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NEC *Bulletin*

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Advance the progressive ideological agenda

The ANC needs to engage more assertively and consistently in public debate to defend and propagate the political and ideological positions of the ANC. This was the conclusion of an extensive NEC discussion on the ANC's engagement in the battle of ideas in South Africa.

The discussion follows a number of recent developments – some of which have already been discussed in the ANC's online series on the sociology of public discourse – which have highlighted the nature and content of the battle of ideas currently taking place in South Africa.

A vigorous battle of ideas is a common feature of the democratic political contest in many societies, and should be welcomed as an integral feature of the democratic process.

CONDOLENCES

The NEC paid tribute to ANC and SACP stalwart **Isithwalandwe Raymond Mhlaba**, who passed away on 20 February. A selfless and dedicated revolutionary, Oom Ray dedicated his life to the struggle for freedom. He was a founding member of Umkhonto we Sizwe, a Rivonia trialist, National Chairperson of the SACP and the first Premier of the Eastern Cape. He was awarded Isithwalandwe Seaparankoe in 1992.

The NEC expressed its sympathies to **residents and workers of Stilfontein** injured and affected by last week's earthquake and extended condolences to the families of the two miners who lost their lives in the tragedy.

The National Executive Committee held a meeting from **11-13 March 2005**. The meeting discussed preparations for the National General Council, the ideological struggle and preparations for local government elections.

The NEC noted the determined efforts of those forces opposed to fundamental transformation – of which the Democratic Alliance is the formal political representative – to shape the public discourse, and to thereby seek to ensure that their political and ideological views are dominant in society. It is both natural and expected that they should seek to do so.

The ANC, however, has not been as vigorous in the defence and propagation of its own progressive perspectives over the course of the first decade of democracy. The NEC resolved therefore, as part of the preparations for the NGC, to ensure all structures work to ensure a more coherent, determined and comprehensive assertion of the political and ideological positions of the ANC in the national battle of ideas.

This must, of necessity, include a repudiation of those individuals and groups who argue for the ANC to remain silent in the face of a sustained political attack. It must necessarily respond to those within the political arena and the media who would seek to misrepresent the positions of the ANC.

To be able to do this, it is necessary for all ANC cadres and structures to familiarise themselves with the content of the right wing political agenda, and to recognise the various forms it takes in public debate. It is also necessary to understand the techniques it uses to further this political agenda. These matters are discussed in some detail in the ten-part series on 'The Sociology of the Public Discourse in Democratic South Africa' which is contained in ANC TODAY, Vol 5 Nos. 2-11.

The ANC will address all of these matters not only to improve the vibrancy of national debate, but to remain faithful to the vision for which the movement was

founded and to implement the fundamental social transformation for which the ANC has been given an overwhelming mandate.

Structures to launch 'know your neighbourhood' campaign

Every ANC branch, accompanied by national, provincial and regional leaders, should immediately begin a programme of door-to-door interaction with residents in the ward as part of the movement's 'know-your-neighbourhood' campaign.

The purpose of this campaign is to identify local issues which need to be addressed in building a people's contract to create work and fight poverty. All ANC branches need to use this interaction to conduct an audit of local delivery issues, and highlight and act on issues that require intervention.

At its meeting, the NEC reaffirmed its January 1997 decision that all NEC members will be deployed to branches over this period to take part in this

work. Members of Provincial Executive Committees (PECs) and Regional Executive Committees (RECs) will also be deployed to branches for the campaign.

Part of the campaign must also include work to strengthen the functioning of ward committees in all areas to improve community participation in the process of local governance.

This work will be taking place together with the initial phases of the local government elections campaign, where election structures will need to be established and various tasks assigned. A national elections strategy workshop was held on 5-6 March, and will be followed up by provincial strategy workshops during March.

PROVINCES WORK TO RESOLVE CROSS-BOUNDARY ISSUES

Structures in the five affected provinces needed to move ahead with the task of resolving issues relating to cross-boundary municipalities. This follows an earlier NEC decision to do away with the notion of cross-boundary municipalities and redraw provincial boundaries so that each municipality falls under one or another provincial.

This decision was based on an analysis of the first five years of the new democratic local government system. One of the areas where difficulties have been experienced has been in cross-boundary municipalities – those areas where a single municipality straddles the boundaries of two provinces.

At the time of the demarcation of the current local government boundaries, cross-boundary municipalities were set up in some areas to ensure viable, integrated and effective local government without shifting provincial boundaries.

However, the experience of the last five years has shown that cross-boundary municipalities present administrative challenges. Cross-boundary municipalities makes it difficult for government to provide services to communities in an equitable and sustainable manner, to promote integrated social and economic development, and to ensure effective local governance.

Because of these problems, the NEC agreed to:

- Abolish the notion of cross-boundary municipalities, so that all municipalities in the country fall entirely in one province or the other;
- Revise provincial boundaries accordingly;

- Undertake investigations and consultations to decide how to adjust these boundaries to ensure effective delivery, development and accountability.

Some of the benefits to communities of ensuring municipalities fall under a single provincial government include that:

- Budgets and service delivery programmes will come from only one provincial government;
- budget and plans that were set aside by a 'handing-over' province will not be cancelled;
- workers in the same municipality will enjoy equal conditions of service;
- housing subsidies and indigent policies will remain in place, but will be easier to implement;
- service delivery will be faster and of a better quality.

The task that remains is to properly communicate the need for this step, and to consult within ANC structures and with the communities concerned to decide which municipalities should be located in which province.

All ANC branches need to discuss this process and ensure that the views of all members are properly canvassed. At the same time, government will be undertaking a consultation process, which includes public hearings, to ensure that all communities have an opportunity to participate.

We need to arrive at an outcome which serves the interests of all the people regardless of where they live. We need to guard against provincial 'chauvinism' and the actions of those who deliberately sow confusion in affected communities to pursue their own personal interests. If approached in a disciplined, open and

accountable manner, this process will yield the results that so many of our communities desire – more effective governance, better interaction between the

different spheres of government, more efficient delivery of services, and greater focus on economic development and poverty eradication.

Preparations start for National General Council

Structures of the ANC should shortly begin preparations for the ANC National General Council (NGC), which will be held in Tshwane from 30 June to 3 July.

The NGC, which is held mid-way between National Conferences, will assess progress in implementation of the ANC's programme and conference resolutions and discuss a number of current political and strategic issues.

It will be attended by around 2,500 ANC cadres drawn from branches, regional and provincial structures, Alliance partners and other sectors of society.

primarily focused at the level of the ward-based branch. To begin this process, the NEC identified a number of discussion documents for distribution to structures in the next few weeks. These documents will include discussions of the ANC's strategy and tactics, unity and cohesion within the organisation, approaches to economic development, the struggle for women's emancipation, the national question and the organisational design of the ANC.

The NGC will be a massive national political school, where all ANC cadres, members and supporters can participate in discussion and debate about the challenges facing the democratic movement, South

Alliance adopts joint programme of action

A common Alliance programme of action, in which all alliance partners will jointly engage over the course of the year, was adopted at the recent Alliance 10-a-side meeting.

The programme focuses on the shared objective of all Alliance partners to mobilise all sectors of society in building a people's contract to create work and fight poverty. It includes a programme of local level popular interaction and mobilisation, in which alliance leaders and members at all levels will engage in the 'know your neighbourhood' door-to-door programme to identify and address issues affecting people at a local level. The programme is intended, among other things, to strengthen local forums of popular participation in governance.

This programme takes place in the context of the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Freedom Charter, in which the Alliance will work together to popularise and advance the vision of the Freedom Charter. Preparations are also underway for the forthcoming Alliance Summit, scheduled to take place towards the end of April.

The NGC will be preceded by extensive discussion and consultation within the structures of the ANC,

Africa and the continent.

Election of ANC leadership should take its normal course

The NEC noted a number of speculative media reports over the last few months relating to the issue described as 'presidential succession'. The meeting also noted a number of comments in media attributed – either by name or anonymously – to ANC leaders or structures.

The NEC agreed therefore to clarify the organisation's approach to the election of national leadership and the selection of candidates for the purposes of national government elections.

The ANC National Conference, which is due to be held in 2007, will elect the ANC's National Executive Committee, including its national officials. The procedure by which the election will take place is

outlined in the ANC Constitution, and is well known to the structures and membership of the ANC. The process of nominations will begin in ANC branches a few months before the National Conference.

The ANC's candidates for national and provincial elections, including our candidate for South African President, will be selected through an internal list process in the months preceding the 2009 general election. The nominations process will again be within ANC branches.

The NEC agreed that there was no reason to initiate either of these processes before the moment they would ordinarily be initiated. The ANC will therefore attend to these matters at the appropriate time, according to

established procedures, and within the organisational practices of the movement.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT LIST PROCESS AIMS FOR GENDER EQUITY

In an historic step, in line with the ANC's commitment to gender equity and the emancipation of women, the NEC resolved to ensure an equal representation of men and women in all its local government candidate lists. This was decided by the NEC when it adopted the local government list process guidelines, by which the ANC will select its candidates for the forthcoming local government elections.

It is anticipated that this provision, like previous ANC initiatives to increase the representation of women, will

have a far-reaching effect on efforts to address the under-representation of women in decision-making structures in sectors of society.

As in previous elections, the guidelines will ensure a combination of broad-based democratic participation by ANC branch members, and measures to ensure the quality, integrity and representivity of the ANC's local government candidates.

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- ▶ NEXT NEC MEETING: 27-29 MAY 2005
 - ▶ ALLIANCE SUMMIT: 22-23 APRIL 2005