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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Viva the Cadres for Development!

For many years now we have insisted on the central importance of the struggle against poverty and underdevelopment in terms of creating the caring and humane society towards which our people aspire.

When we addressed the nation on the occasion of the Presidential Inauguration on Freedom Day, April 27, we said:

"Endemic and widespread poverty continues to disfigure the face of our country. It will always be impossible for us to say that we have fully restored the dignity of all our people as long as this situation persists. For this reason the struggle to eradicate poverty has been and will continue to be a central part of the national effort to build the new South Africa.

"None of the great social problems we have to solve is capable of resolution outside the context of the creation of jobs and the alleviation and eradication of poverty. This relates to everything, from the improvement of the health of our people, to reducing the levels of crime, raising the levels of literacy and numeracy, and opening the doors of learning and culture to all."

Following this, in our State of the Nation Address to the First Joint Sitting of the Third Democratic Parliament on 21 May 2004, we said: "At the core of our response to all [our] challenges is the struggle against poverty and underdevelopment, which rests on three pillars. These are:

- * encouraging the growth and development of the First Economy, increasing its possibility to create jobs;
- * implementing our programme to address the challenges of the Second Economy; and,
- * building a social security net to meet the objective of poverty alleviation."

The task further to accelerate our offensive against poverty and underdevelopment has now been raised in our 95th Anniversary January 8th Statement. In this Statement we have declared 2007 as "The Year to Intensify the struggle against Poverty as we Advance in Unity towards 2012".

In this regard, among other things the Statement says:

"In addition to our continuing task to defend our revolutionary gains, our central task during this phase of the National Democratic Revolution is to liberate our people from the scourge of poverty in all its manifestations, and eliminate all its offshoots...

"At the ANC's National General Council (NGC) in June 2005, the commissions on the Theory of Development reported that, 'the central challenge our movement faces in the Second Decade of Freedom is to defeat poverty and substantially reduce the level of unemployment. This means that the ANC and government must produce a coherent development strategy... identifying where we need to move to and what strategic leaps we need to get there'...

"Through our joint efforts as a nation we have built up momentum for stronger economic growth and development. But we need to act with even greater determination and focus to realise the potential of our economy to meet the needs of the poor in urban and rural areas. We need to act in unity, in a people's contract, to ensure that this progress is not only sustained, but elevated to a higher level during the course of the year.

"This places a responsibility, first and foremost, on the cadres of our movement, wherever they are deployed, in taking the lead in ensuring that growth is both accelerated and shared. Our key challenge is to sustain this growth, broaden participation in the economy and extend opportunities to all to deepen the quality of social development. Sustained and broad-based growth depends on additional progress in our industrial sector, on export growth and trade performance, and on improving education, skills and productivity.

"For those in government and in the legislatures, it requires that policies and programmes are effectively implemented and coordinated, continually monitored and evaluated, and always informed by the needs, interests and views of the masses of our people. It requires a mobilisation not only of the substantial resources and capacity of the state, but also the mobilisation of the most important resource within our communities - our people - behind this central task.

"Economic growth and development is at heart about empowering the masses to take control of their own lives, ensuring that they have the means and opportunity to enjoy the freedoms for which they have fought for a long time. They must therefore be an integral and driving force behind this effort. In this respect there is a clear role for participation by the non-governmental organisations and civil society structures. There is also a profound need for sustained cooperation between the government and its social partners - labour, business and civil society.

"We must therefore take care to ensure that all our policies and programmes involve the people in their design, implementation and evaluation. We must therefore work hard during the course of 2007 to ensure that forums exist

and are effectively used to link government with the various stakeholders in our economy.

"In particular, we must focus on the involvement of the masses at a local government level. We should not take a purely technical approach to the development of the Integrated Development Plans (IDPs). The approach must involve communities in a meaningful way, and it must be used, additionally, to empower, educate and develop these communities.

"Government alone cannot resolve the challenges of inequality and poverty. Rather they require that we unite South Africans in a 'peoples contract to create work and fight poverty'. We must seek concerted action on our development approach, involving the whole of our society.

"As the RDP White Paper said, 'the birth of a transformed nation can only succeed if the people themselves are voluntary participants in the process towards the realisation of these goals they have themselves helped define'. It is therefore important to build a vibrant and continued integration between decision makers from the public-private and voluntary sectors and the intended beneficiaries of development - the people.

"And therefore in all our efforts as we advance with our mission to eradicate poverty we have to ensure continued participation of the masses of our people in the struggle against poverty...

"When it was formed, the ANC undertook the mission of forging the broadest front possible in the fight against white minority rule. Throughout its history, our movement has sought to organise and mobilise all social forces and organisations that share the broad vision of a democratic South Africa.

"Now that the reviled system of apartheid has been overturned, we should continue to seek the mobilisation of the broadest range of forces in society to overcome the poverty, unemployment and underdevelopment that continue to afflict many of our people.

"As we resolved at the 2002 Stellenbosch Conference of our movement, one of our key tasks for 2007 should therefore be to continue to work to bring together as many people and groupings as possible into a common struggle to build a better life for our people."

As the 1 March 2006 local government elections confirmed, the masses of our people continue to show the greatest confidence in our movement. These masses know from their own experience that their best hope for the achievement of the goal of a better life is to continue to entrust the governance of our country to their trusted representative and leader, the African National Congress.

As the January 8th Statement says, among other things, "This places a responsibility, first and foremost, on the cadres of our movement, wherever they are deployed, in taking the lead in ensuring that growth is both accelerated and shared... We must... take care to ensure that all our policies and programmes involve the people in their design, implementation and evaluation. We must therefore work hard during the course of 2007 to ensure that forums exist and are effectively used to link government with the various stakeholders in our economy."

All ANC cadres must therefore see and conduct themselves as Cadres for Development. This means that all of us must make a special effort to understand the practical actions that must be taken to accelerate our advance towards ridding our country of the twin scourges of poverty and underdevelopment. We must also strive to understand these practical actions within the context of the three broad areas we mentioned when we delivered the 2004 State of the Nation Address, namely:

- * encouraging the growth and development of the First Economy, increasing its possibility to create jobs;
- * implementing our programme to address the challenges of the Second Economy; and,
- * building a social security net to meet the objective of poverty alleviation.

Our provinces have now taken up the challenge further to deepen the political maturity of our members by systematically conducting political classes. To empower our members to discharge their responsibilities, enabling them to act as Cadres for Development, our provincial structures will therefore have to integrate the critical issue of the intensification of the struggle against poverty within their education programmes.

The issue of the involvement of our members in the struggle against poverty and underdevelopment as Cadres for Development will be particularly challenging at the local government level. This presents especially our Regional Executive Committees with the challenge to ensure that we develop a core of Cadres for Development in each of our local municipal areas.

In this regard, we must, once again, draw attention to what the January 8th Statement said, that: "As the RDP White Paper said, 'the birth of a transformed nation can only succeed if the people themselves are voluntary participants in the process towards the realisation of these goals they have themselves helped define'. It is therefore important to build a vibrant and continued integration between decision makers from the public-private and voluntary sectors and the intended beneficiaries of development - the people...In particular, we must focus on the involvement of the masses at the local government level...The approach must involve communities in a meaningful way, and it must be used, additionally, to empower, educate and develop these communities."

From this it is clear that the Broad Front for Development which the January 8th Statement calls for, will and must essentially be built from below. This task will therefore fall especially on the shoulders of our local leadership collectives and branches. Of enormous help in this regard will be the work in which our local structures are already involved - the Imvuselelo Campaign. Our success in this regard will give us the possibility to interact with our local communities and community based organisations in an effective manner. At the same time, our structures will have to interact in a correct and constructive manner with our Municipal Councils, Ward Committees and Community Development Workers.

Similarly, our cadres deployed in all three spheres of government, at both executive and administrative levels, will have to ensure that they respond in a serious and sustained manner to the tasks contained in the January 8th Statement. In this regard, among other things, this Statement says:

"For those in government and in the legislatures, it requires that policies and programmes are effectively implemented and coordinated, continually monitored and evaluated, and always informed by the needs, interests and views of the masses of our people. It requires a mobilisation not only of the substantial resources and capacity of the state, but also the mobilisation of the most important resource within our communities - our people - behind this central task."

Everything we have said points to the increased responsibility that rests on the shoulders of the elected leadership collectives of the ANC, from the National Executive Committee (NEC), to the Branch Executive Committees (BECs). These will have to ensure that they give the necessary leadership, guidance and support both to our comrades deployed in the governance structures, as well as those working in ANC structures.

As the January 8th Statement reminded us, when we celebrated the 95th Anniversary of our movement at the highly successful rally at Emalahleni in Mpumalanga, we also began the last five years that will end with our celebration of the Centenary of the ANC in 2012. We are determined to ensure that when we hold these historic celebrations five years hence, having significantly changed the lives of our people for the better, we will be able to say - 100 years after it was born, the ANC can justly claim that the ANC lives!, the ANC leads! Among the heroes and heroines we will celebrate on January 8th, 2012 will be those among our members who will have served as our Cadres for Development, in the interest of all the people of our country.

Thabo Mbeki

ANC 95TH ANNIVERSARY

Place the branch at the centre of struggle

The ANC's 95th anniversary was celebrated at a mass rally in Emalahleni, Mpumalanga last weekend with a call to place the ANC branch at the centre of the organisation's programme to mobilise South Africans for the transformation of society.

Presenting the ANC's January 8th Statement, President Thabo Mbeki said all cadres of the movement, wherever they may be located or deployed, needed to be actively involved in the activities of branches.

"We are now calling on all leaders of the organisation, all public representatives, deployees, veterans and former activists to return to undertake work in their branches. All cadres to the branch!" he said.

As the most basic, and most important, structure of the ANC, branches must receive the support and assistance of all levels of the organisation.

The importance of the ANC branch was highlighted in the report of Secretary General Kgalema Motlanthe to the 2005 National General Council (NGC): "Fundamentally, our strength as a movement must be assessed by the character and level of organisation of our basic unit, the ANC branch, which is strategically located in the midst of our communities."

"The ANC's leadership of our society rests firmly on our presence in all communities. Our presence and outreach rests on branch structures and where these are non-existent it will be impossible for the ANC to play a meaningful role in the life of the community."

The report highlighted problems in branches across the country, with many merely functioning to the minimum requirements of the ANC constitution. In many branches there were no sustainable political programmes or community campaigns. Some were described as "conflict-ridden and unstable" and engaged in fights over leadership positions, deployment of councillors, tendering and control of projects, and recruitment of membership to serve factional or selfish interests.

It was in response to some of these challenges, and to build on the positive impact of the 2006 local government election campaign, that the Imvuselelo campaign was initiated last year. This campaign aims to revitalise branches and improve their political activity within communities.

The intensification of this campaign is one of the key tasks of all structures of the ANC during the course of 2007. A handbook has been developed to assist branch members in understanding, planning and implementing all the phases of the campaign.

At the core of the Imvuselelo campaign is regular, structured door-to-door interaction with every household in every ward. This builds on the practice of the last two election campaigns that contributed to far more effective communication and dialogue between ANC structures and communities. This interaction cannot be limited to election time though, but should be a part of an ongoing programme of systematic community involvement.

Through these door-to-door visits branch members are able to identify and record those issues that most concern residents, including problems with local infrastructure and services. Branches are then expected to collate this information, and develop strategies to address common problems.

This requires sound working relationships with ANC ward and PR councillors, to ensure that problems are taken up and that progress is reported back to communities and affected households.

This process should happen alongside the development and implementation of local programmes of action that tackle local issues within the broad national campaigns of the organisation. This requires an active branch, with experienced members with skills in planning, organising and campaigning. Branches should therefore be organising local cadre development programmes to improve both practical skills and political understanding. There also needs to be targeted recruitment and induction of new members to ensure the organisation grows and that new members are quickly and effectively integrated into the political life of the branch.

Branches also need, in line with the mandate received in the 2006 local government elections, to work to ensure the establishment and effective functioning of ward committees. Branches should also work to establish other local development structures that can serve the various needs of communities, and that work together with government structures and agencies in responding to local needs.

"ANC branches need to work to ensure that community members participate in such structures, and that all sections of the community are adequately represented. These structures should neither be seen nor become extensions of the ANC branch."

Branches will be particularly busy in 2007, as they are also expected to prepare for the ANC's 52nd National Conference, taking place in December. Branch delegates, who comprise 90% of voting delegates, need to be empowered to determine the direction of the organisation in line with the views and wishes of the general membership.

Branches will be the starting point for discussions across the organisation on ANC policy, strategy and tactics, and organisational tasks and challenges.

As indicated in the January 8th Statement: "Our branches are uniquely positioned to reflect on which organisational strategies are most effective at grassroots level, and what policies and programmes have the greatest impact on the lives of the people. The branch is therefore the site from which the interaction of theory and practice is best observed."

MORE INFORMATION:

ANC January 8th Statement
<http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/pr/2007/pr0108a.html>

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

No evidence that grants encourage teenage pregnancy

The provision of government social grants does not promote teenage pregnancy or act as a "perverse incentive" for would-be recipients, according to preliminary findings of research released this week by the Department of Social Development.

The department commissioned the research following anecdotal evidence about alleged perverse incentives of social grants. The rapid increases in the growth of social grant take-up rates during the period 2003/04 and 2004/05 raised concerns about the social grant system's sustainability and potential perverse incentives.

The preliminary report presents the findings of the first two phases of the study, a literature review and a quantitative analysis of the data on the social pensions system.

The key areas that the research addressed were an alleged increase in teenage pregnancies relating to the child support grant; the possible fostering of children in the biological family context to access the foster child grant; the supposed reluctance by some people to take steps to control certain ailments to access the disability grant; and the supposed tendency of beneficiaries not to take part in the labour market and thereby contribute to a culture of economic dependency.

Analysis of the social pensions system data did not provide any evidence of people changing their behaviour to access the disability grant.

Commenting on the findings, Social Development Minister Zola Skweyiya said: "The statistics provide little evidence of people changing their circumstances to obtain the disability grant. Reports of such incidents are so far anecdotal and unverifiable. The increase in disability grant take-up rates often have more to do with people's inability to enter the labour market and the scarcity of employment opportunities. The alleged behavioural changes will be further probed through a separate qualitative investigation."

In some instances, the disability grant was used as a poverty alleviation grant rather than a compensatory grant for people with temporary or permanent disabilities. There were indications that even if people were unsuccessful on first application, they returned with new ailments until their applications were approved. The investigation uncovered policy and administrative weaknesses in the provision of the disability grant. Corrective measures have since been introduced.

From the analysis of the social pensions system data, no link could be established between the availability of the child support grant (CSG) and teenage pregnancy.

"The quantitative analysis revealed that there had been a huge growth in the number of CSG beneficiaries in recent years. However, if a comparison is made between the numbers of teenagers receiving the CSG with the incidence of teenage births in the national population, the quantitative analysis suggests that the take-up rate of the CSG by teenage mothers remains low," Skweyiya said

Teenagers represent 5% of all CSG recipients registered at October 2005. These teenagers claiming the CSG were considerably lower than the proportion of teenage mothers in the South African population.

The department explained that when the child support grant was introduced for younger children, one of the main reasons was to provide financial support during the first three years of a child's life, when good nutrition has the most significant effect on their development. However, more than half of recipients only apply for the grant when their children are older.

There is similarly no conclusive evidence that the foster care grant is growing as a result of the existence of perverse incentives. "However, evidence from the research shows that although the foster care grant was not designed as additional support, in the absence of income support for kinship arrangements and adoption, the cost of providing the foster care grant will continue to grow," Skweyiya said.

The research shows that informal fostering is a well-established practice in certain sections of the population. It further suggested that foster care is a valuable form of alternative care for children whose parents have died or are unable to care for them.

The analysis showed that in the majority of cases, the foster care grant was paid to children who had lost one or both parents, and that the majority of foster parents were related to the foster children. Only in 9% of cases were

the foster parents not related to the foster child. Nearly two out of three foster parents received more than one type of grant.

"Because the majority of foster children are orphans, their placements are expected to be long-term. However, the majority of orphans are not supported through receipt of the foster care grant, and the case loads could rise substantially if more families took this course of action in the event of parents dying," Skweyiya said.

The department said the research findings, including the outstanding qualitative research aspects, will inform necessary policy adaptations and improvements in the grants administration system.

MORE INFORMATION:

Department of Social Development
<http://www.socdev.gov.za/>

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