

SACC Statement on the Election of New ANC President and NEC

The South African Council of Churches congratulates the newly elected ANC officials, led by President Cyril Ramaphosa, following a grueling contest and a nail biting wait for the results. The SACC is, however, disappointed at how the 54th ANC Conference has very much excluded women from among the officials regressing from its commitment to the gender parity principle. Whereas the last team had two women; instead of this improving, it has in fact regressed to a single woman. This sets a very bad example indeed! Nevertheless we wish the new leadership well in their arduous task of restoring the identification of the ANC with the values of integrity and trustworthiness.

The SACC takes an interest in who become the leaders of the party that governs the country because of decisive impact on whether the country advances or declines. To assist the new leadership towards positive outcomes, the SACC promises to engage with them on the critical areas that need to be addressed to restore public trust. We note that three of the newly elected officials, including the President, are from the previous team, making for a sense of continuity with institutional memory. We trust that that institutional memory will make for ease of continuing on some of the critical issues that have previously been brought before the ANC leadership by the religious leaders.

In that regard the SACC hopes for clear and meaningful signals from the ANC, of their commitment to put the people of South Africa first; and the nightmarish experience of self-serving leaders milking the State, will be dealt with and exorcised from all levels of government.

- Corruption and maladministration is real!
- State Capture is not fake!
- Brown bag politics is a thick reality within the ANC, and cries out for action!

Any perceived failure of the new ANC leadership to give an early indication, with courage and conviction, of its ability to restore public confidence and generate a new public optimism, will result in the unfortunate squander of its opportunities. You have to pronounce and act to turn the country around, and join the conversation and campaign to move the country towards a South Africa that Tambo and Mandela can celebrate in the centenary mark of their lives. This is a kairos moment in history, failure to recognize it and its unique demands, will define one way or the other, the place of the African National Congress and this leadership in the future of South Africa.

We look to a leadership that will, with a fresh mandate, uphold the sacred values that inspired many who gave up their lives for justice, some of whom never lived to see the fruits of their sacrifices in the hope that future generations would enjoy the fullness of freedom.

We pray that the confidence of the ANC conference in the new leadership will bind them together to actively break with any and all the misdeeds of the past, individually and collectively. We hope that they will together with the rest of the National Executive Committee, seek to recover the glorious heritage of the ANC of Luthuli, Tambo and Mandela – and restore the faith and trust that 11 million South Africans bestowed upon them to lead in government.

More importantly though, we would like to remind the new leadership that the South African citizenry are the true custodians of our country's democracy and with them the SACC, together with a broad base of civil society, will actively work to recover the promise of the post-apartheid South Africa that lies in the hands of each and every one of us. It is the promise of a just, reconciled, peaceful, equitable and sustainable society; free of corruption and deprivation; and free of racism; tribalism, xenophobia and gender prejudices.



If the immediate past few years have taught us anything, it is that we can no longer and should never again entrust the public values and standards of life in our society to the whims of what becomes self-serving politicians. Because as citizens we lost sight of our role to hold politicians firmly to accountability; because we failed to craft mechanisms to benchmark and demand of them the highest levels of integrity; we are where we are today, living with the pervasive odour of corruption. Given the possible capture of the ANC itself; the unquestionable evidence of the capture of some key organs of State, and the inability to trust the bona fides of ANC leadership and what they truly represent and whom they serve, society can no longer give any political party a blank cheque. Indeed, we must ensure that never again shall the country surrender public values to the whims of politicians – regardless of party or the leadership thereof.

It is for this reason that the National Convention of South Africa, an initiative led by the churches and directed by an oversight plenary of civil society organisations, will push forward with collaborating and inviting South Africans to contribute to setting acceptable standards of practically and meaningfully addressing the unfinished measures of our transformation unto total liberation.

To Mr Ramaphosa and the new party leadership: The SACC calls on you to, without delay, indicate:

- a) How you are to deal with the cancer of corruption and State Capture that has exasperated South African citizens; and how you will promote a government with the transparency and accountability of a servant ANC in government, in accordance with the prescripts of Section 41 of the Constitution.
- b) Whether you will be willing to professionalize rather than politicize the civil service, and also consider freeing up resources by reducing the weight of the Executive, that currently absorbs more than 70 MPs into a large cabinet, with all that goes with that.
- c) What you will do to stimulate the economy and reverse the country from the junk precipice, so that living conditions can improve; addressing poverty in general, and the gross youth exclusion from the economy.
- d) How you are to raise the place, quality and significance of education as a social good and an antidote for poverty and inequality, and for social and economic decay.
- e) How you are to heal the social and economic divisions of our society on race, and wealth.

We trust that the January 8 message will give answers to these issues, and that decisive action will be the mark of this leadership. South Africans will be watching every step of how the leadership shapes up in regard to the pressing issues of constitutional governance, the economy, and quality of life. South Africans have started their own measures of restoring their dreams, through diverse efforts to recover the promise of a decent South Africa. The National Convention of South Africa initiated by the SACC, to **Reimagine, Redesign and Reorganize** for a different experience of life for all, is one example of these efforts. But with your resolve to join in the healing of our country, we have hope yet!

The Book of Job reminds us that God “makes nations great, and destroys them; he enlarges nations, and disperses them”. (Job 12:23) And so with St Peter we say:

“Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.” (1 Peter 5:2-3)

We congratulate you and say, may you open your hearts to receive the blessings that await you the other side of doing right!

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