

Closing Remarks by the President of the African National Congress, President Jacob Zuma, at the National General Council, Gallagher Estates Midrand, 11 October 2015

Comrade Deputy President;

Comrade National Chairperson;

ANC Officials,

NEC members;

Leadership of our Tripartite Alliance plus SANCO;

Veterans, special guests;

Comrades Delegates;

We have come to the end of a most successful and productive National General Council of the ANC.

We end on a high note because the NGC has been marked by high levels of robust discussions and discipline. We congratulate all the delegates for reaffirming the standing of the ANC as a leader of society and as a disciplined, vibrant and dynamic instrument for social change.

One of our unique strengths as the ANC are self-criticism and self-correction. In opening the NGC, we presented serious and uncomfortable challenges affecting the movement and invited delegates to engage these in the commissions and provide solutions. The reports from the Commissions have indicated that indeed serious reflection went into the discussions.

Organisation building and renewal was a key factor in this NGC in our determination to rebuild the ANC and renew the character of our glorious movement.

We announced that our membership figure stood at seven hundred and sixty nine eight hundred and seventy (769 870) members, down from 1,2 million in 2012.

This correctly shocked the delegates and membership because we all want to see a growing ANC all the time.

As always, such a figure at a conference reflects audited members in good standing.

As is also known, this is usually lower than the figures on the database which would include all categories such as those whose membership had lapsed, those who are still on probation and those that have been unfortunate victims of gatekeeping and membership system administrative problems.

The ANC membership also tends to grow leading up to elective conferences. The NGC has also taken resolutions to improve the membership administration system and to eliminate tendencies such as gatekeeping and the bulk buying of votes.

With the implementation of all our remedial actions, we intend to have all 1,3 million names that are currently on the database to be confirmed as members in good standing sooner or at least by 2017. Let us all work hard to achieve that goal.

The strengthening of ANC branches to enable them to perform their constitutional tasks has been emphasised.

The ANC Branch Manual clarifies the role of the branch as follows when it says: "The branch is the basic unit of the ANC, and the most important structure in the movement. It is in the branch that ANC members put to use their skills, energy, political insight and experience in a programme to transform society...

"The branch is the means through which we organise our people. It is the branch which must identify ANC sympathisers and supporters who can be recruited as ANC members, and through political induction and involvement in the programmes of the movement can be developed into tried and tested cadres.

It is the ANC branch which is the first point of contact with the broader community. The branch must respond to the needs and interests of the community, and provide clear direction to the community on the most important issues facing it. A healthy, active and growing branch is the key to a strong, influential and successful ANC".

We urge comrades to seriously read the Branch manual. If we implement its directives we will not have problems in ensuring the correct functioning of the branches. Let us also grow the ANC not only in terms of quantity but also quality. Political education therefore remains paramount.

In this regard, the NGC has agreed to reinforce measures to inculcate within our cadreship, the values of service, selflessness, integrity and discipline. Beyond membership, the ANC also needs to win back all our traditional supporters who have been dissatisfied, ahead of the local government elections.

We will win them back based on how we conduct ourselves as members and also how we implement the good policies of the ANC. The matters of promoting unity, discipline, cohesion, respect and the restoration of order in the organization have been endorsed whole-heartedly by the NGC.

The NGC has also reaffirmed our resolve to root out corruption and factionalism. In this regard, the NGC has agreed that the Integrity Commission should be fully supported and resourced so that it can promote ethical behaviour within the ANC.

However the NGC has also cautioned that the Integrity Commission should not be abused for factional purposes or as an instrument to fight certain individuals within the movement.

To enhance the fight against corruption in the government and the private sector, the NGC has recommended the following;

1. Civil servants including those in the security cluster should be periodically rotated from one employment site to another so as to circumvent growth of unprofessional and frequently corrupt relations with clients, service providers and other persons they interact with and/or are responsible for.
2. Government should conduct a lifestyle audits for all employees of the state and its related entities.
3. The vetting process should be expedited for government employees and its related entities.
4. There should be a single vetting agency for the state to vet all strategically placed civil servants (including state owned enterprises) including those who reject promotion even though it comes with an improved remuneration package.

The ANC Deployment Committee should also ensure proper vetting is undertaken prior to deployment of comrades.

The ANC also challenges the private sector to subject itself to instruments of financial interest disclosure, vetting and life style audits.

ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION

This National General Council has centred its discussions on measures to accelerate economic growth, create jobs, reduce poverty and improve livelihoods. In its deliberations on the economy a number of resolutions were taken and I will mention just a few. Given the distress in the mining sector as a result of the current low commodity price cycle, the ANC calls on parties to exercise restraint and moderation in order to save jobs and to sustain the sector's potential for future growth and development.

The ANC has also called for a speedy promulgation of the amendments to the Mining and Petroleum Resources Development Act to remove uncertainty.

The NGC has also called for the resolution of the current dispute over the interpretation of the terms of the country's Mining Charter is also urgently required.

To promote energy security the implementation of the energy mix is a priority including coal, renewables, gas, nuclear and hydro. The recommendation by the Presidential Operation Phakisa programme to advance offshore oil and gas exploration should be implemented, but in a manner that does not damage South Africa's water and other environmental resources.

Comrades

The ANC fully supports ongoing efforts by the NEDLAC constituencies to advance discussions on a minimum wage in the South African economy.

On black economic empowerment, the NGC resolved that greater conceptual clarity is required in order to improve and broaden the transformative impact of our various black economic empowerment (BEE) initiatives. The NGC noted that while we have made progress in some areas, there have also been reversals and unintended consequences with regard to some of our BEE interventions.

Processes need to be undertaken to iron-out such problems and to develop more sophisticated mechanisms to achieve BEE-related economic transformation. The NGC called for a review of the Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act to enable the implementation of set asides that work more effectively in promoting black businesses.

The NGC also directed Government to take all necessary steps to save South Africa's steel production industry. However, such assistance and protection should be conditional on the steel producers giving firm and specific undertakings with regard to job retention, future investment commitments and future pricing, which will facilitate downstream competitiveness.

Social transformation

The NGC directed that the 50/50 parity between men and women principle must be implemented in full in the ANC and in government. Preferential Procurement rules need to be amended to make specific allocation to women enterprises including cooperatives. The NGC has supported the need to review legislation to facilitate the removal of unused and inequitable water rights allocations in order to ensure a more equitable distribution.

The proposal is that national government should be the custodian of water and water trading will be abolished. On human settlement, the ANC government should implement the Military Veterans Housing Programme and the Human Settlements and Gender Empowerment Programme.

In addition, the Mining Towns human settlement programme including basic services must be prioritised.

The NGC also resolved that we must improve our monitoring of RDP houses and the resale of RDP Houses must be prevented. To promote sports, the NGC resolved that the sport funding model in government needs to be completely overhauled so that sports can meet its mandate and that this requires the necessary levels of investment by all of government, including allocation from all provinces from the equitable share.

Education, Health, science and technology

The ANC has called for a speedy review of the powers of the school governing bodies, the fast-tracking of the introduction of inspectors in schools, and to build more schools in villages and townships especially special schools.

The NGC has also expressed support to the Annual National Assessments in schools and have urged that challenges relating to its implementation must be resolved. The NGC has welcomed the launch of operation Phakisa on Information and Communication Technologies in schools and has urged the use of ICT nationally in our schools.

We need to confront the findings that black African children receive three and half hours of teaching per day as opposed to six and a half hours in former whites-only schools as revealed in a study. This results in a three year gap in their schooling career. In this regard, let me reiterate our call to all teachers to be in school, on time, in class, on task teaching for at least seven hours a day. The ANC will engage SADTU in this regard.

The NGC will intensify the implementation of programmes to curb the scourge of teenage pregnancy, and such programmes will target both the boy and girl child.

The ANC government was directed to fast-track the implementation of the National Health Insurance and for funds to be made available for this purpose.

Legislature and Governance

The achievement of radical economic transformation depends on progress in building a capable developmental state. We have resolved to urgently and comprehensively address weaknesses that exist in several agencies of the state. The NGC reiterated that provinces must be reviewed to strengthen the democratic state and its developmental mandate, as well as the allocation of powers and functions, planning across government.

An ANC Task Team will interface with government to ensure implementation of the resolution. With regards to our preparations for elections, the NGC has noted the voting trends in the metros and that this requires the movement to review its strategies.

On land reform, progress in the willing buyer willing seller policy has been addressed through the promulgation of the Property Valuation Act, 2014, which will codifies the “just and equitable” principle as reflected in section 25 of the Constitution.

The NGC has resolved that government should continue to strengthen the security of tenure for farm workers. The Extension of Security of Tenure Amendment Bill will be an important step in this direction.

Land rights for people in Communal areas should be formalized such that security of tenure is secured and such land can have commercial value. In order to ensure against the risk of people becoming landless in this process, a

limitation clause in the title deed giving the State the right of first refusal must be secured.

The NGC resolved that there should be equitable access to land for women and that their interests be protected. Unemployed graduates as well as youth from rural areas should receive dedicated support and be prioritised in access to land through the lease of State land.

The Expropriation Amendment Bill, currently before Parliament, is critical to ensure that the state is able to expropriate land in in terms of the Constitution and should be expedited. We resolved that the Policy Conference should finalise the details of the policy on the ownership of land by foreign nationals.

The NGC supports the current proposed ceilings on different forms of land ownership and use and this should find expression through the introduction of legislation.

On land tenure, it was noted that the introduction of the Regulation of Land Holdings Bill, will introduce the Land Commission and go a long way in resolving current disputes. The Bill will also introduce land ceilings as outlined in previous conference resolutions.

The NGC confirmed the support for the African Union Agenda 2063 Vision, recognising that it is a continuation of African Renaissance philosophy, and recommended that as a movement it is incumbent upon us to popularise the seven aspirations.

The aspirations are:

- A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development;
- An integrated continent, politically united, based on the ideals of Pan Africanism;
- An Africa of good governance, democracy, human rights, justice and the rule of law;
- A peaceful and secure Africa;
- An Africa where development is people-driven, relying particularly on potential of women and youth;
- Africa as a strong and influential global player and partner.

The ANC disagrees with the double-standard and selective actions of the International Criminal Court. In this regard, the NGC has recommended that government reviews South Africa's membership of the ICC.

Our last important assignment as Chair of G77 + China will be to lead the Group to Paris for the United Nations Framework for Climate Change Convention (UNFCCC) negotiations – in defence of the Durban Platform of Action, informed by the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and capabilities .

On communications, the ANC has resolved to accelerate the implementation of ANC conference resolutions regarding media transformation, accountability and diversity. This includes a parliamentary enquiry on the feasibility and desirability of a Media Appeals Tribunal in line with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

Comrades and friends,

The ANC carries the hopes of millions of South Africans. We remain seized with the responsibility of working to achieve a truly united, non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and prosperous society.

This NGC has taken us a step further towards the implementation of that goal. We go back with a clear mandate to grow the ANC and ensure that it further consolidates democracy and that it continues to lead our people to prosperity.

Let me remind all that preparatory work for the local elections has begun and all cadres must put shoulder to the wheel to ensure a decisive victory for the ANC. We thank all the delegates, local and international guests and all who have participated to ensure the success of the NGC.

We also thank ANC staff for their hard work as well as the law enforcement agencies and all service providers.

May all have a safe journey home.

Amandla!