on our compatriots in the SADF and South African Police to make a break with the past of confrontation and conflict. Our country has entered a period of reconciliation and it requires the contribution of all of them to reach the goal of lasting peace and prosperity. They have an important role to play in defending and promoting the peace process. We call on them to: Expose the murderers! Defend the people! Join the march to democracy! They have nothing to fear in the future as long as they play their role today to realise this democratic future.

Year of Democratic Elections

We enter the ninth decade of the ANC full of confidence that the ideals which inspired its formation are about to be realised. On this day, the words of one of the founders of the ANC, that illustrious leader of the South African people, Pixkley ka Izaka Seme, ring truer than ever before. Enjoining people to struggle, in 1906, Seme said: "The brighter day is rising upon Africa..."

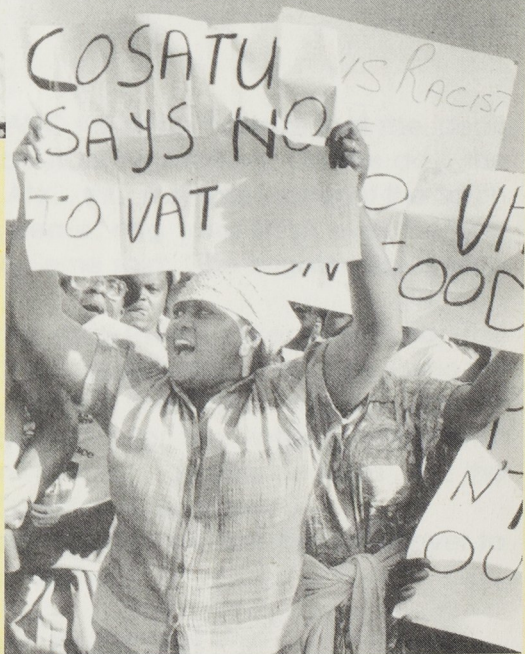
It is neither the goodwill of the apartheid government nor the magnanimity of its leadership – but the people in active struggle – who will indeed usher in this brighter day to our land. In recognition of the urgency and centrality of the people's demand for the vote, the National Executive Committee of the African National Congress declares 1992 the Year of Democratic Elections for a Constituent Assembly.

We call on all our people and anti-apartheid forces the world over to act together to make this demand a reality.

The time is now!
Peace, Freedom and the Vote!
Amandla! Matla!



“ Without the people in constant political motion, our demands at the negotiations table will sound hollow. Without mass action, the process we have entered into will be relegated to an exchange among leaders. It will lack the decisive input of the people. ”



Peace, freedom and the vote!