

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS, THABO MBEKI, TO THE ANNUAL GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE INKATHA FREEDOM PARTY**

Emandleni, KwaZulu-Natal, 18 July 1998

Comrade President of the IFP; Dr Mangosuthu Buthelezi,  
National Chairperson of the IFP, Dr Ben Ngubane,  
Leaders of the IFP,  
Members of the Royal House, Delegates,  
Leaders of other Parties and members of the Diplomatic Corps:

Let me start by saying that we are indeed most grateful for the possibility to be present at this important Conference. We are very grateful for the invitation that we received from the President of the IFP to participate in this Conference, even for a short time.

We bring to the Conference the greetings and the best wishes of the National Executive Committee and the members of the ANC, to the President, the rest of the leadership and members of the IFP and the delegates to the Conference.

This morning, Shenge, I had to get up very early because Madiba said he wanted to see me at six thirty. I was a bit worried about that because I thought that perhaps he had decided to retrench me as Deputy President.

But he had called me to say he thinks it is a good omen that this Conference of the IFP begins on the day that he celebrates his 80th birthday.

He said we should convey his own greetings and his best wishes for the success of the Conference and of the IFP.

I would also like to take advantage of this occasion, Chairperson, to thank the leadership of the IFP for delegating the Honourable Lionel Mtshali to attend and address the Conference of the ANC in December, as well as to thank you for the attendance of the leadership of the IFP Youth Brigade at the ANC Youth League Congress in March.

We accepted the presence of the Honourable Lionel Mtshali at our Conference - and indeed I think he would say himself, that the delegates received him with great warmth - because they took his presence to be a message from the leadership and membership of the IFP that they wanted to put behind us a period of conflict that had affected both our organisations.

We would like you to accept that our own presence here today also constitutes a sincere message from the leadership and the membership of the ANC that we too want to put that period of conflict behind us.

I have taken note of the remarks that the President has made about some of the conduct of our own leadership in the Province, and would like to assure you that we will attend to the matter.

It was of course also correct that the President I referred to the period when many thousands of people died - members of the ANC, members of the IFP, leaders of the IFP, leaders of the ANC - a period when the relations between our two organisations were characterised by antagonism and conflict.

And yet, Chairperson, we who were killing one another were brothers and sisters. Together we suffered under the yoke of apartheid oppression and together we shared one vision, the liberation of our country and our people.

But having said all of that, I would make bold to say that there are a few among us - perhaps they represent the most noble among us - who will cast their eyes back on our passing century, beyond the conflict which afflicted us.

It is they who shall say there is something in the relationship between the African National Congress and the Inkatha Freedom Party which can make all of us declare with confidence that these two movements, which heroically opened the century, will heroically close the century together.

Certainly, we are all entitled to say that the relations between our two movements over the years have been marked by ups and downs or by alternating periods of warmth and coldness, of fire and cold.

The few we have spoken of shall say that we as politicians should have understood that what is common among our movements is enough to make us realise that the majority of the people we seek to emancipate need a relationship between our movements that is neither frigid nor feverish.

It is they, these noble few, who shall be the first ones to realise that whatever the ups and downs, for almost a century now, certain common things stood undisputed in this relationship, njengezingelengele zoKhahlamba nemihosha yoThakela. These are things that stand durable and fundamental.

Perhaps the first amongst these are that both our movements were formed as a response to the consolidation of white colonial power.

The ANC was formed in 1912 and the antecedent of the Inkatha Freedom Party, Inkatha kaZulu, was formed in 1920 - as a response to particular legislation that the government of Jan Smuts promulgated. The law in question was to set the African segregated from the white masters in all possible ways.

It is precisely this humiliating discrimination which made a Zulu poet to write:

"Umfowethu omhlophe uyangiphundla, Uthi ngiyana.".

If I may also mention the very beginning of the process of the reconstitution of the 11;P, personally, I was very privileged to have interacted with the President of the IFP, Dr Mangosuthu Buthelezi, about the very issue of the formation of the IFP.

Therefore what I am saying is that the links and relations between our two organisations go back many years.

And indeed the very founders of the ANC, like Pixley kaSeme, Langalibalele Dube and Josiah Gumede, were themselves part of the nucleus that led to the formation of Inkatha kaZulu.

If I may go further, indeed, politically the President of the IFP is my senior, he having been a member of the ANC Youth League and the ANC long before I joined those organisations.

We have served together for four years as the ANC and the IFP in the National Government and the Government of the Province of Kwazulu-Natal. Whatever our differences about specific issues, I think it would be correct to say that we have worked together without tension.

I am certain that part of the reason for that is contained in the very constitution of the IFP which says that:

"We believe that it is the duty of all governments to uplift society as a whole, paying special attention to the underprivileged and the victims of Apartheid, and removing also social and economic hindrances which prevent every individual from developing the maximum of his or her abilities."

This statement constitutes not only the fundamental objective of the IFP but also the fundamental objective of the ANC. It therefore defines for both of us who our primary constituency is.

The IFP leads an important section of our people, who are like those whom the ANC represents. These are the ordinary masses of our people who, as the President has just said, want a better life, who want jobs, who want houses, who want access to health services.

We also believe that the IFP has a central role to play in addressing these issues and that the IFP has got a contribution to make, which all of us should value, to ensure the reconstruction and development of our country.

And it is our belief that we have a duty to work together to address this common objective to uplift these millions of our people who depend on our common leadership, without discrimination in terms of the politics we speak from public platforms.

I can say here without fear of contradiction that both of our parties and indeed all our people have gained more from the co-operation we have shown in government over the last four years.

They and our country have advanced further as a result of that co-operation than they would have done without it.

We believe that this august Conference will come to the same conclusion.

"Indaba engiyizwe ngimucane Ngaze ngakhula ngayibona ngamehlo. Usifaba singungu, singungubele Nyakana sibhobokayo Umuntu uyawuzizwa izindaba."

We wish you a productive conference, convinced that its outcome will enhance our common possibility to meet our responsibility to all our people and to all our country.

Thank you very much.