



**NINTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON  
TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT  
Midrand, South Africa, 27 April - 11 May 1996**

---

**ADDRESS BY H.E. MR. NELSON MANDELA  
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**AT THE INAUGURAL CEREMONY  
on 27 April 1996**

This great gathering comes at a critical moment as the world faces the challenges of development and world peace.

For South Africa it is a privilege to host those who played such a vital role in our liberation. It is a special joy, on the second anniversary of our Freedom Day, to wish you all a hearty welcome.

South Africa's liberation has brought the opportunity at last to address apartheid's legacy of poverty and inequality. It has brought propitious circumstances for building a framework for the promotion of sustained growth and balanced development particularly in Southern Africa.

We have no illusions about the immensity of the tasks we face as a country, as a region and as a continent - but we are also confident that we are making progress and learning valuable lessons.

Issues of trade and development affect the whole world, but they do have particular significance for Africa, particularly in the history and circumstance at the bottom of many a ladder and yet determined to realize the promise of her rebirth.

We therefore thank UNCTAD for choosing our country and our continent of Africa as the location of its Ninth Conference.

I would also take this opportunity to thank the Conference for the confidence it has expressed in the South African Government by electing South Africa to the presidency of UNCTAD.

When world leaders set out three decades ago to create an instrument in UNCTAD to help overcome the inequality in the world economy, they could scarcely have expected that the closing years of the century would be witness to homelessness and unemployment on such a scale as we now have.

In spite of the immense economic and technological gains that have been made, in spite of the end of the cold war, the reality is that the world at the end of the twentieth century is no more secure a place for most of its inhabitants. Poverty and need continue to blight their lives.

Though these scourges are with us still, in other respects we find ourselves in a world radically changed from that which UNCTAD first defined the particular needs of developing countries.

The old economic and trading blocs which traced the landscape of world trade have changed.

The world trade regime has changed.

Capital movements are freer - and more volatile, as we are experiencing in South Africa at present.

Technology changes at an increasingly rapid pace and on a global scale, inducing rapid change in industrial pro

These changes bring great opportunities - but also severe challenges and problems. They take on specific and meanings for powerful players in the global economy and for those without power. Greater market access and trade are prized in the capitals of the world - but hold no promise for those countries producing few goods and with which to trade, and with no market power to pursue their interests.

For much of the world, especially the Least Developed Countries, inequities are further compounded by lack instruments that were available to other countries when they were in similar positions. The danger is that, left to devices, the current regime can only entrench this inequality and widen the gap between rich and poor nations.

Our mission, therefore, must be shaped by the real needs of those whom history has marginalized. That we can them to the vagaries of the world economy was precisely the wisdom which informed the founding of UNCTA

It is common cause that the United Nations has to restructure itself to meet the demands of the new millennium measure UNCTAD has to forge for itself a new position in the world economy, in the light of these changes and that it is equipped to accomplish in the twenty-first century the objectives for which it was established.

Central to that new position, we are convinced, must be a "Partnership for Development", built on the ideas at UNCTAD four years ago.

South Africa's own experience, as we grapple with the task of addressing our own wide disparities of wealth and highlights in particular three aspects of partnership.

Firstly, the changes in economic and trading groups which have taken place demand more flexible arrangements simple relation of developed to developing nation. For example, South Africa's relation to SADC, of fundamental importance to us, is a partnership very different from our partnership with the European Union. As such, each would require attention to particular needs and circumstances.

Secondly, development cannot be the responsibility only of government. Success requires Governments to join their social partners: non-governmental organizations; the private sector; and other parts of civil society.

Lastly, all these partners need to recognize that the potential contribution of the private sector to the development is very great indeed, whether it is in infrastructure, technological change or human resource development. In that they should cooperate in making development an integral part of the pursuit of business, rather than an addition which it might or might not engage in.

We are confident that this Conference will strengthen our shared commitment and create the basis for strengthening worldwide partnership for development; for prosperity and for peace. We believe that it will promote concretely by UNCTAD for building that partnership as well as for facilitating trade and investment.

We have a shared responsibility to roll back the harsh effects of past policies. And we owe it to future generations to perpetuate patterns of domination and dependence; of pessimism and crude self-interest. Peace and development are indivisible. Without relief of the poverty which pervades much of the world, our democracy and human rights for many only be a formality, and always remain in jeopardy.

We are confident that the United Nations, and this Conference in particular, will take the world forward along partnership and responsibility in building just and equitable relations.

I wish you well in your deliberations, and hope you will have a memorable stay in our country.

---

[\[UNCTAD Homepage\]](#) [\[Events and meetings\]](#)