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la science et la culture

**Award Ceremony of the  
Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize  
UNESCO, 3 February 1992**

**Address by Mr Nelson Mandela  
President of the African National Congress  
Co-Prizewinner**

Mr Master of Ceremonies,  
Mr Director-General of UNESCO,  
Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Firstly, permit me to express my profound and heartfelt appreciation of this honour that the Jury of the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Foundation for Peace Research has deemed fit to bestow on me. I accept this esteemed Prize in all humility and in full knowledge that it is not the individual, Nelson Mandela, who is being so honoured, but rather the struggle for freedom and democracy in South Africa, with which my life has been so intertwined.

It is a hopeful sign of the potential of my Country that this year this Prize is shared by two people who trace their respective political ideals to opposing poles on our national political spectrum. It is the hope of all South Africans that this joint award signifies the convergence of our aims and a growing consensus that has begun to emerge amongst the overwhelming majority of South Africans about the future direction of our country. That developing national mood finds expression in the Convention for a Democratic South Africa which has placed before all of us the imperative that collectively commence the task of building a non-racial democracy.

It has been no easy assignment to build that consensus. Our country has finally arrived at it by a route that was extremely painful and which entailed great costs amongst which we must count human lives lost and broken. Perhaps history will one day record and enumerate the many lost opportunities.

South Africa is distinguished as a country to which history bequeathed two divergent nationalisms. These two, African and Afrikaner nationalism, embody fundamentally different perspectives on the character and the future of our country. Because both nationalisms lay claim to the same piece of earth, our common home, South Africa, the contest between them was bound to be both heated and brutal. We are confident that the progress we are making in the CODESA talks will lay the basis for an end at least to the more violent aspects of that contest.

The shared commitment to democracy of all the participants in the Convention for a Democratic South Africa is indicative of a considerable narrowing of the distance that formerly separated Black from White in our country. It requires courage and vision on the part of all our political leaders to grasp the challenge presented by this unique moment. Posterity will not forgive us if we let slip this opportunity to move as painlessly as possible towards the goal of a country that is free and at peace with itself and its neighbours.

Eighty years ago, when the founders of the African National Congress gathered in the city of Bloemfontein, our movement embraced certain universally accepted core principles that form the basis of modern human rights culture. We have waged struggle and nursed the tender shoots of this culture in our country against great odds.

Reduced to their essentials these principles are that:

- governments must derive their authority from the consent of the governed;
- no person or group of persons should be subjected to oppression, domination or discrimination by virtue of his/her race, gender, colour or religious belief;
- all persons should enjoy security in their persons and their goods against intrusions by secular or clerical authorities;
- all persons shall enjoy the right to life, unfettered by impositions from either the secular or clerical authorities;
- all persons should have the untrammelled right to hold and express whatever opinions they wish to subscribe to as long as the exercise of that right does not infringe on the rights of others.

In accepting this Prize today we feel that the Jury is acknowledging the abiding value of these principles and endorses them as sound.

The past 12 months have witnessed many earth-shaking developments in various parts of the world. The march to greater democracy has not left the African continent behind. In every part of our continent the search for greater democracy and to inject real meaning into freedom and democracy is proceeding apace. We wish to associate ourselves and our movement with this great tide of freedom in the conviction that responsible government is a function not of wise rulers but rather of a people who are politically engaged.

The commitment of ANC to these values derives from our understanding of their essential purpose, that is the empowerment of the individual citizen, irrespective of his/her status, by equipping him/her to cope with the complexities of life. South Africa cries out for peace and for democracy. It is our considered judgement that we shall not have the one without the other. What we seek to build in South Africa is a society centred on human needs and aspirations. This requires that we eschew the misanthropic ideology of racism and apartheid. We as South Africans must part company with policies that render human beings the objects of manipulation by political and economic powers for the benefit of a privileged few. Our country

must develop a national commitment to create conditions that shall enhance the dignity of all those living within it.

The oppressed majority in South Africa have waged struggle to capture for themselves the right to determine their own destiny, including the right to determine for themselves what to do with their future. The indispensable condition for that is the achievement of democracy. We consider that a goal that is worthy of the support of the entire international community. This Prize to us has meaning because it symbolizes that support.

**Thank you.**