Transcript: Former President Thabo Mbeki's interaction with students at Rhodes University on the occasion of the celebration of Africa Day.
Rhodes Theatre, Rhodes University, Grahamstown
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Let me join Professor Hendricks in saluting these students for their courage to summon me to come to Rhodes University.

When I got the message – it was a verbal message – that the students would like me to come here today, I was actually very pleased. I want to say thank you very much indeed for taking this initiative; particularly to the organisers who are seated at the table.

We were just talking with Vice Chancellor Mazibela about the fact that for the majority of countries in Africa, this is a public holiday; but not in our country it is not. There must be something wrong with that.

So it is very very important indeed that you took this opportunity to mark Africa Day and Africa Week because I think it is important for us, as South Africans, to recognise that South Africa is indeed part of Africa and that we share a common destiny with the rest of our continent and that there is no way that South Africa can remain detached from the rest of Africa.

I think this is very important and it is something we need to drill into our own minds so that we understand where South Africa is and where South Africa belongs.

I think you can see this in many ways – that interconnection between South Africa and the rest of the Continent. You see this manifested in the number of Africans that come to South Africa to live, you see it in the economic relations that our country has with the rest of the Continent, you see even South Africa's standing in the rest of the world – South Africa stands as tall as it is, basically because it is standing on the shoulders of the rest of the continent.

So, am saying I am very glad indeed that we decided that we must observe Africa Day and have this Africa Week precisely to ensure that we demonstrate this integration of ourselves with the rest of the continent.

As we were driving to the airport in Johannesburg earlier today I was listening to the radio and they were discussing Africa Day. Someone made this correct observation that still, many South Africans will travel to Ghana, Nigeria, or somewhere else on the Continent and when they return and are asked where they have been, they would respond "to Africa."

This is a subconscious thing which suggests detachment, so I am saying that I am very glad that the students have taken this initiative to ensure that we are indeed part of Africa and I think that one of the things about this topic, "The role of the youth in the African Renaissance," is the challenge that we as South Africans face to educate ourselves about the Continent.

I have known South Africans who when you say there is a trip on the continent, and you would have to join the delegation, they find all manner of excuses to not travel because they believe that everywhere else in Africa is infested with malaria-carrying mosquitoes. So they are afraid of travelling to Africa.

But if you say, you have to travel to New York, the suitcases are packed within 30 minutes.

I am saying that it is critically important to ensure that the youth, especially the working youth, are educated about what the continent is and what it stands for, what it's history is and in that context, to educate ourselves even about South Africa.

I do not know how many of us in this room can say we know South Africa. We need that education.

The Barberton Mountains, in the north east – if I asked the students in this room, what is remarkable about these Mountains, you would not know. What is remarkable about the Barberton Mountains is that it is one of the two oldest pieces of earth in the history of the world.

And so, the scientists have studied this. This is the earliest evidence of the formation of the earth. I am mentioning it to say that I think one of the tasks we have is to educate ourselves about our continent and our country, because I think that without this understanding of who and what we are, we would not be able to do the things we have to do.

Over the years, we have spoken about the need to ensure the victory of the African Renaissance and to ensure that the 21st becomes an African Century. We are raising these matters indeed because I think they are critically important and need to happen. But this means that we have to wage quiet a difficult struggle to achieve these objectives which are, in the end, focused on the upliftment of the ordinary African masses.

And what is that struggle about?

I think most urgently it is a struggle about peace and stability. As you can see, this challenge continues to confront us in various parts of the African continent – Somalia, Sudan and other parts of the Continent. [This is] the struggle to ensure that the continent is transformed into a continent that is stable and peaceful.

It is a particular challenge because in many instances it is quite easy not to understand these conflicts or what it is that has caused this instability and what has contributed to these conditions. And in situations like this, this failure to properly understand what the nature of the conflict is means that you cannot find the right solutions.

I am saying that this issue about peace and stability on our continent is one of the critical matters that has to be attended to if indeed this 21st century is to become an African one. And it means you yourselves as students, should try to answer this question.

Take Somalia. Do an exercise yourselves and ask yourselves about the problem in Somalia: what are these people fighting about? Why are they going around killing each other? Ask these questions and see what answers you arrive at.

You can conduct such an exercise to understand what the Africans have to do when we say we must engage in a struggle to achieve peace and stability.

Siyabula mentioned that we are concerned with this matter of Darfur. We were asked by the African Union to lead a Panel which would advise the African Union on what to do to resolve this conflict that has been going on since 2003.

All manner of efforts have been taken to ensure that this conflict ends, but we are not quite there yet. And so the African Union said lets sit down and look at this matter and what can we propose that would result in an end to this conflict.

And that means that we would try our best to understand what this conflict is about – to say why are people angry with one another? Why are they taking up guns to shoot at one another? (And in many instances to overcome particular images that have been created and communicated via the mass media) So as we arrive in Darfur, we have a particular picture about Darfur which we read about or saw on television; and when we get to Darfur we find a very different picture.

So I am saying that is a particular challenge we face to ensure that we the youth, all of us, understand what the causes of the conflict are because indeed, this is one of the urgent tasks we have: to ensure that the continent is peaceful and stable.

The second task we have of course is to ensure that we have a continent that is ruled by democratically elected leaders. And that is also a challenge because I think that one of the matters we need to look closely at are these national features in each country, and therefore assess what it is you are talking about when you talk about a democratic system and therefore construct a democratic political system that can, in fact hold, that would work because it is sensitive to the reality of the country.

When we were negotiating in South Africa prior to 1994 we had to spend a lot of time with people who wanted an Afrikaner Volkstad. We spent a lot of time negotiating about what this Volkstad meant and where they would want to have it. You could see they were very determined that there had to be some place where the Afrikaner would feel 'this is home' and in that way, if they

could be given that, that would open the door for them to accept [the] democratic settlement.

We discussed this matter at great length and negotiated this and, at the end , we said 'let's agree that we will insert into the constitution a phrase about the right to self determination'. And indeed we agreed. So that went into the Constitution and the Afrikaner Volkstad people were very happy because in principle, constitutionally, the door was created for the establishment of an Afrikaner Volkstad but of course we could not establish an Afrikaner Volkstad, because where would this State have been located?

I am saying that the recognition of the fact that [because] here you had a section of the Afrikaner population which had that intensity of feeling, something had to be done to ensure that this received expression. And so, we inserted into the Constitution the right to self-determination and they were happy.

This is a particular challenge on the Continent because I think that if you look around the Continent, you will see there are all manner of pressures in society.

I once attended a conference in a country that I will not mention. Then a President arrived and I was informed that when he arrived at the airport he was booed. We stayed at some villa when this President arrived at the villa, he was booed by the staff.

I asked what has the poor man done to deserve such treatment. It turned out that the daughter of this President is married to the President of this country – the consequence of which the son-in-law has part of his budget paid by father-in-law. That is why they do not like him. They say he is taking our money simply because he gave his daughter in marriage – now he is taking our money for the development of his country. That is why they were unhappy.

But this is a little story. I am telling it to illustrate that in many instances, you have to go down to this little detail. Merely to say you want a democratic system is insufficient. You should say what kind of society is this that we are addressing.

You will remember that we lost some soldiers in Lesotho a few years ago because we were asked to go there and some of our people were shot. However, it was quite clear as we talked to the Basuto about these things – why is it that after every election there is some insurrection of this sort? There has to be a problem somewhere and of course, the problem was the electoral system.

What you see happening is that in a parliament of 100 people, the ruling party gets 60% of the votes and 99 seats. So, 40% of the population feels unrepresented. And that was the basic cause of this repeated conflict after every election.

So, in negotiations with the Basuto they agreed they would introduce a system of proportional representation which they did and since then there have bee n no problems.

Of course you could understand why this matter becomes so urgent, so important that people would resort to action of this kind. And really one of the reasons is that if you do not have a job in government, the public sector, where else are you going to get a job? The space in which you can get a job and earn an income is quite limited because of the level of development in the country. You have to ensure that you do not build unnecessary barriers in terms of entry into the public sector. So I am saying that an understanding of this kind of detail is necessary so that when we say we are going to establish democratic rule we establish a system that is sensitive to the realities and actualities in that society.

Perhaps one of our biggest challenges on the continent is the restructuring of the relationship between Africa and the rest of the world. Mali produces cotton. Mali is the second largest cotton producer next to Egypt. That cotton is exported raw to Europe and the Malians import the cloth. So, they say this must change and I agree, it must change.

The question remains, how do you change this? There is someone out there in Europe that benefits from this arrangement and he is not about to agree that the arrangement must be changed. So, I am saying this challenge about development on the African continent in part means restructuring the relationship between the continent and the rest of the world.

That really, in essence is why, we decided we should work on and launch the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and we called it a new partnership deliberately because we were saying we had to build a new relationship with the rest of the world.

What are we going to do to achieve this development we are talking about? The Public Investment Co-operation (PIC) a few years back launched an investment fund. We agreed with them that when you talk about these challenges of African development, one of the things we have to do is to ensure that we generate our own resources for that development so why don't we do that?

So, they agreed and said why don't we begin with the pension funds? There are pension funds all over. Then we had to do some footwork on the continent to ask that monies be invested into the Pan African Infrastructure Development Fund.

What we found was that some of these monies from African-country-funds are invested in the London Stock Exchange. You then say that you cannot take African funds and invest them in London when there is this great need for development on the continent. "No, we have got fund managers who are contracted to run this fund and the fund managers say the risk in Africa is too

high, so we are going to put the money somewhere to develop developed countries".

So, I am saying this restructuring of this relationship is key to the achievement of our objective to develop the continent and to eradicate poverty and underdevelopment. You the youth must come at it in detail to say 'what is it that needs to be done in order to achieve this objective of development?' Th is cannot be done by proclamation or slogans! It requires a detailed attention and I am saying that this is perhaps one of the matters you can attend to.

There is also a challenge of African integration and African unity. Maybe I should give you another story about this development.

We were negotiating with the European Union what are called Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs). Now, many of us on the continent did not like the way in which these agreements were structured by the European Union because they were not very helpful in terms of ensuring African development.

So, at some point, I am told that one of the Presidents of a country in west Africa was about to sign. The other West Africans asked me to talk to him to persuade him not to sign, so I called him and advised him not to sign. He replied that yes indeed it was true that he was about to sign but he was also aware that this neighbours were about to sign and he did not want to be left alone. So, I said that I could assure him that his neighbours were not about to sign.

And then he said something that was very sad. He said that he would not sign for now but I should please bear in mind that his country was poor and his people were hungry and when the EU comes back tomorrow to ask him to sign, he may very well not be in the position to refuse. I said to him that understood. I am saying it is sad but it is the truth. The challenge of this defeating underdevelopment and poverty requires that we all apply our minds as to what needs to be done.

I was saying that the issue of African integration and unity is a big matter. It is currently under discussion and has been so for over some time. There is debate between two groups although everyone is unanimous in their support for African integration. What we are differing on is the tactics of how to proceed – those who say a conference should be called and a United States of Africa should be proclaimed immediately. Others are saying that it cannot happen like this – you have to build from below. This is the big tussle although there is no disagreement that integration must happen.

This also relates to the challenge of Africa's place in the world. We have to engage in this struggle. Once, long ago, I was invited to a Conference in San Francisco by the former President of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachov. So it was agreed that we should go.

At a certain point, the VIPs, including myself, are lined up and someone inside the room announces our entrance into the room. They go down the line and when they get to me, they skip me and announce the President down the line. They actually finished the line without announcing me. Then someone standing outside tells his colleague that I am still outside. What was the reason? I had been forgotten.

That was simply the explanation because the continent is not there and even subconsciously people forget you. You can be standing in front of them and they don't see you. And that is what had happened. My name was on the list but they did not see me. Africa's place in the world is something we should be fighting about.

We have just finished, as you know, serving as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. So a matter is raised that the issue of Myanmar should be placed on the agenda of the United Nations Security Council because of human rights violations in Myanmar.

So, we say no, that matter must go to the Human Rights Council because the law that governs the functioning of the United Nations Security Council is in the Charter of the UN and when you talk about the rule of law you must respect that and the UN Charter says that the Security Council of the UN will deal with matters of various countries in situations where there is a threat to international peace and security.

So, we say to them, it will be illegal to put a matter like that on the agenda of the United Nations Security Council because it is not allowed by the law that governs the functioning of the Security Council. And indeed the matter went to the UN Human Rights Council.

Now, of course what happens is I think people get surprised that Africans can stand up for themselves and say 'respect the law.' Everyone gets surprised and angry but I am saying we need to fight for Africa's place in the world. The statement about the UN Charter is a very straightforward and simple matter. It has governed the way in which the UN has functioned since it has been established. But of course, when we raise it and say respect the law people get angry.

Now, let me finish, I think the other matter to which we need to pay attention is to understand the various policy positions that the African Union has adopted. In reality, the African continent has a very large body of very good policies about political, economic matters, matters of culture, the Constitutive Act of the African Union, the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community, the NEPAD mandate, African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, Protocol on Women's Rights, the Pan African Parliament, Court on Human and Peoples Rights, Court of Justice, Peace and Security Council, democracy elections and governance – Charters on all of these things and so on.

There is actually a huge body of policy that has been adopted by the African continent. It is very important to study it because I think that in the end, given

that there is indeed a very broad base of policy which says this is the kind of Africa that we want, the question that then must be asked is: "are we getting there, and if we are not getting there, why not?" Now, I think we must say therefore there must come out of this University, the necessary cadres to build this African Renaissance, to implement these policies which have been agreed because this is the problem.

The policies are there and have been agreed to. Who is going to implement them? I am saying not because the policies are not there but because the bodies are not there to ensure these policies are implemented. And I think this is part of the tasks required by our youth: to study these policies and indeed to say, 'in what ways can we empower ourselves to implement these policies?'

And it is these students at Rhodes that must try to empower others to try and inspire other young people to understand these responsibilities – that we are the drivers of this process of the revival of the African continent. We don't have to be scratching our heads about this, that and the other but to say, what is it that we have to do and I think as part of that, I hope that we have also built up a relationship with other students on the continent because this challenge is there and people understand it but quite what to do about it is a matter that has to be understood.

So there must come out of Rhodes this young intelligentsia that understands the continent and studies the continent and is able to absorb all of these policies and so on – capable, qualified, talented – capable of being the drivers of change. You have a particular challenge in that South Africa enjoys a high standing on the continent and so a lot of expectations about what South Africa might do.

The last story I am going to tell you: once Rev Chikane and I were flying from somewhere and stopped to refuel in Dakar, Senegal. So we stopped and the doors opened. The workers working at the airport, wearing overalls, saw us alighting from the plane and immediately called the airport bus and put us on the bus and the airport staff took us to the first class VIP lounge while the plane was refuelling.

So we sit there, the staff in the lounge were very friendly. About 45 minutes after we had arrived in this lounge, the South African Ambassador to Senegal and the Senegalese Finance Minister arrived in the lounge, very out of breath – it is clear they had been running.

They asked me what I was doing there. I explained that we were waiting to refuel and once that was done we would board the plane to complete our journey. They said, "no no, you are not supposed to be here. You are supposed to be in the Presidential Lounge, so let's go." I said that we only had 10 minutes left so there is no point. I asked them to sit. I promised the Minister that when I met his President I would inform him that I was received at the steps of the plane and taken to the Presidential Lounge.

The point is that there in Senegal, as soon as we alighted from the plane, the workers recognised us and arranged all of this. Ordinary workers, not even a protocol officer. This says something of the standing of South Africa, this is also a challenge that you face. The rest of the continent will continue to say "what is it that South Africa thinks? What is South Africa doing about this matter?" So, I am saying the challenge you have as the youth of the country is to gain this sort of mastery of the continent and its challenges so that you can provide this leadership which is indeed expected of yourselves.

Thank you and have a good Africa Day ...

Questions and answers

Question **President Mbeki, could you please elaborate on whether you believe HIV causes AIDS. There has been much speculation over your views on this matter.**

Answer I wish we had time to discuss this. I was banned when I was in government – my colleagues banned me from speaking on this matter. I obeyed. The issue that we raised was that according to these reports here we are faced with a major catastrophe of HIV and AIDS and we needed to respond to it, appreciating that this is a major catastrophe.

So we asked various questions. For instance, the first report on the incidence of HIV and AIDS in South Africa was published in the South African medical journal in 1985. The same article was published in the New England Journal of Medicine. These medical journals in 1985 said that the profile of the incidents of HIV and AIDS in South Africa was the same as that in the US. That was basically among homosexual males. So, the same profile as in the US.

Within five years in South Africa the profile changed. The profile did not change in the US – here it did. The profile of HIV and AIDS now included the heterosexual population. So, the question we raised was here we face a major challenge of HIV and AIDS but you now have this change. We need to understand this properly in order to respond to it because it may very well be that because of the difference between the US and South Africa, the interventions made in the US may not be appropriate here because there is clearly something that is different. What is this?

I am saying we needed to respond to this differently. It is also obvious, even in the name AIDS – Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome – so this issue of immune deficiency is a critically important part of the story so one of the questions that must be asked is what can be done to strengthen immunity so that the body is able to fight against these

diseases precisely to ensure we are able to respond to this catastrophe in as precise a manner as possible.

Now, somebody decided that Thabo Mbeki had said that HIV does not cause AIDS. But when challenged to produce this, they cannot. Of course, it cannot be produced because I did not say it. But the problem about that is that instead of looking at the challenges – a major health problem in South Africa that manifests itself differently from other countries – why the difference?

If you can answer this, you would be able to answer what kind of treatment and responses are required. This is a very important question because it deals with the health of our people. But as I say, this matter got diverted. The country has been responding to this challenge but as I said, we will also respond better if we had answers to all the questions.

Question **President Mbeki, what will you do if you can get the support of the EU for Africa following what they did to Africa? How do you feel about not participating in Parliament?**

Answer I was not supposed to be back in Parliament. The constitution says the President serves two terms and that is it. It would not be possible, well it may be possible but I think it would not be very clever to return to Parliament to be a back bencher once you have served your two terms. I think there are other things we need to do other than being in Parliament.

Question **President Mbeki, the possible legalisation of the sex trade is on the cards. How do you feel about this?**

Answer I did not know about that but why not? Of course you are aware that this is legalised in many European countries and the skies have not fallen down. Part of the argument that is used in favour of this is to protect women from abuse, from being beaten up and all sorts of terrible things. This ensures they have regular medical checks, etc. South Africa has provided the lead to the rest of the continent on other matters and I think that if we want to provide the lead on this, why not. I don't think anyone in Africa will complain.

Question **President Mbeki, you mentioned that there are brilliant policies in Africa but cadres who are capable of carrying forward these are required. What measures can be taken because brilliant capable graduates are lured by offers beyond Africa? How can we ensure the young intelligentsia is retained in Africa?**

Answer I really do not know because in many instances people are attracted by better opportunities. There is a group in the United States – or there was. I am not sure if they still exist because I have not spoken to them for some time. We were visiting the United States and the Ambassador had asked if I would see them.

This is a group of Africans who set up a society. The conditions for membership being that you must be an African, you must hold a PhD degree that must have been obtained at one of the Ivy League Universities of the US and you must not be older than 40.

So, I met them – a group of Africans from all over all working in the US. They were an interesting group – these young Africans, all with doctorates in all subjects. They had organised themselves into a group because as educated Africans they were interested in improving the lives of Africans in Africa. So they discussed that perhaps they should visit Africa for three months during the year doing what it was they were educated to do so that they could contribute to Africa. I think that even if you have left the continent, you can be inspired to ensure the continent changes for the better and can therefore be very creative.

One of our compatriots who was involved in developing missiles in South Africa during apartheid emigrated to Canada when the programme was closed down. He now works for NASA as a highly specialised engineer. He visits South Africa every year and takes young people in mathematics, science, etc and makes his own contribution.

Question **President Mbeki, how do you propose to drive the African Renaissance from a grass roots level?**

Answer The story I was telling about Senegal addresses precisely this. At the grassroots, the ordinary people have a very good understanding and appreciation of what needs to be done. That is why those workers in Dakar airport behaved as they did and indeed I have seen this everywhere on the continent. But the question that is important is indeed one of the challenges is to ensure that this movement for the Renaissance of the continent becomes a mass movement, that is does not just remain the preserve of the elite and the educated.

But I am saying the ordinary masses of the people understand because in the end, when you speak of peace, it is the ordinary people who are dying in conflict, the women and children, so you do not have to educate them about the

need for peace; they understand. When you say, let's end poverty, they understand that because it is them that are suffering. I am saying you are quite correct, it is important for political parties and others to mobilise the grass roots for this programme of change because indeed, without this it may not be possible to move without that mass pressure. That is something you could do.

Question **(inaudible)**

Answer Grassroots is grassroots and ordinary people are ordinary people. When I look at you I can see that you are extraordinary. You are here at university acquiring education. When you graduate you will have particular skills as a consequence. It is important to recognise and respect this because you see, I hope you are not using this argument in order to argue for an abdication of your responsibilities so that you can say you are an ordinary person and therefore not use your skills that are not available to ordinary people.

One of the things that is a particular challenge in South Africa especially is for people to write in various languages and be published. There are lot's of problems with our educational system which begin long before university level and these have to be fixed. We need to do something and I do hope something will be done to change and radically improve the system of education from bottom upwards. I went to Lovedale High School and we liked the biology laboratory best because it was the warmest in winter. Our teacher was teacher Masholoko – Mash.

What Mash would do if he did not feel like teaching was get pictorials (picture books) and we would be very interested. It never felt like we were studying. Now Mash would fill a beaker with water on his desk and as he came around to us he would sip the water. The principal did not like Mash. But he produced the best biology students each year in the entire province. Because of this the principal could not do anything. We later discovered that the water was actually gin and tonic. You did not feel like you were studying but people got distinctions because he was a good teacher. Our educational system needs to produce more Mashes.

Question **President Mbeki, I am a commerce student and very much concerned with the matter of sustainability. I am concerned that our government's policy of recruiting Cuban doctors is not sustainable**

Answer The matter of foreign labour – yes indeed we have Cuban doctors in South Africa but I hope you also know that we

have many South Africans training in Cuba to become doctors. So, it is not simply a matter of importing skills and once they leave there is no sustainability. There is also a very vigorous programme to train more doctors in Cuba precisely because medical schools in South Africa could not train as many as are required. So, I would imagine that in instances where people deliberately go out of the way to import skills from outside, there would also be the provision for skills transfer. This would be normal and is certainly what is happening with Cuban doctors.

Question **President Mbeki, is Europe responsible for Africa's development?**

Answer The question was raised of how we had interacted with the G-8 for instance. I must say we had no problems. They interacted with us in a proper and appropriate manner. There was a particular period when I think people understood there was a need to respond in a positive and urgent manner to the challenges facing Africa and indeed, you got a sense of that.

You had former President of the US, George Bush, who took certainly me by surprise when he said that everyone who talks of development recognises that health and education are essential to development. However, when talking of this it is suggested that poor countries be provided with loans. How will obviously very poor countries be able to repay these loans? Should they not be provided with grants? Money can be lent to them to build factories. I was very surprised and applauded him because he was right. We worked well with the G-8 but the matter of the implementation of the decisions taken was a very different matter.

As I said, we deliberately talked of a new partnership to redress the relationship between Africa and the rest of the world. This partnership takes many forms. I talked of the EPAs which African countries are negotiating with the EU and that we were, as a continent not happy with what was contained in the agreements because they do not address a very fundamental matter.

If you look at the internal workings of the EU – the EU has a very sophisticated and comprehensive regional policy. It is based on the perspective that all member states of the EU should be brought to more or less equal levels of development. So therefore, funds have to be generated within the EU by countries who are more developed than others. This is how Spain, Portugal and Ireland have

developed in the last few decades as a result of funds from the EU channelled to less developed countries.

This has worked very well and these countries now amount to some of the more developed countries in the world. So, we then say to the EU that with regard to finding a concrete example of development policy you do not have to go very far – just look at what you yourselves have done. A critical matter is that of resource transfers. We said to them that th is is precisely what we are looking for. They do not agree that this will impact on the African continent in the same way. This is the kind of strategic partnership we were looking to build with them. I am sure we still need to build this kind of partnership.

Question **President Mbeki, what would have happened if the issue of Myanmar had been referred to the Security Council?**

Answer The issue of Myanmar remains – what would have happened if this matter was discussed by the Security Council? Presumably the Security Council would have passed a resolution of some kind but the problem with this would have been that it would have been impossible for the Human Rights Council to follow up. You would have had a resolution that is there, there would have been headlines in the media but that would have been the end.

However, with the matter in the Human Rights Council a Special Rapporteur would have been appointed and actually go to Myanmar, engage with the government, etc.

I am sure that this is what is presently happening. That is not to say they would succeed. What we were saying about respect the law is so that tomorrow the powerful countries would decide that they do not like South Africa and it should be taken to the Security Council. You would therefore have a situation where the powerful countries could abuse power for their own ends. This cannot be allowed. In this particular case this is what they were trying to do. If this door was opened, it would be opened for good. We therefore said no and I hope we will continue to say no. It was a clear abuse of power and I think it would have been quite wrong.

Question **President Mbeki, (inaudible)**

Answer The matter indeed has been correctly raised of our recognition of people, the matter of African dignity, issues of African identity including language – our indigenous languages, etc – this whole group of issues are very important. I don't think anyone would contest this. This is part of the reason I have been saying we

have to make an effort to broadening our understanding, even South Africa. Part of this process is to ensure that we refuse to be defined by another – we must define ourselves as part of our pride and we must assert this. This is an important point.

Question **President Mbeki, what is your response to opinions that African solutions to African problems should be abandoned because it is a mere slogan?**

Answer I don't know who would say it is a meaningless dictum because some of the work we have been doing in responding to these African challenges have been African solutions to African problems.

This is a very practical thing. You will remember that South Africa hosted the Democratic Republic of Congo negotiations in South Africa. We worked with them. Then at some point we agreed that with regard to composing the Presidency in the transitional period, there would be one President and three Vice Presidents. So, we were going to sign this the following day, it had been the final item on the agenda.

The night before the signing we receive a call that the signing ceremony is not going to happen because two of the signatories had decided they were going to form their own government without the others. So of course we talk to them to understand what they are going to do. They refuse to listen. We advise that this will not work but they do not listen.

More than a year later, the President of the DRC phoned me to ask me to visit him. In the end, I went to see him. He asked me if I remembered the formula we had suggested? I replied that I did, he then asked me if the 1 + 3 could be amended to 1 + 4. When I asked where the four comes from he explained. I then suggested that he markets the 1 + 4 to the other negotiators. He said I was the mediator not him and I should market this. I did and this is how the transitional agreement in the DRC was formed.

A while later one of the European Foreign Ministers phoned and asked to see our then Foreign Minister Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma. Of course she asked what it was about and he said he could only tell her when they met. He said he would fly in in the morning and fly out in the evening.

When they met, he said to the Minister that he wanted to see her to confess and apologise. He explained that he wanted to apologise because it was this country who had advised the two Congolese leaders not to agree with the proposal we had helped to broker and they had promised to fund the new

Congolese government. He came to apologise and vow that they would not participate in such a thing again. That was very decent of him.

Indeed, this was an African solution to an African problem. That whole process was handled by ourselves as Africans and when the Europeans intervened, they in fact delayed peace in the DRC by more than a year.

So, I am saying that I do not know what anyone would mean that this is just a slogan because in the practice, the actualities, the details, the problems we have to do in Zimbabwe, the Comores, Burundi, Côte dÍvoire – I can provide many other instances – are African problems.

In December 2008 people from outside the continent were still saying to us directly that that there would be no inclusive government in Zimbabwe because "we do not want it to happen." We responded by saying this is not what South Africa wants or what you want, it is what the Zimbabweans want. Interventions from outside the continent to impose non-African solutions have not worked. So, it is not a slogan. Anyone who does the work in a practical way would understand this.

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