

# **‘Unite and Recapture our State’**

**Keynote address to the Conference for the Future of South Africa  
By Siphon M Pityana, convenor of the Save South Africa campaign  
18 July 2017**

I am humbled by the opportunity to address this important assembly that seeks to undertake the immense task of pulling our country from the brink. I would like, on behalf of all of us, to thank both the Kathrada Foundation and Save South Africa for the sterling work of convening us. We are also grateful that the Rhema Bible Church and its leader Rev Ray McCauley, has opened its doors to us to meet.

As we gather here on Nelson Mandela Day, it is appropriate to ask ourselves a soul searching question: if we had heeded the words of the father of our free and great nation, Nelson Mandela, would we be meeting here today to plan how to recapture our democratic state from the hands of rogues and criminals?

Do you remember Madiba’s words in his last State of the Nation Address in 1999?:

He said:

“Our hope for the future depends on our resolution as a nation in dealing with the scourge of corruption. Success will require an acceptance that, in many respects, we are a sick society. It is perfectly correct to assert that all this was spawned by apartheid. No amount of self-induced amnesia will change this reality of history. But it is also a reality of the present that among the new cadres in various levels of government, you find individuals who are as corrupt as - if not more than - those they found in government.

When a leader in a Provincial Legislature siphons off resources meant to fund service to the people; when employees of a government institution set up to help empower those who were excluded by apartheid, defraud it for their own enrichment, then we must admit that we are a sick society.

This problem manifests itself in all areas of life. More often than not, it is business people who launder funds to curry favour with public servants; it is ordinary citizens who seek to buy themselves out of trouble; it is strange religious leaders who sing praises to criminals or hoard land acquired by the foul means of apartheid. All of us must work together for our redemption.”

We did not heed these words – and that is why the threat that Mandela saw quite early in our democratic project has culminated in a criminal merchandise

that undermines our very sovereignty and the promise of a fair, just and equitable democratic order.

We are here today because we did not listen. And because of that, we are left lamenting, bemoaning, complaining and even swearing in desperation at what is increasingly perceived as an unstoppable, powerful and brazen march of the evil force of corruption.

Today, we must begin to fundamentally turn the tide against the forces of evil. In the same way that we defeated apartheid, through the combined efforts of our people, we must

combine our efforts, resources and energies to maximize our impact and stop state capture.

Remember: A people united shall never be defeated!

Amazingly, here we are today, about 400 delegates from around 100 civil society organisations from across the length and breadth of our country, representing millions of our people, gathered in one room, with one common purpose: to say **no to state capture** and rewrite the future of South Africa.

When approached by both Save SA and the Kathrada Foundation, you readily agreed and encouraged us to bring everyone together in this fashion. You must know that we approached you because we've been inspired by your fearless voice, your readiness to take risks and fight this ugly specter.

You are here as activists and organisers of civil society, the unsung heroes of our struggle, who represent the future of South Africa. You represent women, the youth, workers and unemployed, the disabled, business, and faith-based organisations among many others. You represent activist groups that are united behind a range of social issues – education, health, labour rights, social justice, sport and the homeless.

We know that you've done all these things, not because you're seeking martyrdom or heroism, but because you appreciate the call of the moment. We all come from different trenches, but are today seeking unity in a fight against a powerful, vicious and dangerous enemy that we've never confronted before.

We dare not under-estimate what we are up against.

Our campaigns against state capture threaten livelihoods, incomes and lifestyles of many people – starting with the Zuma and Gupta families, but extending deep down into many aspects of the state. We are threatening the careers and lifestyles of corrupt Ministers, public servants, business people both in SOCs and private sector. We are disrupting ugly networks of international criminal syndicates involved in racketeering, money laundering and disabling of functional states and converting them into agencies in their international criminal enterprise. They are powerful players, from both the private sector and sometimes governments in places such as China, Dubai, India, Russia and some African countries among others.

We are up against a global network of criminals who have turned South Africa into their playground and ATM, and who do not like the thought that this is going to come to an end one day.

They have massive resources – all of it stolen from the state and the poor. They have access to the levers of power. They have their own propaganda TV channel, their own blackshirts who threaten our activists and journalists, and their own networks of desperate people who are prepared to do anything to get access to money and power.

As a result, we are seeing a slide towards low intensity civil conflict, with the assassination of political representatives and very disturbing threats against those who speak out, such as Solly Mapaila and Dr Makhosi Khoza. We are seeing the rise of fascist fronts such as Black First Land First, and the dirty tricks of Bell Pottinger.

To make our task even harder, the state capture mafia have destroyed the very aspects of the state that are supposed to protect our freedoms and ensure we are safe.

The leadership of the police -- who are supposed to protect us -- have been captured, leaving us exposed. Crime intelligence is being captured by corrupt elements and, as we are already aware, is slowly being transformed into an apartheid style security police.

Even some in the leadership of the National Prosecuting Authority may have been captured, leaving us unable to charge those committing crimes and see them prosecuted. The Public Protector is a cause for concern and has raised doubt about her competency for the important role assigned to that Office.

It is, I must admit, a massive battle. But it is one from which we cannot shy away.

There is a lot at stake for the people we are uniting against. We are a direct threat to the state capture project, and we must never under-estimate this.

The more we take back power, the more we roll back state capture, the more desperate they are going to become.

We must remain vigilant, we must remain aware, and we must stand united in the face of threats, intimidation and thuggery. This struggle has already claimed lives in the political violence we're seeing in KZN, Mpumalanga and other parts of the country. It has also claimed careers, including the SABC Eight (including Suna Venter who paid the ultimate price), Pravin Gordhan and Mcebisi Jonas and many others who will be mentioned in the course of our proceedings today.

You are, indeed, our heroes. And we salute you.

There are people who are unhappy about what we are doing here today. They are threatened by the notion of South Africans taking back power that they are

guaranteed in the Constitution. They call us many things, they might demean our work and undermine our activities. We must be steadfast and unflinching

They are correct to be unhappy about what we are doing today. But they are completely incorrect if they think we are not going to continue with our agenda.

We are a coalition of the committed. We are a coalition of the inspired. And we are the future of South Africa!

Comrades, we have one single focus today, one common purpose, and that is to save South Africa and plan a new way forward. We have to put an end to state capture, once and for all. We have to recapture South Africa, piece by piece, and restore power to the people.

We have to ensure that the South Africa we live in is the one we envisioned in our Constitution, which so many people fought, suffered and died for.

We have to return our state into the hands of the people. And once Zuma is gone, we have to ensure that we are led by leaders with integrity, who respect the Constitution and the rule of law.

We have to ensure that the state capture project is stopped in its tracks. We must let it be known that with the overwhelming evidence in the public domain, we are bitterly disappointed that law enforcement officers and agencies have not acted against the many implicated in criminal acts.

We are grateful to the media for the role they've played in bringing to light the facts about the extent of state capture that Zuma and his criminal gang have tried so hard to hide from the public.

We demand the immediate appointment of a judicial commission of enquiry, as recommended by the Public Protector, as we believe the information that is in the public domain is only the tip of an ice bag. We must demand the dismissal – and jailing -- of all those found to be involved in these corrupt activities.

It is urgent that the credibility of the criminal justice system, and all institutions that are crucial in the fight against corruption, is restored. It starts with transparency around the appointment of people to head these institutions.

We have to fight to protect the independence of the Judiciary and the integrity of Chapter Nine institutions, and guard against attempts to capture the Independent Electoral Commission, just when we're about to have the most fiercely contested election in 2019.

There can be no sustainable economic recovery with an untrustworthy leadership in the Treasury. It is therefore urgent that credible leaders are appointed in key economic institutions, especially those that are linked to the fight against corruption, such as Treasury, SARS, the Chief Procurement Office, the Public Investment Corporation and the Financial Intelligence Centre.

The recapture of the state must include the removal of boards and executives implicated in misgovernance and criminality in SOCs. We have to insist on a full investigation into corruption in these entities. As part of this, we need proper and transparent processes in the appointment of new leaders in these enterprises.

We also need to push, as hard as we can, to break the corrupt relationships between business and politicians, by demanding transparency around political party funding.

As part of our insistence that we be led with integrity, we need to discuss how we ensure that all political parties subject their public representatives to lifestyle audits as a prerequisite to their nomination to such roles.

Many other ideas on what is required to recapture the state are likely to emerge in our discussions, but these will not see the light of day as long as President Jacob Zuma, the kingpin in the state capture project, is in power.

Zuma must go! Zuma must go! Comrades

Today, one of the most immediate areas of attention must be how we increase pressure on Members of Parliament to vote to remove a corrupt President when a motion of no confidence is debated on August the 8th. We must urge them to join the nation against state capture rather than its preservation.

We must make MPs know that we support them when they vote with their conscience. We must remind our MPs of what the Constitutional Court has told them: that they do not represent the narrow interests of a political party – they represent the people of South Africa, and they must vote in the interests of the people.

This is about the country and not the party, and we must develop a united set of actions to ensure that MPs know this. We must show them, without hesitation, what the people of South Africa want and need. We must discuss how we demonstrate our support. A number of petitions have been initiated, marches have been proposed, letters are being written to MPs among other efforts. What else do we need to do to improve the prospects of success for such a motion? We must reflect on this, to ensure we have maximum impact on the 8th of August.

Above and beyond the motion of no confidence, we must look at ways to stop state capture and recapture the state. We must focus on the “integrity six pack” that has been drafted by the conference organisers, as well as the declaration for the future of South Africa, and ensure that it meets the needs of our people.

This means keeping our eyes on the longer-term objectives, which are to address the socio-economic issues that continue to divide us -- such as poverty,

hunger, inequality, racism, patriarchy/sexism and other forms of discrimination. We have to ensure we address the crises around the rights to basic and higher education, health care services, land reform and employment.

Because only then can we truly say we are shaping the future of South Africa. Comrades We can only start to do any of this if we commit to concerted, coordinated and united action. We must find our areas of consensus, we must search for common ground, and – dare I say -- we must put aside our differences, if we are to reclaim our country back from the captors.

We must be united around a minimum programme with a common purpose. Remember: a people united will never be defeated.

Today, you may find yourself sitting alongside someone whose world-view or class orientation is fundamentally different from yours. The person next to you may be a trade unionist from a different federation from yours or a businessperson who represents monopoly capital. It may be an activist who is campaigning against some of the causes you believe in. It may be someone from a different faith-based group to yours, or from a different ideological orientation.

My earnest plea, comrades, is that you put these differences aside today and focus on what we have in common.

Because we cannot afford to fail.

We have one shot at this, and we must do what we have to do to make it work. We need to strive for common ground, agree wherever possible on common action, and build – day by day – on the consensus we have found.

Because, as I said earlier, only then can we truly say we are shaping the future of South Africa.

In conclusion: many of you have travelled long distances to be here today, to make your own contribution to the future of our country. Some of you are died- in-the-wool activists who have trod this path before. Some are political veterans, who have seen these kinds of struggles played out before. Some of you were active in the underground, others were active in above-ground formations like the United Democratic Front and yet many more have experience in mobilising in the post apartheid struggles.

We are not here today to relaunch the United Democratic Front, but to build a common platform, in whatever form it can best manifest. I would appeal, therefore, that we do not obsess at this stage about the nature of this front, its name, or issues like logos and colours. We do not have the time for that.

The shape of whatever coordinating structure may be formed is important, as is the question of representivity. We need all hands on deck, and we need to ensure that women and young people are at the forefront of what we do. But the most important task is to develop a programme of action that works, and to ensure that it energises and involves the maximum number of South Africans.

We must use the momentum from this conference to set the tone for political and social discourse, in each and every community. We must spread the work. Everywhere I go, people want to know what they should do to support these efforts. We must have an answer for them so that we, as a nation are all engaged. To draw on the language of the 80s, we must mobilise, not mourn.

Each one must teach one. And an injury to one is an injury to all.

As we do so, we should continually aim to redefine the power relationship between the people and the state, and between the people and political parties. We must build People's Power, day after day after day.

We must ensure that our words and actions redefine South Africa's political agenda, so that by the time our people vote again in 2019, it is our agenda – the People's Agenda – that defines what political parties stand for, who they elect as leaders, and how their representatives carry out their mandates.

We have made many mistakes as a nation since we fought for liberation. We have written a Constitution that did not envisage the sort of corrupt leadership we have today. We have entrusted untrustworthy people with power. We have allowed the gains of liberation to be stolen away.

Today, we are going to stop that. Working with common purpose, we are going to take back power and shape the future of South Africa. We are going to restore power to the people.

And in that, comrades, we definitely cannot afford to fail. Because a people united shall never be defeated!

Amandla!

For an electronic version, please email [nikita@savesa.org.za](mailto:nikita@savesa.org.za).