



**LECTURE BY ANC PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA
ON THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MOROGORO CONFERENCE**

**27 OCTOBER 2019
NALEDI COMMUNITY HALL, SOWETO**

Members of the ANC National Executive Committee,
Leaders of the SACP, COSATU and SANCO,
Representatives of the Tambo family,
Delegates to the Morogoro Conference,
Representatives of civil society and community formations,
Religious leaders,
Traditional leaders,
Comrades,
Friends,
Fellow South Africans,

This year, we commemorate the 50th anniversary of the ANC's National Consultative Conference held in Morogoro, Tanzania in 1969, an event that will forever stand out as a turning point in our struggle for freedom.

We have chosen to mark this occasion on the day that we celebrate the birth of one of the most remarkable leaders of our people, Isithwalandwe Seaparankoe Oliver Reginald Tambo.

We do so to recognise the leading and exceptional role that OR Tambo played in the Morogoro Conference and the contribution that he made to its success.

We do so also to acknowledge the unmatched contribution that OR Tambo made to the unity, strength and integrity of the African National Congress during its darkest and most trying times.

We recall these pivotal events in our past so that we may better understand the challenges and opportunities of the present, and so that we may work together to achieve a better future.

Reflecting on a historical event like the Morogoro conference enables us to give meaning and context to our current experience.

Allow me to have a nostalgic moment to digress for a while. Magafuli referred to Morogoro as the shrine of the ANC.

The history of our movement allows us to interrogate the forces impacting upon the collective lived reality, empowering us to be effective agents in moulding the events of tomorrow.

It gives us a tool to critically examine the tapestries woven by the threads of time.

Today as we reflect on OR Tambo's life, we desire to follow in his footsteps.

It was at Morogoro that the strength of his character and the quality of his leadership were most severely tested.

To those who may have doubted, Morogoro confirmed that, more than anything else, Oliver Tambo was a unifier.

He understood that nothing of value could be achieved unless we were united in our efforts.

Even during periods of great danger and great difficulty, when it seemed that things were falling apart and the centre would not hold, President OR worked tirelessly to ensure that the movement and the members of remained united and focused.

He did so without suppressing divergent views. He remained committed to the democratic values of our movement of allowing all views to be expressed whether he agreed with them or not.

He created space for people to express their views, engage with each other and persuade others, and in so doing, arrive at common positions that all could embrace and defend. As a leader he did not have any dictatorial tendency in his exercise of leadership.

Oliver Tambo was also a builder.

He not only built our liberation movement but also built alliances and forged partnerships. Of course in all this he worked with other comrades but there is no doubt that he was the Master Builder.

For three decades he travelled the globe meeting heads of state, union leaders, activists, business people, cultural workers, celebrities, community leaders, revolutionaries - mobilizing the whole world against a racist and murderous state.

He ignited in all he met and engaged with a shared determination to fight for the rights and freedoms of all people.

He rallied the world behind a shared vision of a different society and a different world.

Oliver Tambo was a person of great humility and selflessness.

Someone writing about OR said when we think of OR what comes to mind is the most gentle soul, with the most tiger-like spirit, the kindest heart, with the fiercest determination, the most compassionate nature, with the strongest moral compass,

the warmest, sweetest personality, with an unflinching dedication to honesty, the most loving, peaceful temperament, with a sharper sense of conscience, the most beautiful smile, the resolve to accept only absolute integrity, the most noble, patient, calm presence, with the most tenacious fervour for bold, uncompromising action, and the most brilliant intellect, with the most earnest sincere appreciation for the simplest contribution.

What a giant OR was – a steadfast force with such vitality, creativity, courage, clarity honesty and consistency.

How blessed we were to know and work with such a great leader.

As he made clear at Morogoro, he would do whatever was asked of him to advance the struggle of the South African people and restore the movement – even if that meant standing down as ANC Acting President.

He put the needs of the people above his own, to the detriment of his career, his family life and, ultimately, his health.

Comrades and Friends,

The Morogoro Conference took place at a time of great distress within the liberation movement.

Following the Sharpeville Massacre of 1960 and the subsequent banning of the ANC, PAC and other organisations, South Africa entered a period of brutal repression.

The leaders of the movement were arrested, driven into exile or forced underground.

The ANC struggled to adapt to these fundamentally changed conditions, where established forms of organising were disrupted, activists were dispersed across the continent and the world and resources were scarce.

The adoption of armed struggle and the formation of Umkhonto we Sizwe in 1961 established a new avenue of resistance and gave great hope to the oppressed masses in South Africa.

But the conditions under which armed struggle was adopted meant that the relationship between political struggle and military action was not well defined.

The Wankie and Sipolilo campaigns – which saw the first direct confrontation between MK guerillas and the racist forces of the then Rhodesia – demonstrated the great challenges of infiltrating fighters back into South Africa.

They also heightened dissatisfaction among MK combatants at the conditions in the camps and grievances about the perceived attitudes of some within the ANC leadership.

The depth of dissent within the ranks was evident in a document produced by Chris Hani and six other members of Umkhonto we Sizwe that became known as the ‘Hani Memorandum’.

It began:

“The ANC in Exile is in a deep crisis as a result of which a rot has set in. From informal discussions with the revolutionary members of MK we have inferred that they have lost all confidence in the ANC leadership abroad. This they say openly and in fact show it.

“Such a situation is very serious and in fact a revolutionary movement has to sit down and analyse such a prevailing state of affairs.”

While there were some within the movement that wanted to take harsh action against those who held such views, leaders such as OR Tambo recognised the need for the movement to confront these challenges.

OR was particularly disturbed by the memorandum because it was a reflection of the low morale that was clearly developing in the camps. The movement clearly needed a shakeup – so much evidence of disappointment, anger and division had been expressed. In the collective leadership were individuals who had behaved in ways that were not in keeping with the ethos of the ANC. He asked himself many questions such as how was one meant to restructure the movement and constructively assess its progress and challenges. He went on to hold discussions with several comrades about the situation the movement faced. His conversations went beyond the paid-up membership to include discussions with the Congress alliance partners.

OR used his customary lateral approach to view this setback as a window of opportunity. Following intelligent listening and groundwork he felt that it was necessary to call for a consultative conference to address the problems raised within the movement.

The purpose of the conference would be to redefine or re-examine the role of the movement in relation to the internal structures and its strategy and tactics in dealing with the way forward. The outcome was to be reorganising and rebuilding of the ANC.

This was seen as a bold move. He then sent word via his secret route to Robben Island that a consultative, decision-making event was not only vital, but also overdue. In due course he received a reply agreeing to the conference.

Preparations were made for a National Consultative Conference, to be held in the town of Morogoro in Tanzania.

In the words of a directive by the NEC, the Conference was to:

“[Bring] together militants who constitute the entire spectrum of the progressive and revolutionary forces within our movement, for a down-to-earth appraisal of every aspect of our liberation struggle as led by the African National Congress.”

The Conference was therefore the culmination of several months of discussion, criticism and consultation among ANC leaders and members stationed across the world.

The preparations included the submission of numerous documents, outlining the challenges in the movement and suggested remedies.

A memorandum prepared by Ben Turok said:

“No one in the movement can be content with the present situation; all must be aware of a deepgoing malaise such as we have never known before.”

This was one of the great achievements of the Morogoro Conference, to enable the ANC to critically dissect its problems and to agree, through vibrant and sometimes heated debate, on a common approach to address these.

Importantly, in addressing internal difficulties, the Morogoro Conference remained firmly focused on the tasks of the liberation movement.

In one of its directives, the NEC described the significance of the Morogoro Conference in these terms:

“We are faced with a great challenge to overthrow the most powerful state in Africa and replace it with a democratic people’s state. To do this requires the total mobilisation of millions of our people.

“Radical changes are required in our machinery and style of work to enable us to achieve a further spurt towards the great goal of our movement.”

In several ways, this is what the Morogoro Conference achieved.

Morogoro produced the first ANC Strategy and Tactics document, which outlined the objectives, key tasks and methods of struggle of the movement.

It enabled free discussion and debate at the deepest level. Nothing was left unsaid. Names were named. Events were cited.

It provided clear direction to all within the movement on their respective responsibilities and on the theoretical basis that informed the actions and activities of the ANC.

It also defined the role of the armed struggle as an essential part of the political programme of the movement and its relationship to the development a mass movement inside the country.

The election of a new NEC and the establishment of a Revolutionary Council was among the decisions that contributed to greater organisational coherence and prepared the ANC to better operate under the changed circumstances.

After a long and difficult discussion, stretching back several years, Morogoro decided to open membership of the ANC to coloured, Indian and whites.

This was a greatly significant moment, where the long-standing principle of non-racialism was given expression in who could consider themselves full and equal members of the struggle for liberation.

The Morogoro Conference had an immense impact not only on the unity and coherence of the ANC, but also on the course of the struggle for the next two decades.

The legacy of Morogoro stretches into the present.

It remains a vivid reminder of the ability of the ANC to renew itself and to inject new impetus into the struggle.

It established within the democratic movement a tradition of critical self-assessment and, importantly, self-correction.

It helped to entrench practices of internal democracy, frank debate and leadership accountability that remain defining features of the African National Congress.

Through the Strategy and Tactics document, Morogoro provided an instrument for promoting theoretical clarity and political coherence in the prosecution of the liberation struggle.

The revision of the Strategy and Tactics document over the years has enabled the movement to understand changing conditions and adjust its priorities and programme to meet the demands of a new environment.

Reflecting on the significance of the Morogoro Conference several years later, OR Tambo said:

“Morogoro became a landmark and a turning point in our struggle.”

After a period of organisational malaise, dissent and disunity, the ANC emerged from Morogoro into a new era of unity, revitalisation and intensified struggle.

Now, 50 years later, the African National Congress finds itself at another such moment.

The 54th National Conference, which was held in December 2017, recognised that the movement was in decline.

A Diagnostic Organisational Report presented by the Secretary General described a growing deficit of trust between the people and the movement, which was evident in declining electoral support.

The movement was no longer united.

Factionalism and patronage had become entrenched in the organisation as leaders contested fiercely not only for positions, but for the access to resources that these positions provided.

This contestation had distorted almost every aspect of the life of the movement, from the recruitment of members, to the functioning of branches, to the organisation of conferences.

No longer did it appear to our people that cadres of the movement were guided by the values of honesty, humility, hard work, commitment, sacrifice and selflessness.

The movement was weak, divided and floundering.

Yet, the most devastating effect of this malaise was its impact on the ability of the African National Congress to be an effective instrument of fundamental economic and social change.

Many branches were no longer engaged with the issues that affected their communities.

Effective governance was sacrificed as ANC public representatives fought over the spoils of office.

Under such conditions, corruption became widespread, state capture emerged and critical institutions of our democracy were undermined.

As had been the case nearly five decades earlier at Morogoro, it was the delegates to the 54th National Conference – the representatives of the branches of the ANC – who determined that the ANC was in deep crisis.

It was they who determined that radical steps were required to restore the movement and return it to a path of revolutionary change.

It was they who declared that:

“Organisational renewal therefore is an absolute and urgent priority, and we may go as far as to say, [is essential] to the survival of our great movement.”

True to the mandate of the 54th National Conference, we have been engaged in a concerted effort to unify the organisation, to restore its moral fibre and its moral compass and to rebuild its structures.

The delegates to the Conference determined that the national leadership of the movement should not be dominated by one slate or another, but should reflect the diversity of the organisation itself.

They determined that comrades who had fiercely contested each other and held different perspectives before the Conference should now sit in the same NEC – at the same ‘top table’ – to lead the organisation into a new era.

The leadership has responded to this clear instruction, working to unite and rebuild the organisation; fighting a difficult, but ultimately successful, election campaign; and beginning to rebuild the public institutions that had been eroded through state capture.

Yet, although we have made clear progress, the task of renewal is far from complete.

There is a growing sense in some quarters that the process has stalled and that there are vested interests seeking to resist it.

And while there is much support and enthusiasm for renewal and rebuilding, ANC members and supporters – and broader society – have not been sufficiently involved in giving effect to the important resolutions of the 54th National Conference.

Therefore, as we gather here to mark the 50th anniversary of Morogoro, as we pay tribute to the immense contribution of Isithwalandwe OR Tambo, let us solemnly affirm that we will deepen the renewal of our movement of our society.

Let us affirm here that we will not relent, we will not falter and we will not, under any circumstances, retreat.

And let us remember, at all material times, that we undertake these tasks not merely for the sake of our movement, but to advance the interests of the South African people.

We undertake these tasks for no reason other than that the ANC becomes the most powerful and most effective instrument for the achievement of a better life for all South Africans.

We must attend to our internal problems without being inward-looking.

We must build unity within our ranks so that we can work to unify society.

The unity that we seek is ideological, principled, political and organisational.

We have been united around a common objective, and through debate have sought consensus on our strategy and tactics.

With the Freedom Charter as our lodestar, the Congress movement has consistently worked to build a South Africa that belongs to all who live in it, black and white.

Non-racialism has never been a tactic.

Like reconciliation, it has never been about placating the erstwhile oppressor or seeking electoral advantage.

The 1969 Strategy and Tactics, adopted at Morogoro, said that the purpose of our struggle:

“...is the complete political and economic emancipation of all our people and the constitution of a society which accords with the basic provisions of our programme, the Freedom Charter.”

That remains our purpose to this day, and it is towards the achievement of this purpose that we must direct all our energies and efforts.

It is towards the achievement of this purpose – the complete emancipation of all our people – that we seek to renew and revitalise our movement.

This requires, in the first instance, that we strengthen the exercise of people's power.

The democratic breakthrough of 1994 established government based on the will of all the people.

It gave people the right to vote, to be consulted on policy and legislation and to participate in various areas of governance, from schools to local development planning.

Yet, there is much more we need to do to ensure that South Africans have a meaningful say on all matters that affect their lives.

We need to close the gap between citizens and the people elected to represent them.

We need to make the process of governing more transparent and the institutions of government more accessible.

Certainly, we need better laws and regulations, but the exercise of people's power requires organisation, conscientisation and mobilisation of citizens to take more direct control of their destiny.

It also requires a fundamental transformation of the structure of the economy.

It was the 1969 Strategy and Tactics document that said:

“Our drive towards national emancipation is... in a very real way bound up with economic emancipation.

“We have suffered more than just national humiliation. Our people are deprived of their due in the country’s wealth; their skills have been suppressed and poverty and starvation has been their life experience.

“The correction of these centuries-old economic injustices lies at the very core of our national aspirations.”

By acknowledging the humiliation of our people, the 1969 Strategy and Tactics document makes the point – which I have always felt very strongly – that the oppression of black South Africans was as much psychological as it was material.

Consistent with this analysis from 50 years ago – and informed by the lived experience of our people – we have placed the task of radical economic transformation at the centre of our national programme.

As a nation, we have set ourselves the task of ending poverty and significantly reducing inequality by 2030.

We are directing all our efforts towards the creation of work and economic opportunities for the 9 million South Africans who are unemployed.

We have undertaken an accelerated programme of land redistribution, so that the country’s land may be shared among all those who work it and all those who need it.

We are working to provide decent, affordable housing in areas that are close to economic opportunities and all the amenities that people need to live comfortable, productive lives.

The achievement of economic freedom is dependent also on the universal provision of quality education to all South Africans.

It is dependent on a skills revolution, in which those who have been deliberately denied decent education over several generations have opportunities to acquire the skills needed to thrive in the changing economy.

As we build a new economy, as we create new jobs and opportunities, we need to invest in the lives of our people.

Through affordable, accessible health care, through comprehensive social security, through better public transport, through free basic water and electricity, we are striving to improve the quality of life of the poorest within our society.

Emancipation means also that people should be free from fear.

It is our revolutionary task to take up the fight against crime and all forms of violence, including the violence that is daily perpetrated by men against women and children.

It is similarly a revolutionary task to end corruption in the state, in business and across society.

Corruption is an instrument of counter-revolution because it redirects resources meant for the poor into the pockets of a few, it undermines the rule of law and the institutions of democracy, and it impedes the transformation of the economy and society.

To drive transformation, we need a capable and ethical developmental state.

We need public servants who are dedicated, hard-working and have the skills and expertise needed to implement change.

We need institutions that are robust, durable and properly resourced; institutions that cannot be captured or diverted to serve other purposes.

We recognise, as the delegates at Morogoro did 50 years ago, that the freedom of the South African people cannot be achieved for as long as there are others in the world who are colonised, oppressed or exploited.

As OR Tambo said at Morogoro:

“It is impossible, if not fatal, to divorce the struggle of our people in South Africa from the struggle of the peoples of the world.”

We therefore have a responsibility to pursue the achievement of peace, stability and inclusive prosperity on the African continent and across the world.

The Morogoro Conference was made possible by the support and solidarity of the government and people of Tanzania, just as our freedom was made possible by the tireless and selfless contributions of people from many countries across Africa and in other corners of the globe.

It is therefore appropriate that solidarity should be a fundamental pillar of our foreign policy alongside the advancement of our national interest.

We must remain steadfast in our support for the independence of Western Sahara. We support the quest by Palestinians for their sovereignty.

The ANC continues to call on the United States to remove the illegal economic embargo/blockade against the Republic of Cuba.

Comrades,

To achieve the radical economic and social transformation of our society, we need to deepen and intensify the organisational renewal of our movement.

We must therefore use the opportunity of this important anniversary to clearly outline the tasks we must now undertake.

We must firmly entrench the exercise of democracy and accountability throughout the organisation.

It must be a priority that we empower branch members to freely choose their leaders and to contribute meaningfully to decision-making in the organisation.

Using the Eye of a Needle as our reference, we must free branch members and conference delegates from the influence of money and other incentives.

Everyone must be able to participate in organisational processes without the threat of coercion or violence.

In part, this can be achieved through improved management and the effective use of technology, as the new membership system will demonstrate.

It also calls for more effective and more systematic cadre development programmes, such as those managed by the OR Tambo School of Leadership.

But it also requires a change in attitude, a return to the values that once defined the ANC.

It requires that each of us accepts personal responsibility for our actions.

However, it also requires that we act differently as an organisation.

We should no longer be prepared to defend the indefensible.

For far too long we have been prepared to close ranks and protect comrades who have done wrong.

This must now come to an end.

We should no longer look away when we know that wrong things are being done.

Accountability and consequence must become a reality in the structures of government and our organisation.

Perhaps the most vital part of our renewal is to ensure that the ANC is rooted in society and our communities.

It is the ANC that we must always protect and whose interests we must always advance rather than the narrow interests of individuals, be they leaders or members.

When a rural road becomes impassable, it must be the ANC branch that leads the effort to have it repaired.

When a clinic runs out of essential medicines, it must be cadres of the ANC who do not rest until there are new supplies.

When trains run late, when social grants are not paid on time, when gangsters terrorise communities, when taps run dry or when factories close down, it must be the structures of the ANC who work with communities and public representatives to address the problem.

Where there are social problems that need urgent attention – such as high rates of HIV transmission, violence against women, youth unemployment or substance abuse – it must be the structures of the ANC who work with local religious bodies, civic organisations, business associations, youth groups and others to find solutions.

Effective renewal requires therefore that we build the ANC as an effective instrument of social and economic change.

It means that we need to draw into our ranks the most committed and the most principled within society.

We must develop cadres who have both political and technical skills, who can organise, can theorise and can act.

We need cadres who demonstrate as much knowledge of the global economy as they understand the operations of a small spaza shop.

We must be an organisation that values knowledge, expertise and experience – and that invests in the development of its cadres.

It is through these actions that we will restore the credibility of the ANC among the people.

The renewal of our movement also means that we must reassert, in practice, our bias towards the working class and the poor.

As our 2017 Strategy and Tactics document notes, the rise of a black middle strata is a positive development which accords with the broader objectives of social transformation.

However, as this strata gains greater political and economic weight, and as more of the leadership of the movement enter this strata, there is a risk that the ANC's bias towards the poor may over time be diminished.

Our renewal must therefore be an ideological renewal so that we may understand both the national and the class content of our struggle, and so that the policies and programmes we adopt are informed by this reality.

As we undertake this work, we must reinforce the non-racial character of the African National Congress.

The decision to open membership of the organisation to all races was, in the context of the time, a courageous and far-sighted decision.

It reinforced the unity of all the oppressed groups in South Africa, and acknowledged the role of white democrats in the struggle for freedom and equality.

Now, 50 years later, we must acknowledge that we still have much work to do to establish the ANC as a home for all South Africans.

Voting patterns over the last 25 years show there has been a decline in ANC support in coloured and Indian communities, and no increase in white communities.

This is reflected too in the composition of most of our leadership structures and electoral lists.

This should be a matter of grave concern for an organisation that has been the foremost champion of a truly non-racial South Africa.

We need to better understand the reasons for this and take measures to ensure that in our recruitment, in our structures and in our programmes we promote greater inclusivity and diversity.

The revitalisation of the movement requires that we also strengthen our commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment.

We have made huge strides in representivity in the structures of our movement since the Morogoro Conference, when not a single woman was elected onto the NEC.

We have embraced the principle of equal representation in all of our structures, although we do not always achieve gender parity in practice.

While we work to ensure that this principle is applied uniformly and consistently, our greater task is to ensure that women are able to join the movement, participate equally in all its activities and advance without impediment to occupy positions of leadership.

Even though we may have the most progressive policies, we need to better understand how patriarchal attitudes and practices conspire to limit the opportunities for women in society, in the economy and even within our movement.

And based on that understanding, we need to take measures to affirm the position and the role of women within the movement, and to combat all forms of sexism, chauvinism and discrimination.

The success of our efforts to renew and revitalise the African National Congress depends ultimately on our conduct as leaders and cadres.

We need to embrace the concept of revolutionary discipline as understood and practiced by Oliver Tambo.

As we have said before, he did not understand discipline as primarily a matter of rules, regulations and sanction.

For him, discipline was the product of a deliberate political decision by an individual to dedicate their capabilities, resources and energy to the achievement of the aims of the movement.

For him, discipline was a consequence of the decision of an individual to join the African National Congress.

Discipline does not earn praise. It does not bring personal reward.

It is about working hard and placing the interests of the people above one's own interests.

It is about fighting factionalism, resisting corruption, safeguarding public resources.

It is about integrity and honesty.

It is about acting at all times to promote unity and to desist from any action or any utterance that may sow division.

Renewal must be driven by all of us and it is all of us who, through our actions, must be the renewal.

We recall the memorable words that Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela spoke at the funeral of OR Tambo, when he said:

“I say that Oliver Tambo has not died, because the ideals for which he sacrificed his life can never die.

“I say that Oliver Tambo has not died because the ideals of freedom, human dignity and a colour-blind respect for every individual cannot perish.

“I say he has not died because there are many of us who became part of his soul and therefore willingly entered into a conspiracy with him, for the victory of his cause.

“While the ANC lives, Oliver Tambo cannot die!”

And so it falls to all of us – leaders, members, veterans, supporters – to do everything within our means not only to ensure that the ANC lives, but that it thrives and it grows and that it endures as a powerful instrument for peace and freedom.

In his closing address he summed up the mood of sober determination:

“These are the orders to our people. The order that comes from the conference is, close ranks. Be vigilant comrades. The enemy is vigilant. Beware the wage driver! Men who creep from ear to ear, driving wedges among us, who go around creating splits and divisions. Beware the wedge driver! Watch his poisonous tongue.”

I thank you.