

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome this distinguished gathering to Ottawa and to extend the best wishes of the Canadian government for the success of your deliberations.

Just 15 months ago, I addressed a similar conference here in Ottawa which was exploring the provision of the educational tools for a new non-racial and democratic South Africa. At that time, in the earliest days of the Pretoria spring, Nelson Mandela had not yet been released, opposition political organizations were still banned, the State of Emergency remained in effect, and the pillars of apartheid seemed cemented in place. We've come a long way since then. The political environment in South Africa has been radically transformed in the past year.

The mood in South Africa has changed as well. Black South Africans now firmly believe that political power is in their grasp, if not this year then very soon. It is not just a dream for their children, or their children's children, to achieve. This confidence that their long struggle for political rights will soon bear fruit is accompanied by a painful realization that the immediate economic fruits of political change may prove modest indeed. The black community will rapidly assume its leadership in all levels of the economy, of government, and of society; but the new South Africa will be constructed over several generations. The scars of 40 years of apartheid will not fade for many years.

The easy part of change in South Africa may prove to be the negotiation of a new constitution. The difficult part is to transform the economic and social reality in South Africa which will remain grim for some time to come. No one should envy the government that will assume power in a post-apartheid South Africa. It will face a very, very tough job. How do you convince the black masses who have great expectations about what liberty will bring, that they must continue to be patient? How do you expect that, in most cases, their poverty will continue, because they lack the skills, and the jobs, to acquire the homes and consumer goods and social services that they desire?

The American civil rights poet, Langston Hughes, once wrote:

What happens to a dream deferred:
Does it wither, like a raisin in the sun,
Or does it explode?

If the dream cannot become reality suddenly, at least its achievement must begin, so change will neither wither nor explode. That is the challenge facing South Africa's leaders as a result of the revolution of rising expectations in South Africa's townships. It is a challenge which the African National Congress (ANC) leadership, the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), Inkatha, and the present government is very aware of. It is the challenge