



Justice in our society so that people can live in freedom and security

Stakeholder Conference 2007 hosted by
The National Prosecuting Authority

Wednesday, 28th March 2007 – Friday, 30th March 2007
Gallagher Estate, Midrand

Closing and Vote of thanks by: Ms Marion Sparg

NPA: CEO

Chairperson and conference delegates,

We have spoken to and listened to one another for the past two and half days and I will therefore try not to take up too much time in this vote of thanks. I will be doing a very brief vote of thanks and then making a few comments about two important topics or themes that emerged during the conference –

- the two approaches to justice and
- the importance of stakeholders

I want to thank firstly the organizing team gathered here in front of us today who have worked very hard for a long time. A round of applause please. I would also ask Mariaan Van Kaam to come up on stage and accept this bouquet of flowers on behalf of the team.

I want to thank also all our speakers and everyone who contributed to the success of this engagement.

Yesterday we had two very different and graphic representations or images of power before us here on this stage. The one was embodied by Deputy National Commissioner Pruis and the other by Father Michael Lapsley.

The one approach is about formal authority – law and order. The other is about moral authority – restorative justice.

Both are very powerful and necessary in their own right.

Let's talk about the law and order approach. R43bn of men and machines. This makes us feel very safe, protected. We have a huge army to take on the criminals, the bad guys.

But, on a personal note, as a mother of two very young children, the youngest being only 2 years old, I suppose I should feel comforted and safe by all these men, money and machines that Commissioner Pruis has at its command. But, if SAPS needs R43bn now, in 10 years time they will need R83bn. The army will have grown and the war would have intensified. But is this a war we can win with men, money and machines? Is this the world I want to create for my children and yours?

In the late 80's and early '90's our country also faced a war and took a different road. We made a different choice.

I am a very proud former member of Umkhonto We Sizwe and will defend to the day I die the correctness of the decision taken in 1961 to meet force with force. But we never truly believed that we would overthrow the apartheid regime with force. Even if we could, the cost would have been too terrible. Our country chose differently. Not just the liberation forces but the De Klerk government at the time also chose differently.

We are now engaged in another war, what Minister Manuel described as a new struggle for freedom, against crime and poverty.

Restorative justice is too often seen as a project, a nice thing to do on the side.

It is also seen as a soft approach and I want to appeal to the media in particular since they often communicate restorative justice as being soft on crime. This is not true. There was nothing soft about the negotiations that led to our first national democratic elections in 1994 and there was nothing soft about the TRC. So, why do we say that restorative justice is soft?

We had to break the cycle of violence and oppression in the '90's and when we chose to negotiate it was not because we were soft. Father Lapsley is unfortunately not with us today but in response to his remarks yesterday when he walked onto the stage after Commissioner Pruis, I want to assure him that he is not a fish out of water.

Father Lapsley is correct. We need to break the cycle of violence. We need to break the vicious circle of victim – victimizer - victim and so on it goes.

Why do we wonder about the violence that accompanies so much of the crime in our country when our response as a country and people is usually just to send wrongdoers to prison where, if they did not know about violence, it will sadly and horribly become part of their daily lives. And they will re-enter society only to commit more violence since there is not much more they have learned in our prisons.

In the NPA Strategy 2020, we are aiming to achieve a balance between the retributive approach and the restorative justice approach by 2020. We think this is feasible. We believe that by achieving that balance we will have contributed to a better world for our children.

So, in response to Minister Mabandla's call to us, I want to say that one of the things we must stop piloting is restorative justice. We must mainstream restorative justice.

I must emphasize that I am not rubbishing the law and order approach. We need it also. But, and I truly believe this, it will not break the cycle that Father Lapsley described in such terrible and painful detail to us yesterday. It is only values and moral authority that will do that.

I want to remind NPA colleagues here today that at our recent senior management conference, we were presented with exactly the same two approaches when we were discussing governance. – a compliance driven approach versus a values-driven approach. Compliance is necessary if we are govern our organization effectively but it is only when we police ourselves that we will truly build world-class organizations and achieve our vision of justice in our society so that people can live in freedom and security.

Finally, let me thank all the stakeholders who joined us over the past 3 days. A total of 95 organisations attended our conference. It is a long list and I will not read out the names of all the organizations but will indicate the types of organizations who have attended. These range from international community, embassies, aid agencies, UN agencies, religious community and churches, the media both print and electronic, business organizations and individual companies, government departments and agencies at both national, provincial and local level and ofcourse NGO's and CBO's who work in the criminal justice arena, women's groups, youth groups, advice centers, civic organizations and a range of advocacy and interest groups.

We conclude today the NPA's second engagement with stakeholders in open forum and at national level. These engagements are highly valued and is considered as a direct input into our strategy review, annually and operational project planning.

I want to confirm that the following will be available after the conference – speakers papers and presentations will be available on Monday and on the NPA website and by 13 April will be on CD. A DVD will be ready by the end of April. Pictures will be avaiabel from 5 April and on the NPA website and CD. A full conference report will be ready by end of April. All media coverage during the conference will be included on the DVD.

Stakeholders can contact Pat Achary if they require any of the above mentioned at the contact details indicated on the screens.

I also want to remind you that leaders of the various projects in the NPA are available in the brochure so please feel free to contact them too.

We look forward to working together. We spoke to stakeholders 18 months ago as we developed our strategy and I trust that from our report back over the past 2 days, you can see that we listened and that your views have indeed shaped our strategy and projects.

Stakeholders are not only part of the planning process in the NPA but also part of the process of our implementation. Hence the importance of the community prosecutions for example which is one of the ways we seek to continuously engage with the communities in our country in the search for justice.

I assure you that we will continue to listen to you.

Travel safely and thank you.