

Minister of Public Works
Mr J Radebe
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[Back](#)

World Bank/Centre for Conflict Resolution Consultation:

The Nexus Between Economic Management and The Restoration of Social Capital in Southern Africa **President Hotel, Bantry Bay, Cape Town**

Master of Ceremonies,
World Bank and Centre for Conflict Resolution representatives,
Excellencies, Ministers, representatives of Civil Society,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Recent months have witnessed increased attention on Southern Africa. The conflicts and turmoil in the Great Lakes Region, the DRC and Lesotho have tended to predominate news broadcasts and press announcements. The role of member states, the nature of their interventions and the institutional integrity of SADC have been closely scrutinised by many commentators here and abroad. In all the commentaries I have seen, the emphasis has been placed squarely on the need for peace, stability and security in our region and within the borders of our respective states.

Despite the resolutions of the recent SADC Summit and other evidence to the contrary, very little attention has focussed on what our region is doing to develop and implement viable, self-sustaining and comprehensive programmes to re-establish food security, infrastructure, the provision of services and, in essence, good governance, in Southern Africa.

In the light of this neglect, I am especially pleased to accept your invitation to make a few welcoming remarks to this important consultation. I would like to acknowledge the structure of the participation here, before moving briefly to the nature of your deliberations.

We often take for granted the dual importance of transparency and constructive interaction in modern governance. All too frequently, conferences and workshops become areas where financial institutions, government agencies and NGOs slug it out in competition with each other. It is refreshing to see from your own programme that you recognise the controversy that surrounds the participation of international institutions such as the World Bank in the affairs of developing countries. It is also interesting to note that you have kept the nature of participation tight, focussing on the core strategic sectors within government - the financial, reconstruction and social rehabilitation sectors - and civil society from the participating countries. The fact that you also have drawn in observer representation from countries formally not part of SADC but whose very existence is integral to the region as a whole is also important. I would suggest that the very nature of your gathering contains within it the seeds of success.

The Consultation will focus on *The Nexus between Economic Management and the Restoration of Social Capital in Southern Africa*. Your discussions are concentrated around three main themes: i] economic management in post-conflict societies; ii] the impact of conflict on social capital and civil society; and iii] the interaction between economic management and social capital transformation.

When we try to develop effective solutions to complicated problems we need to know something about the origins of the problem. In an illuminating essay entitled "Barbarism: a User's Guide", the noted British historian Eric Hobsbawm tried to identify the roots of the "current turmoil of nationalist and civil wars" that have afflicted parts of Africa, the former Yugoslavia and so on. He rejected explanations founded on ideology, as well as the idea that the passing of the Cold War had somehow released, in his terms, "primordial forces too long suppressed by communism or Western universalism". ⁽¹⁾

Some of the legacies of conflict in our region that confront us today originated in the era of the Cold War. But they were shaped by the agenda and activities of a struggle between racist domination on the one hand, and the development of liberation from colonial and economic oppression on the other. Wars are essentially about destruction. I know of no conflict that has left no death, no displacement of people, no destruction of bridges, roads, clinics and schools, no agricultural field untilled, no water resource untainted, no economy hammered, and no citizenry untraumatised.

Many of us in this room have seen and experienced war and conflict first-hand. We do not have to rely on executive summaries of reports sent from far-away places to know the ravages and pain of war. Many of us,

too, have to confront first-hand the difficult task of identifying the best, yet speediest, reconstruction programmes to heal the wounds and to rebuild our world.

In South Africa's poorest provinces and regions we fight the poverty spawned by apartheid's skewed development and the violence that sprang from it. In Angola and Mozambique, decades of war witnessed the near total destruction of much of the physical infrastructure and priceless human resources. The Great Lakes region has been torn apart. In many areas, children have been thrown into adulthood without benefiting from the joys of youth and the institutions that teach us responsibilities. Reconstruction efforts are hampered often by topographical features. High mountain ranges, deep valleys, eroded landscapes, and petulant weather patterns that bring torrential floods on one day, and the next searing drought.

The collapse of infrastructure has seen the return of many diseases harmful to human development: malaria's mosquitoes and the tsetse fly have once again become unwelcome visitors in many areas of our region. Poverty, migration, and a collapse in standards of nutrition have assisted the spread of HIV and AIDS to the horrifying extent we have today. The absence of roads, or the associated dangers of unexploded landmines, ensured that food relief operations in countries like Angola have become the most expensive and most complicated in the world. Governments frequently have great difficulty in establishing a caring authority in many areas of some of larger countries because of the regional breakdown of communication, the legal and policing order and the operation of justice. Scarce financial resources of individual countries are often swallowed up by ill-planned though well-meant programmes. Corruption in both government and private sectors has eaten away at the fibre of our countries' resources.

Eric Hobsbawm noted that the turmoil and conflict was "a response to a double collapse: the collapse of political order as represented by functioning states...and the crumbling of the old framework of social relations over a large part of the world...". He identified the root cause in these stark terms: "For the worst of it is that we have got used to the inhuman. We have learned to tolerate the intolerable. Total war and cold war have brainwashed us into accepting barbarity. Even worse: they have made barbarity seem unimportant, compared to more important matters like making money."⁽²⁾

I do not wish to pre-empt your discussions. Nor do I want to end on a pessimistic or gloomy point. Let me state the obvious: the task is an enormous one, and one that can be confronted only through co-operation and honest interchange. A small yet significant example: the Mandela government has worked constructively with the World Bank for some time now. My own Ministry of Public Works was recently awarded a World Bank grant of just under \$1m for a collaborative project between ourselves and the Department of Defence for the closure and re-use of redundant defence force bases in South Africa. The finer details we will work out this coming week. Partnerships of this nature are integral to the task of reconstruction generally.

We believe fervently that integrated development, over time, and in co-operation with relevant NGO structures, communities, and private sector structures can go a long way to re-establishing the constructive power that governments exercise when they are both seen to be and are legitimate in the eyes of their citizens. We believe furthermore that there is an important human dimension to economic development. Both of these rest at the core of the African Renaissance articulated by Deputy President Thabo Mbeki. If at times that renaissance seems illusive, then consider how much more work is required to make it a reality for the benefit of the generations that will follow us! If we are to remove forever the idea and practice that there are, to use the language of apartheid, "an acceptable level of violence", or of poverty, or of inhumanity, or of barbarism, then we must combine our resources, transcend the narrow confines of our own experiences and reach out to learn from one another, to assist one another, to build one another.

With those few words, let me again welcome you all to South Africa, and wish you constructive dialogue and a fruitful consultation.

I thank you.

1. *New Left Review*, 206, 1994, pp 44-54; reprinted in Hobsbawm, E *On History* [London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1997], ch 20, p 264

2. *ibid.*, pp 264-65

[top](#)