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**LAUNCH OF
THE UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE'S TRUST
KEYNOTE ADDRESS
BY
MANGOSUTHU BUTHELEZI, MP
MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS,
CHAIRMAN: HOUSE OF TRADITIONAL LEADERS
[KWAZULU NATAL] AND
UNDUNANKULU KAZULU
Curries Fountain Stadium, Durban: May 27, 1999**

It is a great pleasure for me to attend the launch of a trust intended to lend a helping hand to the unemployed. I think that this launch is timeous and that there is a great deal of political serendipity on this occasion. We stand a mere six days away from an historic election. Undoubtedly, the issue of unemployment is one of those which has been covered by all political parties throughout the election campaign. Each political party has been promising to do something about unemployment and in the runup to this election, as in the 1994 elections, the people have heard many promises of job opportunities for all.

However, I believe that emphasis should be shifted from hearing the voice of political parties talking about unemployment to listening to the voice of unemployed people. At present the voice of unemployed people has not been expressed or heard while the interests of other major groups find a ready ear. The unemployed remain one of the largest and most dramatically growing components of our society and are rapidly heading to become the majority of our people. If we do not listen to the voices of our unemployed people, we are silencing the voices of almost half our nation. This is not democracy. It does not establish us as equals or of equal value to the government of our country. The people must be heard.

The 1999 election campaign has highlighted the recognition of every political party that until the plight of unemployment is addressed in South Africa, there will be no future for the people of our land. We will never be truly free and our liberation struggle will not find real victory until we live free from this burden. It is time for us to form real partnerships throughout our society and particularly among NGOs to make the voices of the unemployed heard. Our Constitution requires that people be fed, healed and educated simply because they are human beings. These are basic human rights and they are the rights of South Africans just as they are the rights of every human being. We have the responsibility to fulfil the rights of our people.

For the sake of our people and for the future of our country, the unemployed require and deserve the priority attention of all levels of government and of every socially responsible institution of civil society. We need to commit every building block of our society to establishing a new country in which unemployment is a memory of the past. If each of us makes this commitment on a personal level and we build through our families, communities and business all the way up into government, we can find real solutions to our problems and address the issue of unemployment with a new inspiration, the inspiration to succeed. I have committed myself to taking responsibility through the formation of a social covenant with unemployed people across South Africa. Our commitment to solving this problem is real and our efforts toward that goal are consistent and true.

On Monday, the 24th of May 1999, I signed a social covenant with the Unemployed Silent Majority Organisation [USMO], which is one of the major representatives of

unemployed South Africans. I have formed this alliance in recognition of the role unemployed South Africans have to play in forging the future of our country. I believe that there is a tremendous contribution to be made for the unemployed can put their political muscle behind the hard economic options and the courageous economic policies so that together we can produce tangible results. The road toward economic prosperity and social stability is difficult and calls for sacrifices and austerity which the privileged few may be less willing to make than our unemployed people are.

I have lived amongst the poorest of the poor for all my life. These are my people and I have always spoken with the voice of my people. Our poorest communities trust me for they know that I am not afraid to speak for the disenfranchised and the unemployed. I know that we will work together to establish success for all our people. We have lived together and walked together, worked together and struggled together for a long time. Now we will stand together to address the plight of unemployment with real solutions that bring real results. The social covenant which I signed with the unemployed can be the basis for economic recovery and the creation of social stability in South Africa.

We will stand together to help ourselves for our difficulties will not merely be solved with handouts. Unemployment degrades human dignity and is the source of a wide range of social problems. The duty of government is that of formulating a macroeconomic plan which can maximise economic growth to stimulate the generation of employment. With better macroeconomic policies we can determine a better future and an end to unemployment. Through our liberation struggle, we have made a promise to all our children that one day we will all live a free and dignified life without the enslavement of

poverty, unemployment and abject social and economic conditions. Yet it seems that some leaders have forgotten about our promise and have given up our struggle for genuine liberation, satisfied with reaping the rewards of our people's struggle.

The detriment to our people of this complacency in leadership is severe. We need a strong and committed leadership with the courage to stand firm without swaying under any negative influence. The longstanding political arrangement between the ruling party and organised trade unions has elevated trade union leadership into a separate caste of aristocrats, comfortably placed on the gravy train. Trade union barons are pursuing their own interests which no longer coincide with those of the worker. Surely, these interests are in conflict with the large masses of unemployed South Africans. It cannot be said that trade unions speak for the unemployed people. Our unemployed people do not have a voice which is being heard. The time has come to change this circumstance.

The revolution of goodwill is making its mark upon every province of South Africa. There is a growing tide of support for our revolution for the people know that it is time for something to be done to change the way things have been going for far too long. I believe that the unemployed people are ready to take our revolution further so that the people of goodwill may triumph. The social covenant which I signed with the unemployed has specified this as one of its key aims, to join our efforts at all levels of political and social debate to make our revolution of goodwill victorious for all our people.

As a first step toward achieving our aim, there must be recognition that, in our country's context, the number of social partners must be raised from three to four to include the unemployed, so that they may be represented in all fora of social negotiations, including NEDLAC, collective bargaining councils and other labour fora. National and provincial laws must be changed accordingly. Unless we give a voice to our unemployed people, policies and decisions will still be made without the participation of those who are most likely to be affected. For our unemployed people, economic policies and labour negotiations are not simply about cutting a better deal or creating a better future. Social and economic decisions affect the immediate interests of those who do not have a chicken in the pot, transport at the door or a job to provide them with a sense of human worth.

The development of our macroeconomic policies must take this fact into account. Government must commit itself to shifting the focus of macroeconomic policy away from the protection of the employed and closer to the need of accelerating economic growth. Economic growth is the only method to ensure that we can create more job opportunities. Only a stronger economy will provide a sustainable solution. We cannot afford to pursue short-lived social benefits for the employed, at the expense of long-term economic plans for growth. Several sound economic policies have been tabled which could set South Africa on track in the right direction of economic growth.

It is vital to introduce maximum flexibility into the labour market for, while flexibility may change people in any job, it does not reduce the aggregate number of those who are employed. Flexibility in the labour market is a proven factor of employment generation.

Moreover, wherever trade unions operate, organisations for the unemployed must be heard and represented. It is essential that we end the monopoly of trade unions on labour relations at plant and industry levels. Trade union practices which restrict access to job opportunities must, quite obviously, be removed. Let us level the playing field once and for all.

It is time for government to develop courageous policies aimed at creating an economic environment which is conducive to business. Government must commit itself to assisting the creation of new businesses, particularly micro and small business as the driving force of a growing economy. Policies which ought to be developed immediately include the creation of real incentives for fixed capital investments, especially foreign investment, and the deregulation and reduction of red tape and bureaucratic requirements. The next government of South Africa must consider the growth of our economy as being the primary priority.

The social covenant which I signed with the unemployed has included the necessity for government to strengthen and widen the safety nets relating to unemployed people. Unemployment insurance must be made available for a longer time and to a broader range of people. Feeding schemes, shelter and better free health care must become available throughout our country. The constitutional promise of good quality, free education and equal opportunities to all children must be fulfilled so as to avoid that the unemployment of parents impairs the life opportunities of their children. These are the first steps we can take as a country towards ending the struggle of unemployment. We owe it to our children to make the required sacrifices and to accept the difficult and hard

work which lies ahead. We have made a promise of work to South Africa. It is time to fulfil our promise.

I sincerely hope that the establishment of this trust can begin to address the real needs of our people and map the way forward for similar projects, so that we may finally fulfil our promise to South Africa. It is encouraging that there are those who are working hard to raise funds and create revenues which can assist the unemployed. I must commend this initiative for its well timed launch. The needs of our people have never been more in the minds of South Africa and the voices of a nation speak of what we can achieve on June 2, 1999. This is the time for a real change and real solutions. We can do it. We simply need to muster the courage and the will to move forward.

I am pleased that the aims of the trust have been set out from the start as being focussed on self help and self reliance. It is important that we teach South Africans the value of these principles. If we can help people to help themselves we will be moving the emphasis away from handouts which cannot last and toward a future in which the people ensure that their needs are fulfilled for the long-term, through their own efforts and hard work. I have always said that there is nothing worse than being idle. It is necessary that we find work wherever we can. Even where there seems to be no work, there is much to be done.

Our communities have suffered due to the culture of indolence which encroaches upon our social solidarity. While many things remain undone within our communities there are those who cry out for lack of something to do. We must commit ourselves to doing

whatever is necessary within our communities to strengthen one another and to grow as individuals. There is much to organise and to learn within our communities and it takes but a little initiative to begin a project which will uplift the lives of many. It is time for us to reach out to those who do not have and to teach them how they can learn to help themselves. Self help is the key to community fulfilment. In this type of work, we will find our dignity.

There is great dignity in labour. One of the truest expressions of mankind is the self expression which is evident through the object of his labour. How hard he works, or what he makes, the care with which he creates or tests or determines, surveys, constructs, develops, teaches or heals, is the measure of the man himself. We often choose to identify through our work who we are, not merely what we do and this creates the motivation to work harder, to strive further and to do better. As a basic form of self identification and self expression, work becomes a fundamental human right. We deserve to have the opportunity to exercise our right if we so wish. If any South African chooses to work, let him be able to work. If he is prevented from doing so through our poor economic or social system, he is deprived of the basic expression of who he is.

I offer my support for the efforts which have culminated in the launch of this trust. It is my deepest hope that the benefits of what is being started here today will go directly to the unemployed people of South Africa to help them find a better quality of life. I believe that love and work gave us life as we know it and should rule our lives accordingly. We must create a society in which love triumphs in the form of social solidarity and human fellowship. We need to establish in South Africa a society in

which work marks the measure of human dignity and worth. Above all, we need to create a country in which work is afforded to everyone who is willing to take it. This is the hope of a better country. It must now become the vision of every South African.

In the effort to develop such a society. I offer my support for what the Unemployed People's Trust aims to achieve. I wish the members of the trust every success in their work and I look forward with great enthusiasm to hear of the achievements and the benefits for our unemployed people across South Africa. On the occasion of the launch of the Unemployed People's Trust, I wish its members well, and I pray that the trust may grow and prosper for the sake of all our people.

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Best Wishes - Jenny.