

## **Closing remarks by President Cyril Ramaphosa to the ANC NEC Lekgotla**

As this Lekgotla of the ANC National Executive Committee draws to a close, we are reminded of the difficult and painful times through which we are living. Earlier today, we bid farewell to one of our most beloved NEC members, Cde Jackson Mthembu. Yesterday, we heard with deep sadness of the passing of Jonas Gwanga, a revolutionary cultural icon. As we mourn their passing, we remember all those within our movement and society who have lost their lives.

We pay tribute to the health workers and other frontline workers who have worked tirelessly to care for, and protect, all the people of this country.

We have now come to the end of one of the most critical makgotla that the ANC has held in recent times. Many people are looking to this lekgotla to provide direction on the actions we must now take to overcome COVID-19 and to rebuild our economy and our society.

This imperative is evident in the way that comrades have approached the discussions in this lekgotla, focusing in particular on what needs to be done, by whom, by when and with what resources. There is a clear appreciation of the urgency of implementation, given the dire state of our economy and high levels of poverty, inequality and unemployment among our people.

For the most part, the reports from the commissions go beyond the restatement of existing policy positions and past decisions. They provide practical measures that can be taken to ANC structures, government departments, public entities and other areas of deployment for implementation.

This lekgotla has placed the defeat of COVID-19 as our overriding and most pressing responsibility for 2021, which requires both an intensive vaccination programme alongside the intensification of prevention measures, increased screening and testing and the further strengthening of our health system.

While government must work with all social partners in undertaking this work, the lekgotla has identified a critical role for the ANC and Alliance in a massive campaign of social mobilisation involving all sectors of society on a non-partisan basis, to reach every corner of the country.

We need to build broad acceptance among our people of the vaccine programme and to vigorously tackle misinformation and misunderstanding. To do this, we must ourselves be disciplined in our own public pronouncements, ensuring that we speak accurately and clearly.

We have agreed that while we work with urgency to undertake these immediate tasks, our planning and preparedness for future crises must be improved. This must include investment in our own vaccine development and production capacity.

This lekgotla has affirmed that we must place the creation of jobs at the centre of our economic reconstruction and recovery plan. This is the most direct and effective way to respond to the hardship that many families are today facing.

We have therefore re-affirmed the priority interventions contained in the plan that emerged from our engagements with social partners last year – infrastructure investment, employment stimulus, localisation and industrialisation, and the expansion of energy generation.

The Lekgotla stressed the importance of moving swiftly to implementation of commitments. It accordingly recommended strengthening monitoring and evaluation and ensuring more effective consequence management in cases where implementation does not occur.

The lekgotla highlighted the need to build a durable social compact between business, government and labour so we harness all our energies and resources to ensure the urgent implementation of the plan in the interests of all South Africans.

We have also said that the current economic reforms must not only address immediate challenges, but must also lay the basis for the achievement of our broader transformation objectives. They must be implemented in a manner that supports and advances radical socio-economic transformation.

Given the significant fiscal constraints the country faces, which will be placed under greater pressure as we roll out the vaccine programme, there is a need to re-prioritise existing commitments in the budget to ensure we support those in need and stimulate inclusive growth.

As Parliament works with urgency to finalise the amendments to section 25 of the Constitution to enable the expropriation of land without compensation, we have agreed on the need to tie land redistribution to agrarian reform.

Land redistribution must be expedited. Land in the hands of government must be released. Land redistribution must bolster the agricultural sector, lead to economic growth, and meaningfully tackle poverty, inequality and unemployment.

We must make certain that land reform improves food security for poor families and maintains food security for the nation. Agrarian transformation must be promoted including for black farmers – large and small - who should be granted security of tenure and given farming support such as access to know-how, equipment and markets.

The effectiveness of our recovery will depend to a great extent on the scale and pace at which we can bring new electricity generation capacity online. The lekgotla therefore agree that we should pursue several measures simultaneously, including the procurement of new generation sources in line with the IRP 2019, including renewables, the procurement of emergency power, improving the efficiency of Eskom, and enabling more embedded generation by firms.

The lekgotla has agreed that, in the context of the continuing COVID pandemic, we need to consider the extension of basic income relief to unemployed people who do not receive any other form of state assistance. This would depend on the state of public finances and that there should be a clear exit strategy.

The meeting agreed that the national Loan Guarantee Scheme must be fundamentally restructured to improve its accessibility and it should enable the participation of non-bank SMME funders.

It also agreed that the Public Procurement Bill must be finalised as a matter of urgency and tabled in Parliament for consideration during 2021. The Bill must cater for set asides for small businesses and co-operatives to support localisation.

The economic recovery needs to advance gender equality in the economy. We must give effect to the principle of equal pay for equal work and implement the decision to support women entrepreneurs and industrialists through public procurement.

The Lekgotla welcomed the work being carried out in a number of government agencies to deal with corruption. It agreed that measures to capacitate the NPA and other law enforcement agencies, improve transparency around procurement and improve collaboration between agencies must be strengthened.

The Lekgotla reaffirmed the ANC's support for the Zondo Commission into state capture and once again called on law enforcement agencies to act without fear, favour or prejudice in rooting out corruption.

An important decision of this Lekgotla is to convene an Economic Summit that critically looks at what COVID has merely accentuated: poverty, inequality and unemployment in South Africa. This Summit needs to focus renewed attention on broad-based black economic empowerment, the transformation of ownership, management and control patterns in the economy, and the promotion of black and women entrepreneurs and industrialists.

The Lekgotla agreed that as a responsible global citizen, South Africa must contribute its fair share to ambitious climate action by means of a proposed update of South Africa's first nationally determined contribution.

The ANC and its alliance partners will therefore host an urgent workshop on these matters to guide the policy process.

The Lekgotla debated how best the country should use radio frequency spectrum for development purposes and what should be the correct configuration of public and private sector participation in this sector.

The Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) has released two Invitations to apply, one for the auction and one for the Wireless Open Access Network. The Lekgotla urges the government to engage ICASA and the sector in general to ensure that the licensing process proceeds expeditiously through an open and transparent process.

The applicants for spectrum must be empowered, ie they must satisfy the BBBEE requirements including that of direct ownership. The process must lead to economic growth, lowering the costs to communicate, and the promotion of effective competition in the mobile market.

We have agreed that the capability of the state is vital to an economic and social recovery, and that specific emphasis needs to be placed on strengthening local government. The lekgotla emphasised the centrality of addressing all challenges in local government towards economic development and improving the lives of South Africans. The district development model must be strengthened by ensuring the financial viability of district municipalities and their ability to raise revenue, and deliver services sustainably.

Basic service provision will be accelerated through job-creating projects in:

- Water: Reticulation, borehole construction, spring protection
- Construction of rural roads
- Maintenance of public assets
- Rural bridge construction
- Public employment programmes such as the Community Work Programme will be redesigned to develop skills and promote local economic development.

The lekgotla was unambiguous in its resolve to strengthen consequence management and accountability in municipalities through strengthening public accounts committees, acting against public servants conducting business with municipalities, increasing transparency of supply chain management systems, and strict enforcement of the listing of municipal officials and service providers implicated in maladministration.

It also urged the state to implement drastic measures to deal with individuals who are vandalising and destroying public infrastructure such as schools, water electricity and transport networks.

An important decision is that the ANC and Alliance need to be working far more closely at local level, together with other structures of the democratic movement, to ensure that municipalities are well governed and managed, that they are accountable and transparent, and that they remain focused on the developmental needs of communities.

The meeting identified a broad problem that many local development projects have been started, but not completed. We have therefore resolved on a comprehensive audit of unfinished infrastructure projects, which will inform interventions to complete projects and perform necessary maintenance.

As we approach local government elections, we need as the Alliance to select candidates for local government that are capable, experienced and are respected in their communities. We have agreed that all existing councillors must go through an intensive evaluation, particularly in municipalities that have performed poorly or where there are allegations of corruption. We need to speed up implementation of our decision to establish an ANC Electoral Committee to lead the candidate selection process.

The lekgotla identified the need to provide more resources at a local level to combat gender-based violence and femicide. While national government has reprioritised resources to tackle the epidemic of crimes against women and children, much of the work needs to happen in municipalities and communities. These efforts need to be properly resourced.

The ANC will continue to mobilise across society for a comprehensive campaign to end gender-based violence and femicide so that no woman or child need live in fear.

The lekgotla also reflected on another of the ANC's priority tasks for 2021, namely working towards a better Africa and a better world. As South Africa's term as the Chair of the African Union draws to a close, the lekgotla agreed that we need to continue to be engaged with several of the priorities of our term. These include the continental response to the COVID pandemic and ensuring the access of all African countries to sufficient dose of vaccines.

We will continue to be actively involved in the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area, giving particularly attention to our initiatives on the economic empowerment of African women.

As a country and as an organisation, we will continue to participate in efforts to silence the guns on the continent. We will do this through our participation in multilateral bodies and processes and, where appropriate and where sought, through bilateral engagements.

The lekgotla raised concerns about the lack of progress in resolving the issue of Western Sahara in a manner that recognises the right of the Saharawi people to full independence and self-determination. We will intensify our efforts in the African Union, the United Nations and other forums to advance this struggle.

The lekgotla welcomed the positive commitment to renewed global collaboration signaled by President Biden of the USA. We call on America to speedily reverse the illegal recognition and imposition of Morocco sovereignty over Saharawi. We trust that this commitment to global peace justice and security will include a focus on the rights of the people of Palestine and the occupied territories.

The meeting welcomed the decision of the Pan African Women's Organisation to locate its permanent headquarters in South Africa. Among other things, this development presents a valuable opportunity to broaden the participation of South African women's formations in this important continental organisation.

The lekgotla recognised that a coherent, integrated and efficient approach to immigration and border management is important for economic development and social stability. It agreed that the country's immigration laws need to be implemented more rigorously and consistently, in line with our Constitution and international commitments and in pursuit of our national interests.

Over the course of the next few days, the decisions of this NEC lekgotla will be consolidated into a report that will be distributed to all our structures, to our Alliance partners and to the broader South African public. These decisions give effect to the priorities and tasks identified in the ANC's January 8th Statement, and provide a clear line of march for the year ahead. These decisions give expression to our theme for 2021: Unity, Renewal and Reconstruction in the Year of Charlotte Maxeke.

I would like to thank all the members of the NEC, representatives of the ANC's leagues, Alliance partners and other mass democratic movement formations, and all the deployees from various different sectors for an enriching and productive lekgotla.

I wish to thank former ANC Presidents Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma and former Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe for their participation in this Lekgotla, and for their ongoing contributions to the work of our movement. I would also like to thank the members of the planning and technical team at ANC headquarters, who have made this virtual meeting possible.

It is clear what needs to be done. It is clear what each of us is expected to do. Let us go out now and do the work.

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