

STATEMENT ON PRAYERS AT CODESA MEETINGS

The GAC notes with regret a decision taken by Codesa not to begin it's meetings with prayers.

South Africa's Population comprises of people of many different faiths and also people who do not believe. In laying the foundation for a new society, the guiding principles have to include religious tolerance.

The opening of Codesa 1 by prayers led by the different religious sectors marked the beginning of a culture of tolerance and cross-cultural respect.

If such tolerance is now withdrawn, it would signify very clearly that we are not serious about achieving a new spirit in this country.

It is important that we recognise the value of prayer and of seeking divine guidance in our deliberations, and emphasize the need for the reinstatement of inter-faith prayers at Codesa meetings and in particular at Codesa 2.

While we also recognise that silence can be a form of prayer, it does not actually entrench a spirit of tolerance and acceptance that South Africa does have many different religions and beliefs. We think therefore that it is essential that we have the mainline religions recognized and given the opportunity to open Codesa 2.

We in the Gender Advisory Group therefore strongly urge that the tradition of opening our meetings with an inter-faith prayer be reinstated.