

CODESA PRESS STATEMENT: 24 FEBRUARY 1992

We dare not turn our back on history

We are gathered here at CODESA to find a way towards a new democratic South Africa. The door is open to all political groupings to join us in the knowledge that they are free to advance any view consistent with democracy in our effort to reach a just negotiated settlement.

It is only through the process of frank discussion and negotiation that a peaceful road can be found to build a future in which all our people can work together to create a life of peace, justice and security for all.

It is only through this process that we can begin to seek an answer to satisfy the just aspirations of our diverse peoples in their quest to assert and to protect their cultural, language and religious rights.

We declare that there is no unbridgeable gap between unity and diversity. All of us here are committed to seeking a route of individual freedom; a route without domination of one group over another within our common border.

There is no other way for South Africa to find its rightful place among the comity of nations in our interdependent world.

There is no other way to avoid a future of turmoil, unending strife and economic collapse for every inhabitant of our land.

All South Africans - black and white - stand at the crossroads. The negotiation process is not just an option; there is no alternative. The choice before us is either to participate in it or to move inexorably towards the nightmare of chaos and civil war.

We dare not turn our backs on history. We appeal to all in our land who value the future of themselves and their children to support the process of negotiation that has been started at CODESA.