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PAPER PRESENTED T THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL
INDEGENOURS CONFERENCE -5 TO 9 AUGUST 1990

By

ZENI TSHONGNENI

Chairperson

Distinguished Guests

Comrades

Sisters and Friends,

I wish to thank the Sami Women's Organisation that have honoured me to
be here today in this 2nd International Conference on Global
Environment.

I also wish to thank the ANC Chief Representative Ey Comrade Thandi
Rankoe who also made it possible for me to be-hete-i this conference
by assisting me in my preparations for the trip.

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I bring you fraternal greetings from the Women.4n South Africa. It
is a reat leasure for us to brin ou reetin s from w m from
g D t . OXEL; 9 Y 9 Q th 20 ?QEL.

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out of the country for many years not because their wanted to but
because of the South African Regime.that.banned'the-AfrteaneNatienal
Cengness_and_exiled_them.

Once again I must say that my being here is going to be educative...

)e The issue of environment is of major concern to women in different
countries. In South Africa ecology-related issues have not been
addressed in the Freedom Charter. Womeh\$organisations in South Africa
have not discussed environment problems .much, not that they are not i
important, but because of having to respond to day to day enisistr-Rssswesh
created by apartheid practises which are life and death struggles.
Our townships are harzadous. We have very serious health problems
in the midst of the most advanced medical technology, our people
starbe in the midst of plenty.ctwe do not have running water,
electricity, sewerage systdhbinfra structures.

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For us to discuss environment is very important, but our sthuggles
have to first address apartheid in depth. Our environmental problems
are caused by this cruel act of apartheid.

I am not going to approach environmental problems we face in our country academically as I am no academician but will approach it from a lay person's point of view.

TOXIC WASTE: It has been realised that our Government is the only one in Africa which has not banned the importation of toxic waste from other countries, and the reality is that the waste is being imported and law prevents this whilst the Government knows the fact.

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AIR POLLUTION: y Blackf are m j

?Sigg settles ln pkgggf far from Towns and Suburbs where whites live:)iav&04wu(deprived f electr10lty, scan y runnng water in inadequate conditions, health hazardous areas with no sewerage. No heating measures, therefore because of lack of electricity the majority of township dwellers use coal for heating and cooking. This causes a lot of pollution also by smog in industry and car exhausts. We know that South Africa sells its electricity to other countries whilst its own people are deprived of this and all technology that lessens the women's burdens to ensure security and comfort.

RIVER POLLUTION: Our country has vast rural areas where our people live in pathetic conditions, no water, no toilets, difficult living conditions are experienced in these areas. There are no health centres(%ransport. Rivers and dams are used to get water, water that is used in all different ways - f0 X live stock, drinking, cooking, \$ ergo; E x ile,

washingta d for irrigation purposes. The people who lTVestarttheriHb fWi W t f th' Ea L ill Wther'mla? Thalsmxcqmc;

use. wa erCAor ls rgggieAgs we aa 5 . therefore spreads diseases like Cholera, Diarrhea etc.

DESTRUCTION OF NATURE RESERVES

People who live under these conditions and lack of all these facilities are-hated to cut trees for fire and building their houses thus destroying forests. Vel6kgrass cut fggthatghggg houses, for is

making quick fires, for live.stock grazing%in small patches oil VAX-ead. (/;Ehis therefore destroys land causing soil erosion and land wasted.

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Dumping in seas we have experienced in Richards Bay, Natal where this has been used for dumping chemicals which are detrimental to people's health and even fish and animals who live in water.

We see our Universities offering courses on environment issues like environmental law, appropriate technology and rural development. These are however few and under prioritised in comparison to the size of environmental challenges facing us.

NUCLEAR: South Africa is going to open the biggest nuclear dumping space. As I have noted all the problems facing South Africa women on environment cannot be isolated from our struggles. First of all we have to fight to dismantle apartheid which is the root cause of these problems.

Comrades, Sisters, allow me to explain further at the expense of boring you what I meant by saying our struggle has to first address apartheid where environmental problems come from.

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In 1913 in South Africa a Land Act legislation was introduced. This deprived the whites of land. The majority owned 87% and Blacks only 13%.

The whites were allocated 13%. This led to the protests of the African National Congress which was founded in 1912. Women's involvement dates back as far as 1912. Already at that time we had women like Charlotte Maxeke who was in the National Executive of the African National Congress. We have therefore seen the influx control laws which enable blacks to be restricted to certain areas like the Townships, Mine Hostels where conditions are unbearable to live under. This did not only end there but some tough measures which were repressive were introduced. The minority got privileged and the majority of South Africa got deprived of this security and comfort. The African National Congress had to respond to these injustices by engaging in peaceful protests which were ignored and therefore they had no choice but to engage in the armed struggle. We saw the banning of the African National Congress in 1960, we saw the exile of our people, we saw the imprisonment of our outstanding sons and daughters, we saw the State of Emergency imposed on us, therefore, dear Friends, do not listen to people who say that you have to reward that racist government for the little changes it has done.

We saw the changing of Prime Ministers without us being included in the very process of decision making in our own country coming with more repressive laws., adopting technics used in other repressive regimes and modifying them by adding even tougher actions. Dear Sisters, we had to take up the struggle and women's organisations have been in the forefront campaigning against all these injustices by the regime. Some of our ongoing campaigns were for the unbanning of the African National Congress, the return of our exiled people. These campaigns were carried out even by those in exile with the help of the international subgroups Ehgtdwienagy; tlbsi:::vx9&VeV-LGTT4mmwdf V W , M, 5% onSA-

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(In February 1990. de Klerk announced the unbanning of the African National Congress)

For that fight our husbands, wives and comrades still remain in exile. This is not out of their choice but because of the indemnity laws that are not clear, that still restrict some of our comrades' return.

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Our comrades still get arrested, Cde. Mac Maharaj from exile has been arrested last week. Some of our leaders are being wanted for arrest like Joe Slovo, Cde. Kastril, Cde. Chris Hani.

Though the SACP has been unbanned, the launch was to be disrupted. Inkatha forces under the leadership of Gatsha Buthelezi are deployed all over South Africa to disrupt the functioning of the ANC and recruitment.

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Talking about environmental problems Kwa-Zulu which is a vast area in Natal suffers this. We have seen many cholera deaths high statistics of malnutrition and diarrhea deaths. The place suffers terrible health conditions. The land is wasted. Besides all this Gatsha Buthelezi still enjoys support from some countries like Switzerland and America as well as the South African Government. We therefore at many women's conferences called for the total isolation of Gatsha Buthelezi.

We also have Bantu Stans like Bophuthatswana where the Mangope's are the tools of implementation of apartheid. We reject these

homelands which are the rootcause of environmental distruction. Notorious chemicals like DDT are used by these Bantustan Governments for spraying homes, hospitals and public buildings. Toxins in DDT take years to break down. They pose a serious threat to Human Health. Although DDT was prohibited for use in 1972, the USA still manufactures 18 kl. a year to developing countries. tayeglaaNxV/K Despite talks with F.w. de Klerk government not much has changed if anything at all.

We still call for sanctions to pressurise the regime. Police are reinforcing in our townships, vigilantes still operate, people still get killed. We have witnessed -violence in townships like Katlehong and Sebokeng let alone the war torn Natal with an onongoing violence l.

created by the forces of the 903:;naentfe'15schools are disrupted since 1985 and so there has been no proper education for our children. All this leading to juvinile delinquency where they take up on drug abuse, drug trafficking, alcohol abuse and prostitution.

One academic said"The future of a country lies on its children if no children the country does not have a future".

Sisters, Comrades and Friends we call on all of you and your respective countries to support the cause of our struggle to a non-racial, non sexist and democratic South Africa where everybody will be equal irrespective of colour creed or race.

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These campaigns were carried out even by those in exile with the help of the international support that we enjoy.

In February F.w. de Klerk announced the unbanning of the African National Congress our struggle still goes on, we did not only fight for that . Our Friends, husbands, wives and Comrades still remain in exile. This is not out of their choice but because of the indemnity laws that are not clear, that still restrict some of our Comrades' return.

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