

**EMBARGO: ON DELIVERY****STATEMENT BY THE STATE PRESIDENT, MR F W DE KLERK, TO THE  
PLENARY MEETING OF THE MULTIPARTY NEGOTIATING FORUM, 17  
NOVEMBER 1993**

Three years and ten months ago we began an historical process. It was based on the proposition that we could, through peaceful negotiation, bridge the chasms which for so many years had divided our people. Our goals were to establish a truly democratic society, firmly based in the rule of law, in which all of our people would be able to participate fully and in which no individual or group would fear domination or arbitrary action. We resolved to rejoin the international community and take our rightful place in the family of nations.

Those who are filled with anxiety about the uncertainties of the present and the future forget how desperate our situation was four years ago. They forget how implacable the enmity was between our main political parties and groups; how seemingly hopeless the prospect was of finding any peaceful way out of the cul-de-sac of racial divisions. They forget the depth of our international isolation, the despair of our sportsmen and women; the frustration of our businessmen; the intensity of our international financial crisis, and the stifling cultural and spiritual claustrophobia of our inward-looking society.

All that has changed dramatically, because we had the determination and the courage to accept the challenge of transforming our society. In many ways that transformation has already been effected. South Africa will never be the same again. In other ways the transformation has just begun. We stand on the threshold of a new era.

The fact that we are gathered here today to ratify the almost final draft of a new transitional constitution, shows that we are beginning to find one another as a nation. Despite all the setbacks and frustrations which we have endured; despite the walkouts and the boycotts; despite the terrible violence which continues to afflict so many of our people; despite the absence today of important parties, we have shown that it is possible for people with widely differing views and beliefs to reach basic and sound agreements through compromise, through reasoned debate and through negotiation.

The document we have before us is the product of many months of hard work and tough negotiation. It is the distillation of the dreams of generations of disenfranchised South Africans. It offers a reasonable assurance of continuing security for others who have traditionally had the vote. It is capable of protecting individual and community rights. It will prevent the misuse of power and will uphold the rule of law.

It is also the product of compromise. As such it does not satisfy any of us completely. But it satisfies all of us sufficiently to meet our most pressing concerns and hopes. In so doing, it provides the basis for a new national consensus.

It is a contract - a contract which we have closed with one another as South Africans, with which we have given a clear direction to our destiny as a nation. As with any contract, its success will depend not only on the letter of its text, but on the sincerity with which all of the parties involved abide by its spirit. In this lies the challenge for the future. Our success or failure in accepting this challenge will determine whether it *will* become a charter for future peace, progress and prosperity for all our people - or a prescription for power-mongering, leading us back to the conflict of the past. We dare not allow that to happen.

When I became President four years ago, I spelled out a vision.

My vision was a new South Africa. A South Africa where freedom, peace and justice could walk hand in hand.

My vision was a new South Africa where men and women of all races would have new and equal opportunities to develop the talents God gave them.

My vision was a new South Africa where people could live their daily lives free from fear, and with hopes that life for themselves and their children would be better.

Today we have set the seal on the first part of that vision. But I do not regard my work as over. This is only the first step. The New South Africa beckons and I intend to continue my task as leader - to help make it a better South Africa.

The New South Africa will flourish and grow only if we continue to create the wealth which a sensibly managed economy provides. The New South Africa must retain the confidence of other nations to invest here and thus to provide jobs for our people. The New South Africa must serve the interests of all its people - Black, White, Coloured and Indian.

I pledge myself to work for that. And I commit myself and my party to the letter and the spirit of our new constitution in the making. I believe that when, in the future, South Africans look back on the work which we have accomplished here today they will say

Yes, it was on this day that we laid the foundation for a new South African nation;

Yes, it was on this day that we created a basis for good hope for this and for future generations of our people.