

SOUTH AFRICA ADVANCED TRAINING NETWORK

Opening remarks by Senator Gareth Evans, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, at the ACFOA/SAETF NGO Forum, University House, Canberra, 5 August 1989.

Mr Chairman, Your Excellencies, Your Grace, Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to address this meeting convened to establish an international network for human resource development in South Africa. I congratulate the sponsor, the South Africa Education Trust Fund, represented here by Archbishop Scott of Canada, and the Southern African Advanced Education Project, represented by Professor Cornford, on the success of their efforts to rouse international opinion at both the Governmental and community levels in favour of this initiative. May I also express my appreciation to the Australian Council for Overseas Aid for making the arrangements for the meeting.

This community initiative for advanced training of black South Africans sends a strong international political signal directed at the inequities of apartheid. First, it demonstrates the complementarity between Government and private sector approaches to South Africa, and the scope and will for joint efforts to reduce the effects of apartheid. Secondly, the initiative emphasises shared judgments about the importance of human resources in the development process. Lack of opportunity caused by lack of skills is clearly one of the most pressing problems for the majority of the South African population suffering under apartheid. In common with this predominantly non-governmental project, Australia's aid for people disadvantaged by apartheid is centered on education and training.

Let's hope that this message of complementarity and shared intent is widely reported, not just here in Australia, but internationally, and especially in Commonwealth countries. The composition of this meeting, bringing together major donor countries, sympathetic African countries and the Commonwealth itself gives me great confidence that the initiative, and its message will be widely recognised and appreciated.

Human resource development has always occupied a very important place in Commonwealth assistance and also in Australia's own aid program, starting in the very early days of the Colombo plan in the 1950s. In the Australian Government aid program at present some 2,000 overseas students are directly sponsored from aid funds and another 14,700 indirectly through subsidy arrangements for overseas students training in Australian institutions.

Critics of aid can always point to horror stories of failed projects, but it is very unusual to

hear of failed training programs. In the case of South Africa, the need is amply illustrated by the growth of Commonwealth and individual Governments' training programs for South Africans in the last two years.

For example, the programs run by the Commonwealth Secretariat for students from South Africa and Namibia have more than doubled in the last two years, rising to nearly 200 South African trainees and nearly 900 Namibians in the financial year 1988/89.

In the same period Australia's assistance has also risen sharply. From a total of only 16 Namibians and no South African students funded three years ago Australian Government aid now provides for over 700 students from both South Africa and Namibia, nearly all of them in South Africa itself or in other countries in Africa, with over 30 in Australia.

But the Australian community has realised that institutional training cannot provide all the requirements for future leaders of industry, commerce and government. The need of non-white South Africans for practical training requires innovative solutions. In turn this means using new, cooperative arrangements directly involving industry and other economic sectors. The "hands on" approach is a vital part of training the managers of the future. I welcome the news that, following the establishment of successful advanced training arrangements for practical managers in Canada and the United Kingdom, Australian NGOs and the private sector are also to introduce an advanced training scheme for South Africans.

The Government recently funded a survey of industry undertaken by the Australian Council for Overseas Aid. This demonstrated that there is a wide degree of support in industry for an essentially private sector run training program. On behalf of the Government I am pleased to announce that we shall play our part in developing this welcome initiative by contributing a significant proportion of the estimated \$325,000 - the figures have still to be precisely determined - establishment costs over the next three years of the coordination unit for a proposed Southern Africa Advanced Training Trust in Australia.

Another thing which makes this proposal particularly attractive is the ingenious way in which the scheme will operate as a network both in Australia and internationally. Those of you who have participated in any aid program will be well aware of the advantages of networks with autonomously funded and run components conducted in a coordinated way. Their common purpose is matched by common methods, mechanisms and information systems which lead to economies of scale. In Africa, at the Government level, the network concept is well illustrated by the success of the Southern African Development Coordination Council or SADCC. The SADCC network coordinates needs and opportunities without creating a huge new bureaucracy.

The long-term coordination function is important for maximising the effectiveness of training. In the Australian Government's programs for South Africans and Namibians, we have tried to ensure that individual training requirements are undertaken with a guarantee of placement and employment for the trainees on their return to Africa.

The new Commonwealth-wide initiative, as we understand it, will work in essentially the same way. Companies will rely on the international network both to identify people capable of being trained for higher management functions and to work out the best opportunities for placing them in areas of need on their return. This is not as easy as it sounds because one of the features of the apartheid has been the dearth of information about employment openings for black South Africans at management levels in their own country. I welcome the call made by the consultation on this project in Harare in June 1989 to the liberation movements and to the SADCC Secretariat to assist the collation and dissemination of information requirements both about training needs and about opportunities for placement elsewhere in Southern Africa.

To sum up, Mr Chairman, I congratulate the sponsors of this consultation on their dedication to overcoming the scourge of apartheid and its callous and calculated waste of human potential, and on their vision in creating this international initiative. It deserves, and I gladly give it today, the full endorsement of the Australian Government. We shall certainly play our role to ensure that a new Australian Advanced Training Trust contributes effectively to human resource development of South Africans.

Your Excellencies, Your Grace, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my pleasure and privilege to declare this meeting open.

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