

# Mandela, In Last State Of Nation Speech, Pleads For Peace

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JOHANNESBURG, Feb. 5 — President Nelson Mandela gave his last state of the nation speech to Parliament today, highlighting the successes of South Africa's first post-apartheid government and calling for the nation's blacks and whites to stop "slaughtering" each other in their "words" and "attitudes."

In his 90-minute speech, Mr. Mandela, whose term expires this year, touched on issues ranging from the number of citizens who now have clean water and electricity to the country's need for a "reconstruction and development program" for the soul. He also acknowledged the growing perception here that racial tensions are increasing.

While he chastised both blacks and whites for their attitudes, some of his rebukes were clearly aimed more at whites — the group more likely to travel abroad and disparage the new government or question its poverty programs.

"We slaughter one another in the stereotypes and mistrust that linger in our heads," he said, "and the words of hate we spew from our lips. We slaughter one another in the responses that some of us give to efforts aimed at bettering the lives of the poor. We slaughter one another and our country by the manner in which we exaggerate our weaknesses to the wider world, heroes of the gab who astound their foreign associates by their self-flagellation."

"This must come to an end," Mr. Mandela said. "For indeed, those who thrive on hatred destroy their own capacity to make a positive contribution."

But Mr. Mandela also took aim at the whole of society, saying that five years after the country elected its first black President there was still much to be done in remaking its soul. South Africa, he said, was still sick from more than four decades under apartheid rule.

"Quite clearly there is something wrong with a society where freedom is interpreted to mean that teachers or students get to school drunk; warders chase away management and appoint their own friends to lead institutions; striking workers resort to violence and destruction of property; business people lavish money in court cases simply to delay

implementation of legislation they do not like; and tax evasion turns individuals into heroes of dinner-table talk,” he said.

“Something drastic needs to be done about this,” Mr. Mandela said. “South African society — in its schools and universities, in the workplace, in the sports, in professional work and all areas of social interaction — needs to infuse itself with a measure of discipline, a work ethic and responsibility for the actions we undertake.”

Mr. Mandela’s speech came as the country is gearing up for national elections and his skills as a politician were apparent as he took careful note of his government’s accomplishments.

But it was also a moment for the country to take stock of how far it had come and to enjoy the performance of a man who is beloved by South Africans of all races.

For his part, the 80-year-old Mr. Mandela, who has always said he would not run for a second term, proved that he had not lost his touch for making an audience laugh.

As he stopped for water after about an hour, he urged everyone to give him credit for his impressive performance so far. “Men of 80,” he said, “start coughing after uttering the first sentence.”

And he used the speech to announce that the government would be increasing the amount given to old age pensioners by 20 rands, or about \$3.30 a month, an announcement he said he was very happy about.

He described how, at a recent economic conference in Davos, Switzerland, he had warned that soon he would be out of a job, an old man standing by the side of the road with a big sign saying: “Unemployed! No money! A new wife! A big family!”

“Now with these 20 rands,” Mr. Mandela said. “I may not stand on the side of the road.”

In his speech, Mr. Mandela inventoried housing starts, health programs, school feeding programs and a host of new legislation. He assured the crime-weary public that there were signs of hope: the country was full of initiatives, some of which were working.

“Let me reiterate,” he said. “The battle against crime has been joined and we have no doubts at all who the victors will be.”

And despite a high unemployment rate, he pointed out that the economy had not been damaged by the world economic crisis, proof, he said, that the country’s “fundamentals” were in good order.

In past years, Mr. Mandela’s opening of Parliament speeches were rarely criticized much by opposition leaders. But this year, most of them sought to score points in the campaign, saying Mr. Mandela had been sent in to gloss over the government’s problems.

They also criticized him for not announcing any new programs to combat crime and unemployment.

Many South Africans had hoped that Mr. Mandela would announce a date for the holding of the elections this year, which are expected before July. In his prepared text he said that the elections would be between May 18 and 27. But in making the speech, he skipped the relevant paragraph, apparently because of several lawsuits on election procedures that are still pending.

But the man who spent 27 years in prison for his efforts to topple South Africa's former white supremacist government urged South Africans to vote and to work hard not to succumb to "arm-chair whining."

"The long walk is not yet over," Mr. Mandela said. "The prize of a better life has yet to be won."

"The foundation has been laid. The building is in progress. With a new generation of leaders and a people that rolls up its sleeves in partnerships for change, we can and shall build the country of our dreams."