

IEA to host former South African President de Klerk

Accra, Aug. 16, GNA – The Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) is to host the former President of South Africa, Mr Frederick Willem de Klerk in Ghana to speak on: “The Challenges of Change in Africa,” on Monday, August 27.

In a statement copied to the Ghana News Agency, signed by IEA Executive Director Mrs Jean Adukwei Mensa, explained that the lecture sought to tap on the former South African President's unique leadership experience which allowed him to support the transformation of South Africa, a multi racial democracy by entering into negotiations that resulted in equal voting and other rights for all citizens.

“President de Klerk's visit presents an opportunity for political leaders and Ghanaians as a whole to benefit from his experience. As a leader, he superintended the abolishing of Apartheid and the first peaceful democratic elections in South Africa.

“As Ghana approaches a highly competitive Presidential election, it is the hope of the IEA that the country will learn from President de Klerk,” the statement stated.

A copy of President de Klerk's profile obtained by the GNA indicates that; the South African former President was born on March 18, 1936 at Johannesburg, Transvaal Province.

President de Klerk, the seventh and last State President of Apartheid-era serving from September 1989 to May 1994, was also leader of the National Party (which later became the New National Party) from February 1989 to September 1997.

He is best known for engineering the end of Apartheid, South Africa's racial segregation policy, and supporting the transformation of South Africa into a multi-racial democracy by entering into the negotiations that resulted in all citizens, including the country's black majority, having equal voting and other rights.

President de Klerk won the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize in 1991, the Prince of Austria's Award in 1992 and the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993 along with President Nelson Mandela for his role in the ending of Apartheid.

He was one of the Deputy Presidents of South Africa during the Presidency of Nelson Mandela until 1996, the last white person to hold the position to date.

In 1997 he retired from politics.

The name 'de Klerk' (literally meaning "the clerk" in Dutch) is derived from Le Clerc, Le Clercq, and de Clercq and is of French Huguenot origin.

President de Klerk came from a family environment in which the conservatism of traditional white South African politics was deeply ingrained.

His paternal great-grandfather was Senator Johannes Cornelis "Jan" van Rooy, and his aunt was married to NP Prime Minister J. G. Strijdom.

In 1948, the year when the NP swept to power in whites-only elections on an apartheid platform, F. W. de Klerk's father, Johannes "Jan" de Klerk, became Secretary of the NP in the Transvaal Province and later rose to the positions of Cabinet Minister and President of the Senate, becoming interim State President in 1975.

His brother Willem is a liberal newspaperman and one of the founders of the Democratic Party.

In 1959 he married Marike Willemse, with whom he had two sons and a daughter.

"F.W.", as he became popularly known, was first elected to the House of Assembly in 1969 as the member for Vereeniging, and entered the Cabinet in 1978.

President de Klerk had been offered a professorship of administrative law at Potchefstroom in 1972 but he declined the post because he was serving in Parliament.

In 1978, he was appointed Minister of Posts and Telecommunications and Social Welfare and Pensions by Prime Minister Vorster.

Under Prime Minister P.W. Botha, he held a succession of Ministerial posts, including Posts and Telecommunications and Sports and Recreation (1978–1979), Mines, Energy and Environmental Planning (1979–1980), Mineral and Energy Affairs (1980–1982), Internal Affairs (1982–1985), and National Education and Planning (1984–1989).

He became Transvaal Provincial National Party Leader in 1982, and in 1985, he became Chairman of the Minister's Council in the House of Assembly.

However, after a long political career and with a very conservative reputation, in 1989 he placed himself at the Head of Verligte "enlightened" forces within the governing party, with the result that he was elected Head of the National Party in February 1989, and finally State President in September 1989 to replace then President P.W. Botha when the latter was forced to step down after an apparent stroke.

In his first speech after assuming the party leadership he called for a non-racist South Africa and for negotiations about the country's future.

He lifted the ban on the African National Congress (ANC) and released President Nelson Mandela from prison.

He brought apartheid to an end and opened the way for the drafting of a new constitution for the country based on the principle of one person, one vote.

Nevertheless, he was accused by Anthony Sampson of complicity in the violence between the ANC, the Inkatha Freedom Party and elements of the security forces.

His Presidency was dominated by the negotiation process, mainly between his NP Government and President Mandela's ANC, which led to the democratisation of South Africa.

In 1992, President de Klerk held a whites-only referendum, with the result being an overwhelming "yes" vote to continue negotiations to end Apartheid.

In 1990, President de Klerk gave orders to end South Africa's nuclear weapons programme; the process of nuclear disarmament was essentially completed in 1991.

The existence of the programme was not officially acknowledged before 1993, and in the same year, President de Klerk and President Mandela were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their work to end apartheid.

After the first free elections in 1994, President de Klerk became Deputy President in the Government of National Unity under President Nelson Mandela, a post he kept until 1996.

In 1997 he also gave over the leadership of the National Party and retired from politics.

In 2000 President de Klerk established the pro-peace FW de Klerk Foundation of which he is the Chairman.

President de Klerk is also Chairman of the Global Leadership Foundation, an organisation he established after retiring from office.

He is an Honorary Chairman of the Prague Society for International Cooperation.

President de Klerk also received the Gold Medal for Outstanding Contribution to Public Discourse from the College Historical Society for his contribution to ending apartheid.

In October 2008 President de Klerk spoke at Brigham Young University concerning the global politics and role of the United States as the world's last remaining superpower.

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