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STATEMENT ON EDUCATION PRESENTED BY SERETSE CHOABI,  
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CONGRESS TO THE INTERNATIONAL ASSEMBLY ON THE  
OCCASION OF THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE  
ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SOLOMON MAHLANGU FREEDOM  
COLLEGE (SOMAFCO) ON THE 23RD AUGUST, 1989 AT SOMAFCO

Dearest Comrades and Friends,

On this special international day I am most delighted that you are here to share with us this special and unique celebration.

This day constitutes part of the week of the 10th Anniversary celebration of the establishment of the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College.

The Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College is a creation of the African National Congress established in the pursuit of freedom for the oppressed and fighting people of South Africa

This College represents the unconquerable spirit of defiance and determination of the people of South Africa to carve out a place for themselves among the nations of the world as a free and independent nation.

Through SOMAFCO we say no to Apartheid. Through SOMAFCO we say to the world that the oppressed people of South Africa although they are a conquered people

living under white colonial rule they are not a defeated people. We stand firm in our determination to regain our right, as a people, to self-determination, independence and life of dignity.

The African National Congress policy on education derives, in the main, from two principal sources. The first is the Freedom Charter which was formally adopted by the ANC in 1955. The second is the policy document entitled "Aims and Principles of the ANC Education Policy" adopted in 1978.

The Freedom Charter opens its eighth provision with the declaration "THE DOORS OF LEARNING AND OF CULTURE SHALL BE OPENED!" Immediately thereafter the Freedom Charter places responsibility for the educational training and the development of "national talent" of the people of South Africa on the Government of a future independent and free South Africa. It is further directed, in the Freedom Charter, that educational training must encompass "all the cultural treasures of mankind" which "shall be open to all..." That the aim of education shall be to teach the youth to love their people and their heritage, to honour human brotherhood, liberty and peace. That "education shall be free, compulsory, universal and equal for all children," That the state shall provide "scholarships" and "state allowances" to enable students to undertake studies in higher education and technical training; that "adult illiteracy shall be ended"; that the colour bar in cultural life, in sport and in education shall be abolished"

The fundamental point that emerges from the Freedom Charter provision on education is that education must be recognised as a right and not a privilege. That education is a right of all the people and that access to it must be free and compulsory. That education must be universal in character and should be organised to benefit from the state of

knowledge of other nations as well as their cultural achievement. That it is the duty of the state to provide education and also to eliminate illiteracy, and, finally, that educational training should be geared and orientated towards the elimination of racial prejudice and the "colour bar in cultural life," in sports and in education itself. The Policy Document entitled "Aims and Principles of the ANC Education Policy" prescribes the principal aims of the AN C Education Policy to be:

(1). To prepare cadres to serve the National Liberation struggle of the people of South Africa in the struggle for seizure of political power and in the post-liberation phase.

(2) To produce such cadres as will be able to serve society in all felds, political, economic, socio-cultural, educational and scientiie.

(3) Priorities will be dictated by the needs of the liberatory struggle in the pre - and post-liberation periods.

The ANC education programme is inspired by the ideals of freedom, self-determination and national independence for the people of South Africa. The AN C education policy is steeped in the revolutionary ideal to bring about the total dismantling of Apartheid and

its replacement by a non-racial, unitary and democratic South African state. The purpose of this education programme, therefore, is to train and produce functionaries and cadres for the South African struggle who are professionals committed to the final destruction of the Apartheid system. Cadres who are committed to serving their community with their skills and professions both during the period of struggle for the national emancipation of the oppressed people of South Africa and after the attainment of independence durin g the phase of social reconstruction. And, to ensure the

achievement of these goals, the AN C has determined that, although students are free to choose what they wish to study, it is paramount that their choices of courses of study and vocations are required to be made within the broad principles of the concrete and practical needs of the 'African National Congress. This is as it should be. We are involved and locked in battle for the total and unconditional liberation of the oppressed people of South Africa.

One of the important principles of ANC education policy is to provide educational training that aims to produce cadres for the South African revolution whose outlook and orientation is conditioned by the desire and commitment to use their educational training, skills and professions in the service of their community. Cadres who, out of political dedication and commitment, place the interests of the community above their own personal economic or financial advancement. It is herein and in this principle that is embodied the ANC aim, through our education programme, to train and to produce what we have characterised as the "new man" or "new South African." An individual whose ethical attitude, reflected in his or her conduct, shows and displays an unconditional acceptance of the commitment to serve others as a categorical imperative and duty. It is the view and perception of our movement that men and women possessing such a vision of their role in society are indispensable to the successful re-organisation of South African society and the effective and successful conclusion of the South African Revolution. It is with the participation and contribution of such devoted and selfless cadres that the ideal of a genuinely free, unitary, non-racial, democratic South African state can be realised in which the rights of the individual will be guaranteed and protected and the rule of law established, respected and consolidated. Another important principle of the ANC education policy is that education must be accessible to all the masses of our people. This principle and perspective in education

policy places beyond doubt the commitment of the ANC to an education programme which recognises and accepts that the future Government of an independent South Africa shall have the duty and responsibility to provide education to all the people irrespective of age, sex, race, colour or creed. ANC education policy seeks and aims to establish, in an independent South Africa, a non-discriminatory education system and also to provide anti-illiteracy adult education programmes under the auspices of the state.

There is also another principle of ANC education policy which stipulates that the ANC education programme shall be required to utilise and incorporate into its teaching programmes "the most advanced in scientific knowledge and progressive cultural traditions of the people of South Africa and the world." The ANC lays great store on scientific education as the most realistic and adequate preparation, in educational training, for people to be enabled to effectively meet and tackle practical problems in modern society.

Another important principle of ANC education policy is the pursuit of the ideal to "combat" and eliminate "the division between mental and manual training and the artificial separation of the arts and sciences." This education principle of the ANC represents an important departure from conventional practice which regards "mental" or "intellectual" training as superior to "manual", .

"practical" or "vocational" training. It is the view of our movement that the value of all skills should be determined on the basis of their social usefulness and not on the alleged superior status determined on the basis of the manner in which the training was acquired. The ANC has, through its training programmes at this school, endeavoured to cultivate and inculcate an orientation in the thinking of our students aimed at bridging

the gap between manual and mental training or between "mental" or "intellectual"

work and "physical". or 'lmanual" work. It should be stated, however, that this is an upheal battle. Old habits and prejudices die hard. We are determined, however, to pursue our policy on this aspect of our educational programme and we are engaged in experimenting in new approaches to tackle this intractable problem.

The AN C education policy is also committed to the democratisation of education. It is our belief that education is not to be regarded as the preserve of the experts who alone are to determine what is to be taught, how it is to be taught and when it is to be taught

Whilst it cannot be denied that professional educationists possess valuable and relevant knowledge, experience and skills in educational training, it is nevertheless, in our view

, necessary and vital that the students (learners), the parents and the community play a direct part and have a say in the determination of the content, methodology and orientation of education. It is necessary also to recognise and appreciate that it is not enough for parents, students and the community merely to have a say in educational matters, but that this say should be such that it empowers them to influence the determination of what is to be taught, how it is to be taught and when it is to be taught

In other words, the parents, the students and the community have to be empowered to influence decisions taken on educational matters and which affect educational institutions.

A further important element in the AN C education policy is the principle that the ANC education programme must be dynamic to keep abressed with developments in education in other parts of the world. It is the view of the ANC that a true scientific education cannot be an island unto itself. On the contraiy, a true scientific education must be open, experimentative, innovative, exploratory and be always ready to accept new ideas from advancing educational knowledge occum'ng in other parts of the world. Such a dynamic education system will guarantee a future independent South Africa the possibility for advancement in a rapidly changing and scientifically developing world.

The African National Congress in its educational programme recognises and accepts that one of the most important objectives of education is to develop the natural abilities of individuals to reach the highest level of their potential. Human individuals possess intelligence through which they comprehend and understand their environment and the world in which they live. Over many centuries understanding of the world by humans has been organised and systematised into knowledge, which, in the modern age constitutes scientific knowledge. It is through scientific knowledge that humans have been enabled to exercise power over their environment and to utilise this knowledge to improve their quality of life.

The African National Congress attaches great importance to scientific knowledge. We aim, at all ANC educational establishments, to train our people in scientific thought and to produce individuals whose thinking and orientation is in the scientific method. We perceive this as preparation for them, after high school, to take full and effective advantage of educational opportunities and facilities available at universities and other institutions of higher learning to acquire skills and professions relevant to our

present needs during the current phase of struggle and later in an independent and free South Africa. Those of our scientists, professionals and scholars that we cannot use immediately, we have a programme to have them placed in institutions, governmental, non-governmental and private, in other independent countries, where they can gain practical experience related to their areas of training and specialities. We plan, in this

way, over time, to gradually build a reserve of highly skilled and experienced manpower who will play an important role when we embark on a programme of reconstruction when Apartheid is eventually overthrown. A lot still remains to be done in this area as the rate at which placements are made available and arranged does not have the capacity to absorb all our graduates and qualified professionals. Any further

assistance, in this area, that could be offered by our friends and supporters would be most welcome and would be an important and an invaluable contribution to our manpower development programme.

Another important aspect of the ANC education programme is the commitment to develop our learners and young people emotionally and spiritually. Our education programme lays great stress on what we have, in the past referred to as the creation of "a new man." In addition to training our young people in the natural and social sciences, we aim, through our education programme, to condition this training by the development of an ethical attitude through which service to others is accepted as an admirable moral quality. We recognise and accept that human beings possess emotions and passions which have to be developed and channelled in constructive directions to render them socially useful. It is for this reason that we have integrated into our training programme the commitment to cultivate ethical norms consonant with our political and moral ideal to establish a non-racial and democratic South Africa in which respect for the individual is a sacred principle and a normative imperative. We aim, through our education programme, to produce men and women who respect their people and culture. Men and women who are intellectually and spiritually attuned and disposed towards struggling for a high quality of life for all our people. Men and women who perceive and accept that their skills and professions are not to be used for personal financial advancement at the expense of the community but for the general prosperity of the community as a whole.

We further aim, through our education programme, to educate our young people to recognise that their future is in their hands and that it will be what they choose to make it. Human beings, through their imagination, innovative skills and creativity have the ability to conceive and formulate ideals for themselves and their future life.



It is also crucial to appreciate that it is only by entering into the drama of life and taking

full part in it that we can contribute towards moulding our destiny. Our forefathers, of whom we are justly proud, created history by living their lives to the full and confronting the problems of their age and not by gaping at the tombstones of their ancestors. Whilst it is legitimate and justified for us to be proud of our past cultural heritage we have a duty to recognise that culture has to be lived. It is in the living culture that the spiritual values and ideals of a living people are embodied. It is through

the total cultural and intellectual life of a people that the characters and personalities of

individuals in society are created and developed. It is for this reason that the ANC attaches such great importance to cultural activities at this school.

It should be recognised that education is the battleground of ideas. Over a million ideas bid for the allegiance of each human heart as it makes its journey from the womb to the tomb. An important aspect of the work of the ANC Education Department is to promote the ideal of democracy and justice for all the people of our country. Indeed, education constitutes one of the fronts in which the struggle is being waged for the values of decency, social justice, freedom and democracy. It is our intended and planned objective to produce, from the training in this school, young men and women committed to the principles of social justice, equality and democratic government. It should always be remembered that every society, through its educational institutions, always has the possibility to reproduce itself and perpetuate its existence by training its

young people to accept its established values, its existing institutions and its national practices. On the other hand it is also possible for a society to break from its past traditions and institutions and replace these with progressive, enlightened and revolutionary ones. Educational institutions play a significant role in the origination,

dissemination and cultivation of new thoughts and ideas. It is the recognition of this fact that was largely responsible for the AN C decision to build the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College. Our aim was to build a school for South African children, a school with-a South Afn'can character and cultural identity. A school linked and tied to the national liberation struggle of the people of South Africa and a model of educational excellence.

It is encouraging and pleasing to note that to a large measure our efforts and endeavours, in this respect, have been successful. SOMAFCO is a revolutionary school and an educational centre for radical political and educational thinking on South Africa.

We decided to establish here in Mazimbu an educational institution on the basis of which the future educational system of an independent South Africa shall be modeled. A school where the education provided is to be in service to the people.

Dear comrades and fn'ends, the education programme of the Afn'can National Congress , I have outlined indicates to you where we stand on education and what we aim to achieve. We aim to achieve the total intellectual and spin'tual emancipation of our nation.

I thank you for your attention.

I love you all.

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Secretaxy for Education.

African National Congress