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STATEMENT BY FW DE KLERK ON 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS ACCEPTANCE OF THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

Twenty-five years have passed since the cold winter's day in Oslo when Nelson Mandela and I were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

In my acceptance speech I observed that peace was a frame of mind:

"It is a frame of mind in which countries, communities, parties and individuals seek to resolve their differences through agreements, through negotiation and compromise, instead of threats, compulsion and violence."

I said that peace was also a framework.

"It is a framework consisting of rules, laws, agreements and conventions - a framework providing mechanisms for the peaceful resolution of the inevitable clashes of interest between countries, communities, parties and individuals. It is a framework within which the irresistible and dynamic processes of social, economic and political development can be regulated and accommodated."

I added that:

- *"Peace does not fare well where poverty and deprivation reign.*
- *It does not flourish where there is ignorance and a lack of education and information.*
- *Repression, injustice and exploitation are inimical with peace.*
- *Peace is gravely threatened by inter-group fear and envy and by the unleashing of unrealistic expectations.*
- *Racial, class and religious intolerance and prejudice are its mortal enemies."*

At the very moment that Mr Mandela and I were receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, negotiators from all our political parties were putting the finishing touches to an Interim Constitution that would provide the basis for our non-racial constitutional democracy. The Interim Constitution included immutable principles that were in 1996 distilled into the foundational values in section 1 of our final Constitution.

Those principles include:

Human dignity, the achievement of equality, the advancement of human rights and freedoms; non-racialism, non-sexism, the supremacy of the Constitution and the Rule of Law and a system of multi-party democratic government that is accountable, responsive and open.

How have we done since then?



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- All South Africans now enjoy human dignity that our Constitution enshrines - but what does human dignity mean in circumstances in which 40% of our people live in poverty and unemployment?
- We have made no progress in achieving equality. We are the most unequal country in the world - and have actually become more unequal since 1994.
- The human rights and freedoms of our people are now protected by our Bill of Rights. The courts have upheld these rights and freedoms - but we have a long way to go before they are all enjoyed in practice. In particular, the language, cultural and non-discrimination rights that are central elements in the Bill of Rights are under enormous pressure.
- Sadly, South Africa can no longer be called a non-racial country. We are rapidly becoming, once again, a society in which race and not merit is the main determinant of success.
- We have made considerable progress in promoting gender equality but too many women are still subject to gender violence and more than half of our women have to bring up their families without the help of a husband.
- We have independent courts that have fiercely upheld the Constitution and the Rule of Law - and that have played a major role in combating corruption and abuse of power. However, minorities often feel that their special rights are not upheld.
- We remain a vibrant and genuine multi-party democracy but struggle sometimes to ensure openness, responsiveness and accountability.

So, it is very much a mixed bag. We have come a long way since 1994 - but we still have a very long way to go to achieve our constitutional vision.

Twenty-five years ago, nobody imagined that the future would be easy. Peace requires a never-ending struggle. We have the framework for peace, of which I spoke, in our Constitution. We need to find once again the frame of mind that enabled us to reach agreement after so many years of division and bitterness.

Despite all this - despite all the challenges that we continue to face; despite all our disappointments and failures - despite the fact that we have fallen far short of the vision that we set for ourselves in our constitution, South Africa is nevertheless a much better place than it was before we embarked on this great journey. And it is an infinitely better place than it would have been had we not succeeded in resolving our differences peacefully through negotiations.

What we achieved was, in the words of NP van Wyk Louw, a deed *“that o’er the earth resounds and mocks the ages in their impotence”*.

That deed is still a source of hope for all South Africans and still has the capacity to unlock the tremendous potential of our country. However, to achieve this potential we will need to find once again the frame of mind that made our historic agreement possible - and we must



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all renew our commitment to achieving the vision that is enshrined in the values on which our Constitution and our new society has been founded.

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