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FCI talked to ANC after drafting charter

By Sue Dobson

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The Federated Chamber of Industries had informal talks with the African National Congress, the Government, and various organisations after drafting its business charter of social, economic and political rights and its accompanying action programme.

This was disclosed by members of the FCI at a Press conference in Johannesburg yesterday.

The representatives were reluctant to give details of their meetings with the ANC.

They declined to name other organisations and leaders involved in the consultations.

However, they said that they had held discussions with various Cabinet Ministers including the Minister of Constitutional Development and Planning, Mr Chris Heunis, and his Cabinet committee.

The FCI representatives said that they had received a favourable response from the Government towards the documents, which had the full support of all FCI members.

"We saw our negotiations with the various parties as talks about talks and have not carried out formal discussions with any party as we believe this would expose them too much and break confidences," said the executive director of the FCI, Dr Johan van Zyl.

"The documents are based on trust and formal discussions with any particular party might jeopardise the charter and the outcome of events.

"We cannot prescribe preconditions for effective negotiation in South Africa.

"It is not our job to decide what are essential issues for the negotiating parties.

"At this stage we are trying to facilitate the getting together of all those parties concerned," he added.

NEW AVENUE

The FCI stressed that the charter and the informal talks already held should be viewed as a new point of departure for negotiation and an effort to bypass the current stalemate over political reform.

The FCI says it has offered the charter as a statement of fundamental human rights underpinning democratic government and the market economy.

The FCI's constitutional and legal advisor, Dr Marinus Wiechers, described the Chamber's charter as being similar to the ANC Freedom Charter.

"Although the two charters differ in strategy and detail they share similar principles," he said.

"We believe that our charter and the Freedom Charter have a similar core of values and that these form common ground from which negotiations can take place," said FCI director of economic affairs, Mr Arthur Hammond Tooke.

The American Chamber of Commerce (ACC) in South Africa has welcomed the charter and its action programme and has urged all businesses to give their commitment to the initiatives.

The ACC added that it would ask its entire membership to support the charter and to give it wide distribution in the United States.

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