



ANC TODAY

ONLINE VOICE OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Building an interactive government



During the election campaign we committed ourselves to promote effective two-way communication between South Africans and government.

We said we needed to change the way government relates to the people, not as a slogan but in practical terms. We made an undertaking to remain in touch with the people and to listen to their needs and respond. One of the major response mechanisms we promised was a Presidential Hotline, to enable citizens to raise their concerns directly with the Presidency.

The launch of the Presidential Hotline and public liaison service on a pilot basis on the 14th of September took government to a new level with regards to communication with the public to improve service delivery.

We have found ourselves engaged in an unprecedented massive conversation with the nation. The Hotline has received a total of 312,137 calls from the South African public from 14 September to 08 Oct 2009. This excludes letters sent through fax and email. My email address, president@po.gov.za is constantly overflowing. We received 27 000 calls on day one, having received almost 2500 calls in the first hour, hitting 7000 by the third hour. This service was clearly long overdue.

There are three levels of interaction. The Presidency has 21 Hotline and Public Liaison staff, backed by 50 call centre agents at the State Information Technology Agency, and a network of 43 Public Liaison Officers in the nine offices of the Premiers and the 34 National Departments who are responsible for the follow ups.

For the staff, every hour is spent listening, recording, responding and even counseling countless of people in distress. Many callers are people who have spent months or even years trying to get their problems resolved to no avail.

I met the 43 public liaison officers from national departments and provinces as well as the 21 Presidency call centre staff on the 14th of September and warned them that the work would be emotionally draining. I emphasized that they were the face of government and should project the caring government we want to be. On the 6th of October I visited the 50 staff members at SITA in Centurion, Pretoria and shared the message with them as well.

They have all handled their work professionally as evidenced by the letters and emails of gratitude we receive from citizens who have obtained assistance. The excitement of it all is to see people's problems resolved and to see the frowns turn to smiles.

The intention is to introduce a culture of taking people seriously, regardless of their station in life. When citizens or anyone calls a government department they must be treated with courtesy and be assisted as speedily as possible.

WEEK IN REVIEW

SA unite to celebrate 10 years of SANDF involvement in peace missions | The country united in celebrating 10 years of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) successful participation in international peace support operations. The Commander in Chief, President Jacob Zuma addressed the troops on parade and also conducted a symbolic wreath laying ceremony including presentation of decorations and medals.

Standerton unrest persists | ANC NEC members Malusi Gigaba and Fikile Mbalula visited Sakhile Township in Standerton to investigate and meet with local leaders in a bid to find solution to the weeks of violent unrest that has engulfed this township. Residents accuses the councillors of financial mismanagement and are demanding immediate resignation of all ward councillors, free electricity and the release of all those arrested during the protest action.

Eskom requests tariff hikes | The South African electricity utility, Eskom, has approached the National Energy Regulator of South Africa to grant it a 45 percent increase for each year over the next three years. In its application Eskom promises to double the free 50 kw power currently given to the poor. If its wish is granted it will see the typical suburban household's average monthly electricity bill increase from R760 to more than R3000 by 2012.

Common queries and complaints across all provinces relate to housing, and access to water and electricity. There are many enquiries relating to unemployment, which take the form of requests for assistance to find jobs or to overturn dismissals as well as to report corrupt practices. There are various enquiries regarding access to grants, special pensions, access to identity documents or allegations of corruption in the social grants system which government has been attending to for years.

Many young people contact the centre to seek assistance with outstanding school or university fees. There are also many cases relating to abuse of power by government officials at various levels.

The service is clearly helpful to people who had no way of ever accessing authority to obtain assistance. The Hotline staff was contacted late one evening to assist an elderly woman who was sleeping on the bench at Moroka Police Station in Soweto, who had nowhere to go. The Department of Social Development was contacted and she was moved to an old age home the following day.

A woman complained about a police station where she opened a case against a stalker. The police claimed it was not a serious matter, and after intervention from the Presidential call centre, the police are now investigating. As government we undertook to take cases against women and children seriously and this must be done.

A man whose RDP house had been attached by a bank had given up hope until he emailed the Presidential call centre. The house was about to be auctioned. The Centre negotiated with the Bank and the family now has their home back. The man will pay back the money and is receiving debt counseling. In another case, an Ekurhuleni man who called about burst sewerage pipes in his area is most grateful as these were fixed just one day after calling and speaking to the President at the Centre.

Most of the people who call the Hotline or who send letters want their enquiries to remain confidential. This therefore limits our ability to share many success stories with the public.

The functioning of the Presidential call centre is continually being improved on the basis of the lessons learnt so far. One of the greatest challenges has been the high volume of calls, with the result that some people have not been able to get through. Our technical teams are looking into this.

The callers spend at least 20 minutes on the phone explaining their predicament. Our staff members in The Presidency have been instructed to treat each call as if it was the only one, they are not allowed to drop callers before concluding the conversation. That on its own reduces the number of calls they can take each day.

We need to educate the public that the Presidential Hotline and public liaison service do not replace the existing hotlines and public liaison facilities of departments, provinces or municipalities. It is intended to be used as a last resort where other systems have failed.

There are various call centres within government. They need to be improved in order to reduce the pressure on the Presidential Hotline, to enable it to deal with cases that provinces or departments were not responsive to. Amongst some of its immediate benefits, the Presidential Hotline has already helped re-awaken public liaison as a key function across government. Numerous government departments across all spheres already perform functions similar to those carried out by the new public liaison function at The Presidency, but there was no coordination and integration.

Now, following the launch of the Presidential Hotline, public liaison officers across government are beginning to form a strong network, sharing experiences and best practices and working together towards the common goal of making government more responsive to the needs of members of the public.

Another benefit of the Presidential Hotline is that it will be used for purposes of monitoring and evaluation. Through the enquiries and complaints that we receive, government will be able to spot patterns in relation to service delivery problems so as to make more informed decisions about the nature of interventions required.

CONTINUED

ANC pleased with municipal by-elections results | The African National Congress expressed satisfaction with its overall performance in the municipal by-elections held recently. It retained its ward and further won two wards that were previously held by the IFP in KwaZulu-Natal whilst it won all four by-elections in the Eastern Cape. In areas where it failed to wrestle the contested wards from the opposition parties the ANC improved its showing.

South Africa loses the jazz great, Winston Mankunku Ngozi | The ANC joined South Africans in paying tribute to the legendary jazz icon that was a beacon of hope and inspiration to many artists. Ngozi's passed away after a long illness which robbed us of his contribution in enriching jazz in the country. He used his talent to inspire social, economic, cultural and political change in the country. At this hour of great loss, the ANC thoughts are with his family, relatives and friends.

US President Barack Obama wins a 2009 Nobel Peace Prize | President Jacob Zuma congratulated US President Barack Obama on being awarded the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize. "Accordingly, we share your vision for the future and embrace your ideals of a world that is at peace and free of nuclear weapons. We need to join together to fulfil our share of the collective responsibility to ensure that generations to come inherit a future that is safe and prosperous," he said.

The long-term solution is that the public service needs to change the way it works and the attitude towards the public. We have started meeting with senior public servants to explain our vision and what change we expect. I met with school principals in August and the police in September. I will meet with various other categories of public servants such as health professionals, social workers, local government practitioners and others.

We want them to know that the people come first in everything we do, and we want excellence. There is no place for complacency, cynicism or excuses.

Working together we can do more!

Jacob G. Zuma

VIEW POINT | BY GWEDE MANTASHE

Let us change this downward slope



As many issues emerge in the public discourse one appreciates that scaling down our political education programme was a wrong decision. It is like an advert 'we stopped the clock to save time'. As a mineworker I learnt that during bad times you don't scale down development to save cost, because you go under when the price of commodities picks up. During repression we don't cut back on investment spending because when the economy picks up you will delay the recovery.

Political education must always ensure that repeated untruths do not become reality in the minds of the cadres of the movement. Our cadres must be equipped with tools of analysis such that they can differentiate between anecdotes and policies of the movement. It is the time that has lapsed without a structured education programme that is beginning to change the character and the outlook of our movement.

The dominance of factions in almost all the provinces of the ANC reflects the weakness of the structures. That weakness, to a great extent, reflects the lack of ideological depth and the weakening of political conscience among the cadres of the movement. Our inability to move with the necessary speed in arresting this decline will lead to us being rightfully accused of benefiting from the disorder, and this will then be seen as a deliberate disorganisation.

When selflessness, one of the principled characters of our movement, is being replaced by a newfound expression of selfishness, wherein personal accumulation becomes the main cause for divisions we must know that the movement is in decline.

Ill-discipline, as evidenced in the disruption of meetings, public rebuke of leadership, lack of accountability and an assumption of individual comrades being larger than the movement itself, is a cancer that is beginning to eat the movement.

These deviant features are uncharacteristic of the essence and form of our movement, and its culture as a liberation organisation. This, therefore, heightens the need for us to strengthen political education among our cadres. We have a duty and responsibility to change and divert from this downward slope.

However, our approach to political education should seek a structural and mass engagement of our organisation. In doing so, we should avoid the notion of political education being a ritual. Essentially, political education is about raising consciousness. Such a consciousness must assist our structures and our cadres to engage with real issues confronting the national democratic revolution, our people and our organisation.

LATEST STATEMENTS

Statement of the Caster Semenya Support Task Team,

16 October 2009

<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?doc=ancdocs/pr/2009/pr1016.html>

ANC pleased with Municipal by-elections results, 15 October 2009

<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?doc=ancdocs/pr/2009/pr1015a.html>

ANC concludes a successful Political Education Strategy Workshop,

15 October 2009

<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?doc=ancdocs/pr/2009/pr1015.html>

ANC mourns the death of Leslie Nzimani Yengeni, 14 October 2009

<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?doc=ancdocs/pr/2009/pr1014.html>

Statement of the Alliance Political Council, 13 October 2009

<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?doc=ancdocs/pr/2009/pr1013a.html>

ANC pays tribute to Jazz Great Winston Mankunku Ngozi,

13 October 2009

<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?doc=ancdocs/pr/2009/pr1013.html>

Importance of oversight,

8 October 2009

<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?doc=ancdocs/pr/2009/pr1008.html>

Among the key issues that political education must help us with, is a raised consciousness against the intersection between election to office and business interest. Current experience shows that ambition for office is accompanied with unruly and violent behaviour, and ill-conceived ways of campaigning and lobbying. Election has become a matter of life and death.

This anomaly, gradually becoming a serious cancer about to swallow our movement, is a consequence of perceiving elected office as a means to self-serving accumulation rather than service to the people. This distorts what we know the ANC to be, its reason for existence, that is, to serve – as clearly articulated in the 52nd Conference of the ANC.

What tools of analysis do we require in order to calm the storms of our times? Historically, the African National Congress has used historical and dialectical materialism, because these are scientific tools of analysis in the course of the national democratic revolution. Saying this today, does it confirm or mean a communist take over? Is the perception of a take over of the African National Congress by the communists and trade unionists real or imagined? Only a conscious cadreship of the ANC can see the difference between the wood and the forest.

The ANC has always been comprised of great leaders who were equally outstanding leaders of the Communist Party, the Trade Union movement, and Umkhonto weSizwe. Among them are stalwarts of our movement, like Moses Mabhida, Moses Kotane, JB Marks, JK Nkadimeng, Mark Shope, Raymond Mhlaba, Govan Mbeki, Dan Tlhome and Edwin Mofutsanyane.

Consequently a debate about purism, one that wishes to project the ANC as “pure” is both erroneous and a fallacy. It also goes against the content and letter of our seminal conferences, such as Morogoro, which adopted the strategy and tactics principles stating that the working class is the primary motive force of our revolution.

“The national character of the struggle must therefore dominate our approach. But it is a national struggle taking place in a different context from those which characterised the early struggle against colonialism ... it is also happening in a new kind of South Africa in which there is a large and well-developed working class ... in which the independent expressions of the working people – their political organs and trade unions – are very much part of the liberation front... Its political organisations – and the trade unions – have played a fundamental role in shaping and advancing our revolutionary course ... its militancy and political consciousness as a revolutionary class will play no small part in our victory and in the construction of a real people’s South Africa”

The critical challenge and question we need to confront today is: Is the ANC stronger in its alliance with the working class formations, the SACP and COSATU, or is it stronger as a pure nationalist movement? Has it always been a narrow nationalist movement, as many want us to believe, or a revolutionary movement that we have always been told it is?

The multi-class character of the ANC necessitates that, as the various classes grow stronger in society the greater the intensity of class contestation will be within our movement. Consequently, the imperative is for us to be able to differentiate between real contestation and a smokescreen.

The African National Congress is a revolutionary movement. It is not a narrow nationalist movement. We should bear that in mind in our political education.

Through reference to the historical evolution of our movement we can help navigate through our present challenges. We can engage even with the most controversial of postulates, and anchor our debates on the real politik and on correct political understanding.

>> *Gwede Mantashe is the Secretary General of the ANC.*

LATEST SPEECHES

Address by President Jacob Zuma at the Second Annual Raymond Mhlaba Memorial Lecture,
12 October 2009
<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?doc=ancdocs/history/zuma/2009/jz1012.html>

Speaker’s notes by Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe at the Olof Palme Days Conference,
10 October 2009
<http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/show.asp?include=deputy/sp/2009/sp10101923.htm&ID=2004&type=sp>

We will not rest until we see the face of rural areas changing for the better



16th October marks the 30th anniversary of World Food Day and the 64th anniversary of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). On this day we reflect on and increase awareness around global food problems, hunger and malnutrition.

According to the latest report published by the World Food Programme (WFP) the number of people in need of food aid in the world has reached a record first time figure of more than 1 billion. Many of these people are in the developing countries and many of them are from African countries. Yet Africa is the wealthiest continent with its endowment of mineral wealth, oil reserves, diversity of wild life, various types of livestock, fish, vegetation, kilometres of rich fertile lands and almost one billion hard working people.

We have to rethink our approach to food security in order to get it right. For the past two to three years, the global demand for food increased with the need for the world to produce and feed 6 billion people. This was compounded by the changing weather conditions that in some places resulted in dry spells that affected crop especially wheat production and in others floods that washed away crops. The tide of bad news continued with the economic recession which hit hard especially among the poor and most vulnerable communities.

As stated in our Constitution Section 27, 1 (b) that, “every citizen has a right to have access to sufficient food and water.” Our government MUST with all available resources protect this fundamental right. For our people, this addresses availability and affordability of basic food products therefore calling for increased monitoring of food prices and appreciation of the work done by the Competition Commission.

To ensure food security among the most vulnerable groups, it has now become evident that government must stimulate agricultural production, invest in agricultural research and stimulate economic growth within the agricultural sector including aquaculture in order to achieve food security.

The people of this country mandated the ANC to effect change on land and agrarian activities to ensure support to subsistence food production, expanding the role and productivity of modern small-holder farmers and maintain a vibrant and competitive agricultural sector.

The ANC listened and prioritised government programme of action to focus on five areas: creation of decent work and sustainable livelihoods; education; health; rural development, food security and land reform; as well as the fight against crime and corruption, especially livestock theft.

Subsistence farmers will be supported through agricultural starter packs that will include seeds and seedlings, fertilizer and livestock. To protect your crops and livestock, the government will continue to rollout the fencing project to safeguard livestock. Already, we have rolled-out 50 km fencing costing 3,5 million for vegetables and crop, grazing land and the Buffer zone in Muyexe village in Giyani.

Over the past 20 years, cereal production in developing countries has increased by 78 percent and fish production by 113 percent while meat production has risen by 127 percent. Even so, many people in developing countries cannot afford animal products, as a result of which per capita consumption of meat is only 17.7 kg/year as compared to 81.6 kg/year in developed countries. About 60 percent of dietary protein is from animal products in developed countries, compared to only 22 percent in developing countries.

This shows that there is a substantial room for expansion of livestock production. Our primary intervention will be to support farmers to enable them to produce products at levels that are able to keep our food prices low, and internationally competitive.

In the rural areas, our key driving project is the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP) which was launched by President Jacob Zuma on 17 August 2009 in Giyani. This programme which has a holistic approach towards rural development is developed to ensure integrated participation of all spheres of government to ensure improvement in livelihoods and thus reduce food insecurity of both individual households and communities. This holistic approach will also ensure co-ordinated planning taking into consideration all challenges facing the area like inadequate water resources.

Together with agricultural research institutions, local governments and provincial departments, we will empower rural South Africans to become participants and owners for the stimulation of agriculture forestry and aqua production in the area. Research institutions will also provide sufficient technology to support this initiative. Today, we are showcasing an innovative approach of food production that uses grey in the production of food in the villages.

This Veggie Tower approach has already been rolled-out in Muyexe targeting 300 households. Through this approach, we have succeeded in creating a nursery and a net tunnel covering one hectare to grow vegetables. Furthermore, we are looking into other technologies that will include possibilities of water harvesting and production enhancing alternatives to improve crop and livestock production. Many of these initiatives will be supported through the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries' National Agricultural Production Strategy.

We are approaching agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a strategic and systematic manner and are determined to increase the overall production of commodities for food security and to contribute to the economy in a meaningful way. We believe that farmers should graduate to different levels to ensure sustainable production and food security.

We have partnered with the Food and Agricultural Organization whom have approved two Telefood proposals to an amount close to 20,000 US dollars for the poultry and vegetable production initiatives in Muyexe. Through our partnership we shall work together to strengthen ensure that this initiative does is sustainable and our communities are encouraged to produce food throughout the year.

Working together with the Agricultural Research Council (ARC), Provincial Departments of Agriculture and other stakeholders, we have improved existing food security initiatives to allow them to quickly respond to unemployment and poverty alleviation. These include, amongst others, the Community seed production schemes which are already implemented in the Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces.

We are also finalising the revitalisation of indigenous seed security saving. The Limpopo communities of Thulamela and Sekhukhune villages have delivered a valuable service of conserving indigenous species of bambara groundnut, cowpea, sorghum, melon, pumpkin and maize.

Our approach will be to have communities own these initiatives to ensure sustainability of the projects. These indigenous seeds adapts to the scarce rainfall and drier climatic conditions that we are experiencing due to changing weather patens. Food security, especially in Africa, is linked to the prevailing climate. South Africa's agriculture is particularly vulnerable to climate change, as farming depends to a great extent on the quality of the rainy season. Increased droughts together with higher temperatures require that we approach food production and conservation differently.

The current drought that has ravaged the western part of the country and the region since 2002 and has impacted heavily on rural communities. We must, work together, to strengthen our efforts to produce more. This is a call to zabalaza against being hopeless and waiting for government to allocate grants.

Working together we can do more to achieve food security!

>> Tina Joemat-Pettersson is an ANC NEC member and Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries