

CONCEPT PAPER FOR THE ANC'S 3RD INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY CONFERENCE

INTRODUCTION

The African National Congress (ANC) derives its internationalist mandate from its founding documentation, which outlines its understanding of the world and its strategic approach to the search for a better international order, one that is equitable, just, humane and democratic. It seeks a greater pursuit of collective leadership in order to secure greater security, peace, dialogue and equity between and amongst poor and rich nations. Drawing from its own liberation history and its international solidarity character, the ANC in pursuing its national and international agenda is guided by the pursuit for “peace and friendship” in “a just world and a better Africa”. Consequently, the ANC’s strategy is to work “with African and global progressive forces to advance human development in our country, our continent and across the globe”.

No wonder that one of the key pillars of the struggle against apartheid was international solidarity through which the ANC mobilised civil society, political parties, academia and other sectors around the world to isolate the apartheid state and in support of the advancement of the objectives of the National Democratic Revolution (NDR), namely: fighting colonialism, racism, poverty, underdevelopment and gender oppression (in all their manifestations). Thus, international solidarity contributed immensely in the attainment of freedom in 1994 and will be crucial as we forge ahead towards a total defeat of poverty, discrimination, inequality and other impediments to the goal of a better South Africa, a better Africa and a better world. As the movement celebrates its centenary in 2012, it shall also commemorate and reflect on the role of international solidarity in its 100 years of existence with the purposes of thinking through ways of building on this heritage in order to strengthen our pursuit for a better world today.

To that end, an International Solidarity Conference is being planned for October 2012. It will be for the third time that the ANC organizes such a conference. The conference will be organized around the celebration of the rich legacy of Comrade OR Tambo. It will draw its mandate from the 52nd National Conference which had resolved, among others, that “the ANC embarks on a programme to strengthen the progressive movement in Africa and formalise relations with the global progressive movement in particular Latin America and East Asia’ and tasked “the NEC to commit resources and space for the holding of a first meeting of the progressive parties/movements in Africa, with a view to holding an international meeting of all progressive parties/movements in the world before the next conference of the ANC”.

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY IN CONTEXT

The celebration of the centenary of the ANC would be incomplete without some recognition being given to the place of internationalism in the history of our movement. This pillar of our struggle has made an immense contribution to our victory against apartheid to the extent that some academic analysts even tried to elevate it above other equally important pillars - namely the underground, armed struggle, and mass struggle. These four pillars complemented and reinforced each other to deliver a deadly blow against the apartheid regime.

The starting point in this regard is our Pan-African origin. The ANC was founded as a liberation movement not just for the people of South Africa, but for the entire region. At its founding meeting participants included representatives of the leaderships of Lesotho, Botswana and other countries. As the oldest NLM in our region, the ANC inspired others to establish similar movements in countries such as Zimbabwe. Throughout its history the ANC saw itself and acted as part of the Pan African forces fighting for the decolonization of our continent. Not only did we forge active and revolutionary ties with other African liberation movements, but we were also there when the OAU and the former SADCC were formed. We fought side by side with ZAPU, SWAPO, Frelimo, and MPLA (among others). Many of our cadres spent a considerable part of their lives as exiles in countries of this continent.

Besides our contribution as a movement to the theory and practice of the revolutionary struggle for the right to self-determination, the ANC is also a product of the struggle against imperialism. Through the Anti-Apartheid Movement in particular, the ANC made an enormous contribution to the development of a global movement for the promotion of peace, social justice and non-racialism. The international struggle against apartheid embodied humanity's struggle against discrimination and social exclusion. It mobilized all, and everywhere - at the UN, and everywhere!

Post-apartheid South Africa has continued this tradition of active internationalism on the continent and globally, playing its part in the renewal of Africa, promoting South-South cooperation, engaging countries of the North, and striving for the transformation of the global system of governance. Some consider South Africa a leader in Africa and on some issues on the global agenda.

The South African transition since the unbanning in 1990 has inspired many across the globe. We have shown that peace between adversaries can be achieved, and that reconciliation is possible. Our transition model has

been emulated, and this has contributed to our current stature in global affairs. We are recognized as an agent for peace and reconciliation; that we can speak to all sides in a conflict, and bring together adversaries. Our values of non-racialism and non-sexism have global appeal. This long history of internationalism is reflected in the ANC's ideological outlook. From its small beginnings in 1912 when it was formed as a narrow Pan-Africanist movement, the ANC has grown to embrace elements of socialist theory that are in line with of the agenda of national liberation movements. Our theory of National Democratic Revolution, with its strong bias towards the working class, is one example of the complexity and depth of our ideological heritage. We also drew inspiration from the civil rights movement and similar struggles of people of the African Diaspora. The Black Consciousness movement of the 1970s - from which many of our cadres were initiated into politics - was our people's response to the struggle of the African Diaspora against racial discrimination and oppression in countries where they were forcefully sent as slaves. We also drank from the well of the Non-Aligned Movement which galvanized the peoples of the South - from India and Indonesia to Cuba and Brazil - in their struggle for a just world order that is free from the domination of the North.

Today we celebrate our centenary in the context of a world that has fundamentally changed from what prevailed in 1912 when our movement was formed. With the exception of Palestine or the Western Sahara, most of the world has been decolonised through the struggle of those who were oppressed. Unlike for the most part of the last five hundred years when the North commanded unquestionable hegemony over all; today the balance of forces is slowly tilting towards countries of the South. Who would have thought that one day Europe or the US would be on its knees, begging for money from China? This geo-strategic shift to the South is opening a new chapter not only in South-North relations, but also in intra-South relations.

1ST ANC INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY CONFERENCE

The ANC has reflected on the role of international solidarity several times before. The Arusha Conference was held, from 1-4 December 1987, under the theme: Peoples of the World Unite against Apartheid for a Democratic South Africa. It was for the first time ever that the ANC invited the rest of the world to come and consider together the issue of the South African struggle against the apartheid regime. More than 60 countries were represented by more than 500 delegates at Arusha, Tanzania.

The conference was convened to review the situation in South Africa and the rest of Southern Africa. It assessed the implications of this situation for the international diplomatic and political work of the ANC. It also discussed

ways and means of obtaining increased political, financial and humanitarian assistance to meet the additional demands arising out of that situation.

The conference was also convened to strengthen the relations between the ANC and the rest of the world based on the common principles of friendship, solidarity and equality among the peoples. Representing the aspirations millions upon millions of people throughout the world, the conference was outraged by the continuing brutality, inhumanity and aggressiveness of the apartheid regime which resulted in death, suffering and insecurity for the peoples of Southern Africa. It noted that the apartheid regime was illegal and that this system of government consistently, since its foundation, rejected the right of the vast majority of the population to participate in the central organs of power. It recognised the suffering of the people at the receiving end of brutal state suppression. It noted the impact of aggression by the apartheid state in southern Africa and its attempts to bribe for support elsewhere in Africa. It discussed in great detail the experiences of the Frontline States, the ramifications arising from military aggression and political and economic sabotage. It declared the occupation of Namibia illegal and a source of tension, conflict and a threat to international peace and security.

It therefore urged all governments, international organisations and solidarity movements to act in support of those who are risking their lives in the struggle for freedom. It further called for the intensification of international solidarity with the struggle and the isolation of the apartheid regime. It underscored the duty that all progressive peoples and formations had towards the search for the most effective methods of increasing support and assistance for the ANC, its allies and the mass democratic movement.

The conference also acknowledged the progressive governments for supporting the UN Security Council resolution to impose sanctions on South Africa. The United States and the United Kingdom were specially saluted for important unilateral actions to cut down economic relations with apartheid South Africa.

The Conference adopted a Plan of Action which covered a number of areas, including actions on the political and diplomatic, economic, military, energy, educational, cultural and sport fronts. The conference called on the international community and the world anti-apartheid movement in particular to declare the apartheid regime as illegitimate, the perpetrator of crimes against humanity, and a threat to international peace and security.

2ND ANC INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY CONFERENCE

The second International Solidarity Conference took place in Johannesburg on 19-21 February 1993. It brought nine hundred (900) hundreds of delegates from about 70 countries in five continents to discuss the contribution of international solidarity on the turn of the tide in South Africa's political landscape. The conference received a detailed report from the ANC on the transformation from apartheid to democracy, a review of what had been achieved and what was planned well into the future.

The idea was to inform the solidarity movement of the next phase of the struggle, which was the building of democracy in South Africa and the re-entry of South Africa in world affairs. The ANC underlined that priorities in this next phase of struggle included, the struggle against poverty, national unity, ending structural violence, embedded racism, and sexism. The ANC used the conference to galvanise political, economic, developmental and technical support for the new state, beginning with the historic elections of 1994.

Conference discussed in great detail the place of a new South Africa in a world that was changing fast following the end of the Cold War. It reflected on the need for South Africa to play a role of a responsible and progressive state force in global affairs, working closely with global South actors. It underlined South-South cooperation, but one that would be people-based. It underscored the role of solidarity movement in the fight for reform of structures of global governance and international finance in order to give impetus to the fight against global poverty.

In its declaration, the conference resolved to mobilise concrete financial and technical support towards the holding of free and fair elections. Until then, it discouraged recognition of elements of the white minority regime. It called for continued isolation of and maintenance of sanctions against South Africa until the formal announcement of the date of elections, the establishment of the Transitional Executive Council and the enactment of the Transition to Democracy Act. It committed participants to continue to support and encourage hope, unity and development in South Africa as well as peaceful co-existence with its neighbours. It also resolved to support a massive programme of reconstruction and development to achieve the vision of a new South Africa as enshrined in the Freedom Charter. It called for new forms of solidarity with new South Africa and its people.

OBJECTIVES OF THE 3RD ANC INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY CONFERENCE

The ANC is planning what will be the 3rd ANC International Solidarity Conference, whose key objective is to reflect on the outcomes of preceding conferences and identify ways of strengthening international solidarity in the continued pursuit of the Freedom Charter goals. The theme for the event is ***“United for a Progressive, Better World”***.

The Conference is aimed at continuing to unite the likeminded people of the world for peace, solidarity and social transformation to create a world free of human rights abuses and creation of sustainable environments. The conference will further;

- Highlight the legacy of OR Tambo and his contribution to the world peace, solidarity and democracy;
- Build on the achievements / lessons of the 1st and 2nd ANC International Solidarity Conferences;
- Facilitate an international dialogue on hundred years of the history of the struggle and the ANC;
- Reflect on South Africa’s engagement with the rest of the world after apartheid;
- Contribute to the building of a global progressive movement for a better Africa and a better world;
- Discuss solidarity with those still struggling for their right to self determination and against oppression and imperialism;
- Promote a common understanding of shared and progressive values.

PARTICIPANTS

The event is expected to attract approximately 1000 delegates coming from all four directions of the world and within South Africa. The criteria for participation will be determined by the ANC’s definition of progressive forces. The following categories will be targeted:

- Former Anti-Apartheid Movement
- Former National Liberation Movements
- Solidarity groups
- NGOs
- Trade Union formations
- Religious sector
- Left formations
- Community-Based Organisations
- Anti-globalisation formations
- Progressive political parties
- Socialist International

- Think tanks and academics
- Regional organisations
- International organisation Eminent personalities

DATE

The conference will take place around the birthday of Comrade OR Tambo (born, 27 October 1917): that is, Friday the 26th to Sunday the 28th October 2012. The conference will start at 10h on Friday and followed by plenary sessions, to close on the morning of the 28th. Most of Saturday will be dedicated to break-away sessions, and a dinner in honour of Comrade OR will be organized in the evening. A tour of historic and other relevant sites will be organized for participants probably on the last day of the conference.

VENUE

Tshwane (City Hall)