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SPEECH BY NELSON MANDELA AT THE  
ANC INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY CONFERENCE

NASREO - 20 FEBRUARY, 1993

Dear Friends and Colleagues.

Allow me to apologise for not being with you yesterday. However, it was fitting that our National

Chairperson. Oliver Tambo. spoke in my place. He is the one who spearheaded international J mobilisation for all those years. and to whom all South Africa is deeply indebted for making it

possible for us to reach this stage in our struggle.

There are certain moments that capture the essence of life itself. Today is such a moment for me.

For you are the friends from five continents who kept hope alive. You took the plight of our

people. our hopes. our dreams and our struggle. to your hearts and made it your own. You have

forged bonds of friendship that are unbreakable. You refused to let the world ignore the tragedy

wreaked by apartheid.

And today you are here with us. many of you for the first time. While you are here you will see

what I saw coming out of prison after 27 years:

- that our people are still the hewers of wood and the drawers of water;

- that our people know only hunger. disease. poverty and violence;

- that in the decades of apartheid rule. we were reduced to beggars in our own land.

You are here to help us transform all this. to help us move from anti-apartheid to democracy.

We are on the eve of great changes, that place enormous responsibilities on all our shoulders.

These are complicated and difficult times, for which there are no pat answers. Before we have

even attained our freedom we are experiencing an incipient counter-revolution. After so much

sacrifice by so many, we have the obligation to prevent disintegration into a Yugoslavia.

And one of the ways to do this is to hold free and fair elections. where every South African will

vote, for the first time. for a government of their choice.

We know that you will march this last mile with us. will work with us to win a resounding victory in these elections. We know you will help us reconstruct South Africa in the vision of

the Freedom Charter, as a country that belongs to all its people, black and white.

We know you will go back to your countries and begin work on the enormous tasks that lie ahead.

Together we cannot fail.

My doctors have given me a clean bill of health. In order to prepare for the strenuous tasks that

lie ahead. I will now begin my two weeks of complete rest. Your love sustained me throughout

my prison years. Your concern for my well-being now overwhelms me.

I thank you all from the bottom of my heart.