



**FW de Klerk**  
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TO THE NATIONAL FOUNDATIONS INITIATIVE  
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**THE IMPORTANCE OF TALKING TO ONE ANOTHER**

The FW de Klerk Foundation strongly supports the National Foundations Dialogue Initiative.

We need a forum where South Africans from across the racial, economic and political spectrums can talk to one another - not only about the serious challenges that confront us - but also about the exciting opportunities that we should be seizing.

One of our problems is that although there are plenty of discussions taking place, most of them are within the separate racial, political and economic silos to which we have consigned ourselves. It is easy to reach agreement if you talk only to people who share your outlook. It is much more difficult to reason with those with whom we disagree.

We need to break out of our silos because the challenges that confront South Africa can ultimately be solved only if all of us work together. These problems include state capture, slow economic growth, unemployment, poor education and unacceptable inequality.

We also need cross-silo communication to improve understanding and cooperation between South Africans from different racial, cultural and economic backgrounds. Although the great majority of South Africans get along well together, the tone of public discourse is becoming dangerously strident.

We must break down the negative stereotypes of one another that are increasingly being propagated in social media and from political platforms. We really need to find one another again as individuals, as fellow South Africans and as human beings. We simply cannot allow South Africa to be divided once again along hostile political, economic and racial lines.

The best way to prevent this is to speak openly to one another.

Finally, we need to speak to one another about the issues that confront South Africa because we are a democracy in which power lies ultimately in the hands of the people. Citizens should make up their own minds about the problems that confront them and should ensure that their political representatives address their concerns. Politicians should be the servants of the people - and not the other way round. To achieve this, people need to talk to one another.

Our national dialogue will be greatly facilitated if it can take place within the broad framework of shared ideals and values. During our great national dialogue at CODESA and in



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the Negotiating Forum in the early 1990s we reached agreement on such values. They are set out in section 1 of the Constitution and include:

- Human dignity;
- The achievement of equality;
- The advancement of human rights and freedoms;
- The supremacy of the Constitution and the Rule of Law; and
- A genuine system of multiparty democracy to ensure accountability, responsiveness and openness.

We need to talk to one another about how we can make these values a reality for all South Africans.