



ANC DISCUSSION PAPER ON THE ISSUE OF NEGOTIATIONS

June 16th, 1989

1. Once more the question of a negotiated settlement of the South African question is being raised with growing insistence. It is therefore necessary that the ANC and the democratic movement as a whole should discuss this issue in order to arrive at a common view.
2. Various factors in world politics have brought this matter to the fore. Internationally, there is a tendency towards detente and relaxation of tensions. This process is accompanied by serious efforts to resolve outstanding problems through negotiations.
3. In addition to the issues of nuclear disarmament and the reduction of conventional forces that are subjects of negotiation by the Nato and Warsaw Pact countries, efforts are also being made to address the matter of regional conflicts. This process has, in varying degrees, affected such areas as Central America, Western Sahara, the Middle East, Afghanistan, Cambodia, Sudan, Ethiopia and South Western Africa.
4. The Pretoria regime has participated in the negotiations concerning South Western Africa and is party to the execution of the agreements arrived at, which involve the withdrawal of the South African army of occupation and the Cuban internationalist forces from the People's Republic of Angola as well as the implementation of the UN Plan for the independence of Namibia. The fact of these agreements is wrongly viewed by many sectors in world politics as proof that the South African regime is committed to the resolution of conflict by negotiation.
5. These sectors also view the change of leadership in the National Party, with FW de Klerk replacing PW Botha, as signalling the possibility of a change of policy as a result of which the Pretoria regime would enter into negotiations to end the apartheid system. Furthermore, to encourage this view, leading spokespersons of this regime have been making various statements suggesting that they are ready to enter into negotiations to end the system of white domination.
6. There is also recognition of the fact that the apartheid system is immersed in a deepening political and economic crisis from which it cannot extricate itself. The assumption is therefore made that these objective conditions themselves oblige the Pretoria regime to seek a way out through negotiations with the genuine representatives of the people of South Africa.
7. It is in the light of this overall international, regional and national situation that various forces raise the matter of a negotiated resolution of the South African question as an issue that should be put

on the agenda now. The new US Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, Herman Cohen, has stated publicly that during his tenure of office he will pay daily attention to this question. British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, is engaged in a series of discussions with apartheid cabinet ministers with the same objective in mind. Even the Chairman of the Frontline States, President Kaunda, has called for negotiations now, which could possibly include a reconstituted Eminent Persons' Group which would work with the Frontline States. The European Community countries have publicly rejected calls by the Frontline States to impose new sanctions against apartheid South Africa, arguing that FW de Klerk should be given a chance.

8. The reality we face, therefore, is that all manner of forces, both within our country and internationally, will be taking various initiatives on the issue of negotiations. These initiatives will, among other things, seek to set parameters for such negotiations, including such questions as the aim of the negotiations and who should sit around the negotiating table. For example, Mrs Thatcher has already said that the principle of one person one vote should be applied in such a manner as recognises the existence of 'groups'. She has gone on to say that the Pretoria regime would have to negotiate with the leaders of all groups. In this context, she has specifically mentioned such people as Gatsha Buthelezi. It is clear that the British government will seek to propagate these views throughout the world and seek their acceptance by the largest possible number of countries, to the exclusion of views that might emanate from the ANC and the democratic movement of our country.
9. It has, however, always been our view that the resolution of the South African question is, first and foremost, the responsibility of the people of South Africa, supported by the international community. In this regard it is therefore clear that it should be the people of South Africa who set the parameters for any process of negotiations affecting our country.
10. Already in October 1987, the National Executive Committee of the ANC put out a statement on the issue of negotiations. Among other things, that statement spelt out what the apartheid regime would have to do to create a climate conducive to negotiations, including the release of political prisoners, the unbanning of organisations, the withdrawal of troops from the townships and ending the state of emergency. It stated that the aim of negotiations should be to transform South Africa into a united, democratic and non-racial country. It addressed other questions such as the termination of the armed conflict and the duration of the negotiations.
11. The question that has now arisen is whether there is a need to have a look at this statement with a view to its expansion by the incorporation of other elements.
12. This is particularly important in the light of what we have stated above, that various forces internationally are working on detailed plans concerning the issue of a negotiated settlement of the South African question. It should also be expected that the Pretoria regime itself is involved in discussion further to elaborate its negotiating plan, which has always pursued the objective of co-opting the oppressed so that they act as partners in the perpetuation of the system of white minority domination.
13. Among others, the regime has already addressed the question of the preconditions for negotiations by insisting that the ANC must, first of all, renounce the armed struggle and prove over a period of time that it has indeed abandoned this form of struggle. It has stated that the aim of the negotiations should be to produce an arrangement whereby, according to the language of the regime, no

group dominates the other. It has passed legislation enabling it to create its negotiating mechanism, which it calls a National Council. This scheme visualises that the apartheid State President would preside over this process as a 'neutral' person and that any agreement arrived at by this Council would have to be endorsed by the apartheid tri-cameral parliament. The regime is looking at these and other elements of its 'negotiating' strategy to take the initiative into its hands by ensuring that it sets the agenda for negotiations.

14. As a revolutionary movement, it is however our task and responsibility that we should, at all times, keep the initiative in our hands, particularly with regard to strategic questions. The issue facing us is how to keep the initiative in our hands on this strategic matter of negotiations. What positions should we elaborate to ensure that it is our opponent who is forced to respond to us and not the other way round? Clearly, as a revolutionary movement, we cannot afford to tail behind the regime and allow ourselves to fall into a defensive posture, with the regime maintaining the offensive.
15. Part of the answer to this question must be that we ourselves should elaborate our positions on various questions concerning negotiations and set the agenda on this issue so that we give no opportunity to the apartheid regime and its international allies to impose on us and the people a process that would be designed to safeguard the interests of the racist minority.
16. In this context we would therefore have to address such issues as the aim of any negotiations, the preconditions for genuine negotiations, the nature of the mechanisms for negotiations and therefore the question who would sit at the negotiating table, the cessation of hostilities by both sides, the possibility of the formation of a transitional government, the duration of the negotiations and the role of the international community in any negotiated resolution of the South African question.
17. Discussion of the whole question of negotiations in no way affects, and should not affect, the overall strategic orientation of our movement and the tasks that arise from that orientation. Our strategic task is the destruction of the apartheid regime and the transfer of power to the people. This we seek to achieve through mass political action, armed struggle, the international isolation of the apartheid system and by ensuring that the ANC plays its proper role as the revolutionary vanguard of our struggling people.
18. The issue of negotiations has arisen precisely because of the advances we have made on all these fronts which have led to the emergence of the crisis of the apartheid system to which we have referred. We must continuously intensify our offensive on all these fronts with the sole aim of transforming South Africa into a united, democratic and non-racial South Africa. At the same time, we must be ready to deal with all consequences of our victories. One of these consequences may be, as has been the case in all the countries of Southern Africa where the liberation movements took up arms, that at a certain point the enemy might decide that it is ready to talk seriously.
19. We must therefore treat the issue of negotiations as one that also involves struggle, a struggle by other means and a struggle that is a continuation of our offensive for the fundamental transformation of our country. Such positions as may emerge in the course of our discussions should therefore be such that they strengthen our overall offensive and defeat all attempts to disarm us and immobilise the people.