

SPEECH BY PRESIDENT MANDELA DURING THE MASAKHANE FOCUS WEEK

Bothaville, 14 October 1998

Premier of the Free State
Ministers
Mr Mayor
People of Bothaville / Kgotsong

South Africans have shown a tremendous capacity to join hands when facing difficulty. The apartheid system eventually fell because of the unity of those who were denied their rights; and because all sectors of society recognised that they had more to gain from working together than from fighting each other. It is that same quality that has helped us, so quickly, to lay the foundations for a better life.

When apartheid ended we faced the difficult task of reconstructing our shattered society and providing the most basic of services for our people. We had to build schools and hospitals; to provide housing and jobs; to boost our economy; to protect our peoples rights through our constitution and our courts; to help South Africa deal with the division of its past and start the healing process; to deal with abuse and damage which engulfed most of our communities.

Essentially our task was to create the conditions in which every South African has the opportunity to create a better life for themselves. But government cannot meet these challenges by itself. It requires of us all to pull together, into a partnership, in order to bring about the necessary changes.

In order to achieve these goals, we also needed to transform government from a system serving minority interests to one that meets the needs of all South Africans. And all these things had to be done in a country where most people were denied experience of government or proper education and training. This is why we have placed a heavy emphasis on building capacity in government.

In spite of all the difficulties, we have succeeded as a nation in beginning to change life for millions of people in ways they could only dream about a few years ago. Over the past four years government has been acting together with the private sector, non-governmental organisations; workers and communities to rebuild and develop our country. It is this spirit of partnership and consultation that has allowed us to bring clean water to over 2,5 million people, build over 600 clinics and electrify 2 million homes. This is only a start, we know, and there are many needs still to be met. But it gives us confidence that we will meet the challenge we now face of speeding up deliver.

Today we have come together to celebrate some of the fruits of democracy and partnership in Bothaville/Kgotsong. Here the democratically elected local authority and an increasingly united community have been working together with national and provincial government to normalise life in a community that previously had little infrastructure, poor housing, crime, unemployment and boycotts of payment and services.

The two projects I have visited here in Bothaville/Kgotsong demonstrate what can be achieved when we work together.

The off-site housing project has brought together many different role-players: farmers, farm-workers, the departments of land, agriculture and housing for the eventual benefit of 1000 people. Though the project was conceived many years ago, it could only come to fruition with democracy. Farmers

involved in this project must be commended for their hands-on approach to the development of their employees land and housing needs. It is by joining hands, across the old divides, in practical action to overcome the legacy of our past, that we will find true reconciliation and nation building.

We have all been disturbed of late to hear about the increasing violent attacks on farmers. In the Bothaville area, no less than five separate attacks have taken place in the last year. The Rural Safety and Security summit we have just held has, we are convinced, laid a sound basis for stabilising the situation on farms.

But the complex problem of crime on our farms, as elsewhere, demand long term solutions. In the meantime, we all need to commit ourselves to doing everything in our power to stop that kind of violence. Efforts to secure more stable farming environments by normalising labour relations and providing security for workers will make an important contribution.

As the test case for the policy of providing off-site housing for farm dwellers under the Extension of Security of Tenure Act, the Bothaville housing project has been designed to allow easy access for to facilities such as clinics, libraries and sports complexes, while securing land and housing. This kind of effort can only enhance stability.

The infrastructure projects is no less important. Apart from bringing water to over 14 000 people, it has boosted the local economy by employing local people in the construction phase.

We should not forget that this infrastructure project in Bothaville is just one among thousands other such projects across the country's 850 municipalities, under the Municipal Infrastructure Programme. This Programme, now in its third phase, has brought improvements to about eleven million people and there are another 600 projects in the pipeline.

Your housing project is contributing to a national effort which is now seeing about 1,000 houses brought into construction or completed every day.

Both these and other local projects have been initiated, built and are being maintained by you, the people of Bothaville/Kgotsoeng. You have done it together as a community. You have consulted and gone about responsibility creating a partnership to give real meaning to Masakhane, that tradition of building one another. I would like to say: Congratulations to you all!

During this Masakhane Focus Week, people all over the country are celebrating similar achievements in building our nation. Masakhane is about people taking responsibility for their own upliftment and participating in the governing of their own lives. It is about empowering ourselves by creating good working relations between government and communities, for the benefit of everybody, just as you have done here and just as other communities have done.

It is about helping to build the capacity of our councillors and our provincial governments so that they, in turn, can best service our needs. We are celebrating progress in the implementation of our programmes for improved services and living conditions. We are also gathering together to commit ourselves further to tackling these and other challenges before us, like crime, unemployment and AIDS.

When we say that the best solutions to these challenges can only be found when work with each other, it requires a commitment of each and everyone of us. Today we should all ask ourselves; what have I done to improve the surroundings in which I live? Do I litter or do I protect my surroundings? Do I spread racial hatred or do I promote peace and reconciliation? Do I buy stolen goods or do I help reduce crime? Do I pay my dues or do I cheat on my taxes, service fees and licences? Do I

expect everything to be delivered to me or do I work with my local councilors to create a better life for myself and my community?

Co-operation between government, business, workers and other sectors brings a lasting relationship that benefits all. It is the road to creating jobs and business opportunities, reducing crime and improving the lives of people where they live.

These partnerships helped us lay the foundations for reconstruction. The building has begun. Together we can turn our villages and towns, our cities and rural areas into parts of a new South Africa that we can all be truly proud of.

Masakhane!

I thank you