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**PRESS STATEMENT OF THE
NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS
Lusaka Zambia – 2nd March, 1990**

A meeting of the National Executive Committee of the African National Congress was held in Lusaka, Zambia on 1st and 2nd March, 1990. It was also attended by leaders of our movement based inside South Africa, including Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and other comrades.

The meeting reviewed the situation since the historic release of Comrade Nelson Mandela. It reiterated the fact that despite the undoubted importance of this release, the majority of political prisoners are still in gaol.

It is urgent that this matter be resolved. This urgency is emphasised by the fact of the heroic hunger strikes on which our comrades in prison have now embarked.

It is also of vital importance that the Pretoria regime moves without delay to remove all other obstacles standing in the way of negotiations.

In this regard the NEC reaffirmed its earlier decision to meet the Pretoria regime to discuss the issue of removing these obstacles. It welcomed the positive response of FW de Klerk to their initiative. Having discussed various matters of detail concerning this meeting, the NEC decided that it was necessary to initiate contact with the regime immediately to seek agreement on the dates of the meeting, the venue and other matters relating to the preparation of the meeting.

The NEC also discussed as a matter of urgency the implementation of its earlier decisions to send into the country some of its members who would, together with the ANC leaders inside the country, carry out an extensive process of consultation with all democratic and anti-apartheid forces on the current situation and our perspectives. The NEC group will be selected and sent home as soon as the necessary arrangements are made.

The NEC considered a report by Comrade Walter Sisulu on work done to re-establish the legal structures of the ANC. It decided that the Headquarters Office of the ANC will be opened in Johannesburg without delay. It also approved the constitution of other headquarters, regional and local structures which will be put in place as soon as possible.

It resolved to approach its international allies to assist in providing the resources that are necessary for the rebuilding of the ANC.

The NEC considered future international visits by Comrade Nelson Mandela and other leaders based inside the country. It confirmed that Comrade Mandela will, from Zambia, visit Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Sweden before he returns home.

It expressed its appreciation for the very many communications it had received, inviting Comrade Mandela to visit various countries. It therefore directed the National Working Committee of the NEC to look into this question to elaborate a programme of international visits for Comrade Mandela and other leaders based inside the country.

The NEC expressed its profound thanks to Comrade President Kenneth Kaunda, UNIP, the government and people of Zambia for the unprecedented welcome they extended to Comrade Nelson Mandela, his family and the rest of his delegation. This outstanding demonstration of solidarity and unqualified friendship is a vital factor strengthening our movement and people in the continuing struggle to end the apartheid system and transform our country into a non-racial democracy.

It also expressed its warm appreciation to the Frontline, Commonwealth, EEC and other leaders who travelled to Lusaka to meet Comrade Mandela. The discussions which took place with them have helped further to reinforce the continuing international struggle for the isolation of apartheid South Africa. The NEC also thanked the rest of the international community for the mobilisation carried out to welcome the release of Comrade Mandela.

The NEC saluted Comrade Mandela and other comrades who have served prison sentences for their opposition to apartheid. It paid tribute to them for their outstanding contribution to the struggle for the liberation of our people.

It resolved that immediately the comrades who were members of the NEC before they were arrested, namely Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and Govan Mbeki, will resume their places with the NEC. The NEC further elected Comrade Nelson Mandela as Deputy President of the ANC.

The NEC resolved to convey its greetings to Comrade President Sam Nujoma, SWAPO and the people of Namibia on the occasion of the accession of their country to independence. It further decided to send a high-level delegation to participate in the independence celebrations.

Finally, it paid its tribute to the National Reception Committee, the democratic and anti-apartheid movement and the masses of our people for the manner in which they received Comrade Mandela into their midst. This process has helped further to reinforce the unity of our people and emphasise the necessity further to intensify the struggle.

The NEC conveyed its warm greetings to Comrade President Oliver Tambo, thanked him for his invaluable contribution to its discussions and wished him a speedy recovery. The NEC is confident that he will soon return to his post to lead our organisation and people to victory.