

AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

Violence and its impact on the negotiations process

*Delivered by Thabo Mbeki
1 April, 1993*

(Please check against delivery)

VIOLENCE AND ITS IMPACT ON THE NEGOTIATIONS PROCESS

Chairperson and the House;

We wish to start by reminding you that at a very formative stage of the negotiating process, one of the Working Groups which were established was required to address itself to the creation of a climate for free political activity which included the need for the levelling of the playing field. The Working Group in question proposed, amongst other things, measures aimed at preventing violence-related crime and matters giving rise thereto. Given the fact that violence impacts negatively on the lives of our people and that it impairs the negotiating process in which we are engaged, it was only natural that we would look for ways by which to bring it to an end.

We will submit that the cause of ending violence in our country, like everywhere else, is not best served by mutual recrimination. During the course of last year (1992) alone, numerous trials, inquests and commissions of inquiry relating to the causes, perpetration and effects

of political violence were conducted. The outcome of those processes have provided a conclusive demonstration of the fact that we are dealing with a rather complex situation. It has become patently clear that elements from the security establishment, unknown people, criminals in political garb and vigilante groups attached to organs which face rejection by the communities in which they are located, are behind the violence which is tearing our country apart. Formal and informal repression, apart from achieving its intended aim of denying people space for free political activity, has also accounted for the many casualties of violence.

We believe that our society is sick. That is why so many people are dying not only in the hands of criminals who roam the streets, but also in police custody. This imposes an obligation on all parties, organisations and administrations to act together in search of a comprehensive solution. The search for such a solution cannot and should not be premised on narrow sectarian considerations.

Various initiatives, bilateral and multilateral, were taken in the past. The signing of the National Peace Accord was a landmark contribution in this

regard. Much more still needs to be done. We need to continually do everything necessary to create a climate which will enable us to sustain our commitment to the peaceful process. For its part, the African National Congress stands ready to strengthen agreements it is party to, and to further elaborate mechanisms which will ensure a successful implementation of such agreements. We have participated in bilateral discussions with the IFP, the Ciskei and Bophutatswana administrations, as well as the incumbent South African government in search of solutions to the continuing violence in our country. We have also been open to cooperation with international observers who were deployed into the country to help combat the scourge of violence.

Convinced of the urgent need to review the peace process and to strengthen the National Peace Accord, we are of the view that a meeting of the signatories of the Accord need to be convened for these purposes. For decisions to be taken in that meeting will, as indeed they must, empower the already existing peace committees, to do their work more effectively than they have done up to now.

Mr. Chairperson, the processes in which the Negotiating Forum is

involved are intended to take the country forward to democracy. The perpetrators of violence are motivated by many things including the desire to derail these processes. This Forum has a responsibility to put up the signposts which will inspire all our peace loving people with hope and confidence.

Together with our people, we believe that central to our ability to intervene decisively with regard to the problem of violence, is a rapid movement forward towards the establishment of multiparty structures of control in areas which are crucial to the elections process. One such structure is the already proposed sub-council which will ensure multiparty control over all armed formations and policing authorities. For any advance from confrontation and conflict to co-existence and co-responsibility in shaping a peaceful and democratic future requires that we start now to work together in areas as crucial as this one. It calls for the overcoming of the inertia and deep rooted hostilities which continue to manifest themselves in the ongoing killing of members of the SAP and the assassination of prominent anti-apartheid activists in various communities.

The import of establishing such a multiparty sub-council does not only lie in that it will enable us to make joint interventions but also in that it will lay the basis for the creation of one army and non-partisan law enforcement agencies which will enjoy the support of all our people - a process to be consummated by a democratic government after the elections. Of course we find no rational grounds for the reluctance on the part of some, to take this important step.

In the run up towards democratic elections, the envisaged electoral law will have to deliberately contain provisions which would discourage violence and actually criminalise activities which are inimical to the election process.

Parties must avoid the temptation to take unilateral actions because peace is not possible without the involvement of all.

Thank you!

African National Congress

April 1, 1993