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Frederik Willem (FW) de Klerk was born in Johannesburg on 18 March 1936, the son of Senator Jan De Klerk, a senior Cabinet Minister. His school years were spent mainly in Krugersdorp, where he matriculated at Monument High School.

He attended the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education and graduated in 1958 with BA and LLB degrees (*cum laude*). During his university years he was actively involved in student affairs.

Mr De Klerk joined a firm of attorneys in Vereeniging that he helped to develop into one of the leading law firms outside South Africa's major metropolitan areas. At the same time he played a prominent role in numerous community activities. In 1972 he was offered the Chair of Administrative Law at Potchefstroom University, but had to decline because of his decision to enter active politics. In November 1972 he was elected as Member of Parliament for Vereeniging.

In 1978 and shortly after his 42nd birthday, after only five and a half years as a back-bencher, he was appointed to the Cabinet. During the following 11 years he was responsible for the following portfolios consecutively:

- Posts and Telecommunications and Social Welfare and Pensions;
- Sport and Recreation;
- Mining and Environmental Planning;
- Mineral and Energy Affairs;
- Internal Affairs, as well as the Public Service, and
- National Education, (the portfolio that he held when he was elected as State President).

On 1 July 1985 Mr De Klerk became Chairman of the Minister's Council in the House of Assembly. He became Leader of the House of Assembly on 1 December 1986. Mr De Klerk was elected to the key post of Leader of the National Party in the Transvaal on 6 March 1982. On 2 February 1989, the caucus of the National Party chose him as the national Leader of the Party.

On 15 August 1989, after the resignation of President PW Botha, Mr De Klerk became Acting State President, and after the general election of 6 September, was inaugurated as State President on 20 September 1989. Mr De Klerk served as State President until President Nelson Mandela's inauguration on 10 May 1994. During this period he initiated and presided over the inclusive negotiations that led to the dismantling of apartheid and the adoption of South Africa's first fully democratic constitution in December 1993.

After leading the National Party to the second place in South Africa's first fully representative general election of 27 April 1994, Mr De Klerk was inaugurated as one of South Africa's two Executive Deputy Presidents. He served in this capacity until the end of June 1996 when his



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Party, under his leadership, decided to withdraw from the Government of National Unity. He was Leader of the Official Opposition until his retirement from active party politics on 9 September 1997.

Mr De Klerk has received numerous national and international honours and honorary doctorates. In 1981 he was awarded the South African Decoration for Meritorious Service. In 1992, he received the Prix du Courage Internationale (The Prize for Political Courage) and was co-recipient of the UNESCO Houphouet-Boigny Prize. He was also awarded the Prince of Asturias Prize in Spain during the same year. In July 1993, together with Mr Nelson Mandela, Mr De Klerk received the Philadelphia Peace Prize and on 10 December the same year was the co-recipient, also with Nelson Mandela, of the Nobel Peace Prize.

In January 1999 Mr De Klerk published his autobiography “The Last Trek – a New Beginning” (Macmillan) and the same year established the FW de Klerk Foundation, which is dedicated to the promotion of peace in multi-communal societies.

In 2004, Mr De Klerk brought together a number of respected former national leaders to join him as founding members of the Global Leadership Foundation (GLF), a non-profit organisation that aims to play a constructive role in the promotion of peace, democracy and development in countries across the world. He is also the Honorary Chairman of the Prague Society for International Co-operation in the Czech Republic; a Member of the Assembly of the Parliament of Cultures in Istanbul and is involved with Forum 2000, a think-tank initiated by former President Vaclav Havel and Nobel laureate Eli Wiessel. In addition, he serves on the advisory board of the Peres Centre for Peace in Israel.

Mr De Klerk makes numerous speeches around the world and actively participates as an elder statesman in international conferences on the promotion of harmonious relations in multi-communal societies, the future of Africa and South Africa and the challenges facing the world during the new millennium. He lives in Cape Town and enjoys reading, the outdoor life and golf.

Time Line

Awards received:

- 1981 South African Decoration for Meritorious Service
- 1989 Newsmaker of the Year, Johannesburg Press Club
- 1989 Newsmaker of the Year, Pretoria Press Club
- 1990 Newsmaker of the Year, Pretoria Press Club
- 1991 Man of the Year, Institute of Management Consultants
- 1991 Marketing Man of the Year, FEDHASA
- 1991 Houphouet-Boigny Prize for Peace, UNESCO
- 1992 Prix du Courage Politique Internationale, France
- 1992 Prince of Asturias Prize, Spain
- 1993 Philadelphia Liberty Medal
- 1993 Nobel Peace Prize
- 1994 Co-recipient with President Nelson Mandela as Newsmaker of the



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Year, Johannesburg Press Club
2002 Order of Mapungubwe: Gold

Academic Awards:

1990 Honorary Doctorate in Philosophy, D.Phil (hc), University of Stellenbosch
1990 Honorary Doctorate in Law, LL.D (hc), University of Potchefstroom
1991 Honorary Doctorate in Law, Bar-Ilan University, Tel-Aviv, Israel
1991 Honorary Doctorate in Philosophy, National Chengchi University, Taipei, Taiwan,
Province of China
1994 Honorary Doctorate, Vrije Universiteit, Brussels, Belgium
1994 Honorary Fellowship Award of the College of Medicine of South Africa
1995 Honorary Doctorate, LLD University of South Africa
1995 Honorary Doctorate, LLD University of Zululand
2007 Honorary Doctorate of Laws, (hc), Salisbury University, USA
2014 Honorary Doctorate in Philosophy, University of Haifa, Israel