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ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA,
NELSON MANDELA AT THE WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM, SOUTHERN
AFRICA SUMMIT - 9 June 1994

Your Excellencies;

President Sam Nujoma of Namibia

President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe

President Hassan Mwinyi of Tanzania

Visiting Cabinet Ministers

Business Leaders, and

Fellow South Africans

Allow me to express my gratitude to the organisers of the World Economic Forum for this timely august summit of Southern African leaders and world business. It is particularly significant for us that this summit should take place in South Africa, and Cape Town in particular, so soon after the epoch-making changes that have taken place.

That we can meet at this level, at the southern tip of the continent, is tribute to a mission fulfilled. We once more express our profound gratitude to your excellencies, the business leaders and the world at large for the generous solidarity you extended to us during the dark days of apartheid.

The rebirth that we celebrate in South Africa is indeed a rebirth of the region and the continent. This is our collective achievement which has opened up new opportunities for us to exploit our great potential and, indeed, to boldly cross the threshold to a new and great era. At last, Africa in general and Southern Africa in particular, can build a new all-inclusive partnership based on freedom, democracy and social justice.

For us in South Africa, this is a time of great joy. Joy at the rediscovery, as a united people, of our common humanity, our common interests and our common destiny.

Ours is a delicate transition. But we are confident that we have entered it with a new national spirit. The first democratic elections which we have just conducted and the atmosphere of peace that has prevailed in this period inspires us with confidence that we shall succeed in our endeavours.

Lest we forget: the transformation we are living through is the result of years of intensive and protracted struggle. It is a result of difficult and sometimes harrowing negotiations. A process that ultimately resulted in the meeting of minds among the major political players.

We are heartened by the progress already made by the Government of National Unity in reaching consensus on the most important challenges facing the nation.

Differences do remain. But they manifest themselves within the context of non-racial democracy. There is a spirit abroad to ensure that we achieve the common objectives that we have set ourselves, primarily to build a better life for all our people and ensure peace, stability and economic growth. The Constitutional Assembly will soon sit to draft a new constitution for the country. And we are confident that the spirit of consensus-seeking which characterised the multi-party negotiations will display itself fully in this regard.

Quite certainly, transitions everywhere do breed uncertainty. And South Africa is no exception. In particular, we experienced significant outflows of capital, and we still experience caution among domestic and foreign investors. But the tide is turning, occasioned by the manifest display of a national togetherness that South Africa has hitherto never experienced. We face a long and hard road to address the havoc wrought by decades of apartheid. The challenge to ensure social justice and stability is as urgent as it is crucial.

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Put in brief, this means building a people-centred and caring society.

It requires that we use all our resources and skills to broaden the base of the economy and ensure that it serves all the people.

It demands that we enlarge the pool of skills and unleash the energies of the people, as a whole, to contribute to the twin processes of nation-building and economic development. i

It also entails addressing the disparities in residential infrastructure, income distribution, provision of health facilities and educational opportunities.

The Government of National Unity is of the unanimous view that all this needs to be done and done urgently. But also that the reconstruction and development targets that we set ourselves should not upset macro-economic balances and undermine fiscal discipline.

All of us recognise that peace and stability are crucial for economic growth and development. We are determined to ensure that all South Africans, including those who fear democracy, can rest assured in the knowledge that change is in their interest too.

This challenge is as much a South African one as it applies to the region as a whole. Now that we have redeemed our pledge with destiny, the people of Southern Africa can start in earnest to build a peaceful and developing sub-continent. We have to urgently resolve the problems of conflict in parts of the region, whilst we undo the effects of apartheid destabilisation. Now we can together address the legacy of colonial under-development and imbalances within and among countries of the region. We can together galvanise the human and material resources that the region commands, to serve the people. We can together develop the physical infrastructure necessary for development across all countries.

For these goals to be achieved, we need to start setting out the integrated strategies required. This also means urgently addressing the merging patterns that would, in the long run, not benefit the region.

The Top-sided development bequeathed us by our colonial past has resulted in the relative under-development of many countries of the region. Related to this is the danger of unhealthy migration of capital as well as skilled personnel to areas with developed infrastructure. It is to the overall advantage of the region that this trend is arrested and reversed. More accurately, it needs to be obviated through strategies for regional economic integration.

In the more distant future, our common objective is the realisation of the treaty of Abudja, the creation of an African Common market. In the near future, we are faced with the task of ensuring that the programmes of both the SADC and COMESA are realised in the new political and social context. With regional integration will emerge a mutually beneficial arrangement regarding movement of goods, capital and labour.

Such regional integration will need to address the broad task of reconstruction and development in the entire region.

We will venture to say, that modern economic planning dictates that inter-national co-operation requires more than just agreements on macro-economic imperatives and broad development projects. For, impacting on these factors is the way the partners jointly and severally create an economic environment which attracts investments and benefits ordinary people.

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impacting on these factors is the basic question on how the partners jointly and serve an economic environment which attracts investments and benefits ordinary people.

This means jointly grappling with issues such as:

t delivery of employment, shelter, nutrition, health, education and training for some 100-million people on a sustainable basis; at prioritising the areas, within our own countries, most in need, and doing it in such a way that we stimulate sustainable growth and development; t seeking and finding the balance between our noble goals and the resource opportunities and constraints; t avoiding economic and financial arrangements, including the debt-trap, which can only have the effect of eroding our countries' sovereignty.

We who are only starting to experience the problems of the region have gathered will stand us in good stead. We can only benefit from the new relationship that is emerging.

As we take our rightful place among nations of Africa, South Africa commits itself to join our neighbours in rising to the mammoth challenge presented by a growing affliction in many parts of the world known as

"Afro-pessimism" - loss of confidence in our continent's capacity to overcome under-development and declining standards.

It is a task which we are called upon to undertake with a singleness of purpose and with confidence, remembering that the thriving countries of Asia, the so-called Asian Tigers were only 20 years ago written off as hopeless basket cases. This can only be achieved if there is purposeful interaction among our countries.

Democratic South Africa enters this new partnership as one player amongst many. We harbour no desire to be the dominant partner, for the region and South Africa itself would lose in the long run. We entertain no illusion of becoming the regional benefactor because such capacity we do not possess.

Rather, we seek to join governments of the region in taking up the cudgels on behalf of all the peoples. We seek to join them in attracting significant investment flows and in reaching beneficial trade agreements. Along with countries of the region we are determined to ensure that the goods mined, harvested and manufactured in the region become internationally competitive. We are committed to strengthen regional institutions such as the SADC and COMESA and at the same time strengthen bilateral relations with each of our neighbours.

This we resolved to do both as a government and in partnership with various institutions of civil society such as business houses, trade unions, as well as educational, health and other bodies.

We are confident that South Africa will soon achieve the rates of growth necessary for us to meet our objectives. The last two quarters have demonstrated that GDP growth is on the upswing. This will be of benefit not only to South Africa's people but will help the movement towards greater Southern African prosperity.

The path that South Africa has traversed might be unique in many respects. But, to the extent that we have based ourselves on the experiences of Southern Africa and Africa as a whole, it is a common achievement and common heritage.

One month into post-colonial Africa, in the true sense of the word, we are confident that regional and continental efforts will ensure that the injunction - God Bless Africa - finds full expression in our prosperity.