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**THIS WEEK:**

- \* Letter from the President: The People Have Spoken - Victory to the ANC!
- \* Elections 2006: More voters place their confidence in the ANC
- \* Government programme update #2: Investing in human capital for growth

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**LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT****The People Have Spoken - Victory to the ANC!**

In my Letter last week, I wrote about the then impending 1 March local government elections, the third since the advent of our democracy in 1994. Among other things, I said: "Decentralisation, resulting in the consolidation of our system of local government, must lead us to the achievement of the strategic outcome identified in this year's January 8th Statement - the exercise of People's Power through Democratic Local Government. Relying on the great confidence of the masses of our people in our movement, our immediate task in this context is to go all out to achieve a decisive ANC victory in the March 1st elections!"

As we go to press, the process of counting the votes cast, as well as auditing and publishing the results of these important elections has not been completed. However, we can say most definitely, that we have achieved the decisive ANC victory we urged all our members and supporters to work for!

Once more the masses of our people have confirmed their confidence in our movement as the leading representative and repository of their hopes and aspirations. For our movement and indeed for all democrats, the days ahead of us must and will be days of celebration.

There are many things that we must celebrate. We must celebrate the fact that we have further entrenched our position as the largest political formation in our country, freely chosen by our people as the leading party of government in all three spheres of government. We must celebrate the fact that the masses of our people continue to support the ANC perspective of progressive social transformation, and unreservedly acknowledge the positive changes we have brought about since 1994.

We must celebrate the fact that, once more, we have held free, fair and largely peaceful elections, whose results reflect the will of the people. We must celebrate the reality that the principal actors in our electoral process, including the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), the contending political parties and formations, civil society and the mass media, contributed severally and collectively to the further consolidation of democracy in our country.

This celebration will be particularly joyful because of the determined attempt that was made by some in our country to project a national mood of gloom and despair ahead of, during and immediately after the elections. These Jeremiah's threw everything they could at our people, striving to convince them that the elections would be something other than the celebration of democracy that they were.

These sought to convey the message that the elections would inevitably be a bitter manifestation of mass anger, frustration and despair, especially targeted against our movement, the ANC. Symptomatic of a perverse determination to communicate nothing but negative messages, one of our leading newspapers welcomed Election Day, 1 March, with the entirely false banner headline - "Poll On Knife-Edge", and the sub-heading, "Threats of violence, power cuts, flooding".

Determined to spread gloom, this newspaper began the front page article appearing under these headlines with the words: "A country racked by cross-border disputes, flooding, power-cuts and service delivery protests goes to the polls today for its third local government elections."

To ensure that its negative message was not lost on anybody, in the same article it said: "Talk Radio 702 received an e-mail which read: "...As you are fond of electricity cut-offs on the poor and oppressed in South Africa, so taste a bit of that which they taste! And let you businesses lose out, in an economy where the poor see no benefits."

In the days before the elections, others, including the international media, allowed themselves to be infected by the determination to communicate a highly negative picture of our country. For instance, on 24 February, less than a week before our elections, one of these published a story under the headline - "South Africa: Tired of waiting - frustration mounts over promised change".

The article told a haunting tale of gloom, as a result of which it said our movement "is believed to be facing its sternest test yet as unquestioning support gives way to a degree of criticism from the poor over the pace of change."

In an article published on 2 March, the day after our elections, another foreign news medium wrote: "The ANC, despite having triumphed in every election since Nelson Mandela led it to victory in 1994, has seen its latest campaign blighted by discontent at lack of basic services, unemployment, and corruption. Tackling the thorny issue of land reform may have been seen within the ANC as a timely way of showing its traditional supporters it is still fighting their corner."

It went on to quote a white farmer, one van Zyl, as saying that by challenging the principle of 'willing seller and willing buyer' with regard to the land question, "(the ANC) is trying to ensure votes by giving the impression it is going to take a stand against the uncooperative (white) farmers."

Reading and listening to much of what was written and said before, during and immediately after our local government elections, it would be difficult to escape the conclusion that the masses of our people had lost confidence in the ANC and were in open revolt against our movement.

As part of this, a determined attempt was made to convince all and sundry that the socio-economic condition of our people 12 years after our liberation was worse than it had been during the apartheid years, and that our democracy was unravelling because of violence, power failures and

natural catastrophes, among other negative impulses.

All this was intended to communicate the message that our people, our country and our movement are walking backwards into a new Age of Darkness! It was said that all this would reflect in a tellingly poor electoral showing for the ANC during the elections.

The newspaper, "Cape Times", celebrated its 120th anniversary ten years ago in 1996. I was privileged to speak at a Cape Town Banquet on 3 April 1996, organised to celebrate this anniversary. On that occasion I said:

"In the Supplement on the "Cape Times" which the "Cape Times" carried a week ago, the distinguished editor of the paper, Moegsien Williams, writes that: 'A typical South African newsroom is an unhappy place, staffed by demotivated, mainly junior reporters and frustrated sub-editors who are expected to cover and produce newspapers able to reflect accurately an increasingly complex society.'

"Further on (Moegsien Williams) says: 'We want to redefine the news. We sense it can't be 'journalism as usual' in the new South Africa... In practical terms, redefining the news means getting closer to the readership by engagement, new contacts, new story ideas and a move away from stereotypes... While we will expose society's ills and wrongs, we will be its cheerleaders when things go right and there are successes. While we will be opposed to many things, we are able for the first time to be passionately and uncompromisingly in favour of some things, especially our new-born democracy.' "

However, with regard to the recent local government elections, many in our media, and some others flatteringly described as "analysts", wrote and spoke "passionately and uncompromisingly" to ensure that there were no "cheerleaders when things go right and there are successes". 'Demotivated' and 'frustrated' people communicated in a determined manner that seemed intended to mock all those 'in favour of our new-born democracy'.

This gave birth to the manufactured sense of unmitigated despair that was projected and fervently propagated specifically to create an atmosphere in which the population would be encouraged to reduce its support for our movement. In terms of this strategy, everybody had to be convinced that our movement had failed the people and that it constitutes a threat to the achievement of the goal of a better life for all!

The 2006 local government elections have now taken place. In the practice they have communicated the message that many of the negative pre-election predictions were nothing more than ill-intentioned wishes that were father to the thought that gave birth to such headlines as the one that said "Poll On Knife-Edge"!

At no point were the elections ever on a "knife-edge". They were never threatened by a scale of violence that would render them neither free nor fair. No power failures took place to disrupt the electoral process. Neither the persistent rain nor the resultant floods had a major impact on the people's determination to exercise their democratic right to vote.

There was no voter abstention, relative to the previous local government elections. Indeed the number of people who voted increased. Of great significance, whatever the concern about the 'pace of service delivery', this had no impact on popular support for the ANC!

Regularly during the election campaign we communicated a number of messages that have proved to be correct, as we knew they were. We said that more of

our people had come to understand the importance of local government and would therefore participate in the elections.

We said that the masses of our people were optimistic about their future and understood that government in general and local government in particular would play an important role in achieving this outcome. We said this would reflect itself in significant voter participation.

We said that the masses of our people had direct experience of what our movement had done as a governing party to change their lives for the better. This would reflect itself in the electoral re-affirmation of the confidence of the people in our movement.

We expressed our confidence that the local government elections would be free and fair. In this regard we said that we were certain that the IEC and the state security organs would create the conditions for our people freely to express their will in all parts of our country.

All these predictions, born of an intimate understanding of our national reality, have come true. Almost completely, the elections took place with no violence, intimidation, attempted fraud and serious administrative weaknesses. All physical material obstacles to free and fair elections were removed on time, including those related to the weather and power supplies.

Our movement has emerged from the elections stronger than ever before, having increased its support within our system of local government. There are now much fewer "no-go areas" than ever before, especially in KwaZulu Natal.

More minority political formations have entered the political scene, beyond the major parties, especially in the Western Cape, thus strengthening the representative nature of our democracy. Simultaneously, the remaining "Bantustan" parties, a carry-over from the apartheid years, have continued to lose support.

Millions of our people heard, understood and accepted the message of hope contained in our Local Government Election Manifesto. In this regard we must thank the hundreds of thousands of ANC members and volunteers who took this message to the people and succeeded to encourage millions to vote.

We must also thank the masses of our people who continued to demonstrate both their commitment to the success of our democracy and their confidence in our movement as the leading national force in the continuing struggle to build a people-centred society that would provide a better life for all.

In our Manifesto we said: "The ANC is determined to make local government work better. We have a plan to achieve this... We will intervene to ensure that councils work better, and are accountable to the community... We will resolutely fight laziness, arrogance and corruption. The ANC is best placed to build partnerships between national and provincial governments and municipal councils, and thus make things happen faster, more effectively and in the interest of the people... We are committed to building a non-sexist South Africa. Half of the candidates standing for the ANC are women..."

"All of us want better service in our schools, community clinics and government offices. We all want better opportunities to improve the lives of our families. Every community deserves decent sanitation, good roads, clean neighbourhoods and street lighting. Together, if we join in a People's Contract, we can achieve these goals, so that each one of us can experience a better life under the South African sky."

The masses of our people heard and welcomed these messages of hope and therefore voted for the ANC. The task ahead of us is to do everything in our power to honour the commitment we made to the people to implement our Plan to make local government work better for all our people. In this regard, the ANC will not disappoint the expectations of the people or in any way betray the confidence of these masses in our movement

Thabo Mbeki

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## ELECTIONS 2006

### More voters place their confidence in the ANC

With most of the results declared in the 2006 local government elections, it is clear that an overwhelming majority of South African voters have placed their confidence in the ANC to lead the process of building better communities and improving the living conditions of all South Africans.

While the final results were still being awaited as this edition of ANC TODAY was published, a number of important trends had already become evident.

More South Africans have voted in this election than in any previous local government election. From those municipalities whose results have so far been declared by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), the data indicates that the absolute number of people who cast their vote in this election is significantly higher than in the 2000 local government election. It should be noted, however, that because the number of registered voters has increased over this period, the percentage turnout may be lower in some councils.

The ANC vote has grown. The absolute number of people who have cast their votes for the ANC is significantly higher than in the 2000 election, as is the percentage of votes the ANC received in most councils. This is the case in councils throughout the provinces.

The DA vote has shrunk. In most municipalities that have been declared, the Democratic Alliance (DA) has lost a significant number of voters. Many thousands of voters who voted for the DA in the declared municipalities in 2000 have not given the party their vote in this election. This is particularly the case in the Western Cape, where the DA's support has dropped in most councils. Results from the Cape Town metro, though not final at the time of publication, indicate that the DA may have lost more than 10% of its share of the vote in the city.

In KwaZulu Natal the sharp decline in votes for the IFP that has been a trend over the last few years has continued unabated. The ANC, on the other hand, has significantly increased its number of votes, especially in small towns. For example, the ANC has won the KwaSani Municipality, gaining 70% of the popular vote, compared with 45% in 2000.

Besides the ANC, the Independent Democrats (ID) appear to have benefitted in the decline of support for other parties. As a party that did not exist at the time of the previous local government elections, the ID has picked up a significant share of the vote, particularly in the Western Cape.

These preliminary observations indicate that South Africans have heeded the call to make local government a dynamic and integral instrument in the struggle to improve the lives of our people. They have endorsed the plan to

make local government work better for all South Africans, and have indicated their readiness to play an active part in ensuring that it is effectively implemented.

More Information

Independent Electoral Commission  
<http://www.elections.org.za/>

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## GOVERNMENT PROGRAMME UPDATE #2

### Investing in human capital for growth

Following the state of the nation address in February, cabinet ministers addressed a number of briefings on progress in the implementation of government's programme of action. This week we publish an edited extract of the briefing on the skills development strategy:

Skills Development will be a key element of the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA). There is compelling evidence that points to the strong relationship between investments in human capital (education, training, health and nutrition) and economic growth and development

The need to improve the quality of human resources is important for developing countries firstly for its role in improving the quality of life of peoples and building democracy but also for its role in the attraction of foreign direct investment.

Our first major challenge is to improve the quality of general and further education, as these are the foundation for skills development. Secondly, we need to strengthen and accelerate collaboration and coordination of our various initiatives. Third, the foundation in each area of skills is mathematics and science achievement.

#### Strengthening the school system

Studies conducted in South Africa and abroad confirm that high levels of reading, writing and numeracy are the most practical and relevant of skills and that these skills are essential bases for developing the high-level vocational skills and knowledge required in South Africa. The focus of this programme will be to improve the resources of our poorest schools, including access to libraries and books in order to improve the literacy and numeracy levels of our learners. The first step will be the provision of 100 fiction books to all Quintile 1 and 2 primary schools in the nodal areas. This year we will strengthen our support to districts with regard to learner attainment and teacher support.

With respect to early childhood development, government is currently implementing Grade R for approximately 400,000 learners in both schools and community-based sites. The Department of Education is working towards reaching the target of one million learners by 2010. The Social cluster has approved an integrated plan for the implementation of the skills programmes for early childhood development practitioners in line with the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP).

This year we will increase the number of Dinaledi schools (which specialise in maths and science) from 102 to 400, and to 529 by January 2007. Over the next three years we will increase them to one thousand. The aim is to double

the number of learners passing higher grade maths and science in Grade 12 by 2008 through targeted interventions and investment. The Department of Education aims to ensure that the education sector offers programmes that address the skills needs of our country. The new curricula and programmes developed by the Department of Education have been modernised and made more relevant and appropriate to prepare learners for the workplace.

The introduction of no-fee schools for poor learners will ensure greater access to schools and thus to the literacy and numeracy skills that form the basis of meeting the skills challenge in the country.

#### Further and higher education

Government has allocated R1.9 billion over the medium term for the recapitalisation of further education and training (FET) colleges. The re-capitalisation of these colleges will ensure that they become attractive first choice options for more young learners to enrol in quality programmes that meet the needs of the economy. As a result of a study of skills shortages, programmes to address needs in civil engineering construction; information technology; financial management; marketing; tourism; manufacturing and assembly; fabrication and extraction; primary agriculture and manufacturing and assembly have been developed and will be offered at FET colleges from 2007.

The restructuring of the higher education landscape is proceeding relatively smoothly and within the agreed time frames. Nine of the 10 proposed mergers have already taken place, giving rise to new institutions. The restructuring has resulted in a new higher education institutional landscape ready to meet the high level skills needs of the country. The already existing foundation programmes in critical skills areas at universities and higher education will be used to promote expansion in engineering and mathematical sciences. The possibility of full service bursaries to recruit more teachers in scarce skills areas is being explored.

The government, through the National Student Financial Scheme (NFSAS), plays an important role in enabling large numbers of academically able but financially needy students to access higher education annually. This year, over 1.3 billion rand will be available for loans and bursaries through the NFSAS.

#### A coherent response to skills development

All of the items related to skills development in the 2005 government programme of action were either completed or enjoyed significant progress. Some of the highlights include:

- \* The successful launch of a revised National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) with a projected R5 billion per year levy funding mechanism.
- \* A successful Employment and Skills Development Lead Employer pilot project that includes FET Colleges is scheduled to be completed by September 2006. Thus far 7,856 learners are participating in the pilot programmes,
- \* The learnership and apprenticeship programmes have grown from strength to strength with a 155,460 employed and unemployed learners enrolled by the end of March 2005.
- \* The Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA) system was successfully re-established when four SETAs were merged. A total of 23 SETAs are now fully operational
- \* The sector skills plans for all 23 sectors of the economy were extensively reviewed and re-aligned to the revised NSDS 2005-2010

The adjusted NSDS 2005-2010 was launched in March 2005. This revised strategy is a comprehensive framework, which can be applied in a variety of ways to develop skills for both employed and unemployed. In the past SETAs were accused of being insensitive to needs of the economy and the public. To remedy this, one of the most significant changes in the current strategy relates to SETAs broadening their support of learners in learnerships, apprenticeships, internships, bursaries, workplace experiential learning and unit standards based skills programmes.

There have been numerous projects that have required close cooperation between the Department of Labour and other departments involved in skills development. An amount of R421 million was allocated for training of unemployed people through our provincial offices in projects linked to housing, agriculture, road construction, and working for water in 2005. By the end of December 2005 about 80,000 had completed training in these programmes.

During the next financial year, we will intensify our focus on the implementation of the second year of our NSDS 2005-2010 as well as the development of a state of the art, fully integrated Employment Services System. Vital to the implementation of these two key projects will be the link to the ASGISA. A detailed analysis of the skills requirements analysis for each ASGISA project has already been embarked upon.

An estimated 108 ASGISA projects have been identified and the skills development needs of each project will be mapped against clusters of SETAs and other stakeholders or role players.

The Employment Services System will be implemented this year to allow the government to have a direct handle on all labour market information such as the existing vacancies, the numbers of people with qualifications in the various occupations, their location, matching work seekers with vacancies on line and so on.

An important feature of the Employment Services System will be the opportunity for every public and private sector organisation to list on the system every single employment or learning opportunity that is available.

Another key feature of the Employment Services System lies in its integrated design that will ensure that a single registration point is used for organisation or citizen registration. This integrated design will be further enhanced by direct linkages between the Employment Services System and other critical human resource based database systems such as Home Affairs, Education, South African Revenue Service and Statistics South Africa.

#### Umsobomvu Youth Fund

Since 2005, the Umsobomvu Youth Fund has supported young people to access skills training programmes at selected FET Colleges. In addition to support for skills training, the Umsobomvu Youth Fund has supported the establishment of Youth Advisory Centres at selected FET Colleges. By December 2005, there were 17 such points located at FET colleges.

#### Promotion of science and technology

The Department of Science and Technology has recorded a number of significant achievements as a result of its investment in the country's science and technology skills base.

The department's efforts in space science have focused on developing the region as a hub for astronomy and space research and development. Through

the Astronomy Geographical Advantage Programme (AGAP), South Africa continues to promote high technology investment in space science to ensure that local researchers and students are able to participate at the cutting edge of international astronomy. A key result of this was the launch last November of the Southern African Large Telescope (SALT).

Related to the country's bid to host the Square Kilometre Array (SKA), a bursary programme has provided the first 12 postgraduate recipients with funding in the 2004/05 financial year. A further 11 recipients have been identified for 2006. This programme is now being extended to South Africa's partners in the bid -Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique and Namibia.

The South African Research Chairs Initiative is a strategic national structural intervention towards the creation of a coherent and national research and innovation system. The initiative is aimed at attracting and retaining qualified researchers to the higher education sector in order to reverse the country's dramatic decline in research outputs and capacity at publicly funded institutions. It is envisaged that this programme, which has already been allocated R200 million, will produce 210 research chairs by 2010 with the potential to develop targeted research capacity.

#### Healthy mind in a healthy body

Athletes and teams that will be participating in the Commonwealth Games to be held in Melbourne, Australia in March 2006 have commenced training under the National Academy Programme. The National Academy Programme has contributed to the successes of our athletes and teams that participated in the Olympic and Paralympic Games of 2004 as well as in the Commonwealth Youth Games in Australia during the same year. Increased investment in the Siyadlala Mass Participation Programme (MPP) will provide more access to sport and recreation activities by large numbers of people who have not previously enjoyed such access. The programme is intended to inculcate a healthy lifestyle among the youth and divert their energies away from anti-social behaviour. The Academy will expand its activities to include support to the South African Football Association (SAFA) to prepare a competitive team for the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

South Africa's progress in preparing for the 2010 FIFA World Cup in all its facets will continue to feature prominently in the run-up to the event. The ministry of sport and recreation has been piloting and pioneering planning and commencement of construction of 2010 FIFA World Cup venues. This will provide many opportunities for communities and institutions to develop and offer respectively a range of necessary skills, not only in construction related industry but also in tourism, marketing and other areas. Our government has already allocated R242 million towards planning for this infrastructure provisioning. We are on track with building a lasting legacy from hosting the 2010 World Cup.

The Community Mass Participation Programme programme has been extended from 60 hubs in 2004 to 131 hubs in 2005. Presently, the main impact on the communities concerned is related to increased levels of activity, especially amongst the young in the communities concerned. The project has also contributed to job creation through the recruitment and training of unemployed youth to run the programme. They are being paid a small stipend and several have been recruited into more permanent jobs based on the skills that they have developed.

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