

Friday, October 30, 1998 Published at 09:03 GMT

Mandela addresses truth report ceremony



Nelson Mandela paid tribute to those who had relived their pain

Excerpts from South African President Mandela's speech at the handover ceremony of the Truth and Reconciliation report.



[Nelson Mandela's
speech at the TRC
report handover
ceremony](#)

"South Africa is no longer the country it was when we adopted the Interim Constitution in 1993, when together we resolved to overcome the legacy of our violent and inhuman past. Out of that negotiation process emerged a pact to uncover the truth, to build a bright future for our children and grandchildren, without regard to race, culture, religion or language. Today we reap some of the harvest of what we sowed at the end of a South African famine."

Tribute to those who "opened wounds of guilt"

"And so as we observe this stage of the TRC process, we should pay tribute to the 20,000 men and women who relived their pain and loss in order to share it with us; the hundreds who dared to open the wounds of guilt so as to exorcise it from the nation's body politic; indeed the millions who make up the South African people and who made it happen so that we could indeed become a South African nation."

At the helm of it all has been the Most Reverend Desmond Tutu, a figure revered not only in our country, but far beyond its borders, who has, during the hearings, conveyed our common pain and sorrow, our hope and confidence in the future. To you and all the commissioners and staff of the TRC we say, on behalf of the nation: Thank you for the work you have done so far."

Report reawakens "troubling emotions"

"Though the interim report is formally given to me as president, it is in reality a report to all of us. For that reason it is being released to the public and given to our elected representatives without a moment's delay. Its release is bound to reawaken many of the difficult and troubling emotions that the hearings themselves brought. Many of us will have reservations about aspects of what is contained in these five volumes. All are free to make comment on it and indeed we invite you to do so. And for those who feel unjustly damaged, there are remedies."

No instant reconciliation

"The commission was not required to muster a definitive and comprehensive history of the past three decades. Nor was it expected to conjure up instant reconciliation. And it does not claim to have delivered these either. Its success in any case depended on how far all of us co-operated with it. Yet we are confident that it has contributed to the work in progress of laying the foundation of the edifice of reconciliation.

The further construction of that house of peace needs my hand. It needs your hand. Reconciliation requires that we work together to defend our democracy and the humanity proclaimed by our constitution. It demands that we join hands, as at the Job Summit tomorrow, to eradicate the poverty spawned by a system that thrived on the deprivation of the majority.

Reconciliation requires that we end malnutrition, homelessness and ignorance, as the Reconstruction and Development Programmes has started to do. It demands that we put shoulders to the wheel to end crime and corruption, as religious and political leaders committed themselves to doing at the Morals Summit last week."

"Terrible past" must be left behind

"The wounds of the period of repression and resistance are too deep to have been healed by the TRC alone, however well it has encouraged us along that path. Consequently, the report that today becomes the property of our nation should be a call to all of us to celebrate and to strengthen what we have done as a nation as we leave our terrible past behind us forever.

Let us celebrate our rich diversity as a people, in the knowledge that when the TRC in its wisdom apportions blame, it points at previous state structures; political organizations; at institutions and individuals, but never, and I want to repeat, at any community."

"We are all masters of our destiny"

"Now the challenge is for all of us to protect our democratic gains like the apple of our eye. It is for those who have the means, to contribute to the efforts to repair the damage brought by the past. It is for those who have suffered losses of different kinds and magnitudes to be afforded reparation, proceeding from the premise that freedom and dignity are the real prize that our sacrifices were meant to attain. Free at last, we are all masters of our destiny. A better future depends on all of us lending a hand - your hand, my hand."