

STATEMENT OF THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE AFRICAN
NATIONAL CONGRESS ON THE OCCASSION OF THE 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF
OF THE FORMATION OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS - JANUARY
8, 1982.

Compatriots, allies and democratic supporters of the heroic struggle
of the people of South Africa,

Comrades,

The names of the founding fathers are in the minds of many of the oppressed
people of our country today as we commemorate the 70th anniversary of the
foundation of the African National Congress. One of these Pixley ka Izaka
Seme, had declared in 1906:

"The brighter day is rising upon Africa...Yes, the
regeneration of Africa belongs to this new and powerful
period. The African people... possess a common
fundamental sentiment which is everywhere manifest,
crystallising itself into one common controlling idea...
The regeneration of Africa means that a new and unique
civilisation is soon to be added to the world".

In 1911, in a historic clarion call which articulated a widely felt need
for a united struggle against colonial domination in Africa, Pixley ka
Seme invited the peoples of the sub-continent to meet in conference and,
forgetting and burying all past differences and divisions, to discuss and
plan together for their common future.

As an expression of the "regeneration of Africa" and in response to the call
for united struggle, the most representative political gathering of Africans
ever held in the sub-continent of Africa took place on January 8, 1912.
Delegates and representatives came from all over South Africa and from other
countries of Southern Africa. They included workers, farmers, peasants,
professionals, journalists, traders, churchmen, chiefs, members of the African
royalty, poets, musicians, authors.

The venue of this momentous event was MANGAUNG (Bloemfontein). Pixley ka I. Seme explained to the assembled delegates:

"The white people of this country have formed what is known as the Union of South Africa - a union in which we have no voice in the making of laws and no part in their administration. We have called you... to this conference so that we can together devise ways and means of forming our national union for the purpose of creating national unity and defending our rights and privileges".

The ensuing debate and deliberations culminated by a unanimous decision, in the epoch-making formation of the African National Congress. The people of Southern Africa had thus forged a new and mighty weapon of struggle, a regional political force, a national movement which grew to become part of the people's political life, experience and history, the embodiment of their deepest belief in the certainty and victory and the expression of their identity with the progressive forces of the world in the pursuit of man's just cause.

Today, as we look back over 7 decades of uninterrupted and principled struggle by the African National Congress to free our continent and our motherland from the shackles of colonialism, racism, and fascism we rise in our millions in salute of the great patriots who gathered at Mangaung in early January, 1912. Among them, were John Langalibalele Dube, Sol Plaatjie, Walter Rubusana, Sam Makgatho, Alfred Mangena, Meshack Pelem, Charlotte Maxeke, Thomas Mapikela, Edward Tsewu and others. There were the royal personages who had personally or whose forebears led the armies of resistance to the colonial occupation of Africa but also came to or were represented at Bloemfontein to forge a new weapon of struggle, among them: Solomon ka Dinizulu of the Zulu, Montsioa of the Barolong, Lewanika of the Lozi, Letsie II of the Sotho, Labotsibeni of the Swazi, Dalindyebo of the Thembu, SeKhukhuni of the Pedi and Khama of the Tswana.

The desire, the attempt, to bring to the Bloemfontein Conference all the peoples of Southern Africa, as a first step towards the unification of the African struggle, was defeated only by the fact that we were separately subjugated by three metropolitan powers - Great Britain, Germany and Portugal.

Those who attended came from the British-colonised part of the region. Today, however, the colonial barriers that separated us in 1911 have crashed under the weight of the advancing African revolution. We have become one people, with one cause and one enemy - the S.A fascists and their imperialist allies.

The African National Congress was conceived as a regional union of anti-colonial forces and had a distinctly continental perspective. On the occasion of the its 70th anniversary the masses of the people of South Africa salute their comrades-in-arms, the peoples of Southern Africa - the founders of the ANC.

They salute the people of Africa - who, with the decolonisation of Namibia and South Africa, will have fulfilled their historic mission to achieve the total liberation of the continent, thus consolidating a firm foundation for a victorious struggle against imperialism.

The oppressed masses and democrats of South Africa, through the ANC, salute all the world forces of change who, during the past 70 years, have fought triumphant struggles against colonialism, racism and fascism. Within 5 years of the formation of the ANC, the world's first socialist state came into being. Today a powerful world socialist system exists and the principles upon which it is founded win growing acceptance as man develops from his past to his future.

The African National Congress, born of the people, a creation of Africa's history and experience, has moved with the people and with the times. It was born into the frontline, to spearhead the people's struggle. Thanks to the dedication of its members, the great vision of its leaders and the calibre of its allies and supporters, it has remained in the frontline and is now spearheading the final assault upon the last colonial stronghold in Africa.

An integral part of a changing world, the ANC has influenced and has been influenced by the socio-economic and political transformations that have come in the course of man's struggle for a better world. It is an integral part of the world-wide forces that are in fact changing the world - eliminating its injustices, correcting its imbalances and introducing a new social, economic and political order in which friendship and peace will prevail because the causes of conflict and war will have been removed.

On this historic occasion, marking the 70th anniversary of the founding of our vanguard liberation movement, we extend our revolutionary greetings and congratulations to all our people on the great achievements and advances that they have thus far registered along this long and arduous march to our cherished goal of national and social liberation. That goal is already in sight'. We are saying this boldly and confidently, for our forces of national liberation have never been better poised for the final onslaught to eradicate the evil system of colonial and racial oppression and exploitation.

The formation of the African National Congress, on January 8, 1912, was an expression of the future people's power won through protracted and bitter struggles against the combined Boer and British colonial enslavement. The ANC was, and remains to this day, the organised political representative and fighting force for the attainment of democratic and revolutionary change in our society.

The message that came out of the founding conference in Bloemfontein, 70 years ago, expressed the collective resolve of the peoples of Southern Africa who correctly perceived that they were suffering under the selfsame yoke of colonial tyranny and therefore shared a common destiny. That message also coincided with the aspirations of millions of colonially - subjugated Africans throughout our mother continent.

It is not accidental that history apportioned to our region the role of a fore-runner in this regard. For it is here that imperialist domination and colonial occupation had achieved the most pernicious and disastrous results, and therefore made more pressing the need to challenge foreign rule and to counterpose to it the right of the African people to self determination and independence. Stretching from that period, the peoples of Africa have made gigantic strides, with practically the whole continent having attained political independence and now engaged in national economic reconstruction to consolidate these gains. A few pockets of racial and colonial domination remain, soon to be swept off the surface of the continent.

Our struggle, as part and parcel of the revolutionary process that is sweeping across the continent, draws inspiration and support from the victories already scored by Africa. Our victory over what was at the beginning, and remains, entrenched imperialist domination and white minority rule, will constitute the apex of Africa's advance to genuine political and economic emancipation.

It is equally true that the revolutionary transformations that we have witnessed on the continent of Africa are also a component part of the broader global struggle waged by progressive mankind against the dark forces of imperialist domination over the world and of the exploitation of man by man. At the time of the founding of the ANC, a handful of imperialist powers dominated the rest of the world politically and economically. Africa had been carved up among the grabbing imperialist forces in pursuit of strategic raw materials, profit, and spheres of influence. Millions upon millions of people in the colonial and semicolonial world had been reduced to objects of unbridled exploitation and producers of fat profits for foreign masters.

Today that picture has changed. It has changed radically and irreversibly. The sphere of imperialist domination has shrunk tremendously and continues to do so as the forces of liberation and social progress grow in size and combativeness. As a consequence, the balance of forces, both continentally and internationally, has decisively shifted in favour of the forces of independence, democracy and peace. The mainstay of this world revolutionary process are the socialist countries, fully committed to the cause of national liberation, the democratic forces in the capitalist camp, and the national liberation movement. We too, therefore, are part and parcel of this revolutionary stream that is changing our planet for a better and happier world to live in.

Given this background, therefore, the 70th anniversary of the African National Congress finds all of us better placed than we have been before to carry our historic mission to destroy the apartheid monster and realise the goal of total liberation of the African continent. It is our historic obligation, as it is that of Africa, united under the Organisation of African Unity, to fight to achieve this goal, and in doing so, to contribute to the efforts towards ensuring that the continent as a whole enjoys peace and attends to the urgent task of winning economic liberation and raising the living standards of its people.

We are better placed to move forward because our people are engaged in mass organised action at a level and with a tenacity unsurpassed over the last seven decades. We are better placed to break new ground in our assault on the enemy because these risen masses recognise clearly, from practical experience, that the revolutionary struggle in which they are engaged has one leader and one perspective - the African National Congress and the Freedom Charter respectively. We are better placed to move in on the enemy because today we have a popular army, Umkhonto We Sizwe, capable of speaking to the enemy in the language he understands best.

The early decades following the 1912 founding conference were times of probing by our movement to meet the changing context of the struggle in which new economic and political forces for change were still in their infancy. Our people had been finally robbed of their land and all political rights. In growing numbers they were pushed into the mines and plantations to produce wealth for South Africa's ruling class. This marked the emergence of the working class movement in our country. It was from this black labouring section of our population that the new forces of resistance came up. The past 70 years have witnessed unending efforts by the working people to combine and use their collective strength to defeat the oppressor. In the process, confrontations, skirmishes, economic strikes, boycotts, anti-pass campaigns, defiance campaigns and other forms of struggle, took place all over the country. All these served as a practical school for drilling and training our revolutionary forces. Gradually they have grown in strength and experience and now pose a real threat to the system of apartheid. They form the backbone of our striking power.

Already by the late 1940's our young militants, thrown up by the growing and intensifying struggle, began to chart new and more effective methods of struggle for the new stage. This prepared the ground for the massive confrontations of the 1950's - the campaign for the defiance of unjust laws, general political strikes, more anti-pass campaigns and the Congress of the People that adopted our historic document - the Freedom Charter. By that period the African National Congress had become a mass movement involving all sections of the oppressed in active struggle. Faced with and frightened by the rising revolutionary tide, the enemy declared our movement illegal and detained many of our leaders and activists.

For us it was a time for reassessment, for the drawing up of a new strategy and new tactics to meet the changing conditions.

The administrative terror which the enemy unleashed against the popular upsurge: the bannings, banishments, beatings, torture in police cells, hangings and shootings - none of these have succeeded in neutralising the people's militancy. Instead they have reinforced our determination to pursue the cause of liberation.

Under the leadership of the ANC and its allies as well as other patriotic revolutionary forces inside the country, organised political confrontation has grown immeasurably over the recent past. The underground forces of our movement are entrenched deeper and are multiplying among the people more than at any stage since the outlawing of our organisation. The enemy is engulfed in a crisis of deep proportions and is frantically looking for new ways out of this political quagmire.

In the current period, our people have begun to reply to the enemy violence with revolutionary violence. Today our armed cadres are dealing blow after blow at the enemy in wide-spread areas throughout South Africa. The growing sophistication of these blows, their frequency and their high level of organisation have inspired our people and reinforced their conviction that our cause shall triumph. The racist regime itself can no longer deny that they face a future in which growing mass political upsurge will be more and more complemented by increasing armed action by the people. We have reached a stage where the people have opted for and are joining the armed struggle as one of the most effective ways to dislodge the racist rulers from power. Inside our own borders the balance of forces is gradually tilting in our favour. The voice of the mass democratic movement, headed by the ANC and its allies is winning the hearts and minds of growing numbers from amongst all the oppressed, pushing into growing isolation the diehard racists and fascists. This movement is not only an opponent of the apartheid regime, but has actually emerged as an alternative power, enjoying the actual and active allegiance of the overwhelming majority of our people. Increasing numbers from the white-oppressor group are steadily joining the stream for political and social change.

Through our sacrifices, and in the face of brutal enemy repression and persecution, we have stubbornly and persistently defended our great creation, the African National Congress, against frantic and desperate efforts by the enemy to blot it out. We have defended it because we knew that without it our collective strength would cease to exist, without it the prospects of our capturing power would fade into the distant future. Twenty years after the oppressor regime declared it illegal, the ANC today on its 70th anniversary, is openly acclaimed as the leader of our people, thanks to the imposition by the masses of a new popular concept of legality which the enemy guns cannot shoot out of existence, and which his courts cannot imprison. By "lifting" the ban in this manner we have asserted ourselves as the alternative power of our land the only legitimate power, because we are the people, the democratic majority, whose will must triumph in the end.

In sharp contrast to the racists who have sought to divide our country and people into racial and ethnic compartments, we have upheld the ideal of one country, one people and one democratic and non-racial destiny for all who live in it, black and white.

The people's determination not to deviate from these ideals remains steadfast and finds expression in the universal commitment we have made to remain loyal to the perspectives contained in the Freedom Charter. As there can be no compromise between democratic rule and racist tyranny, so must it be that the Freedom Charter, the alternative political, economic and constitutional platform of popular power in our country, will emerge triumphant.

After 70 years of unrelenting struggle, and building on the historic and irreversible gains recorded during these decades, we have reached a stage when the process of consolidating bases of popular power among the people has begun. To promote this process, we have decided to mobilise our people for the oncoming period under the watchwords "Unity in Action". Our strength lies in unity, and our future advances, in action. Without unity we are weak, and without action we remain oppressed. To move forward we must attack, act in unity and unite in action. The gains recorded during 70 years of struggle have, thanks to the great contribution made by the successive generations of our people, given us the possibility to achieve such unity in practice. .

The motto of unity was inscribed on our battle standards on the very day of the creation of the African National Congress. As Seme had declared while organising the first congress, "we are one people". For their parts the delegates resolved to bring together the oppressed into common action as one political people.

We have therefore striven for seven decades to build one common nationhood with one destiny. Our shared experience of collective sacrifices in the struggle for a common goal have knit us together as one solid block of liberation. The comradeship that we have formed in the trenches of freedom, transcending the barriers that the enemy sought to create, is a guarantee and a precondition for our victory. But we need still to build on this achievement. All of us - workers, peasants, students, priests, chiefs, traders, teachers, civil servants, poets, writers, men women and youth, black and white - must take our common destiny in our own hands.

On this, our 70th anniversary, we call upon our people and on our allies and supporters to make 1982 a year of Unity in Action with the intensification of our assault on all fronts.

We call upon our working people, the backbone of our liberation movement to mobilise as never before at the point of production to build a powerful democratic trade union movement for the advancement of the interests of the workers and for their activation into the struggle for the victory of the national democratic revolution.

We call upon our people in the bantustans to mobilise and to isolate and destroy the Pretoria puppets. Let us all fight for a democratic and unified South Africa.

We call upon our youth and students to maintain and heighten their spirit of resistance. You have already demonstrated that you are a detachment of greatest courage and heroism. Now, more than ever before, our struggle demands that you act with supreme dedication and vigour under the banner of our fighting movement.

We call upon our womenfolk to raise the cry for vengeance against those who are murdering, maiming and torturing our sons and daughters for their participation in our struggle. You have already demonstrated that you do choose between dying in defence of apartheid or joining the noble cause of national liberation.

We call upon the millions of the oppressed to stand shoulder to shoulder at this crucial hour in our history. The enemy manoeuvres to sow division in our ranks must be defeated. Our destiny is one'.

We call upon those amongst our people who have been clad in police and army uniforms to rethink their role. You have it within your grasp to choose between dying in defence of apartheid or joining the noble cause of national liberation.

We call upon those in the white community who stand ready to live a life of real equality and non-racialism to make common cause with our struggle for genuine liberation.

On the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the African National Congress, itself a product of the trials and tribulations of Africa's children, we salute the OAU and the brother peoples of our continent. To all of them we say the need for us to continue acting in unity in the struggle to destroy the apartheid regime, the enemy of all Africa, increases with the intensification of the struggle. It is the hope of the millions of your brothers and sisters held prisoner by the Pretoria regime that this year you will, together with them, take initiatives further to advance our united action.

We salute in particular the brother people of Namibia, their leader, SWAPO and the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN). It is to us a matter of proud record that as early as 1919, and again in 1946, the ANC sent delegations to Versailles and the United Nations respectively, to fight against the territory of Namibia being mandated to racist South Africa.

Today, the heroic struggle in which the Namibian people are engaged is itself a mighty contribution to our own liberation, an expression of a united offensive in which we who suffer under a common enemy are engaged. We pledge to our fellow combatants of Namibia that we shall intensify the offensive on our front so that both our peoples can secure their emancipation.

We salute the heroic people of Angola who have resolutely sacrificed to sustain and advance the struggle of the Namibian people, in the process suffering aggression upon aggression by the fascist regime of South Africa.

We salute also other comrades-in-arms engaged in struggles to liberate themselves, including those of Western Sahara led by the Polisario Front, of Palestine led by the PLO, of El Salvador led by the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front, of East Timor led by Fretelin, of Puerto Rico, Guatemala and elsewhere.

All these struggles together with our own belong to one democratic and anti-imperialist mainstream. Any advances they make contribute to the furtherance of our own struggle, any advances we make strengthen the hand of these sister movements which like us, confront the forces of imperialism headed by the United States of America.

These forces of reaction can see that the risen peoples are determined to bring to an end the epoch of imperialist domination. They have therefore decided to go on the offensive against the people. The most backwards elements in world politics, therefore, be they apartheid South Africa, Zionist Israel or the reactionary Junta of El Salvador, find encouragement to hang on to their ill-gotten power at all costs.

But in 70 years the world has changed radically. The people of Africa, of Southern Africa and of South Africa are not alone. We too have our allies and loyal friends-countries and peoples who share the same vision as we do, who are prepared to carry the burden of struggle together with us, who recognise that all humanity is diminished and world peace and security threatened by the continued existence of the apartheid regime.

We greet these allies and friends on the occasion of our 70th birthday. We greet the governments and peoples of the socialist community of nations, the governments and peoples of the countries organised in the non-aligned movement, the Scandinavian peoples and governments, and the anti-racist governments and peoples of the rest of Western Europe and North America in the firm belief that we are together committed to act in unity against those who are committing a crime against humanity, the apartheid regime.

The year of the 70th anniversary of the ANC has been proclaimed by that august body, the General Assembly of the United Nations, as the year of mobilisation for the implementation of sanctions against apartheid. We urge that all those who truly wish to see an end to the inhuman system of apartheid should, acting in unity, seize this opportunity to ensure that the Pretoria regime is isolated as never before. Failure to do this will condemn our people and those of Southern Africa in particular and, in the end, the rest of mankind, to a terrible blood-letting that will forever remain a blot on the conscience of the entire humanity.

Today we commemorate with deserved pride the 70th anniversary of our national union. This is a historic occasion which has been made possible by the sacrifices which our people have made throughout these years and the support of the world democratic movement.

From Port Elizabeth and Bulhoek to Sharpeville and Soweto and many other widely dispersed points in time and space between, our people have laid down their lives in the struggle for our liberty and in pursuit of the goals for which the ANC was founded. On Robben Island, in Kroonstad and Pretoria are locked away leaders of our people, both young and old, men and women, black and white, heroes and heroines to whom the liberation of the people is worth more than their own lives.

On this historic occasion we raise our banners in salute of all these martyrs and patriots and pledge to remain true to their example and steadfast in the execution of their command to seize power from our oppressors.

In their name and that of the National Executive Committee we greet the entire membership of the ANC and Umkhonto We Sizwe and charge that they carry the tasks facing all of us with such honesty, courage, dedication and discipline as befit all true revolutionaries. In their name, and on behalf of the National Executive Committee, we command all these revolutionaries and urge all other patriots to unite in action, to act for unity and, as one, to lead the people in united action.

In the name of the founding fathers, in the name of the martyred heroes of our people, and in the name of the leadership of the African National Congress, we call upon our people to observe 1982, the 70th anniversary of the formation of our national union, as the Year of Unity in Action.

Let this be the year of the most powerful offensive that our country has ever seen. Let this be the year of our greatest unity in action. Let this be the year of a great leap forward to the threshold of victory.

Long live the Year of Unity in Action'.

Long live our glorious people's movement, the African National Congress'.

Maatla ke a rona' Amandla ngawethu'

Ke nako, Mayihlome'.

All power to the people'.