



PRIME MINISTER

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**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER
LUNCHEON IN HONOUR OF MR NELSON MANDELA,
DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS
CANBERRA - 23 OCTOBER 1990**

Mr Mandela
Parliamentary Colleagues
Ladies and Gentlemen

We welcome you here today not simply as a distinguished visitor to our country, but as a modern day hero whose personal struggle and personal achievements have been admired by so many Australians.

We salute you for your commitment to the struggle against apartheid; for your suffering in the service of that cause; for your moral authority which has not only survived, but has grown through your ordeals; and for your example of courage and strength that is showing the way for your people, and all the people of South Africa, towards the exciting and perilous transition from apartheid to non-racial democracy.

In prison you were a potent symbol of the struggle to free South Africa of apartheid. For twenty seven years you bore the heavy burden of imprisonment.

Now you bear a heavier burden of responsibility. You have become not only the symbol, but also the leader of your great cause.

Your task is to lay the foundation of a South Africa which, on the ashes of apartheid, will build a democratic, just, stable, prosperous and non-racial society.

No one believes that will be easy. But no one here can doubt your fitness for the task. For what is truly inspirational is not that you bravely faced imprisonment for twenty-seven long years, but that you have now put behind you those bitter years, to sit down at the negotiating table with your former gaolers, and to plan with them the future of a democratic and non-racial South Africa.

So we welcome you to Australia, Mr Mandela, both with respect for what you have suffered and achieved in the past, and with hope for the work you have ahead of you in your great struggle.

The iniquity of a system which determines political, social and human rights according to the colour of a person's skin, is deeply offensive in a country like ours. We are not perfect, but the concept of "a fair go for all" is an Australian ideal.

The iniquity of institutionalised apartheid, the censorship, the repression, the denial of economic opportunity that have characterised South Africa are deeply offensive in a country like ours where democratic rule, freedom of expression and freedom of movement are so familiar as to be sometimes taken for granted.

So ordinary Australians understand your struggle and sympathise with it. They recognise the fundamental evil of the system of apartheid, and the moral bankruptcy of successive South African Governments which have upheld it. They recognise the absolute justice of your crusade against that system.

And they also understand that an evil system such as apartheid cannot prevail against the good will and good sense of the many determined people demanding its end.

Among those determined people you, Nelson Mandela, occupy a pre-eminent position.

I am proud, as an Australian and as a leader of a free country, to count myself and my country among those who have stood with you in these difficult years.

We have not of course been able to share your sacrifice of imprisonment. But we have shared your goal - of working not to destroy South Africa but to rebuild it.

For us as a member of the Commonwealth, as a member of the Western alliance, and as a nation which prides itself on setting standards for responsible international conduct, our duty to be closely involved in the fight against apartheid was crystal clear.

As early as 1983, my Government began a scholarship program for educating and training disadvantaged black South Africans. Now we have a \$17 million humanitarian scheme providing education, training and development assistance for black South Africans.

It was this Government which, within the framework of Commonwealth pressure, proposed the Eminent Persons Group which developed a negotiating concept close to that now being implemented by the ANC and the South African Government.

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But it was clear to us that tough sanctions were also needed. Australia, in concert with the Commonwealth and with other nations, took these difficult decisions. We took them early, we took them resolutely and we applied them broadly. Let me in this audience enumerate them.

- . Aviation services between Australia and South Africa - banned.
- . Trade: import of agricultural products, oil, uranium, coal, iron and steel - banned. Government procurement in South Africa - banned.
- . Sporting contacts: all South African teams - banned from Australia. All individuals who represent South Africa banned from competing in Australia.
- . In the field of investment: new investment or reinvestment of profits, and all Government assistance to investment and trade with South Africa - all banned.
- . Import and export of all military arms and ammunition - banned.
- . Services: Australian consular services in South Africa - withdrawn. Promotion of tourism to South Africa - banned. Government contracts with South African companies - banned.
- . Finally, financial links: New loans by Australian financial institutions to South Africa - halted. Australia led the Commonwealth, and through it the international financial community, to intensify the pressure on South Africa's financial system - a system that was already struggling to meet its onerous debt obligations in the face of the enormous economic inefficiencies of apartheid.

Australia has not simply applied these measures; we have been among the foremost advocates of them in the international community, and we have been a leader in their international acceptance and application. We have taken this course in the full knowledge that there would be tangible costs to the Australian economy. We have borne these costs - and the slurs of those who oppose us - because of our overriding belief in the effectiveness of sanctions as a means of removing the international scourge of apartheid.

It is important in this parliamentary forum that I point out that Australia's abhorrence of apartheid has not been the exclusive preserve of this Labor Government. The depth of Malcolm Fraser's commitment testifies to that.

But equally, it should be understood that since we have been in Government we have been alone among the major parties in our commitment to sanctions as a means of translating that abhorrence into effective action.

And that belief, with some notable exceptions, is of course almost universally shared - by you, Mr Mandela, by the African National Congress, by the United Nations, and perhaps most strikingly of all, by the South African Government itself.

We apply sanctions in the full knowledge that they have adverse effects within South Africa. But we do so not out of spite or malice but as part of a carefully designed range of measures to influence the South African Government towards recognition that its own self-interest lies in the reform of apartheid.

In short, our sanctions are imposed, as we have reiterated, not to bring South Africa to its knees, but to bring it to its senses.

We recognise too, the unnecessary pain sanctions will inflict if applied for too long. Sanctions must be lifted not a moment too soon and not a moment too late. Following my discussions with you today, I am pleased that I will have the benefit of your wisdom and foresight - as well as that of Commonwealth and other international leaders - in making our decision about the right time to lift sanctions.

We have seen moves by the South African Government which provide real hope. Substantive changes are being made. In the past year, events have moved significantly and at times with remarkable rapidity. As yet the South African Government is only part way down that road, and it is a long and difficult journey they have to make. Many in South Africa would lead them off that track.

But sense is dawning in the corridors of power in Pretoria. With your counsel and persuasion, President de Klerk has put South Africa on the road to reform. We readily acknowledge and admire the changes which President de Klerk has brought about - as I have in fact communicated to him.

A year ago, you were still captive, just as the South African Government was captive of the immorality and illogicality of apartheid. A year ago, the ANC was banned, its membership as scattered as the hopes for a non-racial South Africa. A year ago, the prospect of full negotiations on a new constitution was as remote as were the ANC's exiled members from their South African homes.

Today, much has changed. And if you and the ANC persist in your cause with President de Klerk and the international community, if you maintain the pressure and exercise courage and wisdom, the next year or two will see a new constitution in South Africa. This is an exciting prospect, but a daunting one too.

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Great expectations have been raised among your people that the new South Africa will deliver immediate prosperity and happiness. There are dreams to be fulfilled - but like all dreams, they are difficult to realise.

It is salutary to be reminded that the euphoria of winning power is often quickly followed by the realisation that the realities of government can be harsh. You will need to show leadership in counselling your people about what they may expect in the new South Africa.

Your coming South Africa will, happily, have a democratic and non-racial constitution. But it will carry with it the bitter legacy of the enmities which are a feature of the apartheid system.

The recent violence in the townships is frightening and it is tragic. More than that, it is evidence of the continuing conflicts which will need to be addressed if South Africa is to have a peaceful future.

Your coming South Africa will have great wealth. Like our country, South Africa is blessed with mineral and agricultural riches. But its new leadership will need to take difficult decisions. Your now long-held commitment to a fairer distribution of the country's wealth and opportunities remains valid.

But concepts that were formulated in the days when the command economies presented some attractions for those oppressed by an apparently uncaring capitalism require revisiting, as those very command economies are being jettisoned as incapable of meeting the needs of a free people. Your new leadership will need to balance the need for more equitable distribution with the imperative of maintaining a market system that fosters economic growth.

Your new South Africa will be influential. With freedom will come international respect and influence. South Africa's economic strength, strategic importance and history will ensure it takes a prominent place in the councils of Africa. With this influence, however, will come heavy responsibilities. Africa's diversity, its many conflicts, its poverty - starvation in a continent which has the intrinsic capacity to be a net exporter of food - all this brings great challenges for those who assume its leadership over coming decades.

A new South Africa, freed from the shackles of its racist past, will also begin afresh harmonious and profitable relations with other nations, including Australia. There will be opportunities for South Africa and Australia to work together for a better and more harmonious international community.

Mr Mandela

The precepts which you set down three decades ago for a new South Africa would be worthy aims for this international community. Let me close by using some of your words, as relevant now as they were when you spoke them at your trial in 1964:

"I have fought against black domination and I have fought against white domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities ... It is an ideal which I hope to live for, and to achieve."

Mr Mandela, you went on to say that it was an ideal for which you were prepared to die.

It is to the lasting relief and joy of all Australians - indeed, of humanity itself - that you did not have to pay that price. If those of us who help to shape the world in the coming decade can apply your standards of courage and wisdom, and your capacity for reconciliation, this will be an ideal for which no-one else will need to die.

Nelson Mandela, we welcome you and honour you for the magnitude of your sacrifice over twenty-seven years; for the far-sighted leadership you have exercised since your release; and for the vastness of the task that still lies ahead of you and your fellow South Africans.

So you are thrice welcome and we are thrice honoured in welcoming you. Be assured of our pride in having stood with you in your darkest hours; be equally assured of our commitment to stand with you as you see the dawn breaking - to work with you now as you move surely towards our common goal: a democratic, non-racial South Africa.

It will come. May it come soon.

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