

Message of support from Minister Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma to the conference to mark the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Anti-Apartheid Movement

Making Hope a Reality: Celebrating the Past; Building the Future

Please accept my best wishes for a successful meeting to mark the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Anti Apartheid Movement (AAM) on June 26, 1959 in London and to build solidarity for the future.

It was of course no accident, that June 26 – South Africa Freedom Day – which marked the historic adoption of the Freedom Charter in Kliptown in 1955 – was chosen to found the Movement by South African exiles and British supporters because it reflected the direct solidarity of the Movement with the oppressed millions in South Africa.

Yes, it was a small beginning with a small number of committed people, but inspired by great idealism and noble principles as well as by leaders such Chief Albert Luthuli, Father Trevor Huddelston, Julius Nyerere and others.

Among its first major challenges was to end the continued membership of the apartheid regime and its racial institutions of the Commonwealth, international sports and other bodies, etc.

Indeed, by 1963, South Africa was excluded from the Commonwealth as well as the Olympic Games; the UN had adopted a resolution calling for the Release of all Political Prisoners by a vote of 101 to 1; a UN Special Committee against Apartheid had been established and African States formed the Organisation of African Unity. Many of these achievements were the results of initiatives and campaigns by the AAM.

By this time, the AAM had established a basis for a world wide campaign against apartheid in cooperation with the peoples and governments of the world and acting closely with other solidarity movements, the OAU, the UN and a variety of other bodies. It had formulated a comprehensive Programme to isolate and boycott all apartheid institutions and bodies, promoted the consumer boycott of South African goods whereby individuals in effect voted for economic sanctions, and intensified the sports, cultural, academic and other boycotts. The Movement also continued its campaigns for the release of political prisoners and in support of the African liberation struggle. All this was of course done in close consultation with South African leaders including Oliver Tambo, the leaders of other liberation movements and the Front – Line States and UN bodies etc.

As the Movement developed and faced new challenges, it also assumed new responsibilities, commensurate with developments in Southern Africa and became the most influential and powerful solidarity movement in Britain and the world. It is also the one movement that understood the power of music and the two Mandela concerts reflected its worldwide impact.

No one can deny the immense contribution that the AAM made to the liberation of Southern Africa and we salute all those who sacrificed so much from afar to help bring about freedom in our region and our country.

We also recognize the role of former AAM Presidents from Barbara Castle and David Steel to Trevor Huddelston, who all inspired so many into solidarity action.

As I greet you all, including Bob Hughes and the ACTSA leadership and members, I am sure we all miss the absence of Mike Terry who only last year was taking initiatives to prepare for this 50th anniversary meeting.

END