

STATEMENT ON THE QUESTION OF A UNITED
FRONT BY O.R. TAMBO ACTING PRESIDENT
OF THE A.N.C. (S.A.) TO THE 20TH SESSION
OF THE O.A.U. LIBERATION COMMITTEE.

1. Africa believes in Unity. This is her shield and spear. With unity, her defences are solid. She is invincible. With Unity, she has the weapon of attack, from which alone will come victory. Africa has fought and struggled to achieve, hold, defend, consolidate and strengthen her unity. She continues ^{to do so,} as always she must, ~~to do so~~ as long as there is a cause to fight for and an enemy to defeat. The struggle for unity rages as relentlessly in 1972 as it did 100 years earlier, as it did 10 years ago. Great victories have been won in this struggle. To day we can point to the OAU as being, so far, the greatest and most glorious monument to the efforts of Africa's leaders, and especially to those who held the destiny of Africa in the decade preceeding the 1960's, and who by their tireless efforts, their vision and devotion to the cause of uhuru and independence, contributed to the historic founding of the OAU in Africa Hall, this month 9 years ago.
2. Fifty years earlier, a feat of comparative magnitude had been achieved in Southern Africa. The leaders of the African people of this region of Africa had emerged from another "Africa" Hall in Bloemfontein, united as one nation for the first time in the history of European invasion and domination in that part of Africa. They were united under and behind a shield and spear of their own creation, the African National Congress. But it was not the South African blacks only they sought to unite, but the whole of colonised Africa. For decades, they have fought and struggled
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for this goal. The national anthem, the national flag and the revolutionary songs of the ANC are a living record of an ideology, a strategy which its leaders pursued in practical pan-african and international activities for decades, missing no opportunity for campaigning for unity. ANC leaders travelled abroad attending the earliest pan-african meetings and calling for united struggle. In the 40's, the ANC attended the 1945 pan-african meeting in London, its President-General attended the inaugural meeting of the United Nations Organisation. At home, unity talks were held between the ANC and the AAC, and between the ANC and the SAIC.

3. If the African people in Southern Africa had not learnt the value of unity, ^{from} the wars fought by individual tribes against foreign invaders over a period of 2½ centuries, they had seen their enemies combine to form a Union in 1910, with the motto: Unity is Strength. Two years later, the oppressed masses found strength in the ANC. For them too, unity was and is strength. Hence the strivings of ANC leaders to seek strength in unity.
4. In the 50's the ANC forged a united front of revolutionary, anti-apartheid forces, later called the Congress Alliance headed by the political organisation of the African people, the ANC, and strove to isolate the racists by mobilising the entire people in a series of mass actions. Following talks between ANC leaders and their colleagues in Maseru in 1952, the BCP was established. In a great bid at uniting the entire population in action against the apartheid system, it called the historic Congress
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of the People in 1955. In the same year, it sent a delegation to the epoch making Bandung Conference of Afro-Asian States. It attended the first and all subsequent Afro-Asian ^{People's} Solidarity Conferences; it had its delegation at the inaugural meeting of the All-African People's Conference, and has participated at all other pan-african gatherings held in pursuance of a united struggle.

5. In the 60's the ANC leaders took the initiative, following Sharpeville, to create a united front of all African political organisations in South Africa with the purpose of continuing mass action against the racist regime. Subsequently in March 1961, more than 150 political, social and cultural organisations met at a conference characterised by an unprecedented spirit of unity. The national strike organised in pursuance of the decisions of that conference spread, for the first time, as far afield as Namibia, and for the first time in the history of national strikes in South Africa, ^{it} received the massive support of the Moslem community in the Cape. Also for the first time in the history of white rule in South Africa the country's entire army was mobilised to stamp out that peaceful strike by unarmed people - such was the degree of unity of the oppressed people who were organised into this action by the ANC leader, Nelson Mandela.

In the meantime, a South Africa United Front had been formed outside South Africa by representatives of Namibia and South African political organisations, namely SWANU, SWAPO, SAIC, PAC and ANC. It would be easy to demonstrate that the ANC played a decisive role both in the birth and life of this United Front.

6. In the middle ~~S~~ixties, some 18 months after the notorious Unilateral Declaration of Independence by a racist clique of settlers in Zimbabwe, and during a period of some 18 months, the ANC was participating in what must be acknowledged as the greatest and best example of unity, when its militants, standing shoulder to shoulder with their brothers of the Zimbabwe African Peoples Union, fought with arms against the ^{racist} ~~combined~~ enemies of Africa on the soil of Zimbabwe, inflicting severe losses among their ^{troops,} ~~racists~~ and falling bravely in the cause of Africa. Those who fell, lie buried in Zimbabwe. Some of those captured languish in Rhodesian jails to this day. This was unprecedented, and has no parallel in the history of national liberation movements. And yet it ^{was} ~~is~~ not accidental.
7. With the best blood of our people, in a deliberate ~~and~~ conscious act, the ANC has demonstrated in peerless language, its belief in and unquenchable desire for unity - the unity of the fighting peoples in South Africa, in ^{all of} Africa and among all anti-racist, anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist forces the world over.
8. From what has been said above, it is fair to make the observation that there are many questions and issues on which the ANC could be lectured to with great advantage and benefit to itself. But the question of the importance of unity of all revolutionary forces is not one of them.

AND by UNITY the ANC means UNITY; and "unity" is not unity if it is not UNITY IN ACTION or, worse, if it is no more than a popular word used as a vote-catching slogan.

9. The OAU is the very embodiment of Unity as the ANC understands it. It is a unity that sounds in deeds rather than words. It is ^a living reality, an inspiration and an insurance for the future of Africa. This is because the OAU rests on a firm and faultless foundation - the result of careful study and calculation, of experimentation, of testing, measuring, weighing and then building, stage by stage, level by level, with tried and tested materials.
10. One of the questions due for consideration by this Session of the O.A.U. Liberation Committee is that of a United front for South Africa. There are two problems involved here: One is a problem of, mainly, the OAU and the other is a problem largely of the liberation movement in South Africa. The one is a problem of communication between the OAU and the liberation movement; the other is a problem of operation by the liberation movement in the field of battle.
11. The O.A.U., which is fighting for the liberation of Africa at a level determined by its nature, means and resources, would obviously prefer to have a single mode of contact with the fighting masses - a combined liberation movement, instead of dealing, at this point of contact, with a number of movements, operating in the same territory, each claiming supremacy over others, all fighting the same enemy and presumably having broadly the same strategy, in this case, the strategy of armed struggle. The OAU, therefore, both as part of its policy of building strength through unity and for reasons of administrative efficiency and effectiveness, tries to bring liberation movements together, or otherwise encourage them to combine.

12. On the other hand, the demands of the situation in the territory of struggle require planned co-ordination and oblige the revolutionary forces to combine their efforts, thereby maximising their striking power, and minimising the areas of conflict and contradiction among their ranks. This is a problem of operation which only the liberation movements can and must solve. The two problems are not unrelated, but a realistic answer to the first is possible only if the second is solved. In terms of priority, therefore, it is the liberation movements that must search for and find what would in effect be the answer to the over-all problem.
13. If the question of a united front in South Africa is one which the liberation movement in South Africa must resolve, why should it be the subject of statements made to the 20th Session of the OAU Liberation Committee? What is new in the South African situation which puts the matter of a united front in an urgent issue?
14. At its 19th Session, the Liberation Committee expressed the view that there was a lull in the armed struggle in South Africa, and that this was due to unwillingness on the part of the ANC and the PAC to form a united front. It is very debatable whether there is a lull in the "armed struggle" in South Africa. It is even more debatable whether, if there is, the cause is simply the absence of a united front between ANC and PAC. Further, what is meant by "ANC" or "PAC" or even "Unity Movement" in the field of practical action is too complex to admit of simple treatment.

But fortunately, the Committee decided to set up a machinery to undertake a "thorough study" of the

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situation in South Africa with a view to working out such stratagems as would serve to accelerate the pace of progress of the struggle. Unfortunately, it does not appear that this study has been started. ^{by the Liberation Committee - the A.M.C has} In our view, it would be necessary to vary the terms of reference so as to ensure full participation by the liberation movement, whose daily business ^{is} is to examine and review developments and conditions touching questions of strategy and tactics in South Africa.

If the Committee intended to pursue this study, which for many reasons the ANC considers essential and urgent, it would be unnecessary to discuss the issue of a united front at this Session. But the matter was brought before the 19th Session of the Committee by the PAC, which is pursuing it again at this session. We now wish to deal with the matter as raised by the PAC.