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SOUTHERN AFRICA

A NEW AGENDA

FOR INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

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Introduction

THE WORLD has witnessed the birth of freedom and democracy in South Africa with the successful holding of the country's first non-racial elections and the installation of President Nelson Mandela as the first democratic Head of State. Now is a time of profound hope in South Africa and throughout Southern African. This hope arises from the knowledge that a genuine end to apartheid will result in a real improvement in the quality of life for the black majority in South Africa and a new vision of the future for the Southern African region as a whole. The prospect now exists of a new era of reconstruction and development throughout Southern Africa.

Change has come in South Africa for many reasons, but above all it is due to the sacrifices and the struggles of the people of South Africa and the support they have received from the governments and peoples of the region.

However a supplementary but integral element of their struggle has been the contribution made by the international solidarity movement. Millions of people across the world have been outraged by the immorality of apartheid and have been inspired into action by the courage of those resisting it. Through their efforts they helped to generate the pressures which brought the apartheid system to a dead end. By the end of the 1980s, the regime had been compelled to accept that there had to be change. It had no real alternative other than to release imprisoned African leaders such as Nelson Mandela, unban democratic organisations, and to seek a negotiated political settlement.

Over the past three decades and more, a remarkable world-wide movement of solidarity came into being; uniting governments, parliamentarians, artists, trade unionists, religious leaders, but above all, people from all walks of life who were determined to play their part in ridding the world of apartheid. It proved to be a movement of tremendous vitality, imagination and diversity, yet united in the common goal of achieving a genuine end to apartheid.

Now that this goal has been achieved, what is the future role of this world-wide solidarity movement? Indeed is there still a need for international solidarity? If so, what will be the new agenda for such a movement?

Already it is clear that the democratic transformation of South Africa opens up the potential of new challenges and new opportunities for international

solidarity. Such solidarity can play an important role in helping to promote and consolidate peace and democracy in South Africa and throughout Southern Africa. It can also make a direct contribution towards the struggle to overcome the legacies of apartheid and to build the new South Africa, as well as helping the governments and peoples of Southern Africa in their efforts to overcome the destructive consequences of apartheid policies throughout the region. The potential exists for international solidarity to make a vital contribution towards helping to create a new era of reconstruction and development throughout Southern Africa.

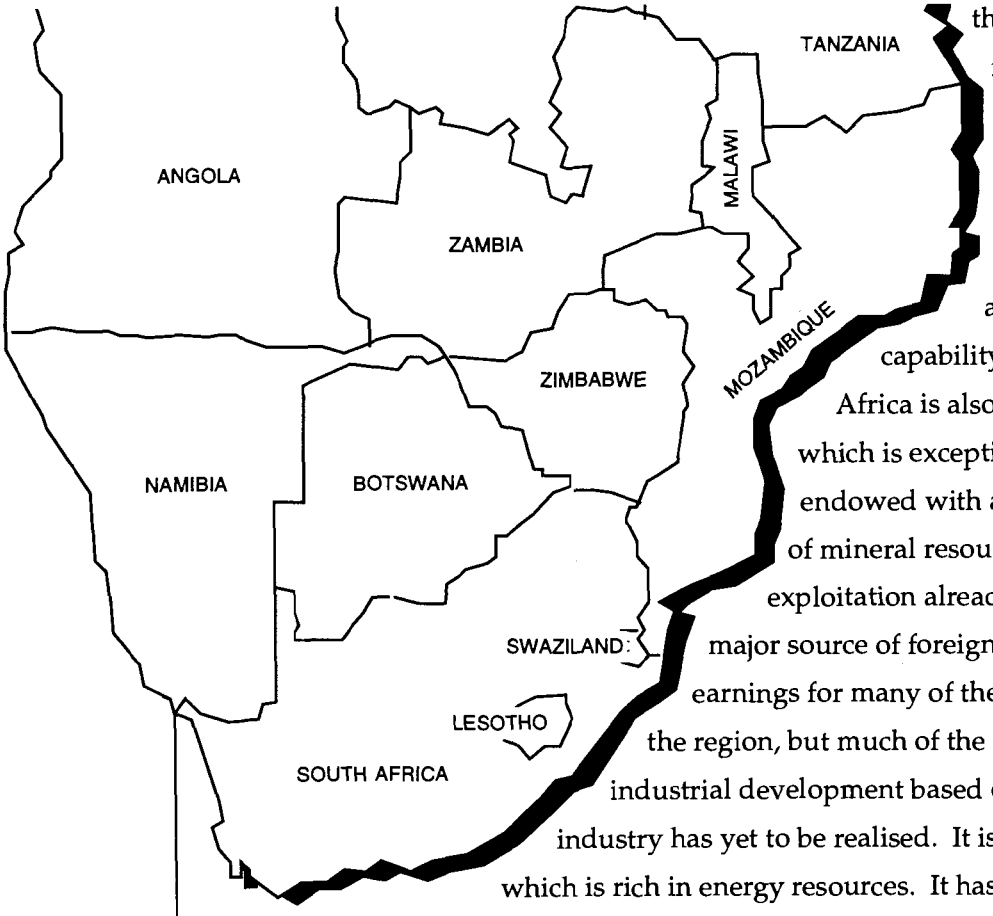
It is to meet these new challenges and expectations that we embarked upon the task of preparing a new agenda for international solidarity. Obviously the specific contents of new forms of solidarity action will be shaped by future developments – not least how the process of transition in South Africa evolves and in particular the future actions of those who have been resisting the democratic transformation of the apartheid state into a united and non-racial society.

With the birth of a democratic South Africa, we can no longer defer debate as to how best to transform the world-wide movement against apartheid into a new movement of international solidarity – and with a new agenda to help promote and consolidate peace, democracy and economic and social justice throughout Southern Africa, so that the peoples of the region can reconstruct their countries and pursue developmental, environmental, social and educational programmes which can enrich all their lives. This is the agenda which is needed to make hope into a reality.

A new hope for Southern Africa

THE SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION of South Africa from an apartheid state into a united, non-racial democracy opens up a new era for Southern Africa. It is a region of great diversity but yet with tremendous potential. Freed from the destructive effect of apartheid aggression and destabilisation, it should be capable of developing a capacity for substantial regional self-reliance as well as playing an important role on the world stage.

The various combinations of natural resources and climates means that it is a region which is capable of producing a rich diversity of agricultural products,



thus ensuring regional self-sufficiency in food production as well as sustaining a major export capability. Southern Africa is also a region which is exceptionally well endowed with a wide variety of mineral resources. Their exploitation already represents a major source of foreign exchange earnings for many of the countries of the region, but much of the potential for industrial development based on the mining industry has yet to be realised. It is also a region which is rich in energy resources. It has well-developed coal mining industries – and massive reserves; it produces oil; and has several major hydro-electric power schemes. Southern Africa also has a comparatively well developed infra-structure, especially in transport, albeit that it is highly distorted so that it largely benefits South African interests.

However its richest resource is its people. They have demonstrated tremendous qualities of courage and determination in their efforts to resist apartheid and white minority rule. In the former Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique, as well as in Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa itself, against seemingly impossible odds, they decided in the early 1960s to take up arms in order to secure their human dignity and fundamental rights. Tremendous sacrifices were made in order to break the unholy triple alliance of Portuguese fascism, the illegal Rhodesian regime and apartheid South Africa. Independence for Mozambique and Angola in 1975, for Zimbabwe in 1980 and for Namibia in 1990, should have ushered in new eras of peace and prosperity.

Yet, as a result of South African aggression and destabilisation this hope has still to be realised. It is to the remarkable credit of the political leadership of Southern Africa and the peoples of the region that despite this experience they

have been steadfast in their commitment to non-racialism and to the promotion of national reconciliation. It is these human qualities which represent by far the greatest hope for the future of Southern Africa.

The apartheid deficit

THE PRICE which the people of Southern Africa have had to pay as a result of the policies and practices of apartheid is impossible to calculate. Apartheid, in essence, sought to deny Black people their most fundamental human rights simply because of the colour of their skin. But it was also a political, economic and social order deliberately created to guarantee power, privilege and wealth to the white minority.

In order to try and preserve white supremacy, the apartheid regime sought to destroy any expression of genuine opposition. It resorted within its borders to systematic and brutal repression. Beyond its borders, it engaged in deliberate strategies of aggression and destabilisation in an attempt to break the Frontline States anti-apartheid positions. In addition, it constantly defied the United Nations over Namibia and for more than a decade blocked the implementation of the UN Independence Plan.

But the Pretoria regime also sought to maintain white supremacy through consciously fostering ethnic and other differences. Through its bantustan policy, in particular, it deliberately promoted tribal conflict in a classic example of 'divide and rule'.

The full catalogue of the destructive consequences of apartheid has yet to be compiled. At one level, it can be represented by the child living in one of the dumping grounds in a bantustan. For that child, life under apartheid meant no prospect of proper nutrition, little or no education and certainly no effective primary health care. But at another level apartheid meant the $100 billion of economic damage *(a conservative estimate)* inflicted on the states of the region as a result of South African aggression and destabilisation.

The efforts required to address the legacies of apartheid within South Africa and the destructive consequences throughout the region are therefore immense.

The democracy dividend

IN THE WORLD TODAY there is much talk of the 'peace dividend' resulting from the end of the cold war. For Southern Africa the prospect now exists of a 'democracy dividend'. The coming into existence of a new democratic South Africa could transform the region. Apartheid would no longer destroy the lives of millions of South Africans nor would it distort and corrupt the economic and social development of other countries in the region.

For South Africa, a new democratic order should lead to educational and social policies which mean that all its people will have the opportunity to reach their full potential – the very antithesis of apartheid policies. Democracy, potentially, could have other liberating consequences. Apartheid proved to be an extremely wasteful and destructive system of racial domination. Huge resources had to be expended on the bureaucratic machinery of apartheid and the vast expenditure on security which multiplied in the face of mounting popular resistance.

One of the first tasks of the new democratic government has been to embark on a programme of reconstruction and development. This is requiring the restructuring of governmental machinery, particularly the civil service and the security forces, so that they function in a manner which is consistent with the ideals of democracy and non-racialism, as well as liberating resources which can be devoted to helping overcome the legacies of apartheid.

The 'democracy dividend' should also bring benefits to the peoples of Southern Africa. The social and economic development of all the countries of the region has been seriously damaged as a consequence, directly or indirectly, of the policies of Pretoria. Through regional co-operation, with a democratic government in power in Pretoria, it will be possible for the countries of the region collectively to work out a comprehensive programme for balanced and equitable development for Southern Africa.

A joint commitment by all the Southern African states to strive for a new pattern of economic, social and defence policies can create conditions of common security within the region. This can produce an even greater 'dividend' for the upliftment of all the peoples of Southern Africa. It can provide the framework for resolving potential and actual conflicts in the region which can be so damaging to the very fabric of life. Whilst it is

necessary to expend resources for legitimate security and defence, it will be possible to make even more substantial savings in a new atmosphere of regional security and peace.

As well as the direct benefits which will flow from the ending of apartheid, therefore, the democratic transformation of South Africa will open the way to working out an entirely new structure of economic and social relationships between the countries of the region. The prospect will then exist to formulate plans for co-ordinated regional economic development on an equitable basis which will also provide for expanded markets and therefore greater potential for regional self-reliance. All this can help to bring to reality the new vision of Southern Africa which has been the hope, for so long, of all its peoples who strived with so much courage to win their political freedom.

The current reality

THE REALITY TODAY in Southern Africa is still very different. Although South Africa has a democratic government, the power structures – especially in the military and security spheres – remain largely unaltered. As events in the run-up to the elections illustrated, potentially destructive forces, both inside and outside the security services, exist, which could continue to pose a threat to the new democratic South Africa.

These realities are going to place very real constraints on the new government of national unity. It could face very serious challenges from those who fear democracy as it seeks to address the massive economic and social imbalances within South Africa and to effect a fundamental change in South Africa's relations with the other countries of Southern Africa.

These problems are going to be further compounded by the high expectations which exist amongst the vast majority of the population which has been impoverished by apartheid. They are looking for immediate action to address their basic needs, including housing, education, health and employment. In reality it will not be possible for all such needs to be addressed immediately. However, given the strength of civil society in South Africa, including the trade union movement, those impoverished and dispossessed will continue to struggle to ensure that these issues are tackled. This represents a potential cause for social tension and conflict at a time when national unity and

reconciliation will be vital for the consolidation of the democratic transformation of South Africa.

Indeed across the region, the prospect of a new Southern Africa appears more like a mirage than a vision. The destructive consequences resulting from Pretoria's policies will not disappear immediately nor automatically with democratic change in South Africa. In many cases the damage done is so great, with the fostering of tribal and ethnic tensions as well as support for surrogate organisations and open war, that it will take a long time to recover from these disastrous consequences.

This is above all evident in Angola, where Unita, for so long the surrogate of Pretoria, has brought death and destruction to the whole country following its defeat in the September 1992 multi-party elections. Likewise, the Mozambique people are still paying the price for Pretoria's arming and financing of Renamo. Major efforts are still required to consolidate peace, national reconciliation and democracy so that the Mozambique government and people can begin the immense task of reconstructing their country.

These problems are compounded by the poverty which entraps much of the region, which is so often also exacerbated by crushing debt burdens and a hostile trading environment. Moreover the structural adjustment programmes advocated by the IMF, the World Bank and other donor agencies for many of the countries in the region have failed to achieve a viable framework for sustained economic development. As the world moves towards ever more powerful trading blocs in the north, the possibility is that the economic situation will deteriorate further for Southern Africa.

An additional and major disturbing element is the increasing indifference within the affluent North to the hunger of the South, and especially of Africa. The recent frightening growth of racism and xenophobia across Europe can only further aggravate this situation.

Meanwhile the Southern African states have prepared for the future with their decision to transform the Southern Africa Development Co-ordination Conference into the Southern African Development Community and are looking forward to the admission of a democratic South Africa as an eleventh member of the Community. This represents a new framework through which the region as a whole can promote reconstruction and development in the new

era. Such a framework, by striving for sustainable and balanced development, will also help create conditions for common security and peace in the region.

Making hope a reality

IN THE NEW SITUATION a tremendous challenge faces both the people of South Africa and all the countries in Southern Africa. To make their hopes into a reality, a new agenda of international solidarity is needed to support the efforts of the peoples and governments of Southern Africa.

This task will only be possible if we can all generate the necessary moral commitment and political will – and, above all, the vision of a new Southern Africa which can inspire people into action.

There are a number of fundamental ideas which we need to convey to the public and the international community:

- The people of South Africa and the region have a unique opportunity to build a new future. The international community must not deny them this chance. The West deferred taking action against apartheid – and its aggression – until it was much too late. It must not repeat the same mistake by deferring assistance. It should be ready to provide support and solidarity now.

- Southern Africa has the potential to become a region of stability in a troubled world. It should be able to embark on a new chapter in its history free of external interference. The international community should be willing to respond positively to the needs of the region to help ensure that a new era of stability is achieved and thereby contribute to securing international peace and security.

- Southern Africa has the capacity of becoming an important economic actor on the world stage, with the prospect of expanding investment and trade relations to the mutual advantage of those concerned. Effective support and solidarity now will be a sound investment for the future.

- A genuine end to apartheid in South Africa will represent an important contribution to the efforts to combat the growth of racism

in Europe, the United States and elsewhere across the world. The international community needs to support the building of a non-racial South Africa and a new Southern Africa so that the region can become a source of inspiration and a beacon to all those challenging racism.

However the most important and basic questions that need to be addressed are:

- Is there a need for a new movement of international solidarity?
- If so, how should it be built?

  and
- What should be its agenda?

We need to give careful consideration to all these three questions. The answer to the first must be **YES**. Mobilisation by the world-wide anti-apartheid movement over more than three decades inspired millions of people into action against apartheid. As a result a very strong base of support has been built, especially in those countries which traditionally collaborated with apartheid. A deep sense of affinity has developed amongst activists and supporters for the hopes and aspirations of the people of Southern Africa and this needs to be mobilised in the new era.

In principle, it must be possible to inspire activists and supporters to renew their anti-apartheid commitment so that it finds expression in activities which can help address the legacies of apartheid. However such a process is not automatic. Indeed, the experience of the transitional period in South Africa illustrates how it can be difficult to sustain effective solidarity when conflicting signals emerge from South Africa. Ultimately, therefore, a key factor in determining whether a new solidarity movement will thrive and flourish will be the extent to which public opinion internationally can be motivated and inspired by the efforts of the governments and peoples of Southern Africa to build a new future and the extent to which new bonds of friendship and solidarity can be sustained.

Two crucial factors which will influence this are:

- The extent to which people are convinced that international solidarity is needed;
- Whether they believe their actions will produce tangible results.

Addressing the question as to how to build a new movement of solidarity is

more complex. Much of the strength of the world-wide anti-apartheid movement arose out of international moral outrage and the need to end external collaboration with apartheid South Africa. Through concrete forms of action, ordinary people were able to express their anti-apartheid sentiments. This is why, in part, the movement was particularly strong in the very countries which collaborated most with apartheid.

The efforts of the peoples of the region to build a new Southern Africa must now inspire the international community as did their struggles against racial tyranny. It will be necessary to convince those who have steadfastly campaigned against apartheid that their efforts will only reach fruition if we are all able to generate new forms of solidarity, so that the evils of apartheid can be totally destroyed. It should also be possible to reach out to new social forces and attract new kinds of activists; people whose motivation will be to help address the legacies of apartheid and its destructive consequences throughout Southern Africa.

The best guarantee that a powerful new movement of solidarity will develop in support of the vision of a new Southern Africa will be if it is able to develop a clear framework for action. Through an extensive process of consultation and debate it has been possible to identify eight key points for a new agenda of international solidarity:

1 Helping to promote and consolidate peace and democracy in South Africa and throughout Southern Africa

The birth of the new democratic South Africa is only the beginning of a process of transforming South Africa into a genuinely non-racial and democratic society. Specifically agreement will need to be reached on a democratic constitution to replace the existing transitional constitution.

The potential for resistance to change remains immense. Maximum vigilance will be required by the international community – with appropriate responses when required – to help the new South Africa through the complex process of transition now underway.

The birth of the new South Africa can also give impetus to the quest for peace and democracy throughout Southern Africa. There is an

urgent need for effective international solidarity with Angola and Mozambique to ensure that peace and democracy triumph.

2 **Ensuring that Southern Africa remains a major priority for the international community**

Sustained public interest will be necessary in order to ensure that governments and inter-governmental organisations continue to recognise the importance of the region, and for this interest to be reflected in their aid and developmental policies and priorities. The region must not be neglected.

3 **Mobilising support for the governments and the peoples of Southern Africa in their efforts to promote a new era of reconstruction and development throughout the region, including pressing for major programmes of international development assistance**

The new South African government is committed to a major programme of reconstruction and development and this will require the maximum possible international support. Likewise the newly formed Southern Africa Development Community will need effective international support as it embarks on programmes to promote regional reconstruction and development.

4 **Encouraging sustainable and balanced development within a framework of common security and peace in the region**

International solidarity can play an important role in influencing international policy towards Southern Africa so that the international community makes a positive contribution towards assisting the Southern African countries to develop a framework for common security in the region.

5 **Campaigning so that trade, investment and aid relationships are beneficial to the region as a whole and do not reinforce existing inequalities**

As sanctions against South Africa are lifted and new patterns of trade and investment develop, there is the danger that they could simply

serve to reinforce existing structural inequalities both within South Africa as well as across the region. Thus it will be necessary to devise ways and means by which effective pressure can be brought to bear so that new economic relations are beneficial to all the peoples of the region as a whole.

6 **Developing a capacity to help shape and monitor the policies of governments, the European Union and institutions such as the IMF, the World Bank and multi-national corporations, so that they are supportive of the vision of a new Southern Africa**

The future prospects for the new South Africa and the potential for a new era of reconstruction and development throughout Southern Africa will be significantly affected by the international economic environment in which they will need to perform if they are to market their products and attract appropriate development assistance, loans and investment.

A key issue will be the extent to which the IMF, the World Bank and other potential donors seek to dictate economic reconstruction plans which are at variance with the perspectives of the new South Africa and the other Southern African states. International solidarity could prove to be a positive factor in helping to shape international policy to create an environment in which the people of Southern Africa can realise their hopes and aspirations based on their own needs.

7 **Ensuring that the public are educated and informed about developments in Southern Africa**

Effective campaigns of information and education aimed at public opinion will be needed in order for public interest in Southern Africa to be sustained. Such campaigns will also need to focus on the media, with the aim of encouraging positive and comprehensive reporting of developments in the region.

8 **Exploring the means by which new bonds of friendship and solidarity can develop to help empower the people of Southern Africa through the encouragement and promotion of 'people to people' solidarity**

During the course of the anti-apartheid struggle, strong links were built between different constituencies within South Africa and their international partners. The strongest of these links are those involving the trade unions, churches, and between local authorities and the nascent structures of non-racial local government. There are also similar but fewer linkages involving the other Southern African countries.

A tremendous potential exists to strengthen existing forms of 'people to people' solidarity as well as to find new expressions of such solidarity involving other sectors of the community and for it to develop to encompass the Southern African region as a whole.

Such 'people to people' solidarity should not be perceived as simply a North-South relationship. There is potential support from countries in the South where the public as well as governments will wish to participate in the reconstruction and development of Southern Africa and this will form an integral component of the new international solidarity movement, as well as contributing to wider South to South co-operation.

In all probability it will be 'people to people' solidarity which will prove to be the main popular expression of a new agenda of international solidarity. Such solidarity could then provide the backbone for a movement which is capable of exerting real influence at a national and international level on the full range of issues addressed by this new agenda of international solidarity.

Conclusion

THIS IS A TIME FOR HOPE for Southern Africa. The potential exists, as South Africa builds a new united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society, for a new era of reconstruction and development throughout Southern Africa. International solidarity can make an important contribution in helping to make this hope a reality.

The potential exists for the world-wide anti-apartheid movement to become transformed into a new movement of solidarity – in all likelihood taking new

organisational forms depending upon national circumstances – which would then have the task of transforming the need for solidarity into a reality.

The process of drawing up a new agenda for international solidarity, therefore, becomes an urgent priority as the process of transition advances inside South Africa. This Strategy Document is intended to encourage debate and discussion within Southern Africa and amongst all those who identify with the people of Southern Africa in their efforts to build a new future. Our common action can make a difference.

Footnote

This Strategy Document was originally presented as a draft entitled 'Towards a New Agenda for International Solidarity' to the International Conference: Southern Africa – Making Hope a Reality, which was jointly convened by Mwalimu Julius Nyerere and Archbishop Trevor Huddleston at Church House, London on 14/15 June 1993.

It has been revised and updated to take into account the presentations and discussions at the International Conference, comments which were made on the original draft and subsequent developments in Southern Africa over the past twelve months.

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