

UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT



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THE ROLE OF BUSINESS IN POST APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

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Introduction

South Africa is going through an exciting period in its history. Political movements have been unbanned, some political prisoners including Nelson Mandela are free, some of our compatriots who spent decades in exile have returned. Over 40 000 are expected to be home soon.

The Harare Declaration initiated by the ANC and adopted by the OAU, the UN Declaration Against Apartheid adopted by consensus, by the UN General Assembly has opened up opportunities for the South African Government and the ANC to traverse a new path to the future.

Although proper negotiations have not yet started, talks aimed at the removal of obstacles have been underway since May 19. The ANC has suspended the armed struggle, and the regime has committed itself to meeting the steps set out in the Harare Declaration.

We are reasonably hopeful that it is just a matter of time, before the actual negotiations on constitutional principles and mechanism for the implementation of that constitution before. The vast majority of South Africans will for the time, have the opportunity to determine their destiny. They will elect a leader of their choice and build real democracy upon the ruins of apartheid.

Regrettably, for African majority the extension of full political rights to them would not result in immediate comfort and happiness. Rather, it will be the beginning of a new phase of a long and hard struggle to redress the social and economic imbalances which are the result of decades of apartheid and colonial exclusion.

South Africans are entering an era of development and reconstruction aimed at correcting the legacy of oppression and exploitation. This is the task that will face a new democratic government. We suggest that the role of business in a post apartheid South Africa should be situated within this context. What then is the role of business in the aftermath of apartheid?

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- **Presidents:** Albertina Sisulu, Archie Gumede
 - **Executive Chairperson:** Curnick Ndlovu • **National Treasurer:** Azhar Cachalia
 - **National Publicity Secretary:** Mosiuoa Terror Lekota • **National Secretary:** Popo Molefe

BUSINESS BENEFITED FROM APARTHEID.

It is common cause that apartheid stunted economic growth and accounted for the current economic chaos. The current economic growth of approximately 0,2% is far less than the population growth of + 3%. White business benefited from the cheap labour system created by apartheid. Many of them never addressed themselves to the injustices meted out to black workers. Instead they allied themselves with the state. The workers regarded them as the extension of the apartheid state. Until they were recently compelled by a series of labour strikes, employers supported repressive labour legislation. Thank God, action by the workers made them change attitudes. This resulted in an accord between SACOLA, COSATU and NACTU. Business therefore has a moral duty to redress the situation of blacks.

One of the most disturbing things about white business is the tendency to look at the question of economic growth in a manner that ignores the reality of black dispossession and disempowerment. They ignore the impact of economic exclusion on the black people who constitute the vast majority.

This practical view does not realise that there cannot be economic growth without political and industrial stability. Political stability will be created once the question of material deprivation of black people is addressed.

Therefore, business has a critical role in the upliftment of the black people, raising their standards to a level that will enable them to live decently and in a dignified way. This means a transfer of some resources from whites to blacks. Business must begin to work out a range of details of how to redress these inequalities.

Areas requiring urgent attention:-

- (A) 1. Education Need - resolve the crisis in education - illiteracy.
2. Human resource development - skills training.
- shift from emphasis on academic studies to technical training, engineering and science.
3. Lack of health facilities
4. Housing and land
5. Train managers and black entrepreneurs.

These will facilitate the raising of living standards. In the long term better educated will earn decent salaries - by more thus expand local market and production of consumer goods - productivity.

- This will mean the growth of the manufacturing sector.
- Employers must interact with NGO's and community organisations

(B) INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS (Employer and Employee)

- Need for industrial democratisation
- Union and worker charter
- Business must be orientated towards accommodation of workers
- They should not just be recipients of wages and repositories of orders from managers.
- They should participate in the determination of the distribution of the wealth that they produce.

(C) RETURNING EXILES - business role

- Assist in providing accommodation
- Skills training
- bursaries to place them in university and technical colleges
- placement in jobs.