

PREREQUISITES OF A PEACEFUL SOLUTION IN SOUTH AFRICA

**Speech in the Ad Hoc Committee of the United Nations General Assembly,
16th special session, December 13, 1989**

Mr. Chairman,

I wish to thank you and this Committee for the privilege to say a few words at this special session.

I am happy to see you in the chair, having admired your contribution to the movement of solidarity with the struggles for freedom in southern Africa.

We are now at a historic moment in the southern part of Africa because of the heroic struggle of the people - under tremendous difficulties - and the international response to the situation.

I would like to pay my tribute to the people of South Africa, to their liberation movement and to the mass democratic movement for their courage, sacrifice and statesmanship in an extremely protracted struggle.

For me, as a national of India, it has been particularly inspiring to follow the way in which the mass democratic movement has developed and enriched the spirit of satyagraha, the defiance of unjust laws, which Mahatma Gandhi discovered on South African soil.

The United Nations, and its Special Committee against Apartheid, have played a great role in promoting an international consensus and alliance against apartheid - and for support to all those struggling in that country for a non-racial, democratic State.

They deserve tribute for their untiring efforts and for their adherence to fundamental principles.

I recall that at its inception in 1963, the Special Committee against Apartheid, declared that the problem in South Africa is not a conflict between black and white, but a struggle of all the people against racism.

The first Chairman of the Special Committee, the late Diallo Telli, said at the inaugural meeting of the Committee that one of its tasks was to help the regime in Pretoria to get out of the mire into which it had landed itself and the country.

The intransigence of the racist regime and the short-sightedness of some major Powers have forced the South African people and the frontline States to bear enormous suffering - which has been a blot on the conscience of humanity.

Yet, Africa is a continent of reconciliation and the leaders of the democratic movement have continued to uphold their vision of the future - and to eschew any spirit of revenge.

The proposals for negotiations, formulated by the liberation movement, and endorsed in the Harare Declaration, are so reasonable that it is difficult to conceive anyone interested in a just and lasting settlement entertaining any reservations.

At most they only ask for a return to the situation before the Sharpeville massacre of 1960 - to provide conditions for fruitful negotiations.

How can there be meaningful negotiations if Nelson Mandela is in prison, Oliver Tambo is in exile and other leaders are restricted - so that they cannot even consult freely among themselves, much less with their people.

While Prime Minister de Klerk has taken some positive steps, repression continues unabated.

There are more and more arrests, restrictions and political trials - even when De Klerk talks of reconciliation - as I am painfully aware as a member of the Council of Trustees of the International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa.

Only they are not reported by the media.

I would like to stress, therefore, that while we should recognize and grasp the opportunities, we should not be carried away by euphoria.

There must be continued effort by the international community.

Let us hope that this special session will conclude with an effective declaration commanding widest support.

But that does not spare the South African people from the obligation to strengthen their unity and expand their struggle - and they fully recognize that.

The international anti-apartheid movement must step up its work for comprehensive sanctions and for greater support to the struggle - and we may note that they are fully committed.

The United Nations must play a crucial role in this new situation - not only because the destruction of apartheid is a vital interest of the United Nations but

also to prevent the intrusion of Powers with their short-sighted "national interests".

I have confidence that the Special Committee against Apartheid and the Centre against Apartheid will discharge their responsibilities with commitment and imagination that they have demonstrated.

As we have emphasized repeatedly, the issue in South Africa is not only freedom in one country, but the assertion of fundamental principles which are indispensable for genuine international cooperation.

It is also the total emancipation of the continent of Africa, after centuries of plunder, rape and humiliation.

Let us hope that soon, we, in the rest of the world, can join the African people in celebrating that emancipation.

Let me conclude, therefore, with the slogan of the freedom movement in South Africa:

Mayibuye Afrika (Come Back, Africa)