

NATAL / TRANSVAAL INDIAN CONGRESS

CODESA WORKING GROUP FOUR

(Future of the TBVC states)

6/2/1992

OPENING STATEMENT

1. The NIC/TIC firmly believe in the economic, political and geographical integrity of South Africa. We believe that South Africa is one country. We have always opposed divisions of South Africa. In fact the Natal Indian Congress was formed in 1894 to oppose the removal of Indians from the common voters roll in Natal. In 1946 we opposed the 1946 Land Tenure Act and the Indian representation Act which sought to give Indian south Africans limited rights over our oppressed compatriots. In 1981 we opposed the South African Indian Council which sought to co-opt Indian South Africans into the white laager. Consistently, we mobilised Indians to reject the House of Delegates within the Tri-cameral parliament.

Throughout these campaigns our political line was that South Africa is indivisible. It is one country. Its people - one nation with certain cultural and linguistic differences.

Today we can, once again, hopefully with one voice and with one agenda, talk and campaign for a united and unfragmented South Africa.

2. The future of the TBVC states is the concern of all South Africans. This important decision cannot be relegated for discussions and decision among the Government of the RSA and the TBVC states.

* More than seven (7) million citizens of the TBVC states are spread throughout our country. Many reside permanently within the so-called " White South Africa". If recent government announcements are to go ahead, they will be excluded from participating in the processes of proposed public consultation about a new constitution.

By the same token, the hundreds of thousands of people within the TBVC states who have chosen not accept their citizenship, or who have been refused it on the grounds of ethnic background will likewise not be able to exercise political rights in the areas where they live.

* We are further concerned that at this moment, as the question of the very existence of these states is in question, the South African Government is intending to promulgate legislation that will further disadvantage TBVC citizens residing within South Africa's border. Specifically, the clause of Social Assistance Bill that removes the right to a pension for South African residents and that makes this dependent on South African citizenship will have severe consequences for TBVC citizens in South Africa.

3. At a very practical level our discussion today should centre on political or principled positions - designed to obtain commitments from all parties. This will inform us as to both the need for sub-committee and research teams and their content.

4. We are mindful of the problems that re-incorporation will bring in its wake. We are also mindful of the immense reservoir of skills, government and administration that reside in the TBVC and other self governing states. There is a need to disperse these resources throughout South Africa where they are needed.

5. In conclusion we in CODESA must display the will to find a solution. We are reminded that in the unification talks between West and East Germany, a 1000 page agreement was produced in four weeks! We have the capacity to do likewise. What we need to do is develop the will to do so.