

2004 New Year's Eve Broadcast

30 December 2003

Fellow South Africans:

We have come to the end of an eventful 2003 and the beginning of the historic year when we will be celebrating the First Decade of our Liberation. This year we have continued to make new advances towards the achievement of the goal of a better life for all.

Nevertheless, as we celebrate the end of a successful year and the beginning of another, we should not forget that there are still many of our people who live in conditions of poverty and deprivation.

We still have many of our people who are unemployed. There are some who do not have access to good nutrition and the necessary amounts of food they require. Others continue to live in shacks without proper housing.

Yet others still have no access to clean water and modern sanitation, adequate health facilities, roads, electricity, telephones and other modern facilities. Some of our children continue to study under trees because some of our schools do not have enough classrooms, while others have no running water, proper sanitation and electricity.

Many of our people continue to die earlier than they should because of poverty and the impact of diseases of poverty as well as infectious diseases. To make matters worse, we still face the challenge of high levels of criminal violence, which continues to claim especially the lives of many poor people.

We also have many irresponsible drivers and pedestrians who cause unnecessary deaths and injuries among all road users. This has continued even during this festive season.

Accordingly, as we celebrate the birth of the New Year, we must also express solidarity with those of our people who continue to live in conditions of want and deprivation.

Together we must reaffirm our commitment to work together with those in our country who are poor and suffering, to ensure that their lives change for the better.

Even as we celebrate during this festive season, we must spread the message of Letsema. We must draw many more of our people to work as one in a people's contract to ensure that acting together, we overcome the scourge of poverty and underdevelopment.

Many parts of our country are experiencing drought conditions because of inadequate rainfall. Again, as we are doing, we must come to the assistance of those of our people who, as a result of the negative impact of the forces of nature, are suffering from shortages of water, loss of grazing fields, domestic animal stock and crops.

On this day, our hearts go out to those who are afflicted with illness, forced to miss our joyful celebrations because they are in hospital or lying at home immobilised by one ailment or another. We wish all of these a speedy recovery and commend them to our hard working medical personnel.

But even as we openly acknowledge all our common problems and challenges, and commit ourselves to work together to address them, we must also celebrate the fact that many more people enjoy better lives today than they did when we last celebrated New Year, a year ago.

This relates to all aspects of human activity, including land, jobs, housing, water and sanitation, food, health, schools, social grants, as well the reparations due to those identified by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

As the year ends, our economy is in good shape. Interest rates have come down, as has the rate of inflation. The economy is well poised to take advantage of the global economic recovery to achieve higher rates of growth, and generate more wealth and jobs.

The government is completing its work to launch the expanded public works programme aimed at ensuring that those of our people who are unemployed and excluded from the economy, have the possibility to work, earn incomes and improve their quality of life.

Our continent has also continued to make progress away from a difficult past. The Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Burundi, Sudan and the Comores are well on the road to permanent peace and stable democratic systems.

This creates the possibility for these countries to join others on our continent to pursue the central goal of NEPAD of achieving the goal of a better life for all Africans throughout the continent.

During 2004, we will hold our third democratic general elections. We urge all our people, especially the youth, to register as voters and exercise their important democratic right and duty to vote. As we did in 1999, we must ensure that these elections are free of any violence and intimidation, giving all our people the possibility freely to vote for the party of their choice.

This will constitute a high point of our celebrations of our First Decade of Liberation on April 27th and an affirmation of our resolve further to consolidate the democratic victory for which many sacrificed their lives.

We wish you all a happy and successful New Year, the year of our First Decade of Liberation. Once more, please ensure that you drive safely and arrive alive!

Thank you