

THE JULY 18TH MANZINI DECLARATION

We, the leaders, members and representatives of Swazi civil society, the labour movement, political formations, the faith communities, women, youth, rural folk and general public of Swaziland;

Having gathered under the auspices of the Sidla Inhloko Forum here at the John Bosco Centre in Manzini on Saturday, July 18, 2009 to deliberate, discuss and debate on a wide range of social, economic, cultural and political concerns affecting our people here in Swaziland; and to recognize Nelson Mandela's 91st birthday, him being the symbol of liberation and human dignity.

Having affirmed our unity and solidarity in our diversity;

Cognizant of the many challenges confronting us as a nation;

Desirous of entrenching democracy, peaceful conflict transformation, gender equality, sustainable development and national unity in Swaziland do make the following resolutions:

RESOLUTIONS:

- That we need to come together and struggle for sustainable development, decent work and end to abject poverty in Swaziland;
- That all of our people have a right to health, education, housing, security and all the basic amenities of life;
- That democracy, justice and freedom is the birthright of each and every Swazi, young or old, male or female, able bodied or living with a disability;
- That freedom of expression, assembly, association and belief are constitutional guarantees that should not be violated by the state using any pretext;
- That as a nation grappling with the AIDS pandemic, those living with HIV/AIDS or affected by it, directly or indirectly must have access to affordable health and medical services, be free from stigma and demonization in order to live productive lives full of dignity;

- That Swazi women and girl children must be safeguarded from rape and other acts of gender specific violence and related outrages;
- That our vibrant youth, being the future of the nation must be accorded all the support they need to realize their dreams, hopes and aspirations;
- In light of the above general resolutions, we have the following specific demands:

SPECIFIC DEMANDS AND DECLARATIONS:

I: ON DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE:

1. A constitution making process that will be people driven, inclusive, transparent and accountable that will result in the adoption of a popular, legitimate national, democratic constitution;

2. The immediate repeal and removal of the draconian Suppression of Terrorism Act and all other oppressive and unjust laws from the statute books like the 1963 Public Order Act the Proposed Public Servants Bill, elements of the constitution that underpin the 1973 Decree and the Swazi Administration Order of 1998 because they violate the spirit and letter of International Human Rights Obligations;

3. The resumption of a credible multi-party democracy and the lifting of any state restrictions on the activities of political parties in Swaziland in line with the SADC Electoral Protocol as signed by Swaziland in 2004 underpinned by a free and fearless independent media.

4. The release of all Swazi democrats and patriots who are currently facing trumped up politically motivated charges because they are deemed by the state to be “dissidents” against the status quo;

5. Powers of chiefs must be clarified and strictly confined to the traditional sphere; and traditional authorities must respect laws passed by democratic institutions and promote and protect the rights and freedoms of all citizens.

6. Corruption must be weeded out completely from Swazi society by using existing laws and enacting the necessary legislation to combat this vice;

II: ON HUMAN RIGHTS:

7. Recognise that human rights are inherent to our humanity and not given to us by the state. We commit to drawing up a comprehensive bill of rights that is not overly encumbered with derogations and claw back clauses; domesticate all international instruments automatically after ratification;

8. Democratically constitute an effective and independent Human Rights Commission;

9. The law should apply to all equally - no one is above the law;

10. Need for a constitution that conforms and reflects all human rights related Covenants as signed by the government mainly:-

- **The Universal Declaration on Human Rights.**
- **The African Charter on Human and People's Rights.**
- **The Constitutive Act of the AU.**
- **The Harare Declaration of the Commonwealth.**
- **The SADC Charters, Protocols and Guidelines.**

III: ON CRIME AND THE RULE OF LAW:

10.. That the police and related state law enforcement and security organs should consider it their first duty to protect and defend the ordinary Swazi citizen from wanton criminal attacks and treat everyone as equal before the law. Enforcement of law and order should be without fear or favour, in line with international good practice and respect for human rights and there should be an end to the culture of torture and impunity for those implicated in extra-judicial killings;

IV: ON GENDER AND WOMEN'S ISSUES:

11. That concerted efforts must be made to ensure that progress is made towards redressing historic injustices and systemic imbalances that militate against equal rights for women and men in Swaziland;

12. That the adverse and disproportionate effects on women of HIV & AIDS and Poverty be recognized and combated and that gender issues are mainstreamed into government policies and budgets.

13. That Swazi women and girl children must be safeguarded from rape and other acts of gender specific violence and related outrages;

14. That the government should take more proactive measures to promote the equal recognition of Swazi women in the professional, business, social and academic spheres;

15. That laws, customs and traditions that militate against women inheriting and owning land in their own names should be done away with;

16. That those wrong interpretations of our culture, traditions and culture which undermine the rights and dignity of women or any other section of the community should be combated and rectified.

V: ON COST OF LIVING AND DECENT WORK:

17. The state is called to take positive steps, in conjunction with organized labour employers' associations and other stakeholders to generate employment under conditions guaranteeing decent work; the government to ensure that prices of basic goods and commodities remain affordable and accessible to the ordinary people; and, if needs be, subsidized;

18. Further that the government must:

- **Provide social security for all**
- **Provide social protection for all**
- **Provide medical aid for all**
- **Government to upscale labour inspection and such inspection to include local worker representatives**
- **All Companies operating in Swaziland must do their banking in Swaziland in order to benefit the Swaziland economy**
- **Government to introduce national minimum wage based on regional survey**
- **Enforce the 3 months security deposit for employers to mitigate effects of fly-by-night employers or workers**
- **Abolish labour brokering**
- **Expatriates must be forced to transfer skills to the locals as condition for acquiring residence permit**
- **Government must provide bail out stimulus packages for companies which are severely affected by the financial crisis, but such Companies to declare its books and further undertake to pay back the money**

VIII: ON THE YOUTH:

19. The youth demand a constitutional multi-party system where they would have a right to belong to a political home/organization where they can freely exercise their democratic rights in Swaziland;

20. The youth demand to live in a Swaziland without political prisoners and where women young and old, are empowered are protected by the laws of the land;

21. Youth issues and demands are cross cutting and reflected throughout this declaration;

IX: ON EDUCATION:

22. Scrapping of the IGCSE system of education and the implementation of wide-ranging educational reforms that will bring Swaziland in tandem with the demands of a rapidly advancing, technologically complex twenty first century globalized economy through the development of an educational system with quality and content that measures up to international standards;

23. More universities needed in Swaziland and existing colleges should be upgraded so that they can run degree courses; there should be sponsorship for all colleges including vocational institutions;

24. There should be quality free education from primary to tertiary levels; with proper salaries paid to all staff.

25. Scrap the system of contract teachers. Instead hire them on permanent terms with proper remuneration;

25. School children in Swaziland expect the government to provide security in all schools to avoid tragedies like eNcabeneni;

X: ON THE PLIGHT OF STREET VENDORS, HAWKERS, PEASANTS AND EX-MINERS AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE INFORMAL SECTOR:

26. Concrete measures to be taken to protect and subsidize our hard working informal sector traders and small business people for sustainable growth;

27. There should be more government support for people in the handicrafts sector;

28. Social grants should be increased and people with disabilities in this sector need special transport arrangements;

29. Government should release payments accruing to ex-miners which have been deferred for too long leading to poverty;

30. Peasants must be involved in determining the prices of the commodities they produce and they need government support in terms of implements, tractors etc; and protection of their markets

XI: ON LAND, THE ENVIRONMENT, FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AND AGRICULTURE:

31. The government should involve the agricultural sector, especially the rural based small farmers to come up with initiatives that work towards the realization of full food sovereignty within a practical time frame and guaranteeing security of land tenure; that far reaching legislation should be passed setting in motion policies to protect the environment; The government should provide adequate support to small farmers and peasants in this sector and introduce irrigation and modern, environmentally friendly methods of agriculture that at the same time allow the Swazi people to decide on their own food policies;

32. There should be a comprehensive inventory of land ownership in the country;

33. All Swazis living on Swazi National Land should have security of tenure for the land they occupy and cultivate;

34. There should be equal access to water resources and concerted efforts must be made by all to conserve our precious rivers, wetlands, forests, mountains and other elements of our environment;

XII: ON REGIONAL MATTERS AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

35. The government should adhere to all international treaties to which Swaziland is party to;

36. We call on the international community to remain vigilant and engage the Swaziland government to comply fully with universal conventions safeguarding civic, political, economic, social and cultural rights;

37. We urge SADC to ensure that Swaziland adheres to all SADC Protocols and allows full democratic rights to prevail in Swaziland as it espoused for other the rest of the people in SADC members when it was chair of the Organ on Defence Security and Stability;

38. We call on the African Union to urge the government to live up to its obligations under the African Charter, the Constitutive Act of the AU and NEPAD's African Peer Review Mechanism;

39. We call on the United Nations, working in tandem and/or under the auspices of UNDP, UNESCO, WHO, ILO and FAO as well as its General Assembly to urge the government to dialogue with all stakeholders to ensure peace, stability, democracy and social progress;

40. We call on Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Freedom House, Reporters without Frontiers, Article 19, FIDH and other human rights bodies to document and catalogue incidents of human rights abuses and atrocities in Swaziland;

41. We call on the international media to step up comprehensive coverage of unfolding events in the country;

XIII: ON CUSTOMS, TRADITIONS AND CULTURE

42. That Swazi traditions, customs and culture be promoted to protect our national heritage and enhance our collective quality of life;

43. That culture remains our national identity, it should be voluntary and dynamic and should retain coherence with fundamental rights and not be used for political patronage;

44. That those harmful interpretations of our culture, traditions and culture which undermine the rights and dignity of women or any other section of the community should be combated and rectified;

We, as citizens, with an equal claim in the country, hereby affirm the above resolutions and demands as our freely held aspirations and expressions of our right to self-determination.