

EMBARGO: IMMEDIATE

SPEECH BY THE STATE PRESIDENT, MR F W DE KLERK, AT
CODESA ON 16 MAY 1992

Honourable Judges, Chairmen, eminent visitors from overseas missions, Your excellencies, Ambassadors to South Africa, leaders of delegations and members of delegations, ladies and gentlemen.

Before turning to the issues at stake, I would just like to make a short announcement of great interest to all delegations here in the presence of our foreign visitors. I am pleased to announce that in response to the Minister of Foreign Affairs' request to the Commission of the European Community for drought aid, that the senior Vice President of the Commission informed us yesterday that outside of and in addition to assistance to the Southern African region, the Commission is prepared to consider providing emergency relief to some of the worst affected population groups and areas in South Africa.

The Government, ladies and gentlemen, will follow this up as a matter of urgency to make the necessary arrangements if details can be arranged and we thank the mission of the European community and ask them to convey South Africa's appreciation for this gesture.

Mr Chairmen, I have been tempted to react in detail to some of the statements made yesterday, but have decided to resist the temptation. However I want to make one clear statement in reply to the accusations and innuendo's that the Government promotes continued minority domination or privilege. I cannot allow that to stand. It is simply not true. When we say that the book on apartheid has been closed, we mean it. When we say, Mr Chairmen, that we, all of us, must now build the South African nation, we are in earnest about it. When we say that in our attempt to build the new constitution, we must assure that there is no discrimination built into that new constitutional system and that also in other spheres South Africa will be freed of discrimination, we mean it. We are totally committed to it.

[Translated version follows]

En daarom meneer, wanneer ons in hierdie onderhandelingsituasie praat oor die probleem van verskeidenheid, dan praat ons nie in 'n rassiesin daarvan nie, dan praat ons van die werklikheid van Suid-Afrika. Dan praat ons soos wat soveel ander afvaardigings gepraat het, van die bekommernis in die harte van bepaalde taalgroepe, kultuurgroepe, belangegroepe, gebiede, dat hulle wil verseker wees dat

hulle ruimte om te lewe, veilig en beskerm sal wees. Dat een vorm van onderdrukking nooit deur 'n ander vorm van onderdrukking vervang sal word nie. Dan praat ons soos ons praat, as gevolg van die ingewikkeldheid van ons probleme. In talle ander lande wat nie eers so 'n komplekse samelewing soos ons s'n het nie, was dit nodig gevind om ook met wigte en teëwigte op allerlei maniere seker te maak dat ook die belange van kleiner belangegroep in daardie lande effektief beskerm word teen die misbruik van mag. Ons wil op geen wyse 'n voortsetting van diskriminasie hê nie en ons wil op geen wyse spesiale voorkeure en spesiale voorregte vir enige minderheidsgroep, nie die Blankes of enige ander minderheidsgroep, inbou in die nuwe grondwet of in die nuwe Suid-Afrika nie.

Translated version

[Therefor Sir, when in this negotiation situation we speak of the problem of diversity, we do not speak thereof in a racial sense, we speak of the reality of South Africa. Then we speak, as so many other delegates have spoken, of the concern in the hearts of specific language groups, cultural groups, interest groups, regions, who wish to be assured that the space in which they live will be safe and protected. That one form of repression will never be replaced by another form of repression. We speak then as we do because of the complexity of our problems. In many other countries that do not even have as complex a society as our own it was deemed necessary to ensure, by various means, also through checks-and-balances, that the interests of smaller interest groups in those countries were effectively protected against the abuse of power.]

The Government, the National Party and the many other delegations, Mr Chairmen, who insist upon proper checks and balances do so, not to subject any majority to minority whims. They do so in the spirit in which the American Founding Fathers have instituted their checks and balances. That spirit was the spirit that no majority should ever be able to misuse its power to undermine the constitution or to dominate or to damage the interests of minorities, however they may be defined. We in Government are not defining the concept of minorities in any way in terms of race or colour or any other discriminatory norms.

Mr Chairmen, we are speaking about the way forward. From the reports of the various working groups and also from the progress which has been made in Working Group 2, unwritten as yet, emanates fairly clearly and laudable guidelines for the future, for the way forward. Guidelines pointing all of us towards peaceful and attainable goals. Time does not allow me to go into detail. Important in the consensus which we have reached in

many working groups, in the consensus which have been growing amongst all of us, are the following:

That we are jointly committed to continue with the leveling of the playing field. We must ensure a level playing field. We are jointly committed to the creation of an atmosphere and the situation on the ground which will make free and fair elections truly possible. We share with each other the conviction that the continuing violence must come to an end and we recommit ourselves, also within the framework of the Peace Accord, to attain that and to do that. We jointly believe that we need to move forward in phases, and we have agreed upon frameworks in that regard. The frameworks are becoming clear, are crystalizing and are materializing. And from all that we have already attained, certain common practical goals are materializing. Thus it is materializing that there is a need for specific legislation on a basis of urgency, and certain legislative necessities have already been identified. A common practical goal which has materialized is that we must have a transitional executive council with sub-councils doing the important preparatory work in many fields so that we can really move forward. A common practical goal which is materializing, is that we need a Codesa-inspired and negotiated transitional or interim constitution and from that will result a democratically elected transitional multi-party Government which will govern in the spirit of national unity. From that will emerge and will flow also a transitional parliament, fully representative of all South Africans, in which they all participate. From that, in turn, must flow a final constitution agreed upon in the transitional parliament in a manner yet to be finally negotiated between us here in Codesa; a final constitution which must serve this country and its people for centuries to come. A good constitution, a proud constitution. A constitution in step with the best the rest of the world can offer.

We have made remarkable progress, Mr Chairman, notwithstanding the one important setback which I do not want to underestimate. All of us, I believe, face the choice: do we go forward along these guidelines, striving for these goals in a spirit of reconciliation, or do we elevate the disappointment of delay in Working Group 2 to a cause for tension, infighting and even conflict? The Government has no hesitation in saying, let us move forward and build on the foundations of Codesa I and II with a sense of urgency. Let us identify that which is still outstanding and then use Codesa to reach agreement on such issues. There is no reasonable alternative for that. Let us review our procedures and methods, if necessary, in order to improve our productivity and our effectiveness. In the same breath, one must emphasize - however much we may be in a hurry - what we do we must do well. A transitional or interim constitution cannot be a slapdash, rickety affair. In itself it must already make all South Africans proud. We must strike a balance

between speed and thoroughness, between the needs for time frames and the avoidance of mistakes which will later cost us dearly. Outside this venue there are millions of South Africans wanting us, demanding from us to succeed. They want peace, they want development, jobs and food. They want the fighting to stop and the building of a better life for all South Africans to begin in earnest. They want poverty to be alleviated. They want us to succeed.

Our hearts go out to all our peoples. It is not for ourselves that we are working in Codesa, it is for our people, for our youth, for our country that we must work and that we must succeed. We dare not fall back into strife and confrontation, therefore we say let, us move forward in faith and in hope, let us continue to reach out to all our people and to each other to bring our people together in peace and in harmony. And through reconciliation, to forge here in Codesa, also in the weeks to follow and the months to follow, to forge a spirit of co-operation, a spirit and a unity of purpose which will lead this country out of the mistakes of the past into a prosperous and a stable future.

Translation follows.

Ons benader ons taak, nie in 'n hoogheilige sin nie, maar in diepe nederigheid in die gees dat ons geroepe is tot geregtigheid en dat alleen op die fondament van geregtigheid, van billikheid teenoor elke Suid-Afrikaner, alleen op daardie fondament, 'n veilige en 'n voorspoedige toekoms vir hierdie land en al sy mense gebou kan word. Ek verklaar met oortuiging hier vandag: ons is gereed om vorentoe te beweeg. Die tyd vir magsdeling het gekom. Die tyd het gekom dat daardie nuwe grondwet gestalte kry en dat alle Suid-Afrikaners deel word daarvan en dat die Suid-Afrikaanse nasie as 'n nasie sy trotse plek inneem in die internasionale arena van state. In daardie gees sal ons positief en konstruktief bly saamwerk, bly hard werk, bly gee alles waaroor ons beskik ten einde te verseker dat ons so gou as moontlik - want ons aanvaar spoed is belangrik "and time is of the essence" - by finale oplossings en antwoorde uitkom wat blywende vrede in ons land kan verseker.

Ek dank u.

Translated version

[We approach our task, not in a sense of being "holier-than-thou", but in deep humility in the spirit of justice, and believe that it is only upon the foundation of justice and fairness towards every South African, that a safe and prosperous future for this country and all its people can be built. I declare with conviction here today: we are ready to move forward. The time for power-sharing has come. The time has come for the new constitution to form and for all South Africans to become part thereof and for the South African nation to take its place as a

nation with pride in the international arena of states. In this spirit we will continue to work together positively and constructively; continue to work hard, continue to give everything at our disposal in order to ensure, as soon as possible, that we reach final solutions and answers which will ensure lasting peace in our country, because we accept that speed is important, that time is of the essence.]

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