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ANC MESSAGE OF SUPPORT TO SWAPO ON THE OCCASION OF NAMIBIA'S CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS BEGINNING 7TH NOVEMBER, 1989

After more than one hundred years of colonial misrule, the people of Namibia stand poised on the threshold of freedom. Colonial domination, imposed upon Namibia by the decision of the imperialist powers at Berlin in 1884, survived this long because of the policies of a handful of states, who did all in their power to delay the arrival of this day.

The dawn of Namibian independence is owed, in the first instance, to the selfless struggles of the Namibian people themselves. Indeed it was their undaunted courage that earned them the solidarity and support of the international community.

Virtually from the first day of its initial session, the United Nations Organisation has been seized with the Namibian question. For years, until the mid-1960s, the leading Western powers deliberately stood in the way of serious discussion of this issue, of vital importance to the peoples of Africa, in general, and those of Namibia in particular. It was the intransigence of the racist regime, supported as it was by the leading Western powers, that reluctantly compelled the Namibian people to take up arms — to take the solemn decision that they must return to the battlefield, where they had originally lost their freedom, in order to reclaim it.

As we cast our minds back we recount and recall the names of the great men and women who stood firm, often against terrifying odds, in defence of their country and its people in order to build the Namibian nation. In centuries to come, long after the names of the colonialist administrators have been swallowed up by the mists of infamy, the names of these great fighters will live on in the annals of humankind. The names of Hendrik Witbooi, Hosea Kutako and other Namibian patriots are inscribed for eternity in that roll of honour. So too will be the names of the heroes of this hour — the leadership and cadres of SWAPO.

In 1966, when the Namibian people, under the leadership of SWAPO, resolved to wage armed struggle, there were those who said it was the action of desperate persons who would soon regret their 'rash' decision. There were yet others who counselled patience and moderation. A small minority thought it wiser to accommodate the aggressor and collaborate with him. There could be no clearer vindication of the wisdom of the decision to take up arms than this day.

After 23 years, during which the cream of Namibian humanity suffered the deprivations of imprisonment, banishment and exile, SWAPO, under the able leadership of Comrade President Sam Nujoma, has stood firm on principle and refused to trade the people's birthright for a handful of silver and the plums of public office under the colonial regime.

Namibian independence, so eagerly awaited by all, has been obtained at the price of great sacrifices. It is fitting on this day that we remember the hundreds who perished in the wars of resistance against German colonialism, the scores massacred in every quarter of Namibia during the decades of South African occupation, the thousands who have been imprisoned, tortured, maimed and executed, the hundreds mercilessly butchered at Kassinga, and the fighters of the People's Liberation Army of Namibia — PLAN — who gave their lives on the battlefield to make this day a reality.

A special word of tribute is owed also to the peoples and governments of Southern Africa, who despite every blandishment and intense military pressure, have stood shoulder to shoulder with the Namibian people through the bitter years of armed conflict. We salute in particular the people of Angola whose blood has been shed in defence of their own country and to secure the freedom of a sister nation.

Especially on this day, as we celebrate a victory, we dip our revolutionary banners in silent homage to their memory, firm in the knowledge that their sacrifice was not in vain. We remain unshakable in our belief that the new Namibia that shall rise from the ashes of racist occupation will be a monument worthy of their courage and dedication.

Our joy is, however, tempered by the overwhelming need for vigilance. The provocation staged only this past week by Roelof 'Pik' Botha is a clear warning that the enemies of our freedom still harbour hopes of turning back the tide of African progress. Unity must remain the watchword until the gains you will score today have been consolidated in a democratic constitution for Namibia — unity of all the forces of national independence and freedom, unity of all patriots under the banner of SWAPO, the movement created by the Namibian people to wrest freedom from the clutches of the racists and their allies.

On this propitious day, the National Executive Committee of the African National Congress, speaking on behalf of the hundreds of thousands of militants of our movement, on behalf of our leaders and cadres in the prisons of apartheid, in the name of the fighting ranks of our people's army and our underground, indeed on behalf of all South African democrats and patriots, expresses our fraternal solidarity with the Namibian people and their National Liberation Movement, SWAPO.

As you embark on this final leg of your long and arduous march down the highroad of freedom, we reiterate that you may rely on the bedrock of friendship and solidarity that has bound our two peoples during these decades of struggle. The historic reverse suffered by our common enemy in Namibia, is a portent of the defeats that await him in South Africa itself. Namibia's victory today heralds the victory of our people tomorrow.

LONG LIVE THE UNITY OF THE NAMIBIAN PEOPLE!

LONG LIVE SWAPO OF NAMIBIA!

LONG LIVE THE FIGHTING SPIRIT OF PLAN!

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES! VICTORY IS CERTAIN!

ANC National Executive Committee, Lusaka, Zambia