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Presented to Senate <sup>"Forum"</sup> meeting

May 1989

17 May 1989  
day before mtg w/ Bush

**FOUNDING STATEMENT FOR THE VISIT TO WASHINGTON D.C.  
OF A DELEGATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN CHURCH LEADERS.**

The four of us have come to Washington D.C. at the invitation of our friends in the American Forum on South Africa. We express our deep appreciation for their efforts towards the achievement of justice and peace in our country.

We come at a time when there is a growing emphasis in international relations on resolving conflict situations by negotiated, peaceful settlements instead of by violent confrontation. We welcome this trend warmly, more especially because it reflects the desire of black South Africans as repeatedly expressed for the past 80 years.

We believe that throughout South Africa's history our people have been reasonable. Since before South Africa was formed as a country in 1910, they have worked unceasingly for a negotiated, non-violent settlement in our country. The award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Chief Albert Luthuli, President General of the African National Congress, in 1961 bore witness to our people's commitment to non-violence. Those of our liberation movements which have adopted the military option did so only in the early 1960s, after half a century of peaceful pleading had failed. Even though the liberation movements chose that option, it is only one element of their strategy and its aim is to force the South African Government to the negotiating table. Internally, our other political organisations have worked for peaceful, negotiated change. Both the liberation movements and the political organisations inside the country co-operated with the Commonwealth Eminent Persons' Group in its efforts to promote a negotiated settlement. More recently, members of our delegation have been involved in negotiations with the South African Government in an attempt to secure the release of detainees after many of them went on hunger strikes because they were jailed without trial.

During this period, the obstacle to a negotiated settlement has been the South African Government. It was the South African Government which banned Chief Luthuli. It was the South African Government which outlawed our liberation movements, prompting them to resort to arms. It was the South African Government which deliberately smashed the Commonwealth peace initiative by bombing South Africa's neighbouring states. It has been the South African Government which, over the years, has banned nearly all the political organisations of our people for doing nothing more than working peacefully for democracy. The South African Government has been an intransigent government, and Western countries have helped to keep it in power.

**We believe President Bush's Administration stands on the verge of an important threshold. In the past, too many U.S. administrations have propped up unjust regimes because of perceived U.S. economic interests and theoretical ideological considerations. Too often the U.S. has been forced to take late, reactive and defensive steps to protect its interests when a government is about to fall after the people of a country have decided they will tolerate oppression no longer.**

**During the life of this Administration, our people will take decisive steps towards attaining freedom. We believe that you in the United States, together with your allies, have the means to get the South African Government to the negotiating table. You have in Southern Africa an opportunity to open a new chapter in your history by taking early, pro-active and creative policy decisions which place you at the cutting edge of international support for the movement for democracy in our country.**

**There has been speculation that the British Prime Minister, Mrs Thatcher, wants to be a peace broker in Southern Africa. We do not place much hope in the prospect of the British Government becoming the pre-eminent broker. While Mrs Thatcher might conceivably play a useful role in reassuring fearful white South Africans during negotiations, neither she nor her Government have the credibility among black South Africans to be accepted as impartial brokers.**

**If Americans are to play a role in bringing peace to Southern Africa, you would need to make a fundamental policy shift in your approach to the South African crisis. Such a change would involve a clear recognition:**

- That the movement for democracy in South Africa is legitimate;**
- That the system which represses that movement is illegitimate and incapable of reform;**
- That the current South African Government urgently needs to be replaced by one which represents all the people; and**
- That every possible peaceful, effective step needs to be taken to bring about negotiations between all political groups in South Africa which will result in representative government.**

**The Commonwealth EPG, in consultations with the democratic movement inside and outside South Africa and with the South African Government, has developed a negotiating concept for South Africa. Time and again, our people have spelled out within South Africa and internationally their proposals for a just, non-racial and democratic South Africa in which black and white can share. Among the latest to have been tabled were the constitutional guidelines of the African National Congress.**

**We urge the U.S. Administration and the rest of the international community to press the South African Government to take the following preliminary steps, without which negotiations cannot begin:**

- 1. To lift the State of Emergency.**
- 2. To release all detainees and political prisoners and to allow exiles to return home.**
- 3. To unban the African National Congress, the Pan Africanist Congress and all other banned and restricted political organisations.**
- 4. To guarantee free political activity and to amend the Internal Security Act and all other laws accordingly.**
- 5. To repeal the Population Registration Act, the Separate Amenities Act, the Group Areas Act and all other laws which organise South African society on the basis of race.**

**It is well known that we believe that, short of taking up arms, the application of various forms of economic and diplomatic pressure is the only way in which those outside South Africa can force that government to sit down and talk to our people. At present, there is a new emphasis on the ways in which financial sanctions in particular could achieve that aim. We are monitoring the exploration of that option closely. However, the methods which you use to put pressure on the South African Government are secondary to the main issue, which is to get it to the negotiating table. If it can be done without sanctions, so much the better. Nevertheless, we reiterate that we remain totally convinced that the South African Government will not be brought to the negotiating table without pressure and therefore that the time is not appropriate to lift the campaign to exert such pressure.**

**A decision by the United States to support fully the struggle for freedom and democracy in South Africa could have an international impact as dramatic as the Soviet Union's policy of "glasnost". As we move towards the 21st century, countries of the South and the so-called "Third World" will become more powerful in international politics. Against this background, a bold decision now would serve the long-term global interests of the United States. Moreover, vigorous backing for democracy in South Africa would be in line with your best historic traditions. South Africans aspire to no more than the fundamental freedoms Americans have enjoyed for most of their history.**

**Dr Allan Boesak, Moderator of the NG Sendingkerk (Dutch Reformed Mission Church) and President of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches**

**The Revd Frank Chikane, General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches (SACC)**

**Dr C F Beyers Naude, former General Secretary of the SACC**

**Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town and Metropolitan of the Church of the Province of Southern Africa**