

# **ANC STATEMENT TO THE GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM OF THE WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

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*Johannesburg, July 2002*

The second millennium has provided humanity with the capital, the technology and the human skills to end poverty and underdevelopment. However, current patterns of consumption, production, trade and investment are clearly unsustainable. Despite the substantial increases in wealth that the process of globalisation has generated, in sub-Saharan Africa, where almost half the population live in poverty, there has been no progress in reducing the poverty rate, and the number of people in poverty has increased substantially since the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. This has had a particularly negative impact on the status of women in our region.

Therefore, the central question that the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) must answer is: what must we do and how must act to turn the world from its current path of unsustainable development, and decisively act to defeat poverty and underdevelopment, particularly in Africa. We are certain that at the root of these actions must be a fundamental change in the relationships between the North and the South.

The Rio Summit provided us with an enduring set of principles and programmes to achieve sustainable development and the United Nations Millennium Declaration identified a set of realisable development goals. The WSSD must emerge with clear agreement on concrete programmes, with resource commitments and time frames, for the realisation of these goals.

Most importantly, the WSSD must agree on clear steps to:

- Reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day.
- Ensure access for the 2 billion of the world's poor to modern energy services, combined with the further development of low-emission and renewable technology
- Eliminate the deficit in access to clean water and sanitation, particularly in Africa;
- Defeat the scourge of communicable disease, especially in Africa
- Substantially improve food security of the worlds poor;
- Defeat ignorance through the provision of quality education for sustainable development

Defeating poverty cannot be achieved without a fundamental restructuring of the economic, political and social relations that define our world. In particular, it requires a massive and sustained infusion of resources from the developed world to the countries of the South, particularly in Africa. Our experience of building democracy in a divided society, of extending basic services to the poor within the confines of limited resources, of transforming property relations in the context of the rule of law, gives us the optimism of realists that these things can be done on a global scale.



But more than this, our experience of protracted and sustained popular organisation convinces us that such progressive transformation on a global scale cannot be achieved without a progressive movement that leads such change. The Global Civil Society Forum of the WSSD, therefore, provides us with a critical opportunity for dialogue to consolidate a progressive movement for global transformation.

It is in this light that we call upon civil society organisations around the world to join with us in the long march to development, democracy and peace. It is a march to which the African National Congress remains fundamentally committed. It is a march that must unite the broadest range of progressive forces in action for a better world for all. It is a march that must build on the capacity of ordinary people for self-emancipation, and unleash this potential for the benefit of all humanity.

## JOHANNESBURG AND THE WORLD WE LIVE IN

The Johannesburg Summit convenes against the backdrop a city visibly scarred by the profound contradictions of its history. Wealth and poverty lie cheek by jowl, a stone's throw from the central venue of the intergovernmental conference. And Jo'burg's landscape is strewn with the waste of one hundred years of resource extraction; in the service of which South Africa's racial hierarchy was constructed with violent determination. The city's contemporary social and environmental panorama is an ever-present reminder of our country's painful past. This divided geography also reflects the state of the world as we enter the twenty first century: a globalised world built on the foundation of imperial conquest and colonial domination, which continues to define the contours of privilege and underdevelopment.

Against the backdrop of these profound injustices, the defeat of white domination in South Africa is testimony to the indomitable capacity of ordinary people to change their own world for the better. The people of South Africa, united in action with progressive movements, governments and peoples from across the globe were fused into a single global movement for human emancipation.

These struggles realized the democratic breakthrough of 1994. Since then the foundations of a non-racial society have been established, the architecture of democracy has been constructed, and the basis for sustainable development has been created.

We are justly proud of our achievements as a people:

- **Water** has been established as a human right in our Constitution. We have not rested on the proclamation of that right on paper: since 1994 water has been extended to ten million of the poorest and we are confident that by the year 2008 we will have eliminated the apartheid water access backlog and provided access to 14 million South Africans. Basic sanitation has also been provided to 400,000 of the poorest South Africans.
- **Housing:** The building and transfer of ownership of low cost housing has been an important programme for resolving apartheid's social backlog. As of June 2001 over 1.1 million units had been delivered, accommodating 5.7 million people, approximately 14% of the total population of South Africa.



- **Electricity:** The mass electrification programme has been one of the most successful examples of mass infrastructure delivery inspired by the RDP, South Africa's own Agenda 21. Initiated in 1991, and included as a key government programme after the 1994 elections, the electrification programme has brought electricity to more than 3.3 million homes

Less visible, but also of great importance, is the work we undertake every day to build the institutional basis for sustainable development. Central to this is the creation of democratic institutions at every level of government and society. Our aim in this regard is to transform an apartheid state, founded on the deliberate promotion of uneven development, into a state that can truly serve the interests of its entire people. As we do so, the principles and programmes agreed at Rio are an inspiration and guiding light. Our system of democratic and non-racial local government is barely 18 months old, municipalities are legally mandated to develop Integrated Development Plans. The intent of these IDP's is to realise integrated, sustainable and participatory development planning and other goals of Agenda 21 at local level.

The goals of equity and poverty eradication has also been pursued through providing more equitable access to natural resources, with significant changes made in the areas of water, fisheries and land. South Africa is implementing a land reform programme in order to right historic wrongs, develop agricultural productivity and provide a basis for sustainable livelihoods. Secure land tenure is important for the success of attempts to lever investment into previously underdeveloped areas through the Spatial Development Initiatives, and to improve local resource management and economies through community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) programmes.

But, despite the enormous progress we have made, the goals of economic justice, social upliftment and environmental sustainability are far from being achieved in South Africa. As we continue the battle to overcome apartheid's tragic legacy, these facts (our successes and our failures, our victories and our defeats) give us the hope of realists that substantial transformation can be achieved on a global scale. The processes that have worsened poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa can be reversed, as they have been in South Africa. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) proposes a framework for doing just this. It is a framework that realises that, in the course of shaping the direction of Africa's development, the process of globalisation cannot be ignored.

## **GLOBALISATION AND THE POTENTIAL FOR CHANGE**

To the extent that the new global situation has not resolved the contradictions within and among nations, between poverty and wealth; to the extent that ethnic, religious and other tensions continue to ravage parts of the globe; to the extent that some of these contradictions find bold expression in our own society; to this extent and more, the transformation taking place in our country and our continent is closely intertwined with the search for a new world order.

This search takes place in the context of a globalising world. *Globalisation* represents a significant change in the modus operandi of capitalism. In the last quarter of the twentieth century new features of the process of capital accumulation have emerged, which distinguish our era from that previously described as *imperialism*. Perhaps most important amongst these is the transition from an *international* to a *transnational* mode of operation



of the world economy, reflected by the growing importance of transnational institutions, including the transnational corporations and trans-national governmental institutions. These changes have been spurred by the overall development of technology and, in particular, advances in information and communications technology (ICT), which have reduced the cost and increased the speed of communications across the globe, abolishing pre-existing barriers of time and space, and affecting all areas of social and economic life. This has made possible the integration of national systems of production and finance, and is reflected in the exponential growth in the scale of cross-border flows of goods, services and capital.

At the same time, the globalised world is one where politics have been fundamentally reshaped. The technological developments associated with globalisation have taken place against the backdrop of a profound political sea change, with important implications for progressive movements and developing countries:

- The collapse of the socialist bloc resulted in the rapid extension of markets across the globe, the emergence of a uni-polar world, and the redefinition of political creeds across in a variety of ideological perspectives.
- The social democratic project in Europe entered a period of profound economic and political crisis. The progressive parties that had emerged from pre-War working class movements to construct the 'welfare state' were swept from power by the ideologues of a callous neo-liberal policy framework.
- The 1980's also witnessed the third world debt crisis and the political and economic crisis of the state-led, import substituting industrialisation project, particularly in Africa. This crisis coincided with the final liberation of the continent of Africa, as manifest in the independence of Namibia in 1989, the liberation of South Africa in 1994, and the consequent defeat of imperialist war in the sub-continent.
- In the developed capitalist countries it is monopoly companies, particularly transnational corporations, which set the globalisation agenda. These corporations have the potential to determine economic, social and environmental policy of governments throughout the world. Already, the content and form of globalisation of trade, investment and capital flows, and the operation of some of the critical multilateral institutions reflect in large measure the wishes of these corporations.
- Combined with these forces, the nation states of the North have also continued to drive and shape the process of globalisation in a manner that suits their national interests. The danger of unilateralism is inherent in a uni-polar world, and it is one that all progressives must combat.

As progressive movements seeking to fundamentally transform global political and economic relations we must boldly confront the objective realities of the globalising world, and the extent to which these realities confine our efforts. But at the same time it is vital that we clearly analyse the reality that confronts us with a view to changing them.

It is the task of progressive movements, revolutionary democrats and humanists everywhere to recognise the dangers, but more critically identify the opportunities in the search for a just, humane and equitable world order. And there is cause for optimism:



### ***A New Realisation of the Need for Progressive Change***

First, the obvious difficulties currently being faced by the global economy have created a basis for a re-examination of the “virtues” of unbridled markets. The sometimes negative impacts of globalisation on the developing countries in particular, afford progressive forces worldwide the space to posit new approaches to the global governance, financial architecture and trade regimes.

### ***Democratic States Create the Basis for Genuine Global Partnership***

In the period of imperialism the extension of the world economy was largely driven by the agency of colonial domination. The emergence of developing countries as independent nation states on the global stage has created the political and institutional framework within which global developmental action can potentially succeed. Millions of formerly colonised people now enjoy (in varying degrees) formal national sovereignty and basic citizenship rights in these societies.

This places on the agenda the need for, and the possibility of, greater equity in world trade regulations, the reform of multi-national institutions and more genuine global partnerships between peoples. The recent Doha negotiations bear testimony to this: developing countries were better prepared and more coherent in their argumentation, and more confident in their ability to struggle for their positions than in any previous trade negotiation.

### ***Confidence And Determination in Africa***

Third, a new confidence and determination is emerging across Africa to mobilise for the reconstruction and development of the continent. We know that capacity to implement these programmes is limited in many countries, many conflicts remain unresolved and the progressive movement in Africa is generally weak. Nevertheless, African leadership has developed the programme of action (NEPAD) for, and the institutional basis (African Union) for renewed hope in our mother continent.

### ***A Global Movement for Progressive Change***

Last but not least there is a growing international movement for justice, in which people of good conscience are energetically demanding the creation of another, fairer world.

## **A PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENT FOR GLOBAL TRANSFORMATION**

Another world *is* possible. But the progressive transformation of global society requires the existence of a progressive movement to effect that change. A progressive movement is one with answers. It is a democratic and popular movement that mobilises the poor and working people of the world toward the realisation of these answers. It is one that seeks to link individual struggles with multi-dimensional engagements at local, national, regional and international level. It is one that is not afraid of building principled alliances and tactical partnerships for change, between peoples, democratic governments and enterprises, in the interests of people-centred development.



Since the Rio Summit, growing globalisation has been accompanied by the development of a wide range of generally progressive and sometimes popular ‘social movements’ or ‘citizen’s movements’ operating at the national and, increasingly, at the international level. They are focused on a myriad of issues including balanced development, peace, disarmament, gender questions, youth, the environment, health-care and human rights questions – including the world-wide movement against apartheid and racism. Some have at times worked closely with more traditional working class movements, such as the trade union movement, as well as other progressive and popular institutions of civil society. While these increasingly well-mobilised movements are often hostile to the present character of globalisation, they are also often the products of the new realities and they have used the global information and communications infrastructure to publicise their perspectives, and to network amongst themselves.

These developments should be roundly welcomed. In carrying out the programme set by Rio, and realising the international development goals, democratic governments (at local, national and global level) must rely on the formal instruments available to them. But, above all, they must rely on the active involvement of members of society in changing their lives for the better. As individuals, organised political formations and as various structures of civil society, the citizens of the world are the bedrock of fundamental change. Indeed, ‘sustainable development’ in its essence must mean releasing the enormous potential that resides within the masses of the people for self-emancipation. Therefore, the building of a popular movement for progressive transformation is not a threat to governments, it is a necessary condition for governments to successfully implement sustainable development.

However, the character of some of the forces campaigning against globalisation are ambiguous. From the perspective of the South, Northern ‘anti-globalisation’ is not necessarily ‘progressive’:

- The alarming rise in the popularity within Europe and elsewhere of fascist, anti-immigration forces, which clearly represent a stream of ‘anti-globalisation’ sentiment within those societies.
- Within working class movements there is also the ever-present danger of tendencies promoting isolationism and protectionism, as opposed to internationalism.
- Some conservative elements within the northern Green movement are clearly opposed to development and industrialisation in the South. While innovative and environmentally sustainable solutions to the problems of development must certainly be found, such tendencies are likely to find themselves in opposition to the poor of the South.
- There is also a tendency, both within and outside the movement, to conflate it with ‘NGO’s. The growth of the NGO movement is an important part of the emergence of a ‘global civil society’ However, NGO activists can not substitute themselves for genuinely popular mass organisation founded on a democratic and progressive basis. In the absence of clear linkages with popular organisation, the sphere of non-governmental organisation is, by its nature, subject to competing influences through a variety of mechanisms, including financial patronage.



- Finally, we are convinced that neo-anarchism is not the answer to neo-liberalism. We know well from our own struggle that mindless violence is the province of at best the naïve, and at worst the agent provocateur.

As a progressive third world movement that has emerged from and inspired many 'social movements' we are also concerned by the 'rejectionist' tendencies of some in the emerging global movement. Certainly, the need for a 'countervailing force' against the arrogance of combined private/business and state interests should not be dismissed, and all would agree that the independence of 'civil society' is fundamental to democratic governance. On the other hand, we believe that the progressive transformation of global society requires alliances of progressives, both within and outside the state, especially where that state is popular. Indeed, the state itself is the most powerful weapon in the hands of the poor and oppressed. Therefore, the question needs to be posed, how does a movement claiming to represent precisely these interests position itself in relation to progressive, democratic and popular forces in state power, as is the case in many developing countries?

A similar question might also be asked with regard to institutions of governance at international level. For example, is the United Nations System, including its various agencies, organs and conferences such as the Johannesburg Summit the 'enemy' of a progressive movement, the object of a purely disruptive programme? Or is it a terrain of struggle where progressives, both within and outside such forums, can combine principled alliance toward tactical and strategic objectives?

These questions cannot all be answered at once. 'Global civil society' is not necessarily progressive. It is, rather, a contested terrain in which various forces compete to wield the cultural power of mass mobilisation. The Seattle movement (if that be a useful, if somewhat inaccurate, appellation) is still emerging. It is a complex of forces in which contestation is taking place. It is yet to learn its identity. This will be found in the context of ongoing dialogue: a task for which this forum is perfectly suited.

## **CONCLUSION**

Progressive change on a global scale can be achieved. The WSSD is a forum in which we believe such change can be advanced. We are therefore committed to pursuing the agenda for change in all forums open to us, including both 'governmental' and 'civil society' summits.

We salute all the delegates to the WSSD Global Civil Society Forum, and call for dialogue on the lessons of our common struggles in order to find the answers to the questions that plague our world. We do not believe that any of us have all the answers and only through collective dialogue can progress be achieved.

