

De Klerk warns of growing alienation

ONE of the most outspoken presentations at the Eskom African Business Leaders Forum this week was made by former President F W de Klerk, who concentrated on the next 10 years ahead for South Africa.

He did not address the issue of leadership directly, but highlighted the economic and political factors that could help or hinder South Africa's progress as a democracy.

De Klerk warned: "There is very little frank debate. Many whites pub-

licly express politically correct, but qualified, support for transformation while they privately educate their children to work overseas.

"The result is that too many whites are emigrating, either overseas or inwardly into their own communities. They are withdrawing behind their security fences and are not making

the contribution to the broader society that they could make . . . South Africa cannot afford to lose skills and commitment on this scale."

To become globally competitive, the country needed to improve its education system, encourage entrepreneurs and undertake successful land reform with a balanced and ef-

fective approach to the issue of land ownership, he said.

All South Africans must share ownership of economic resources. Prejudices must be overcome, for they could imperil the democratic project.

"I am deeply concerned by growing alienation between our communities. Recent research brings some discon-

certing facts to the fore. Seventy-two percent of white males now believe, rightly or wrongly, that affirmative action has turned them into second-class citizens in their own country. Seventy percent of black South Africans believe that white farmers should be forced to sell their land. Less than 25% of black South Africans

agree that landowners should have the right to dispute land claims by going to court."

De Klerk said the years since 1990 had constituted a "brave experiment".

"I am confident that we South Africans will rise to the occasion — just as we did between 1990 and 1994. I believe that if we do so, South Africa in 10 years will be a much better country than it is today, and an infinitely better country than it was 20 years ago."