

**STATEMENT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS  
COMRADE OLIVER R TAMBO  
TO THE ANC NATIONAL CONFERENCE  
DURBAN - 2 JULY 1991**

The Chairperson  
Comrade Nelson Mandela, Deputy President of the ANC  
Members of the National Executive Committee  
Regional Leaders  
Commanders of Umkhonto we Sizwe  
Esteemed representatives of governments and political parties  
Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps  
Distinguished Guests  
Fellow Delegates  
Comrades and Friends

We welcome you all with boundless joy, especially you delegates, who represent the hopes and aspirations of millions of our people across the length of our strife-torn country. We welcome you conscious of the fact that you have come here propelled by our burning desire to make this conference the last one we shall have to hold under minority rule.

We salute our allies in the South African Communist Party and the Congress of South African Trade Unions. We salute the ANC Youth League - the future of our country. We salute the ANC Women's League for steadfastly championing our cause and particularly the largely unresolved issue of women's emancipation. We salute commanders and combatants of our glorious army Umkhonto we Sizwe for the sterling contribution they have made to the struggle.

This conference is not only unique because it takes place in South Africa after a period of three decades, but also because of its representativeness. Given the cloud of uncertainty hanging over this country and the climate of confrontation fostered by enemies of peace and democracy; and given our people's and the world's impatience with oppression, decisions emanating from this Conference must infuse South Africa and our entire region with consequences of historical magnitude. For congregated within these four walls is the voice of reason, the voice of freedom, the voice of peace - in fact the voice of humanity.

Comrades and friends,

It is my task to present a report back to our Movement, our people and the country, on the mission we were assigned to do outside the country more than three decades ago. I present this report on behalf of my colleagues in the National Executive Committee (NEC), my peers and fellow combatants in the external mission - both the living and the departed. In this context, we pay special tribute to the heroes and heroines of our struggle. The names of Robert Resha, JB Marks, Moses Kotane, Florence Mophosho, Lilian Ngoyi, Moses Mabhida, Johnny Makhathini, Duma Nokwe, Yusuf Dadoo Vuyisile Mini and countless others will forever remain on the roll of honour of our struggle. We shall always remember them for their outstanding contribution.

Because the history of the past thirty years is as vast as the road we have traversed, one can only but mention landmarks in this report. In 1959 the ANC took a decision that Comrade Josia Matlou and I were to leave the country. Our mission was to rally international support for the isolation of the apartheid state. We also had to create a reliable rear base for our struggle. Comrade Matlou left before me. I left the country in 1960, a week after the Sharpeville massacre and just before the



ANC and the PAC were banned. Sharpeville, of course, marked a major watershed in our history and ushered in a whole new era.

Permit me to strike a personal note. I crossed the border illegally into the then Bechuanaland with the help of Ronald Segal. I was aided too by the late Sir Seretse Khama and spent some time in protective custody because of kidnap threats by South African agents.

Together with Dr Yusuf Dadoo and Segal we proceeded to Tanganyika. It was there that we met Mwalimu Nyerere who was heading the struggle for his country's independence. We were amongst the first freedom fighters to be received by this great son of Africa. Those were hopeful and exciting days. They were also particularly frugal ones when we often did not know where the next meal was coming from.

From Tanganyika we went to Ghana where we met Kwame Nkrumah. It was there that the idea of a United Front was discussed between the ANC, the PAC, the SACP and an organisation which was later to be known as Swapo of Namibia. Our discussions on this issue were finalised in London and the South African United Front was formed. Thus began our international crusade to win friends and isolate the racists.

Comrades and friends,

It must be remembered that the fundamental question that we then had to resolve was how to transform our Movement to meet the new situation in South Africa. The choice confronting us by a vicious and violent regime was "to submit or fight". Rather than surrender we chose the path of armed struggle. Our role outside was to prepare conditions for the politico-military training of cadres of Umkhonto we Sizwe. Here at home the leadership was recruiting cadres to go for training as well as building the underground.

In this regard our mission abroad worked hard to ensure that the world was mobilised in support of our struggle. We appealed for the isolation of the regime and urged the international community to support our armed struggle. From the very beginning we made steady gains in this regard. The socialist countries, notably the Soviet Union and the newly independent countries of Africa, Latin America and Asia threw their full weight behind our struggle. Most of these were willing to support the armed struggle.

In the West we succeeded in encouraging the formation of a powerful anti-apartheid movement and the formations which helped to isolate the Pretoria regime. We are honoured by the presence of the President of the British Anti-Apartheid Movement, none other than that great friend of the South African people, Archbishop Trevor Huddleston. I am sure you will all agree with me that he is a most fitting representative of the international anti-apartheid forces. Welcome home Father. Welcome home Isitwalandwe Huddleston.

Comrades our position in international organisations, like the Non-Aligned Movement, the Afro-Asian Solidarity Organisation and so forth became unassailable. By 1974 the General Assembly of the United Nations was able to refuse the credentials of the South African representative despite strong resistance from some Western countries. It is a measure of our success that by 1989, the ANC had more representatives abroad than the South African government.

Comrades and Friends

While we registered early victories on the international front here at home we suffered a devastating



setback at the hands of a regime armed with draconian laws of repression. The Rivonia arrests and the smashing of the underground structures set us back many years. Although colonialism was collapsing in Africa our sub-region was still in the grip of reaction. The imperialist powers collaborated with Pretoria, Portugal and Rhodesia against the liberation movements. The cordon sanitaire they erected made it difficult for our Umkhonto combatants to return home. Following our discussion with ZAPU, we decided to send a detachment into Rhodesia, with instructions that they were to fight their way back home.

It was in 1967 that a combined force of Umkhonto we Sizwe and ZIPRA crossed the Zambezi into Rhodesia. This marked the beginning of what was known as the Wankie-Sipolilo campaigns. As well as being an attempt to return home this was a practical manifestation of our solidarity with our sister people in the Frontline States. In this regard, our combatants together with their Zimbabwean comrades acquitted themselves heroically in battles against the combined Smith and Vorster forces. They carried out their mission gallantly and valiantly. We salute Basil February, Patrick Molawa, Andries Motsepe and other comrades who lie buried in the soil of liberated Zimbabwe. However, at the conclusion of the Wankie-Sipolilo campaigns, our problem of re-establishing the ANC inside remained essentially unresolved.

By 1969 it was considered necessary to hold a National Consultative Conference in Morogoro, Tanzania. Conference was to take stock of the totality of our experience and, on the basis of that, map out the way forward. Morogoro became a landmark and a turning point in our struggle. It was that conference which produced a comprehensive document on the strategy and tactics of the ANC.

Reporting to our Second National Consultative Conference in 1985, the National Executive made the following observation about Morogoro: "Out of Morogoro came significant results, the most important being the re-orientation of our Movement towards the prosecution and intensification of our struggle inside South Africa, the restoration and reinforcement of unity within our ranks and the integration of all revolutionaries within the external mission of the ANC." The decision to open up the membership of the ANC to all South Africans, regardless of the colour of their skin, was a giant leap forward towards the true non-racialism within the ANC.

From Morogoro we created the Revolutionary Council (RC) which was charged with the responsibility of prosecuting the struggle inside the country. We later replaced the RC with the Political Military Council (PMC). The PMC was answerable to the NEC and, under its leadership, forward machineries were established. As a result, the post 1976 era witnessed a rapid re-emergence of the ANC within the country. Some of the many factors which contributed to this development were the collapse of Portuguese colonialism and the June uprisings of 1976. Following this, thousands of young people who went into exile at the time found political home in the ANC.

On the other hand, the independence of Angola and Mozambique created new possibilities for our struggle. Angola provided us with military bases. The MPLA under the leadership of the late President Agostino Neto allowed us training facilities regardless of their own serious problems. In spite of years of destabilisation by the regime Angola stood firm and with the assistance of Cuban and Soviet internationalism turned the tide against Pretoria. It was at Cuito Cuanavale that the SADF met their match. Victory there opened the way for Namibia's independence and Pretoria's historic retreat in our region.

The cohesion and steadfastness of the Frontline states proved decisive in enhancing our striking



capacity. If these countries had not acted together and created a United Front against apartheid South Africa, we would have been in serious trouble. In this regard, the independence of Zimbabwe in 1980 further consolidated the strength of the anti-colonial struggles in our region. Thus, the balance of forces irrevocably shifted in our favour.

However, in an attempt to roll the wheel of history back, these states were subjected to the most brutal form of destabilisation by South Africa. Together with our hosts, members of the ANC became victims of cross border raids. We remember our martyrs who fell in Matola, Maseru, Gaborone and other places. The remains of Obadi Mokgabudi, Gene Gugushe, William Khanyile, Morris Seabalo and many others remain buried in the Frontline states and must be brought back home. Representatives of these states have joined us today, to once more reaffirm their unflinching support for our cause. We are grateful to them and to their people for all they have done for us. Never shall we forget the support they rendered and continue to render to us.

Whilst aiming to destabilise the Frontline states, the regime increased efforts to weaken the ANC through the infiltration of its agents. Comrades were poisoned in the camps, others kidnapped and many more killed. And in 1984 enemy agents managed to start a mutiny in our camps. We could not allow the enemy to destabilise us with impunity. We strengthened our department of intelligence and security and sought to contain the dangers posed by infiltration. We have now released all agents we held but must continue to uphold our vigilance.

Comrades and friends,

One of the greatest historical failures of our times has been the inability of successive white regimes to halt our struggle. Even at the most difficult times our people never surrendered. Whether it was under the banner of black consciousness in the late 1960's and the 1970's, or with the Durban strikes of 1973, our people never ceased to struggle. As a result, despite all the schemes aimed at destroying our Movement, we grew both in stature and effectiveness. Our survival and growth as a fighting force is the major victory that our people have scored under difficult conditions of illegality.

As well as fighting the regime, we consciously prepared our people to play a meaningful role in a liberated South Africa. In this regard, we founded the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College in Morogoro, Tanzania in 1979. When we approached the Tanzanian government with the idea of a school, they readily gave us land on which SOMAFSCO stands today.

The beginning of the 1990's witnessed the maturing of both the subjective and objective factors in favour of our people's victory. As we were poised for a great leap forward, we designated the 1980's the 'Decade of Freedom.' We proceeded to call upon our people to make South Africa ungovernable and apartheid unworkable. To this call our people responded in their thousands. Everywhere in the country, popular organs of people's power emerged, challenging the apartheid structures.

Our people's confidence in their ability to defeat the regime was restored by the daring armed actions of Umkhonto we Sizwe. The blows which were struck at SASOL, Voortrekkerhoogte, Koeberg and other installations inspired our people and demoralised the regime. In this regard, we pay special tribute to Barney Molokwane, Clifford Brown, Ronald Malapa and other glorious martyrs who made the supreme sacrifice in the service of their people and country. In the same period we successfully re-established the underground as a vital pillar of struggle.

It was this underground which through its propaganda and leadership stimulated the formation of



the mass democratic organisations. With the dynamic growth of the UDF and COSATU we reached the point where our four main pillars of struggle - mass struggle, armed struggle, the underground and international support - posed the most serious challenge to white minority rule ever seen in our country. As a result, the regime was forced to declare the state of emergency in 1985. As the crisis of the apartheid state deepened, so did the confidence in our victory grow.

Internationally there was an almost universal turning of the tide in favour of our struggle. Even the traditional allies of the regime found it impossible to continue supporting apartheid. It was in this context that, in 1987, an official ANC delegation was received in Washington, for the very first time. And at last, the United States administration fell in line with other governments who had long been supporting our cause. In this respect we would like to single out the powerful and consistent support provided over the years by Sweden and Norway.

Even as we made these impressive gains, it is fair to say that on some issues and in some instances we could have put up a better performance than we actually did. It was with the view of resolving some of our subjective weaknesses that we convened our second National Consultative Conference in Kabwe, Zambia, in 1985.

Conference took place against a climate of heightened confrontations between our people on one hand and the regime on the other. Like today, the regime and the South African press sought to create divisions amongst us by resorting to all sorts of schemes including attempts to draw a wedge between the youth and the older generation within the ANC. None of these schemes have succeeded. Amongst its many positive decisions, Conference resolved to open up the membership of the NEC to all South Africans. We, therefore, became second to the SACP, the first truly non-racial political movement in South Africa. We also resolved to strengthen democratic principles within the Movement and in particular, to urgently address the gender issue. Further, we resolved to rally to the defence of our people by intensifying the struggle inside the country. Of note was the way we stressed the important balance and relationship between the main pillars of our struggle. We stressed that in struggle, even where arms are employed, the masses are the key to change. Above all we emerged from Conference as a united and strengthened organisation, much to the dismay of our adversaries.

By the time of the Kabwe Conference we had succeeded to place the issue of the transference of political power firmly on the agenda. This reality was beginning to be recognised by far sighted sections of the white community who began to seek for discussions regarding the future of our country. More importantly, contacts between democratic forces inside and outside were intensifying. In the circumstances, the need to address conditions under which we would be prepared to negotiate a democratic transfer of power was placed on the agenda. Equally, we had to elaborate principles upon which the constitution of a democratic state would be founded.

In response to these, we issued an NEC statement in 1987 outlining conditions under which we would be prepared to enter into negotiations with the regime. At the same time we commissioned the ANC Constitutional Committee to begin elaborating constitutional principles on the basis of the Freedom Charter. It was our view that such principles would constitute a basis for a national debate on the new constitution. We, therefore, hoped to initiate a process whereby the new constitution would emerge from the people themselves. Through these and other initiatives, the ANC increasingly defined the terrain and tempo of our struggle. In this manner we provided overall leadership to the country.

Even as we provided leadership, we were always conscious of the fact that the ANC was the people's Parliament. The widespread circulation of Constitutional Guidelines was a further



assertion of the sovereignty of the people. The unity in action of our people has remained the guiding beacon throughout the days of illegality. To reach our goal of a united, democratic, non-racial and non-sexist South Africa, sooner rather than later, then we must not deviate from this course.

In this context, we considered it important that decisions of the ANC were to be shaped by popular mass endorsement at all times. Even if such decisions were acceptable within the Movement, they would have come to naught unless they enjoyed popular support beyond the bounds of the ANC itself. Whilst our policies were in terms of our beliefs and convictions, they also reflected and served the people's interests. Above all, we sought to make the people part and parcel of our decisions.

Operating within the logic of a people's struggle - armed and political, and supported by the international community, we managed to push the enemy into crisis which could not be resolved within the confines of the old order. For the first time possibilities to end apartheid and national oppression through negotiations were created. As a result of struggle the closed door that our late President, Chief A.J. Luthuli, knocked on for many decades was finally opened. It is our responsibility and destiny to seize this historic opportunity.

In this regard, it was vital that we did not surrender the initiative to our adversaries. We initiated a process of wide ranging discussions within the ANC, between the ANC and the Mass Democratic Movement and between the ANC and the OAU and, in particular, the Frontline states. These consultations resulted in the adoption of the Harare Declaration by the OAU in 1989, the endorsement of this declaration by the Non-Aligned Movement and the Commonwealth and the adoption of the UN Consensus Resolution on South Africa of 1989.

Once more, the world stood united behind democratic forces in this country. The unfolding democratisation process is, therefore, taking place on the basis of the agenda set by ourselves. Accordingly we must continue to assert the ANC's leadership of this process. This means that we have an ongoing responsibility to lead the process of negotiations. As in the past, our leadership should be exercised both here and abroad. This becomes even more important given the changing face of the international community. We must therefore refocus international attention on the need of continued support including support we shall need in order to reconstruct our country and the region in the post-apartheid era.

#### Comrades and Friends

I was struck down by a stroke on the eve of the adoption of the Harare Declaration. The Deputy President will continue with this report in a moment. However, I wish to pay a special tribute to all of you here, and many more around the world who wished me recovery from ill-health which at times gave cause for concern. In particular, I thank my security aides who were the first on the scene and who to this day have continued to provide me with tremendous support and help. I must also thank His Excellency President Kenneth Kaunda who did everything possible to save my life - including paying all expenses relating to my illness and sending his best doctor and nurse to accompany me to London. Many comrades who visited me in Sweden and London were of great help towards my recovery as were the prayers many of you offered. Finally, I want to thank my wife Adelaide and my family for giving me the love and the support I could not have survived without.

Before I sit down, I wish to make a few observations: We did not tear ourselves apart because of lack of progress at times. We were always ready to accept our mistakes and to correct them.



Above all we succeeded to foster and defend the unity of the ANC and the unity of our people in general. Even in bleak moments, we were never in doubt regarding the winning of freedom. We have never been in doubt that the people's cause shall triumph.

Finally I would like to thank all who have contributed to making my Presidency a worthwhile experience for me personally.

Amandla!

Maatla!