

5.81.1

STATEMENT OF THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE ANC, NELSON MANDELA, AT  
THE OPENING OF THE OBSTACLES MEETING: CAPE TOWN, MAY 2, 1990.

MR PRESIDENT,  
MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT,  
DEAR COLLEAGUES OF THE ANC,  
FRIENDS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

WE WOULD LIKE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE WORDS OF WELCOME THAT HAVE JUST  
BEEN ADDRESSED TO US. AS EVERYBODY PRESENT CAN WELL IMAGINE, WE  
HAVE PAID A LOT OF ATTENTION TO WHAT WAS SAID. WE ACCEPT THAT  
WHAT YOU, MR DE KLERK, STATED, IS PART OF THE DIALOGUE THAT IS A  
NECESSARY PART OF THE PROCESS OF FINDING A POLITICAL SOLUTION TO  
THE PROBLEMS WHICH FACE OUR COUNTRY AND PEOPLE.

THIS IS THE FIRST TIME IN 79 YEARS THAT A TRULY SERIOUS MEETING  
TAKES PLACE BETWEEN DELEGATIONS OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS  
AND THE SUCCESSION OF WHITE GOVERNMENTS THAT HAVE RULED OUR  
COUNTRY FOR GENERATIONS. THIS IS A FACT THAT IS SOBERING IN ITS  
IMPLICATIONS.

IT INDICATES THE DEADLY WEIGHT OF THE TERRIBLE TRADITION OF A  
"DIALOGUE" BETWEEN MASTER AND SERVANT WHICH WE HAVE TO OVERCOME,  
IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH A CULTURE OF PEACEFUL, DEMOCRATIC AND  
GENUINE DEBATE, DISCUSSION AND NEGOTIATION WHICH SHOULD BE THE  
HALLMARK OF THE POLITICAL PROCESSES OF A FREE, PEACEFUL AND  
STABLE SOUTH AFRICA.

THE ANC APPROACHES THE PROJECT ON WHICH WE ARE ABOUT TO EMBARK AS



A SIGNIFICANT FIRST STEP ON THE ROAD TOWARDS THE FUNDAMENTAL RESTRUCTURING OF SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY. TO LIVE UP TO THESE EXPECTATIONS, THIS MEETING MUST, APART FROM RESOLVING THE ISSUES ON OUR AGENDA, MAKE A DECISIVE AND HISTORIC CONTRIBUTION TO THE REPUDIATION OF THE EARLIER TRADITION TO WHICH WE HAVE REFERRED. IT SHOULD START THE PRACTICE OF THE RESOLUTION OF CONFLICT AND DIFFERENCES, THROUGH DISCUSSION AMONG EQUALS, AND FELLOW CITIZENS OF A COMMON PATRIMONY.

THE MEETING WHICH BEGINS TODAY SHOULD BE INSTRUCTED BY THE IDEA THAT ALL OF US WHO WILL SIT AROUND THE NEGOTIATING TABLE ARE SOUTH AFRICANS. AS SUCH, WE SHOULD BE INSPIRED BY A COMMITMENT TO ADDRESS THE INTERESTS AND FUNDAMENTAL ASPIRATIONS OF ALL OUR PEOPLE, WITHOUT REGARD TO RACE OR COLOUR.

THE SOLUTION WE SEEK SHOULD NOT BE BASED ON ANY OF THE INHUMAN FOLLIES WHICH HAVE LED OUR COUNTRY INTO THE DESTRUCTIVE CRISIS IN WHICH IT IS NOW IMMERSSED. THE PACE AT WHICH WE MOVE, TO ARRIVE AT A JUST SOLUTION SHOULD BE INFORMED BY THE FACT THAT THE BLACK MASSES OF OUR COUNTRY DEMAND AND EXPECT FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE NOW AND NOT TOMORROW. THE PEOPLE AS A WHOLE WANT THE PEACE AND STADILITY WHICH CAN ONLY COME ABOUT AS A RESULT OF THE TOTAL ABOLITION OF THE APARTHEID SYSTEM.

THE NEW SOCIETY WE SHALL CREATE MUST, AS A MATTER OF NECESSITY, BE PREDICATED ON THE BASIC PRECEPT THAT EACH INDIVIDUAL SOUTH AFRICAN HAS AN INALIENABLE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE IN ALL THE PROCESSES WHICH, IN THEIR COMBINATION, HELP TO SHAPE OUR COMMON



DESTINY. NONE AMONG US SHOULD FEAR CHANGE.

THE CHANGE THAT MUST COME WILL LEAD TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF STRUCTURES, INSTITUTIONS AND A SOCIAL ORDER WHICH MUST GUARANTEE THE RIGHT OF ALL THE CITIZENS OF OUR COUNTRY TO DECIDE WHAT HAPPENS TO THEMSELVES, THEIR FAMILIES AND THEIR COUNTRY. THE SOLUTION WE SEEK MUST BE BASED ON A COMMON ACCEPTANCE OF THE IDEALS OF DEMOCRACY, THE RIGHT OF ALL THE PEOPLE TO GOVERN, A GOOD STANDARD OF LIVING, SOCIAL JUSTICE AND PEACE IN A UNITED SOUTH AFRICA.

DIE ANC IS BEWUS VAN DIE FEIT DAT DAAR BAIE BLANKES IS WAT 'N VREES KOESTER VIR DEMOKRATIESE VERANDERING. DAAROM WIL DIE ANC WEEREENS BEKLEEMTOON DAT DIE BLANKE GEMEENSKAP, INSLUITENDE DIE AFRIKANERS, NIKS TE VREES HET VAN DIE ANC NIE. DIE SAMESTELLING VAN DIE AFVAARDIGING VAN DIE ANC IS 'N TREFFENDE BEWYS VAN SY VERLANGE OM ALLE BURGERS IN TE SLUIT IN 'N TOEKOMSTIGE SUID-AFRIKA. DAAROM HET DIE ANC HOMSELF VERBIND ON ALLE VORME VAN RASSISME TE BEVEG.

IT WOULD SEEM OBVIOUS THAT TO ARRIVE AT THE DEMOCRATIC AND NON-RACIAL POSITIONS WE HAVE BEEN TALKING ABOUT, ALL THOSE WHO ARE HOSTAGES OF THE PAST, MUST TRANSFORM OURSELVES INTO NEW MEN AND WOMEN WHO SHALL BE FITTING INSTRUMENTS FOR THE CREATION OF THE GLORIOUS SOUTH AFRICA WHICH IT IS POSSIBLE AND NECESSARY TO REALISE.

ACCORDINGLY, WE MUST DENY THE PAST ITS ATTEMPT TO ENSLAVE US. THE VOCABULARY OF THE OLD SOCIETY SHOULD FIND NO PLACE IN OUR



DICTIONARY. THE IDEA THAT THE COLOUR OF A PERSON DEFINES THEIR PLACE IN SOCIETY MUST, TO ALL OF US, BE AS FRIGHTENING AS THE PLAGUE.

WE MUST UNDERSTAND THAT IT IS PRECISELY THE MOST OBSTINATE AND ENDURING OF OUR PREJUDICES THAT POSE THE GREATEST THREAT TO THE COMMON EFFORT TO MOVE FORWARD TO A NEW, JUST AND DEMOCRATIC REALITY. WE MUST COMPREHEND THE FACT THAT THE ATTEMPT TO SUSTAIN THE NOTION THAT SOME ARE, BY VIRTUE OF THEIR SKIN COLOUR, BORN SUPERIOR TO OTHERS IS, IN A REAL SENSE, A CARDINAL SIN. IT SHOULD BE UNDERSTOOD THAT IN THE WORLD IN WHICH WE LIVE TODAY, BLACK MEN AND BLACK WOMEN HAVE BROKEN OUT OF THE MENTAL ENSLAVEMENT WHICH, IN THE PAST, COULD HAVE PERSUADED THEM THAT THEY WERE IN ANY WAY INFERIOR.

WE HAVE THEREFORE COME TO THIS MEETING NOT AS SUPPLICANTS OR PETITIONERS. RATHER, WE ARE HERE AS FELLOW SOUTH AFRICANS AND EQUAL MEMBERS WITH THE REST OF OUR PEOPLE, AND OF THE WIDER UNIVERSAL HUMANITY WHICH IS IRREVOCABLY CONVINCED THAT THE SYSTEM OF WHITE MINORITY RULE, WHICH PERSISTS IN OUR COUNTRY, MUST COME TO AN END, WITHOUT DELAY.

AS PART OF THAT SOUTH AFRICAN AND INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, WE BELIEVE THAT THE CIRCUMSTANCES EXIST WHICH ENABLE ALL THE PEOPLE OF OUR COUNTRY TO SOLVE THE GRAVE PROBLEMS WHICH FACE US THROUGH NEGOTIATIONS. IT WAS FOR THIS REASON THAT WE PROPOSED THAT THIS MEETING SHOULD TAKE PLACE, SO THAT WE COULD, TOGETHER, ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF CREATING A CLIMATE CONDUCTIVE TO SUCH NEGOTIATIONS.



AS HAS BEEN AGREED, WE SHALL DISCUSS THE QUESTIONS THAT ARE RELEVANT TO THE CREATION OF THIS CLIMATE, AND INCLUDE THOSE THAT AFFECT THE RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS, THE STATE OF EMERGENCY, THE RETURN OF THE EXILES AND OTHERS. WE REMAIN CONVINCED THAT THE REMOVAL OF THESE OBSTACLES WOULD NOT ONLY CREATE THE NECESSARY CLIMATE. IT WOULD ALSO HELP TO DEVELOP AN ATMOSPHERE OF TRUST AMONG OURSELVES AND AN AFFIRMATION THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF THIS COUNTRY IS COMMITTED TO THE PROCESS OF CHANGE.

WE ENTER THESE DISCUSSIONS CONVINCED THAT ALL OF US MUST DO EVERYTHING IN OUR POWER ACTUALLY TO REMOVE THE OBSTACLES TO THE NEGOTIATIONS FOR A NEW CONSTITUTION WHICH, AT THEIR CONCLUSION, SHOULD RESULT IN THE RECONSTRUCTION OF SOUTH AFRICA AS A UNITED, DEMOCRATIC AND NON-RACIAL COUNTRY. WE MUST SUCCEED IN THE ENDEAVOUR TO REMOVE THESE OBSTACLES SO THAT WE CAN TOGETHER MOVE FORWARD AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE TO END THE INHUMAN SYSTEM OF APARTHEID.

WE TRUST THAT ALL THE PEOPLE OF OUR COUNTRY, REGARDLESS OF THE POLITICAL FORMATIONS TO WHICH THEY MIGHT BELONG, WILL ENGAGE IN THIS SACRED EXERCISE WITHOUT SEEKING ADVANTAGE FOR THEIR PARTICULAR POLITICAL ORGANISATION. THE IMMENSE AND INTOLERABLE SUFFERING OF OUR PEOPLE DEMANDS THAT ALL OF US MUST BE INSPIRED BY THE SOLE OBJECTIVE OF RECREATING OUR COUNTRY AS A HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS HOMELAND FOR ALL ITS INHABITANTS.

WE TAKE OUR SEATS AT THE TALKS COMMITTED TO THIS VISION. THE SACRIFICES THAT OUR PEOPLE HAVE MADE AND ARE MAKING, TO END THE



SYSTEM OF APARTHEID, DEMAND THAT ALL OF US ACT WITH THE NECESSARY SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY SO THAT THE DREAMS OF MILLIONS OF PEOPLE IN SOUTH AFRICA, IN SOUTHERN AFRICA, IN AFRICA AND THE REST OF THE WORLD FOR AN END TO THE SYSTEM OF WHITE MINORITY DOMINATION. ARE TRANSFORMED INTO REALITY. THE TIME TO REACH THIS END HAS COME.

THANK YOU.

