

ADDRESS

by

HIS EXCELLENCY, KGOSI DR L M MANGOPE

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOPHUTHATSWANA

ON THE OCCASION OF THE FIRST MEETING OF
CODESA

on

20 and 21 DECEMBER 1991

INTRODUCTION

This is indeed a great and memorable occasion for all of us, who for years have struggled for basic freedom and human rights, democracy and restoration of dignity, to be present at this launching of a new era towards a free South Africa.

This moment is as great, ...but also as serious and awesome as the challenges and responsibilities facing us all. We are here to seek, ... not our own, ... nor individual organizational benefit, but to sincerely and truly seek the future wellbeing of, and peace for all our peoples.

Our purpose is not to seek posture for political gain outside these walls, but as true leaders, to lead, ... to heal rifts ... to close gaps, ... to break down barriers, ... to find common cause which will serve the best interests of Southern Africa. We want to set the example right here, in this meeting.

1. OUR HISTORY

We are not creatures of apartheid, ... nor are we part of apartheid structures. We abhor and have fought with all our being against this iniquitous system.

Why do I say this?

Because Mr Chairman, the history of the Batswana nation goes back to the eleventh century when we inhabited the greatest portion of the country north of the Orange river and south west of the Zambesi. We lived here as sovereign and free people until we suffered the dual fate of the northward expansions of colonial Britain and the westward encroachment by the Voortrekkers.

As a result of this intrusion and occupation of our traditional land, and our resistance to these actions, Lieutenant-Governor Keate of Natal was eventually approached for arbitration and ultimate judgement. The resulting Keate Award published on 17 October 1871 secured the rights

and the independence of Batswana chiefs in areas south of the Molopo,(today Bophuthatswana), and north of the Molopo, (today Botswana).

Despite these findings and this judgement by their own official, we continued to become the victim of British colonial expansionism. In 1885 our land was occupied and divided into the Bechuanaland Protectorate and the Crown Colony of British Bechuanaland. Because they valued their freedom highly and feared for the future of their land, the Batswana Chiefs and all the inhabitants obtained the solemn and categorical commitment from the British that they would never form part of either the South African Republic or the Cape Colony.

Sadly however, after the discovery of diamonds in Kimberley, ... the British, in violation of agreements and reneging on all their commitments, unjustly and unilaterally incorporated our country into the Cape Colony. Our struggle for freedom and justice began in all earnest.

This act was in direct contrast and contravention of the way in which the other three British protectorates, namely Lesotho, Swaziland and Botswana were treated and stands

till today, as probably the biggest injustice of all time against my country, ... and was never accepted by my people.

These events occurred 15 years before the unification of South Africa in 1910 and 53 years before the National Party came into power with their policy of separate development.

In 1977 we used the opportunity presented by the South African Government to re-gain our sovereignty and freedom so unjustly and cruelly taken from us by the British Colonial government. We rid ourselves from apartheid, ... scrapped all apartheid laws, ... and created a non-racial society.

We remoulded our people, who were scattered in groups and tribes over a wide area, and forged them again into a nation. We regained our dignity, our self-esteem, our sense of self-reliance and self-belief, acknowledging the wise and guiding hand of the Almighty God.

The fact that this process resembled an element of the apartheid policy of the South African Government, was a cruel outcome of fate and very ironical.

Ironical in the sense that we introduced and built on sound democratic principles and values that are acknowledged and demanded worldwide and is even today sweeping through Eastern Europe and Asia with worldwide acclaim.

Were it not for the immoral act of colonialism by the British in 1895, and the apartheid policy followed by a minority regime over which we had no say, Bophuthatswana would have been accepted and recognised, together with the other British Protectorates of that time, namely, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland.

Our cultural and historical heritage ... the reality of diversity in Southern Africa and the need to satisfy the aspirations of all concerned ..., cannot be ignored or wished away. It will have to be accommodated and provided for, whatever political dispensation decided on. Why then limit oneself to the position as it found expression in 1910 and ignore all previous historical and other developments and events?

(2) OUR PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

None of us need to look further than the world around us to see which policies and ideologies have been successful and which have failed. South Africa need not repeat any of the mistakes of others if the events and lessons of today's history are observed, ... if we note the principles and values of the successful nations, ... as well as those of countries who are in the process of collapse.

(3) OUR ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCES

Turning to achievements and performances, it is evident that the people in my country enjoy wealth and a quality of life, that is far advanced of standards achieved in many countries. If this is compared with the political chaos, economic decline, unrest and violence elsewhere in the world, we are doing much better than most at present. This was achieved within a period of fourteen years compared with developments over many, ... many decades elsewhere.

In fact, in development and growth we stand tall when compared to other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Over the past two years we registered the highest real economic growth rates in Sub-Saharan Africa. Our enrolment of primary and secondary scholars rate under the first ten in Sub-Saharan Africa and our 1990 matriculation results were second to none.

It is thus not fair nor prudent in terms of our history, our tested principles and values, and our economic performances, to be regarded as just another so-called self governing territory, TBVC state or product of apartheid. The circumstances in each country drastically differ from one another and these countries, especially my country, can therefore not be grouped and generalised for convenience purposes. This nation refuses to be ignored or belittled in any way whatsoever. For us to change our constitutional dispensation, the change will have to be for something better, or alternatively a future which at least is as good.

4. PARTICIPATION IN CODESA

In turning to Codesa, let there be no doubt that we are encouraged by the main developments to date.

It is a culmination to us of our persistent representations, argumentation and negotiations over many years with the South African government.

It is our sincere wish to participate and contribute constructively to the proceedings. It must be remembered however (whether it is formally recognised or not) that we are a sovereign and independent country, ... with our own parliament and legislative process, ... and our own electoral system that meet democratic principles.

The Government of Bophuthatswana is only capable of functioning within the parameters laid down by constitution and other laws. We are therefore not legally competent to enter into any commitment or agreement which may result in the abolition of Bophuthatswana as a sovereign independent State, or the possible merging of its identity with another or others . Authority to that end may only be conferred by, or in accordance with, the provisions of the law of the National Assembly, adopted for that purpose.

We are prepared to participate on the basis of sufficient consensus regarding general procedures and decisions, but an important aspect is not acceptable. Decisions taken that affect our very existence, we cannot allow. It is not constitutional, ... nor is it proper, ... that other participants in CODESA, should make the decision for us.

We, the people of Bophuthatswana, are the ones who must have the final say on our future.

I regret, Mr Chairman, that I cannot unreservedly commit myself to the Declaration of Intent as it is presently formulated and therefore cannot sign it.

5. A WIDER VISION ON CO-OPERATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

My vision for the future, is namely that all nations of Southern Africa commit themselves to grow into one powerful, prosperous, inter dependent and peaceful Economic Community.

The destinies of all population groups in Southern Africa are intertwined economically and in respect of many other fields.

I therefore sincerely hope that flowing from CODESA, a wider vision regarding economic co-operation and development for the whole Southern Africa, including the SADCC countries, be considered and actively pursued.

My country will wholeheartedly support any initiatives in this respect by CODESA.

CONCLUSION

Ek wil afsluit deur u die versekering te gee dat Bophuthatswana bereid is om sy bydrae te maak. Ons aanvaar terselfdertyd die verpligting om dit, wat vir ons lief en dierbaar is, te beskerm en uit te bou in 'n nuwe grondwet vir Suid-Afrika. Ons wil saam met u ons vertroue stel in ons Almagtige Vader wie die finale beskikker is van die lotgevalle van volkere en nasies.

MAG SY SEËN OP HIERDIE VERRIGTINGE RUS.