

11 STATEMENT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL
CONGRESS
COMRADE OLIVER R. TAMBO
TO THE ANC NATIONAL CONFERENCE
JOHANNESBURG - JUNE 1991

The Deputy President, Comrade Nelson Mandela
Members of the National Executive Committee
Members of the Internal Leadership Core

Regional Convenors and Members of the Regional Leadership

Commanders and Combatants of our glorious army, Umkhonto we Sizwe

Leaders of the Mass Democratic Movement

Excellencies Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Fellow Delegates, Comrades and Friends

Compatriots

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It is my singular honour and privilege to welcome each and every one of you to this first legal ANC National Conference inside South Africa after decades of us not being able to do so. We welcome you with boundless joy, especially you delegates, who, represent hopes and aspirations of millions of our people across the length and breadth of our country. We welcome you convinced that you have come here propelled by a burning desire to end apartheid tyranny sooner rather than later.

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It is my pleasant task to make a report back to our Movement, our people and country, on the mission we were assigned to do outside the country, more than three decades ago. I present this report on behalf of the National Executive Committee and my fellow returnees, both the living and the dead. At this stage, I want to express my hope and wish that the remains of J.B. Marks, Moses Kotane, Florence Maphosho, Elijah Makhathini, Eli weinberg, Dr Yusuf Dadoo and countless more martyrs of our struggle shall soon be brought back home so that they, too, can lie side by side with their ancestors. This is the least we can do to honour the memory of the heroic men and women who, gave their all so that a

democratic South Africa freed of oppression and fear could be born .

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I left the country in 1960 on the instruction of the NEC. My brief was to establish the external mission of the ANC and to awaken the international community to the plight of our people. Anticipating the banning of the ANC, the NEC had decided that if such banning was to materialise, the external mission which I was to head would take responsibility for both the internal and external fronts. We went to Bechuanaland where at best we were treated with suspicion and at worst with outright hostility by the British authorities. We soon learned that we had to confront this hostility throughout the western world.

Within days of our departure, there was a massacre at Sharpsville followed by the banning of the ANC and other political organisations. Our worst fears were confirmed when our leaders were captured at Rivonia and later sentenced to life imprisonment. These events left us with a sense of deep shock and revulsion. We felt lonely and abandoned in a hostile world. No one has more aptly portrayed our then situation than Hilda Bernstein. In her words, " There came a time when it seemed as though the ground was no longer firm beneath our feet; as though the world had tilted and we were uncertain about each step. But this was not only a personal concern. The same sense of disorientation existed in the organizations within which we worked. It was not so much a loss of direction, there was no

doubt about what we believed, what we were working for; no

hesitation in political aims. The uncertainty arose from the blows we had received. "

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It was in those circumstances that we took a calm resolve to meet the challenge head-on, for the cause we stood for was greater than ourselves. We did not indulge in self-pity and personal admonishment for having dared to challenge white supremacy. On the contrary, we acted sustained by the knowledge that we were representatives of a great and noble people. We rose to the challenge fully conscious that a people with a proud history of resistance such as ours would expect no less from their progenitors. As a result, our determination to fight on became stronger than ever; for we strongly believed in the justice of our cause - a cause of a people destined to be free some day. It mattered not how long it would take us to reach that day. It mattered not how much pain and suffering we would have to endure before we too could be free men and women. We were going to be free and, we shall be free.

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What was the key question that we had to address in the early 1960's? The external mission had to launch and sustain an all round offensive internally and externally. In other words, we had to transform the external mission into a fully fledged ANC, operating in conditions of illegality. In this regard, our efforts to re-establish internal structures proved to be very

difficult, given that internationally and regionally the balance of forces was still predominantly in favour of apartheid forces.

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The entire sub-continent was still firmly in the hands of imperialist powers who, connived and collaborated with Pretoria against the liberation Movement. Our cadres had to pass through colonial Mozambique and colonial Rhodesia before reaching the borders of South Africa. That was the time when wars of independence in the Portuguese colonies and Rhodesia began in earnest. We took advantage of this and decided to send the Luthuli Detachment into Rhodesia with instructions that they were to fight their way back home. This was also a manifestation of our practical solidarity with the people of the Frontline states. In this regard, our combatants acquitted themselves well in battles against the combined Smith and Voster forces. Though the detachment never succeeded to reach home, they had carried out their mission gallantly and valiantly. We salute Basil February and his fellow comrades who lie buried in the soil of liberated Zimbabwe. However, at the conclusion of the Wankie and Spolilo campaigns, our problem of re-establishing the ANC inside remained essentially unresolved.

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On the international front things looked different. If successive white regimes managed to contain our initial efforts to relocate inside the country, they dismally failed to do so on the international front. From the very beginning we made modest but

steady gains in our endeavour to isolate the racists and create a reliable rear base for our struggle. In this regard, the Socialist countries led by the Soviet Union gave us solid support from the very beginning. The newly independent states of Africa, Latin America and Asia threw their full weight behind our

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struggle. In the West, particularly England we succeeded in encouraging the formation of a powerful anti-apartheid Movement. This helped swing public opinion against apartheid. Our position in international organisations, like the non-Aligned Movement, the Afro-Asian solidarity organisation and so forth, became unassailable. By 1974 the General Assembly of the United Nations was able to refuse the credentials of the South African representative despite strong resistance from the West.

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It must be mentioned that the positive role of the Frontline states proved to be crucial if not decisive in enhancing our striking capacity. Tanzania did not only provided us with our first external Head Quarters, she also provided us with training facilities for our soldiers. We later moved the Head Quarters to Lusaka where it has been until our return home. In this regard, the independence of Mozambique, Angola and later Zimbabwe, irrevocably shifted the balance of forces in favour of the anti-colonial struggle in the sub-region.

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Comrades and Friends

Our contribution to the liberation of the sub-continent is a

historical fact. But to be able to make the type of contribution we made, time and again we had to strengthen ourselves through a process of internal reorganisation. It was in this context that in 1969 we held our first National Consultative Conference in Morogoro Tanzania. The objective of the Conference was to take stock of the totality of our experience and, on the basis of that, to map out the way forward. Morogoro became a land mark and

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a turning point in our struggle.

Conference produced a comprehensive document on the strategy and tactics of the ANC. The document emphasised the need to activate all the motive forces of our struggle. These forces were identified as blacks in general and, Africans in particular. The working class was seen as having a leading role to play in the struggle. In this regard, we reaffirmed the supremacy of political struggles.

Reporting to our Second National Consultative Conference in 1985, the National Executive made the following observation about Morogoro: " Out of Morogoro came significant results, the most

important being the reorientation of our Movement towards the prosecution and intensification of our struggle inside South Africa, the restoration and reinforcement of unity within our ranks and the integration of all revolutionaries within the external mission of the ANC. " The significance of the decision to open up membership of the ANC to all South Africans should be

seen in its proper perspective. Addressing a public meeting between 1955 and 1959, I was asked a question as to whether I would accept a membership fee of eight white comrades who, wanted to join the ANC. I could not accept the money because the practice at the time was that whites should join the Congress of Democrats. Even though constitutionally anyone could be a member of the ANC, practice at the time militated against this. In this sense, Morogoro was a giant leap forward towards true non-racialism within the ANC.

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From Morogoro we created a special body with the responsibility of prosecuting the struggle inside South Africa. This body was called the Revolutionary Council and we later replaced it with the Political Military Council. The PMC was answerable to the National Executive. Under its leadership, forward machineries were established. Slowly but with increasing success we began to revive our structures inside the country. Thus, our presence amongst our people was re-established.

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The greatest historical failure of our times was the inability of successive white minority regimes to destroy and liquidate the ANC. Despite a thousand plans aimed at dismembering us and rendering our Movement ineffective, we grew both in stature and effectiveness, particularly in the post 1976 era. Our survival and growth as a fighting force is the major victory that our people have scored under difficult conditions of illegality. By 1981 units of Umkhonto we Sizwe, were able to mount some of the

most spectacular assaults on the enemy, such as the attack on SASOL. Thus, the great lie of the invincibility of the apartheid fortress was laid bare. Our people began to see cracks on the fortified walls of the laager.

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At the beginning of the 1980's both the objective and subjective factors were maturing in favour of a people's victory. We, therefore, designated the 1980's the "Decade of Freedom. " As we grew in confidence, we called upon our people to make South Africa ungovernable and apartheid unworkable. Our people responded to this call in their thousand

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s. Everywhere in the country, popular organs emerged, challenging the hegemony of the structures of apartheid. The UDF and COSATU were formed. Thus we entered a period of dual power in the country. The government was forced to impose the state of emergency. International confidence in the viability of the apartheid state, plunged to its lowest level. As the crisis of the apartheid state increased both in scope and content, Western governments began to court the ANC. For the very first time an official ANC delegation was received in Washington.

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It was against a climate of heightened confrontations between our people and the enemy that we held our Second National Consultative Conference at Kabwe in 1985. Conference was therefore characterised as the Council of War. Amongst the many positive decisions of this Conference, was the decision to open

the membership of the National Executive Committee to all South Africans, irrespective of the colour of their skin. We .therefore, became, second to the SACP, the first truly non-racial political Movement in South Africa. The other important decision was to strengthen democratic practices within the Movement by holding a National Conference after every five years. Above all we resolved to rally to the defence of our people by intensifying the struggle on all fronts.

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By the time of the Kabwe Conference we had succeeded to place the issue of the transference of political power firmly on the agenda. This reality was beginning to be recognised by the far sighted sections of the white community who, began to seek us out

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and engage us in discussions regarding the future of the country. On the other hand, as our people defiantly unbanned the ANC, contacts between the inside and the outside were intensified. In the circumstances, the need for us to address conditions under which we would be ready to negotiate the democratisation of the country became more than urgent. Of equal urgency was the whole question of the nature of the state we wanted to see replacing the apartheid state.

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In response we issued an NEC statement in 1987 outlining conditions under which we would be prepared to enter into negotiations with the regime. At the same time we commissioned the ANC constitutional committee to begin elaborating

constitutional principles on the basis of the Freedom Charter. In our view these principles would be a basis for a national debate on the new constitution. We, therefore, hoped to initiate a process whereby the new constitution would emerge from the people themselves. Through these and other initiatives, the ANC increasingly defined the terrain and tempo of our struggle. We thereby provided overall leadership to the country.

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However, enemies of our struggle, particularly on the international front, were far from vanquished. Diabolical schemes aimed at undermining our offensive had to be nipped in the bud. To this end, we initiated a process of wide ranging discussions within the ANC, between the ANC and the Mass Democratic Movement and between the ANC and the OAU and, in particular the Frontline states. These consultations resulted in the adoption of the

Harare Declaration by the OAU in 1989. The non-aligned Movement endorsed the Declaration which was later adopted by the United Nations albeit with some modifications. We had secured our rear by succeeding to establish a common international on the resolution of the South African problem by peaceful means. What is more, the Harare Declaration was not an imposition, but a beacon which emerged from the people of Southern Africa themselves.

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Comrades and Friends

I was struck down by a stroke on the eve of the adoption of the

Harare Declaration. My report back should, therefore, end here.
In concluding I wish to make a few observations: We did not

surrender when the going got tough. We did not tear ourselves apart because of lack of progress at times. We were always ready to accept our mistakes and to correct them. Even in bleak moments, we were never in doubt regarding our ability to win freedom for ourselves. We are in no doubt now that the people's cause shall triumph.

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It is now my pleasant task to declare this first ANC National Conference inside South Africa in a period of thirty years, open. Accordingly, our National Executive Committee stand dissolved.

I am sure I speak for all my colleagues in the NEC when I say that we shall always be ready to serve our Movement in whatever capacity. May I wish you all the success in your deliberations. Lastly, I want to, most profoundly, thank all those who, made my Presidency an unforgettable experience for me personally.

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Let us march to victory.
Amandla!

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STATEMENT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

COMRADE OLIVER R. TAMBO

TO THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONFERENCE

DURBAN - 1 JULY 1991

Dr Nelson Mandela, Deputy President of the ANC
Dr Kenneth Kaunda, President of the Republic of Zambia
Dr Robert Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe
Mualimu Nyerere, Distinguished Leader of the Republic of Tanzania
Members of the National Executive Committee
Regional Leaders

Commanders of Umkhonto we Sizwe
Excellencies Members of the Diplomatic Corps
Distinguished Guests
Fellow Delegates
Comrades and Friends
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It is my singular honour and privilege to welcome into our midst some of the most distinguished African leaders of our times. President Kaunda, President Mugabe and Mualimu Nyerere will be properly introduced, mine is just to give them our warmest embrace on behalf of the ANC, the entire South African people and indeed on my own behalf. Welcome to this your own home dear brothers.

We welcome you with boundless joy, especially you delegates, who represent hopes and aspirations of millions of our people across the length and breadth of our strife torn country. We welcome you conscious of the fact that you have come here propelled by a

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burning desire to make this Conference the last one we ever shall have to hold in bondage.

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This Conference is not only unique because it takes place in South Africa after an absence of three decades, but also because of its representativeness, its South Africanness. Given the cloud of uncertainty hanging over our country like a dagger, given the ever rising climate of confrontation fostered and perpetuated by enemies of peace and democracy, given our people's impatience with oppression, decisions that will emanate from this Conference must inevitably burden South Africa and, indeed our entire region with consequences of historical magnitude. For congregated within these four walls is the voice of reason, the voice of freedom, the voice of peace, the African National Congress.

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Comrades and Friends

In line with our democratic traditions, I now present a report back to our Movement, our people and country, on the mission we were assigned to do outside the country more than three decades ago. I present this report on behalf of my colleagues in the National Executive, my peers and fellow combatants in the external mission, both the living and the dead, and indeed on my own behalf. Because the history of the past thirty years is as vast as the road we have traversed hitherto, one can but only mention land-marks in our report.

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We left the country in the early 1960's on the instructions of the NEC. Our brief was to establish the external mission in order to win friends for our struggle and thereby isolate the

apartheid state, and secondly, we were to create a reliable rear base for our struggle. Though the decision that I was to leave was taken in 1959, due to logistical problems I only left in 1960. By that time the Sharpsville massacre had taken place and the ANC had been banned. As a result, the NEC directed the external mission which, I was to establish and head, to assume overall responsibility in prosecuting the struggle both inside the country and abroad.

At the time we believed that we would not be outside the country for more than five years. In the event, we stayed for thirty years. I went to Bechuanaland from where I proceeded to Tanganyika where I met Mualimu for the first time. From Tanganyika I went to Tunisia and then Ghana. Thus began our international crusade to win friends and isolate the racists. Inside the country the leadership was preparing for the armed struggle which was launched in 1961. Our efforts were therefore complementary. However, this did not last long as our High Command was arrested in Rivonia in 1963 and later sentenced to life imprisonment in 1964. Rivonia was a severe blow which took us years to overcome.

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Given these forbidding circumstances, we took a calm but firm resolve to meet the challenge head-on, for the cause we stood for was greater than ourselves. We did not indulge in self-pity and personal admonishment for having dared to challenge white supremacy. On the contrary we acted sustained by the knowledge that we were representatives of a great and noble people. We rose

to the challenge fully conscious that a people with a proud

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history of resistance such as ours would expect no less from their progenitors. As a result, our determination to fight on became stronger than ever; for we strongly believed in the justice of our cause - a cause of a people destined to be free some day. It mattered not how long it would take us to reach that day. It mattered not how much pain and suffering we would have to endure before we too could be free men and women.

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The fundamental question that we had to resolve in the early 1960's was how best to transform our resolve into practical struggle. It became clear to us, particularly in the post Rivonia era, that we had to launch and sustain an all round offensive internally and externally. To this end, we travelled extensively and simultaneously began to train our cadres in countries like Tanzania, Ethiopia, Egypt, and Congo. Demands of the day necessitated the transformation of the external mission into a fully fledged ANC, operating in conditions of illegality.

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Initially we put more efforts into our international work. If we hoped to raise the necessary resources for the struggle, we had to unite the world behind the ANC. But also the regime had to be isolated in order to be weakened. From the very beginning we made modest though steady gains in this regard. We found ready friends in the Socialist countries who rendered us solid support. The newly independent countries of Africa, Latin America and Asia threw their full weight behind our struggle. In the West,

particularly England we succeeded in encouraging the formation of a powerful anti-apartheid Movement which, helped to swing public opinion against the regime. Our position in international

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organisations, like the non-Aligned Movement, the Afro-Asian solidarity organisation and so forth became unassailable. By 1974 the General Assembly of the United Nations was able to refuse the credentials of the South African representative despite strong resistance from the West.

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Comrades and Friends

If we managed to register early victories on the international front, internally we were not that successful. Between 1963 and 1967 communication with the inside was very minimal and unreliable. Our underground had been dealt a crippling blow by the Rivonia arrests. On the other hand, the entire sub-continent was still firmly in the hands of imperialist powers who[^] connived and collaborated with Pretoria against the liberation Movement. We had trained cadres who. were languishing in camps with little

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prospects of returning home. Following discussions within the Movement, we decided to send the Luthuli Detachment into Rhodesia, with instructions that they were to fight their way back home.

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So, in 1967 a combined force of Umkhonto we Sizwe and ZIPRA crossed the Zambezi into Rhodesia. This marked the beginning of what was known as the Wankie-Spolilo campaigns. As well as being an attempt to resume the struggle inside, this was a

manifestation of our practical solidarity with our sister people in the Frontline States. In this regard, our combatants together with their Zimbabwean comrades acquitted themselves well in battles against the combined Smith and Voster forces. They carried out their mission gallantly and valiantly. We salute

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Basil February and his fellow comrades who lie buried in the soil of liberated Zimbabwe. However, at the conclusion of the Wankie and Spolilo campaigns, our problem of re-establishing the ANC inside remained essentially unresolved.

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Given our Wankie experience, it became necessary for us to meet. Thus, in 1969 we had our First National Consultative Conference in Morogoro Tanzania. Conference was to take stock of the totality of our experience and, on the basis of that, map out the way forward. Morogoro became a land mark and a turning point in

our struggle. It was that Conference which produced a comprehensive document on the strategy and tactics of the ANC.

Reporting to our Second National Consultative Conference in 1985, the National Executive made the following observation about Morogoro: " Out of Morogoro came significant results, the most

important being the re-orientation of our Movement towards the prosecution and intensification of our struggle inside South Africa, the restoration and reinforcement of unity within our ranks and the integration of all revolutionaries within the external mission of the ANC. " The_deen up membe rgja,ip of the ANC to all South Africans, regardless of the colour of

their skin, was a giant leap forward towards true non-racialism within the ANC.

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charged with the responsibility of prosecuting the struggle inside the country. We later replaced the RC with the Political Military Council. The PMC was answerable to the NEC and, under

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its leadership, forward machineries were established. The post 1976 era witnessed a rapid re-emergence of the ANC inside the country. Amongst the many factors which contributed to this development were the collapse of Portuguese colonialism and the June uprisings of 1976. As a result of the June uprisings, many young people reinforced the external mission.

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On the other hand, the independence of Angola and Mozambique created new possibilities for our struggle. Angola provided us with military bases and we opened up the eastern front. The steadfastness of the Frontline states proved decisive in enhancing our striking capacity. The independence of Zimbabwe in 1980 further consolidated the strength of the anti-colonial struggles in our region. Thus, the balance of forces was irrevocably shifted in our favour. Key leaders of the Frontline states have joined us today, to once more, reaffirm their unflinching support for our cause. We are grateful to them and to their people for all they have done for us. Never shall we forget the support they rendered and continue to render to us.

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Comrades and Friends

The greatest historical failure of our times was the inability of successive white regimes to destroy and liquidate the ANC. Despite a thousand plans aimed at dismembering us and rendering our Movement ineffective, we grew both in stature and effectiveness. Our survival and growth as a fighting force is the major victory that our people have scored under difficult conditions of illegality. In that time, as well as fighting the regime, we prepared our people to play a meaningful role in a

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liberated South Africa.

This we did by encouraging our youth to go to school wherever they were. And in 1979, we founded the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College in Morogoro, Tanzania. When we approached the Tanzanian government with the idea of a school, they readily gave us land on which SOMAFSCO stands today. Mualimu is here. We, therefore, ask him to convey our heartfelt gratitude to the Tanzanian people for the gesture they have extended to our people. Education will forever remain the other leg of our struggle.

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The beginning of the 1980's witnessed the maturing of both the subjective and objective factors in favour of our people's victory. As we were poised for a great leap forward, we designated the 1980's the " Decade of Freedom. " We proceeded to call upon our people to make South Africa ungovernable and apartheid unworkable. To this call our people responded in their thousands. Everywhere in the country, popular organs of people's

power emerged, challenging the erstwhile hegemony of the apartheid structures. In 1983 the UDF was born and a year later COSATU was formed. Thus we entered a period of dual power in the country. By 1985 the regime was forced to declare the state of emergency. As the crisis of the apartheid state deepened, so plunged international confidence in its viability . And for the very first time an official ANC delegation was received in Washington.

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Even as we made these impressive gains, areas of failure remained many and varied. For instance, the fact that many cadres spent

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long times confined to the barracks and underground houses without ever seeing action, was one such failure. We could have sent more people to school than we actually did; this was also a failure. It was with the view of resolving some of our subjective weaknesses and thereby strengthen the Movement, that we convened our Second National Consultative Conference in Kabwe, Zambia, in 1985.

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Now that President Kaunda is here, I want to say a few words

about this towering champion of the African revolution. It was because of him that the ANC and Lusaka became synonyms . We

cannot talk of our struggle without talking about the nerve

centre of that struggle - the Republic of Zambia. It is thanks to President Kaunda, the government of Zambia and indeed the Zambian people, that today I am making the kind of report back that I am making. Not only did comrade Kaunda give our struggle

all that Zambia could offer, but he also saved my life when I was taken ill. Thank you comrade Kaunda. Thank you Zambia.

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Our 1985 Conference took place against a climate of heightened confrontations between our people on the one hand and the regime on the other. The regime sought to create divisions amongst us by resorting to all sorts of schemes including attempts to draw a wedge between the youth and the old within the ANC. None of

these diabolical schemes succeeded. Amongst the many positive decisions, Conference decided to open up the membership of the NEC to all South Africans. We, therefore, became, second to the SACP, the first truly non-racial political Movement in South Africa. We also resolved to strengthen democratic practices

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within the Movement and to rally to the defence of our people by intensifying the struggle inside. Above all we emerged from Conference as a united Movement, much to the shame of our adversaries.

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By the time of the Kabwe Conference we had succeeded to place the issue of the transference of political power firmly on the agenda. This reality was beginning to be recognised by the far sighted sections of the white community who began to seek us out and engage us in discussions regarding the future of our country. More importantly, contacts between democratic forces inside and outside had intensified. In the circumstances, the need to address conditions under which we would be prepared to negotiate democratisation of the country became more than urgent. Equally,

we had to elaborate principles upon which the constitution of a democratic state would be founded.

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In response to these, we issued an NEC statement in 1987 outlining conditions under which we would be prepared to enter into negotiations with the regime. At the same time we commissioned the ANC Constitutional Committee to begin elaborating constitutional principles on the basis of the Freedom Charter. It was our view that such principles would constitute a basis for a national debate on the new constitution. We ^ therefore, hoped to initiate a process whereby the new constitution would emerge from the people themselves. Through these and other initiatives the ANC increasingly defined the terrain and tempo of our struggle. In this manner we provided overall leadership to the country.

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However, enemies of our struggle were far from vanquished. Diabolical schemes aimed at sabotaging our struggle had to be nipped in the bud. To this end, we initiated a process of wide ranging discussions within the ANC, between the ANC and the Mass Democratic Movement and between the ANC and the OAU and, in particular the Frontline states. These consultations resulted in the adoption of the Harare Declaration by the OAU in 1989.

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Comrades and Friends

I was struck down by a stroke on the eve of the adoption of the Harare Declaration. My report should, therefore, end here. In

conclusion I wish to make a few observations: We did not

surrender when the going got tough. We did not tear ourselves apart because of lack of progress at times. We were always ready to accept our mistakes and ready to correct them. Even in bleak moments, we were never in doubt regarding our ability to win freedom for ourselves. We are in no doubt now that the people's cause shall triumph.

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I now declare this first ANC National Conference inside South Africa in three decades, open. The National Executive Committee is accordingly dissolved. I am sure I speak for "my

colleagues when I say that we shall always be ready to serve our Movement in whatever capacity. May I also take this opportunity to thank all those who have made my Presidency a worthwhile experience for me personally.

Amandla!