



PRESS RELEASE

**Opening Remarks of Justice Ismail Mahomed
to the Convention for a Democratic South Africa
held in Johannesburg on 20th December 1991**

On behalf of my esteemed colleague Mr Justice Schabort, and myself I wish to thank all of you present in this hall who have honoured our country and expressed their love and concern for its people, by accepting our formal invitations to join in the commencement of an exciting journey into the future.

Our gratitude is also due to his Lordship the Chief Justice who has graced this occasion with the dignity of his office, the sensitivity of his character and the wisdom of his intellect.

And there is a special debt to the religious leaders of different faiths and denominations who have sought with such richness to infuse a spiritual dimension into an occasion of momentous political and secular significance.

It is truly a momentous occasion as our society attempts for the first time in its troubled history squarely to face the real truth of our existence in Africa.

The cosmic forces have intriguingly conspired to bless our beloved country with potentially dazzling material riches, with wondrous opportunities for human creativity and brotherly love, and with truly exciting possibilities in the evolution of the spiritual condition of those destined to live and to share in this country.

But what was a potentially glorious historic romance, has been distorted into a major modern tragedy by the malignancy, the obscenity and the cruelty of apartheid and institutionalised racism which has separated and demeaned us and isolated us from the mainstream of the civilized world.

But the moment of truth has finally arrived for all of us. We can no longer avoid or delay our tryst with our destiny.

We should seek to meet it with courage, with eagerness and with joy, by proclaiming, before the sun sets on this auspicious day, our irreversible commitment to a non-racial, democratic and caring New South Africa, which can hold its head high among the free and civilized nations of the world.

A clear commitment to structure our society with all deliberate speed on the constitutional foundation of this basic truth shall begin to set us finally free from the shackles of fear, of anxiety, of greed, of insecurity, of poverty and of anger which have perpetuated our needless tragedy for so long.