

AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

STATEMENT

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF TRADE UNIONS ON SANCTIONS AND
OTHER ACTIONS AGAINST THE APARTHEID REGIME IN SOUTH AFRICA.

The African National Congress and the South African Congress of Trade Unions applauds the initiative taken by the workers group of the ILO governing body and the international trade union movement in convening this historic conference. We are confident that these deliberations will produce not only words of condemnation, but recommendations for action that will in fact be implemented.

There have been many conferences and many resolutions; but the will of the international community has been thwarted and action prevented by the western powers. They profit from the apartheid system, and therefore render political, military, economic and moral support to the regime in order to ensure its survival.

In contrast, workers have no vested interest in apartheid. Above all groups they can recognise exploitation and know the need for solidarity and mutual support in eradicating it. From their own experience they have learnt that words can do little unless followed by organisation and action. Trade Unions are therefore the logical groups to spearhead international action against apartheid.

Quite simply, apartheid is the particular form that capitalist exploitation has taken in South Africa. Using racism as a tool the entire society has been organised in such a way as to facilitate optimum exploitation of labour and ensure the maximum of profit for all those investing in the apartheid economy, whether domestic or foreign.

The apartheid regime maintains itself in power through coercion and terror, institutionalised and overt violence within the country, and aggressive attacks upon our neighbours.

The overthrow of this regime and the destruction of the apartheid system is, and must be, the responsibility of the South African people. It is a responsibility that we have assumed.

Today, we are witnessing in our country, we are witnessing a consistently rising curve of worker militancy. The extremely high rate of unionisation has forced employers and the regime to concede that black trade unions are there to stay. Around the principle of non-racialism and worker militancy, we are living through the development of trade union unity likely to lead to a single federation of progressive unions.

All sections of our people have rejected the Bantustans and the regime's constitutional proposals and are engaged in campaigns of united action against them. All the independent democratic trade union centres are recognising the need to combine union and community based action.

The christian churches

The major christian churches have now come out in opposition to the regimes constitutional reform. The Islamic Council of South Africa and other religious bodies have also rejected them.

At the level of mass activity there is a growing thrust towards united mass actions that cut across race. Among the whites there is division about the most effective way to perpetuate the system. But at the same time through the churches and radical white youth there is growing opposition to the total militarisation of the South African economy and society, - an opposition which finds expression in the refusal of growing numbers of white young men who are refusing to participate in the apartheid army despite the heavy prison sentences they face.

argue that this should not have been done? And what of those who went to war to resist nazi oppression and murder -- did their families and people not suffer?

On what basis then, are our people denied the right to decide whether they wish to make sacrifices in order to achieve the society to which they aspire?

Let there be no misunderstanding: the call for sanctions comes from the people of South Africa, and it is only the collaborators, the implementers of apartheid who say nay.

We have also been told that armed struggle is not necessary, for apartheid is already being reformed from within. The agent of change is supposedly Botha, or in other scenarios it is businessmen such as Harry Oppenheimer, or foreign companies and the TNCs. What we have not been told is why, those who have created the system should now turn on it, and show such arduous zeal in destroying their profits !

The reality is, that what we are seeing is the unfolding of a strategy to perpetuate white minority rule in South Africa and the enslavement of Namibia.... a strategy which is called reform.

Our delegation has noted, for example, hovering in the corridors of these buildings a disguised army manouvering to gain the reentry of apartheid South Africa to the ILO. Some of them call themselves the Trade Union Council of South Africa. Our people know them as those who have denied them solidarity -, who have refused to condemn detention and murder in our prisons. They recall that this group distanced itself from the demonstrations that followed the murder of the trade unionist Neil Agget, and refused to participate in the mass national stoppage of work. Their claims to win and assist black workers in South Africa are merely a device to gain legitimacy.

Assistance for the development of the independent and democratic trade union movement in our country must not involve interference or manipulation. These conditions have been put by our workers and have the full support of the African National Congress.

Similarly, actions appropriate to supporting our struggle must be indicated by our own people. We have the right, not only to determine our own destiny but also to choose the means we shall use. No one can prescribe how we should fight our struggle, least of all those who nothing to assist.

Those who speak of alleged reform deliberately refuse to recognise what constitutes liberation. For our people, liberation means above all : the acknowledgement that we are one country and one people; that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white; and that all South Africans have the right to participate in making the decisions that determine our destiny and to decide how we shall be governed and how the wealth and resources of our country should be utilized and shared.

That is the liberation we are fighting for, and that is what our people are dying for. And, Mr. President, that is what victory will bring.

And that also, is what all those who continue to collaborate with apartheid are denying the South African people. Their actions are also encouraging the Pretoria regime in its aggression and the destabilisation of independent governments in South Africa. southern Africa.

The murder of p-o-ws was but the latest of the criminal brutalities of the regime. Three weeks ago workers in a jam factory in Maputo were amongst the civilians killed when the regime attacked Mocambique. Next week we will commemorate June 16th. when hundreds of school children were massacred.

The list is endless. How many more lives must be sacrificed? How many more times must the regime violate the territorial integrity of our neighbours? How much more must the war - yes, it is a war - How much more must it escalate before the international community will take cognaisance of the reality? In southern Africa, there is no mere disturbance; no minor infraction, but a breach of the peace of our area and a real and growing threat to international peace and secu

and security. Last week the regime used rockets and ammunition derived from western technology and manufactured with western finance and components. Tomorrow, it is our fear that they will use nuclear weapons. Again the technology and nuclear materials will have been supplied by western collaborators - but, it the lives of the southern African people that will be sacrificed. How much longer, Mr President?

In welcoming this conference, we have referred to the vital role that workers can play in spearheading international action. The ANC appeals to all of you here represented:

First: To demand that your governments support the imposition of comprehensive mandatory sanctions.

Second: To demand that your governments take immediate unilateral and regional action to impose sanctions pending action by the Security Council

Third: We ask trade unions to take direct action against collaboration. It is workers who produce the goods; it is workers who load and transport them; it is workers who deal with the paper that maintains the links with apartheid. It is regrettable but true, that workers are the cogs in the machinery of collaboration. If at any stage in the process, and preferably in all, workers refuse to co-operate, collaboration will come to a stop.

We commend in particular, two area for consideration for direct action. arms and oil.

Despite the mandatory arms embargo, arms and military equipment are being sent to South Africa. Workers must place lives before jobs and take action.

Oil is a strategic commodity that w quite literally fuells apartheid

All workers need to be alerted to the criminal nature of this nefarious trade, and the jeopardy in which their lives and safety are placed due to the secrecy that is maintained. Trade Unions should investigate, provide information and expose these covert operations.

Fourth: We would ask the conference to support the front line states, who are paying the price for the failure of the international community to take effective action against the criminal apartheid regime.

The above are just some of the actions that can be taken. We appeal to the three international centres and OATU to assist, support, co-ordinate, strengthen and expand trade union action against apartheid.

I wish to conclude Mr President, by with the words of Mrs Sarah Mosolèli, whose son Jerry was executed yesterday morning:

" Go well my son, I love you. I am proud of you because you're to die for your people. We'll meet where you're going. You must know the struggle will not end even after your death."