

UNITING BEHIND THE CONSTITUTION IN SUPPORT OF GENUINE MULTI-PARTY DEMOCRACY
ADDRESS BY MOSIUOA LEKOTA,
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TO THE
FW DE KLERK FOUNDATION CONFERENCE ON
UNITING BEHIND THE CONSTITUTION
PROTEA PRESIDENT HOTEL, CAPE TOWN
2ND FEBRUARY 2013

Let me just say very briefly that when I was Minister of Defence we were on one of these marketing trips, and Sir Charles, one of the British people, told me and others a story that I think will guide me today. He spoke about how a very important military meeting was arranged and speakers who spoke and spoke. But there were too many speakers and then by the time the last one came everybody had consumed so much that people had run out of patience. So as he was speaking they were talking in very loud voices and nobody was listening. But the last speaker was determined that he is going to deliver his speech because he had done all this preparation. He says he ground on, and ground on, and ground on, but nobody was listening. And then something developed on the main table, tension there exploded and actually their voices subsided and they were stretching their necks to check what is happening on the main table. And then they heard one of the august people there saying, look I am tired of this thing. And then the guy with the gavel took it up and brought it down right on the plate of this guy, and then he started to go down and disappear behind the table, but even as he did so he said, hit me again, I can still hear him. So I will avoid a situation like that, I should really avoid a situation like that.

The question that I have been asked to talk to you about brought to mind two things that Nelson Mandela said during his term as President. It was a joint sitting, I think, and he reminded the Members of Parliament that there were good men and good women in all the political parties represented in the House, and then came round to say that there were evil men and evil women in the ANC and all of the other parties in the House. And then he said, the challenge facing our country is to aggregate the good men and women on the one side so that they may guide the fortunes of our country into the future.

I think, in a very significant way, what we are trying to do here is to grapple with that question: How at this time do we aggregate good South Africans on the one side so that they are able to direct the affairs of our nation so that we can achieve those outcomes that the CODESA process gave us? That really is the question. And I think that we must realise that we have to start like young people, we must have the energy to grapple with this problem. It is not extremely difficult. It does sound like

that, but it is not. The last elections the ruling party got 62% of the votes, opposition parties put together 38%. If it was then I would say we need to get 12% so that we can bring the ANC down to 50%, equal perhaps even, and the atmosphere would have been different. We still have that challenge.

The one thing that I must add is that of the voters during that election, some seven million registered voters did not go and vote. In doing that they strengthened the ruling party. I think they did not go and vote and I dare say that in that group the African section would have been the majority in that seven million because in any aggregate Africans are always the majority; it is a very big group of people. And if Africans did not go and vote and they are the majority in that group, it must be because they had already come to see that there was something seriously wrong with the ruling party. I add to that number the men and women who were supposed to register and go and vote but who did not. So the seven million increases. By how much, I do not know. We do not know but there can be no gainsay in the fact that that happened.

Then there are those who went to vote, and voted for the myriad of small political parties which did not even gain one representative in the House. So if you take then that number again, then the seven million increases also by that number. To get 12% and therefore get to 50% to reduce the majority of the ruling party has to do with those numbers. And so we have moved on since the last election, we are now like four years on. Since then the ruling party has committed so many blunders, so many serious violations, I do not want to detail them now, most of us know about them, that that 62% is no longer 62%.

And I might say with some measure of certainty, having worked for the movement for freedom in this country all of my life, I never went to Russia or some other country like that. I was always here in the townships and everywhere, and so on, every part of the country. There is no part of the country I have not been in the communities, and I have been doing the rounds again to see what is going on. The only time I left South Africa is when I went overseas on Robben Island, otherwise I was always here. So I think it may be accepted that there are things I can say with a measure of absolute certainty and a measure of accuracy.

So now the mood in our community - I am talking about African communities - is very angry, it is very upset with the ruling party. I was in the Eastern Cape a few weeks back and I reminded our people there - I was in Adelaide, at Bedford, Cookhouse, having started in Port Elizabeth the night

before - so I reminded the meeting there that in 1993, Nelson Mandela, speaking to the Cosatu Congress in June, July that year, said to the workers, "If the ANC does to you what the apartheid government did to you, then you must do to the ANC what you did to the apartheid government." No less an authority, not me - Nelson Mandela - says this to the Cosatu Congress in 1993. And I am going to remind our communities, I said to my colleagues in the opposition, and all of that, we must go and remind the people of our country that this is what Nelson Mandela said, if the ANC does this to you, then do what you did.

The people have no services anywhere. It is the same issues we complained about. The people go and complain, "We want water" in Ficksburg. Their leader is shot and killed. The workers go and complain about wages, they got shot and killed, and so on, and so on. But things are worse. We used to complain about the quality of Bantu education, but under the old order you had to pass with 50% plus. That was expected. Now, in order to bolster the numbers of matric passes in Gauteng, which is ruled by the ruling party, they now pass children there with 33%. Which means they do not know 67% of what they are supposed to know. You would never dream of a pass like that under apartheid.

But, you see, they have to do that so that they show the DA and Mrs Helen Zille and others to have lower passes. Now, I think we have to compete with the international community, with the Japanese, with the Germans, with the English, and all of them. They come to us with the geniuses - not just geniuses, highly trained and qualified geniuses. And then we want to come with some 33% pass. Most of the children do not even know how to count. The country is going down. Now, those kind of things are what we shall be talking to the people about.

So the situation in this country has deteriorated terribly. There are no working traffic lights. The communities in which we grew up, and so on, where we never drank water smelling of sewerage, are now in that situation. So that deterioration calls for men and women, all of us, to rise to this challenge. So we must rally behind the Constitution. The Mandela De Klerk leadership, in spite of their differences, got to CODESA and brought everybody together and said, let us discuss the problems of our country. That legacy we have to claim.

The ruling party has made it quite clear that they see this Constitution, negotiated at CODESA, as an instrument of the enemies of South Africa. We are now on record having said if that is your view, we want to make it quite clear we are committed to that Constitution. It is a perfect Constitution. It is the only framework within which our nation can develop into a stable, united, non-racial, and all of

the things we are talking about, it is the only one. If we lose this Constitution, we have nothing. And in order to ensure that this Constitution is held in place we need to be dealing with the battle of protecting and ensuring that we have a judiciary that is reliable and independent. Because this drive to attack the judiciary is intended to ensure that nobody's rights can be protected. So it is a vital thing that we make it very clear, and we need to move.

The advantage is that we do not need to go for armed struggle as in the old days. We do not need that. Democratising the country, the CODESA and Constitution, that Constitution has given each one of us a right to vote. And if we go back to the figures that I started with, the way to rally, the way to ensure that the Constitution does not go, is that every South African of all walks of life, whatever their differences may be, must go and vote. And we must get everybody to understand that message. Please go and vote, but vote on the opposition side. Go and vote.

When you sit at home with your vote you have no right to open your mouth afterwards and say that this thing is not right, that thing is what, because you have given power to those who are doing these wrong things. Go and only be counted because we have the handle to deal with that thing, we go there and we vote. We must go and make those Xs. We must get our friends, we must get our neighbours, we must get the co-workers, fellow travellers in the aeroplanes, in the trains. If we can get everybody just to understand this singular thing, that we have now an instrument, that we can solve the problem without spilling blood.

And we have already been talking to the people of Sasolburg, do not destroy your infrastructure. You do not need to do that. We did that under apartheid because we did not have an instrument other than to attract attention by destruction, and so on. Now we do not need that. We need to build on what we inherited to take the country forward. So this is perhaps easier said than done. The opposition parties have been discussing intensively working together. We must work together.

But I am glad I can say this afternoon that on this issue of working together, in the last meeting that we had in Johannesburg we were at one, at least definitely the parties that were there, we were completely at one. We go, in Parliament all of us are agreed on that issue. We are working towards what you might call a coalition of the voters. You see, I heard some other talk, but I want to say this, we need every South African to go and vote for the party of their choice. They must go and vote. Because you cannot change people overnight, no. You cannot do something, and then say now come here and vote for that and that. There are habits, there are commitments people already have, and

so we need to get everybody to go and vote, and vote as they choose.

But we must guide the people. When they vote - we have looked through the parties and we are looking at that process, we are about to finalise it - what are the issues that are common amongst all of us? On the issue of the Constitution there is no debate, so please go and vote for the retention of the Constitution. You can go and vote for the IFP, the IFP is for the Constitution. You can go and vote for COPE, it is for the Constitution. You can go and vote for the DA, it is for the Constitution. So when you do that, once you have done that, all of those votes cast have already been cast in defence of the Constitution.

We want to do something about service delivery to the people. These parties, all of these opposition parties, are at one on that issue. Please vote for whatever party you vote for. Because if I am going to say you must leave that party and come and vote for COPE, it is not going to happen, in fact, we are going to alienate each other. Go and vote. But we can select that issue and identify it as an issue on which we are one. We want good service delivery for the people. We want quality education for all the children of this country, in all the provinces. And these opposition parties are at one on that issue. Go and vote, you are voting for this.

We want to do something about the electoral system, because at the present time power is not in the hands of the people, power is in the hands of the political party. So you put the emblem of the party, and people vote for that party. And then a group goes to Mangaung and set their court by itself, and then they decide, okay, you are my cousin, you will take this position. You are my uncle, you will do that, and you will be the DG so that you can get all the tenders, go there, and so on. But where are the people to decide who must go and represent? They are not there.

So we need to do something about the electoral system. We need some portion of the representatives in the National Assembly who must go and stand before the voters and say, vote for me, I will do this, I will do that, I commit to that. And when there is no water, or something, the people can say, come here and explain. If the sewerage is all over stinking, please come and explain this thing and do something about it. Until we get political power into the hands of the people we will always have these uprisings. Sasol, Balfour, Ficksburg, you count them.

Because just now I feel like I felt under apartheid. I do not have anybody in Parliament who represents me. I can not go to Parliament and say, look my vote, look, what is this, and so on. There

is nobody I can punish. Even the President, the head of state, said do not ask me. Do not ask me, ask the ANC, or ask this and the other. Then you wonder, when the President stands before the nation and says, do not ask me, who then is supposed to know? So you ask me how much money did you spend on Nkandla, and all of that. Do not ask me, ask the minister, I do not know. And so on. So who knows? Who is the head of state?

We need to do something about this. We need to be able to place before the nation some programme. We have to look at the economy, look at the National Development Plan. We must look at that. We must decide, what are the things in the National Development Plan that we will commit to? If there are things that we will not commit to, we must be able to say to the voters, unfortunately we do not think we can do that, certainly not in the first year, first term, or something like that. But then the people know these are the things that can be done and that we can expect will be done for us when and if these people were voted by us.

When you read the newspapers there is an assumption that many people are making. They say we are now going to be stuck with Zuma for the next seven years. I would like to add this point. Mangaung was a meeting of the ANC. Mangaung elected who of the fraudsters and who not, will lead the ANC for the next seven years. The question of the choice of who will lead South Africa in the next term of government must be decided by the voters of our country. Us, the people. We must go in numbers to the voting stations. We must go there and vote, and the outcome there will either put the forum of opposition parties ahead of the ruling party or the African National Congress.

I want to suggest this, I have a picture, this picture I see in my mind that President Zuma will continue to lead a coterie of all those fraudsters, and all of that, leave him there with them. Let us vote for these opposition parties, put in a new leadership. And then you will see the difference. There is Mangaung and here is South Africa. So it is the only way in which we can save the Constitution, and save the promises of democracy made as we were going to freedom, and made when we concluded the negotiations at CODESA.

I take great pleasure in the fact that the problem that we are faced with in this country now does not choose colour. Children who are white-skinned South African children are being excluded from universities, some of them. When it comes to jobs they are being excluded, and so on. But you know, the great thing about it, now the children of members of the opposition parties, certainly in the Congress of the People I know, it does not matter how many of us struggled for freedom, our

children have got wrong surnames so they can not apply for jobs in government offices. Oh, yes! Even Frank Chikane, he has got a wrong surname now. He can also not apply for a job without government interfering. We are faced with men and women who are determined to make life impossible for anyone who wants governance with excellence. And this we must underline again my dear friends. The Stone Age did not end because there was no more stones. Stones are still plenty around. But the Stone Age ended because people had discovered a new instrument. They took steel out of stone and made pots with it. And that was a more efficient instrument with which to cook. They took steel out of there and they made spears and therefore the Stone Age passed.

The ANC was formed to democratise South Africa. That was its historic mission. It was not formed to govern. In order to liberate the country and all of that, you recruit the skills you need for that purpose. But, sadly, the day after you got that democracy or you got that freedom, you need a different instrument. You need a formation of men and women with the necessary skills to govern. And what South Africa needs today is not how many dishes of boiled mielies I ate on Robben Island, that is history. People now need services. People now need quality life. Children need education. We need a government that knows how to manage the resources of the nation. And forget the sentimentality that we are black, it has got nothing to do with it. You can not dismiss a person from a job, who knows how to do the job, and put somebody there because they have got the same colour as you when they do not know anything about what needs to be done. And then people are sitting there, no food, no this and that. We are heading for a serious catastrophe if we go this way. So now we must say to the people, if you vote for us we will depoliticise the public service.

Men and women who apply for jobs will be evaluated on the basis - can they do it or not, not on the basis are they members of COPE or members of DA or members of IFP. Evaluate them on the basis of what they can do. Because if we are going to deliver quality services to the people we must bring quality men and women who can do these things for the people. That is what we are confronted with. And we need to be practical. There will be prices paid with this thing.

When Tatane was shot dead in Ficksburg there was a contingent of young people that were sent there, they had just been trained. They were trained after President Zuma had said that the police will become a police force, even though the Constitution talks about a police service. So there is a force there in the townships, maybe you do not know, but in the townships - those who come from the black communities will be aware - now there is a police unit called the Berets. They are slaughtering people there. The things that they are doing are shocking.

Now, that the people know. So those here in this country, those who are seen to oppose these things that the government is doing, are going to find that they will be on the rough receiving side. I spoke at the funeral of Tatane in Ficksburg, and I said this is only the beginning, and this thing is going on. And then when Marikana happened I was dumbfounded, I could not believe it. I talked to some of the mineworkers in those areas. There are people who are being used there. And the workers said, but these guys speak languages we do not understand. What language is this they speak? We do not know. So something very, very serious is also happening.

We can not sit back, we must rally and defend the Constitution. We must be ready. Within the opposition parties, we need men and women who must not only assist in developing and policy options, and all of that, and so on, but who are also going to be willing. Some of whom, not all, must be willing to go there and assist in implementing strategies and tactics and the work that needs to be done to take things forward. It can not be that Nelson Mandela was the last of the leaders ready to sacrifice for the people. From among us, here, outside, there are many young people - black, white, you name it - ready if they are shown the direction to go, to work and ensure that our country becomes what it ought to be and take its rightful place among other nations. So this is where we are.

Many of the people, by the way, who are sitting in the National Assembly, were not elected by the people, because most of them, people do not know them. Who is that guy? They do not know. And therefore we need to know that we can never go and stand before the people and speak because the people will say, who are you? We do not know you. That is why Sasolburg happened because none of them could go there and stand in front of the people and talk to the people, and so on. Nobody knows them. They do not belong there. Now, we must be able to go and appear before the people and say, this is who we are, this is what we can do for you.

I am of the view that when we go to the State of the Nation address, we need to do something. In our last meeting we considered the issue and we will finalise our decision in the meeting of the 12th, because we are meeting again on the 12th. It can not be a State of the Nation as usual, there must be something different. And we must say something to the nation that is different. And we will do so. The campaign must start now. We need to be able to say, that is what you have heard, that is what has been suggested, but we want to tell you something different.

It must begin now so that the people going forward can see that that is what government says. Now

you are promised that the 'willing seller' - 'willing buyer' will go. We have asked the question, if you get rid of it, what are you going to do with the property clause in the Constitution? Are we going to Zimbabwe, or what? There is no answer. But we can not pretend we do not see or hear. As we sit here, Nkwinti has told parliament that 99% of land that was productive that was bought by government or transferred to other communities, especially the African communities, that that land is lying fallow and unproductive now. That is what he said, 99%. That is a serving minister. Which means the food production that was on that land has been lost to the nation. Now we are importing chicken from Brazil, and it must, necessarily, it must be more expensive than the chicken that we are producing in this country. It also means that the workers that used to work on those farms are now unemployed, they are not earning anything and they can not buy food. Crime must shoot up. Because men and women who are hungry and have no job, they lose their rational thinking. They do strange things.

People talk about 2019. No! We need this government of the ANC out of the way yesterday. We need it out yesterday. I say this, I have no fear in saying this. I am not ashamed of it. I was a member of the ANC for 31 years of my life, amongst which 13 ½ years of my life were spent in the prisons of the country for freedom, for peace and democracy among the people of our country. That is what I was in jail for. When that thing does not happen, I can not suffer from the fatigue of struggle. I am ready to return if need be because there are men and women I agreed with, we will fight to get freedom and give our people the necessary atmosphere to build a decent life.

Some of them lost their lives loyal to that commitment, and I cannot now renege on that agreement. And I think we must invite all other South Africans to say in honour of those who paid so much - the Bram Fischers, the Joe Slovos and all of these people, Helen Josephs, and Albertina Sisulus, and all who died - there must be a peaceful country. We owe it to them, not only to go and vote but if there is a higher price to be paid, we must be ready for it.