

SOUTH AFRICAN



COMMUNIST PARTY

Central Committee

STATEMENT OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNIST PARTY PRESENTED BY  
GENERAL SECRETARY, CHRIS HANI, TO THE CONVENTION FOR A DEMOCRATIC  
SOUTH AFRICA, WORLD TRADE CENTRE, 20 DECEMBER 1991.

The South African Communist Party enters the Convention for a Democratic South Africa with a total commitment to ensuring that the process succeeds. The oppressed and working people long for peace. They long for an end to the violence. They long for their freedom that has so long been denied.

The SACP, in alliance with the ANC and Cosatu has grasped the first opportunity that has arisen - as a result of our struggles - to secure a negotiated settlement of the apartheid conflict. The Codesa process is a victory for our people! We believe that it is our responsibility as a vanguard organisation of the working class, together with our allies, to pursue this process with the utmost vigour.

But we need to make clear that we are not mesmerised by the word process. We want it to succeed and get on track and remain on track. But that is not our only preoccupation. We are in this process because we want it to lead to a democratic result. We are in this process because there are a majority of South Africans who do not have a say in the rules governing their own lives. We are in this process because there are millions of South Africans who need a new government that will listen to their needs

We want this process to succeed because without a new constitution there can be no peace. Peace must be based on a secure foundation, on a lasting constitution enjoying overwhelming support of the majority of our people.

Such a new constitution must also provide the framework within which this society can be transformed from a paradise for a small minority and misery for most others, to one where all enjoy peace and social justice

These are our broad goals, but how do we proceed from here? We believe, with the ANC, that it is essential that this meeting emerges with decisions that are enforceable, that we are all bound by these decisions.

Without wanting to be unduly provocative, it must be clear to all with open minds that no reasonable person can justify a government elected by 5% of South Africa's adult population, holding a veto over the decisions of these proceedings.

All decisions carried through a process of sufficient consensus must be implemented.

But what are the decisions that we would like to see emerge from Codesa I? In the first place, we in the SACP reiterate our belief that it is not possible to pursue the process of negotiations successfully unless a climate of free political activity exists. This demands the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners, return of exiles, repeal of all repressive legislation, an end to the violence and freedom of all to pursue their political activities without harassment.

We are especially concerned at this time with the failure of the government to implement its undertakings under the Groote Schuur and Pretoria Minutes by continuing to hold as prisoners, including on death row, people who are being punished because of their actions against apartheid

We insist that these people be released-not after further representation or consideration by some or other intricate bureaucratic process or the presentation of new facts. We demand that these people be released now. The government can do this without any further formalities. We are saying that they must be free to spend their first Christmas for many, many years, with their families

When we call for free political activity we do so in the context of a climate of violence that we know has persisted for many years, particularly in Natal, the Transvaal and the Western Cape. But it is found throughout the country. Not only is this causing havoc to community life, but it obviously makes a mockery of any attempt to organise politically

This freedom of political activity is obviously also impeded by continued evidence of government funding of organisations that it favours. We need to know the truth and there is no doubt that the truth is only emerging gradually under pressure and that the scale of government financing of organisations to which it feels well-disposed is much greater than previously admitted. This must end.

We believe that the present government has shown its unwillingness or incapacity to tackle these issues. That is why we demand the immediate installation of an Interim Government of National Unity to oversee the process of transition towards a democratic constitution. The longer the installation of such an Interim Government is delayed the longer we allow the violence to continue, the more we endanger not only lives at the present moment, but we also build into our culture a sense of the normality of such violence.

We want to reiterate that one of the prime tasks of such an Interim Government is to oversee elections for a Constituent Assembly -the body that we see as best suited for drawing up a new constitution. We see this as the most democratic and inclusive way of making the new Constitution, enabling our people to make their impact on their own future. That is how the new

democratic, nonracial, nonsexist constitution must be made.

There is no reason why this process should be drawn out. We believe that the parties should commit themselves to ensuring that the establishment of an Interim Government and elections for a Constituent Assembly should be completed within 18 months.

The SACP is determined that this process should lead to a functioning multi-party democracy with regular elections. That is why the SACP commits itself to abide by the results of any such elections, independently verified as free and fair. We call upon the South African government to make a similar commitment. We cannot have any party to negotiations setting itself up with a form of veto right over democratic decisions

It is important to note that while this Convention primarily addresses itself to constitutional questions, it takes place amidst a social and economic crisis of unprecedented proportions. The level of unemployment and the scale of poverty is a source of great alarm to us. The economic policies pursued by successive apartheid regimes have resulted in a distorted and stagnant economy.

We need a democratically elected government in place as soon as possible, a government with a mandate to deal with the social and economic issues that are fundamental to any real transformation

Of all sectors of our society it is the black working people who have suffered most from the racism and expropriation. It is above all their aspirations that will have to be addressed. We are participating in this process, in the first place, to articulate their needs. We are also concerned that women be able to occupy their rightful place as equals at every level of society in any new democratic order.

We in the SACP do not hide our belief that political freedom without social reconstruction will be meaningless. There needs to be a new growth path which creates wealth more efficiently than the present economic policies, but also ensures that such wealth is used to better the lives not only of a few, but of all

For the peace process to succeed demands from all who are committed to democracy, the greatest possible unity. I want to say to organisations which have not traditionally formed part of the ANC-SACP-COSATU alliance or even the mass democratic movement that this is not the time to emphasise our differences. It is our job to build on the highest level of unity we can develop to take ourselves forward not to narrow sectarian goals but the broad democratic system that is in all of our interests.

To those who are not part of this process either through withdrawing or failing to join, we make a special appeal. Let us turn Codesa into a truly patriotic contribution, the remaking of our beloved country into one to which we will all feel an abiding loyalty. Let this be the work of all of us, no matter what our differences may be. Let us put aside these differences and concentrate on what unites us and ensure that that unity results in a product that is truly enduring.

At the same time this is a period where all of us must exercise the maximum degree of responsibility. It is not helpful for any of us to raise the spectre of civil war. Anyone with knowledge of what has happened in Angola and Mozambique must know that words like 'civil war' should not be lightly bandied about. Let us rather redouble our efforts to bury any possibility of such a fate enveloping us.

Let me conclude by expressing the wish of the SACP that this Convention should succeed in laying the basis for peace in our country, a process that will unlock the talents of all South Africans in building a new nation, which will secure the health, happiness and wellbeing of all our people.