



MEETING OF THE SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL: NEW YORK 11-

12 JULY 2017

STATEMENT BY THE ANC AT SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL

'DEFENDING AND PROTECTING DEMOCRACY WHERE IT IS DENIED OR IS UNDER THREAT'

02 JULY 2016

Comrades President, Secretary General, all dear Comrades and Friends,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Compatriots,

On behalf of the African National Congress delegation led by our Secretary General Cde Gwede Mantashe, I would like to begin by extending the warmest fraternal greetings to this conference from Comrade Jacob Zuma, the President of the African National Congress (ANC) and the leadership of the African National Congress (ANC).

As we meet here today to discuss how to realize SI's vision of a fair, egalitarian, peaceful world; we know that far too many countries around the world are still engulfed by political instability and conflict, and that far too many communities and individual citizens continue to face persecution in flagrant violation of the UN Charter of Human Rights.

We know that despite the best efforts of progressive organizations we are living in unpredictable and uncertain times where the democratic gains of the past few decades are seemingly being rolled back in many parts of the world. The rise of populism, the rise of the far right, the slide towards authoritarianism; and the resurgence of movements once deemed on the fringes of society, now at the fore: are all cause for concern to progressive forces everywhere.

Perhaps of the greatest concern to us, though, is what some have termed 'the democratic rollback', following a relative golden age of democratic advance.

Far from the notion of the 'global village' drawing us together, united by our commitment to democratic principles, we are seeing aspirations for democratic progress being stifled and snuffed out across many parts of the world – as sectarianism, political and religious violence, and authoritarianism take hold.

Irrespective the passage of time, we are seeing intractable conflicts dragging out for decades, with no resolution in sight, as with the plight of the Palestinian and Saharawi peoples.

We urge the Socialist International to work with the United Nations to help resolve this challenge that is now on the 40th year while the Western Sahara people still continue to face lack of human rights.

At its recent Policy Conference, the African National Congress has resolved as follows,.

- To call for the intensification of the solidarity campaign in support of the People of Western Sahara.
- That we encourage the UN Secretary General to appoint a Special Envoy to Western Sahara, so as to ensure a continued special focus and facilitate the necessary timely interventions. We were therefore delighted

to learn from the Secretary General yesterday that the appointment of a Special Envoy has already been made. We therefore once again urge all parties to support the UN Secretary General's process and the African Union in all its endeavours in this regard.

Comrades and friends, it is now 50 years that the international law and successive UN resolutions have not been implemented regarding the resolution of the occupation of Palestine.

We all remain concerned as we learn daily of the continued human rights abuses against the People of Palestine.

As part of the role we can play, the ANC resolved that we need to hold a Global Solidarity Conference on Palestine, consisting of the Liberation Movements of Palestine and all other International Progressive Organizations who support the liberation of the Palestinian people.

The ANC continues to work hard in uniting the People of Palestine, which unity is a prerequisite for real negotiations with Israel.

We therefore urge the Socialist international to up our ante in facilitating Dialogue between these two countries for a peaceful resolution of the challenges they face.

On another hand, we are seeing countries who once epitomized hope and new beginnings descend into conflict and instability, as we have seen in many of the so-called Arab Spring countries. At the heart of this being the programme of regime change where legitimate authorities are ejected from power and replaced by puppet states.

We have seen the insatiable appetite for natural resources drive external actors to fan the flames of hostility and conflict across many resource-rich countries: as we are seeing in South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Papua New Guinea, and many, many others.

We are seeing centuries-old religious, cultural and other differences being exploited by authoritarian regimes to turn countryman against countryman across many parts of the Middle East, as the region descends into bitter sectarian warfare.

We have seen legitimate grassroots movements rise up against tyranny, only for them to be hijacked by reactionary elements or the military-industrial complex, and the power of the people usurped.

Amidst these uncertain times, we have seen democratic societies take decisions with reactionary overtones, such as the election of President Donald Trump in the United States, and Brexit in the United Kingdom.

In both cases, these actions threaten to roll back foreign policy and other advances. In the case of the US, the decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, and maintaining the blockade against the Republic of Cuba, are indications of this reactionary tendency. In the case of the UK, Brexit threatens to undermine carefully-cultivated relations with Britain and the rest of Europe – as Britain opens itself up to accusations of being insular and xenophobic.

On the other hand, however, we are at the same time witnessing the rise of pragmatic, non-ideological, 'non-establishment' political parties, as well as the coming to power of centrist parties in some of the advanced societies. This may be a cause for optimism that these new groupings will be infused with fresh thinking and new ideas on how best to advance progressive ideals – social democracy foremost amongst them.

The task before us is how best to defend and protect democracy where it is denied and under threat in these ever-changing and uncertain times. The answer, as we know, lies in progressive internationalism, in strengthening South-South cooperation, and in the transformation of Institutions of Global Governance to a rules-based system that must encourage the resolution of issues through interaction, as opposed to unilateralism.

In countries where democracy is under threat, or democratic gains are being reversed, we have to step up campaigns of solidarity and make sure our voices are heard.

In the Western Sahara for example, it has been 40 years since their country's occupation by Morocco. We need to step up efforts to engage with Morocco on this issue through the AU and UN structures, and most importantly, push for the implementation of the UN Resolution, of holding of a referendum on self-determination for the Saharawi people.

In Cuba, we must continue to support the Cuban people who continue to suffer under a harsh, inhumane and illegal blockade. We must register our loud disappointment with the reversal of the gains made in US/Cuba relations under the Obama Administration and strengthen our solidarity campaigns with the Cuban people for the lifting of the blockade . At the same time we must push for greater investment and trade between our countries and Cuba.

On Palestine, we must step up our solidarity campaigns and support measures to put pressure on Israel, owing to its continued violation of international law and successive UN resolutions.

Comrades and Compatriots

Far too many nations have and continue to suffer under the yoke of imperialism, of colonialism, of apartheid, of authoritarianism, of neo-colonialism, and of tyranny.

It is incumbent on those of us who have emerged from this dark past, and who now have democratic structures in support of the unalienable right to freedom for all – to speak out where we see injustice being meted out.

Our actions should not just be limited to solidarity campaigns; they should include political lobbying; working within the structures of our respective political systems to effect change, and most importantly, working through important structures like the SI advance international cooperation between like minded, progressive organizations.

We know, in the immortal words of the Internationale: that “freedom is merely privilege extended unless enjoyed by one and all.”