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Continuing the miracle into South Africa's second decade

FW de Klerk Foundation

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Community Builders Prize awarded to F W de Klerk

Press release of FW de Klerk's acceptance of the Gandhi, King, Ikeda Community Builders Prize Awarded by Morehouse College in Atlanta, United States

Former President F W de Klerk was awarded the Gandhi, King, Ikeda Community Builders Prize by Morehouse College, the *alma mater* of Martin Luther King, on Saturday 3 April in Atlanta. Morehouse College is one of the leading black colleges in the United States and the Gandhi, King Ikeda Prize was instituted three years ago. Other recipients include His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan bin Talal of Jordan, Dr. Michael Nobel and Ms. Betty Williams.

In his speech, Mr de Klerk emphasised the importance of justice and reconciliation in achieving lasting peace in societies that have experienced conflict. He stressed that the achievement of constitutional rights is only part of the battle in both the United States and South Africa, and that true justice will be achieved only when constitutional rights are translated into decent living conditions and real equality for all black South Africans and Americans alike.

Mr de Klerk stated that Morehouse College's gesture in awarding the prize to a former leader of a government that was synonymous with apartheid is in itself an act of reconciliation. He then continued to highlight the importance of forgiveness and the peace-making power of reconciliation in his comparison between the civil rights movement in the United States and the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. According to de Klerk, forgiveness is critically important for the spiritual and mental well-being of human beings and for the search for lasting peace. He stated that because many of the conflicts in the world have their roots deep in memories of ancient and unforgiven wrongs, peace can only be established between such peoples when the root of their sense of grievance is addressed. Forgiveness helps to break the vicious cycle of bitterness, revenge and escalating conflict and is the beginning of the road to reconciliation.

Mr de Klerk said that reconciliation is a concept which requires thorough analysis to avoid the misuse of the word as simply another rhetorical catch-phrase. He stated that reconciliation entails the bringing together of those who have previously been alienated from one another. It requires one to put the hurt, reproach and conflict of a divided past behind one and to concentrate, instead, on the promise and common purpose of a united future. It also requires one to

carefully, and dispassionately, examine the collective accounts of one's past relationships and to seek a balance. In the search for reconciliation with one another, one must forgive and hope to be forgiven. Mr de Klerk explained that any search for lasting solutions to the problems that have caused conflict in the past will require all parties to make real - and sometimes painful - compromises. The acceptance of compromises, moreover, requires a leap of faith and a willingness to trust those whom one had previously regarded as sworn enemies.

Mr de Klerk said that in both the United States and South Africa the achievement of constitutional rights is only part of the battle. He pointed out that South Africa's constitutional transformation has had very little effect on the lives of at least half of the population who continue to live in poverty and deprivation. Accordingly, the manner in which South Africa deals with economic and social transformation during the next decade will determine the long-term success and viability of the state that was founded ten years ago.

He said that in the same way the dream of Dr Martin Luther King will only be fully realised once constitutional rights are translated into decent living conditions and real equality for all black Americans. According to Mr de Klerk, it is a question of justice. He stated that although both the United States and South Africa have achieved great constitutional victories, there is still a long road ahead and many more mountains to climb until all the dreams are finally achieved.

**ISSUED BY THE F W DE KLERK FOUNDATION.
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