

## **Closing statement at the 2nd National General Council of the ANC**

Tshwane, 3 July 2005

Chairperson,  
Deputy President,  
Members of the National Executive Committee,  
Comrades delegates:

We are about to close our 2nd National General Council. On behalf of the National Executive Committee, the delegates and our movement as a whole, I would like to thank the Principal of the University of Pretoria, Professor Callie Pistorius, the staff, students and workers of this important national educational asset for everything they have done, which contributed enormously to the success of our National General Council.

All of us listened carefully to what Professor Pistorius said when he welcomed us to the University on Thursday. He conveyed an unequivocal message that spoke of the role of this important centre of learning, teaching and research as an agent of change, dedicated to the task of building the winning nation to which the millions of our people are committed.

This gave us the right start for the work we had to do at this General Council, to consider the next steps the ANC should take, itself to contribute to the building of the winning nation to which the millions of our people are committed.

I am certain that the National General Council will agree that when we publish the Council documents, we should include the inspiring Address delivered by Professor Callie Pistorius.

As we conclude our work, and speaking on behalf of our National Executive Committee and in my own name, I would like to thank the delegates most sincerely for the seriousness with which they approached the work of the NGC.

The documents we adopted, including our Declaration, give a clear indication of the tasks ahead of us. The challenge we face will be to follow up all the decisions we have taken, fully conscious of our responsibilities to our country and people.

Among other things, the document on Organisational Issues we adopted includes the following important statement:

"The declaration contained in clause 4.15 of the Constitution (of the ANC) must form part of the membership form, and new members should have this oath administered upon joining." I am certain that we will act with the necessary sense of urgency to implement this important decision of our National General Council.

The delegates are of course perfectly aware of what this oath, Clause 4.15 of our Constitution, says, since, apart from anything else, I took the liberty to quote it in full in my Opening Address. Let me read it out once again.

"I solemnly declare that I will abide by the aims and objectives of the African National Congress as set out in the Constitution, the Freedom Charter and other duly adopted policy positions,

"that I am joining the organisation voluntarily and without motives of material advantage or personal gain,

"that I agree to respect the Constitution and the structures and to work as a loyal member of the organisation,

"that I will place my energies and skills at the disposal of the organisation and carry out tasks given to me,

"that I will work towards making the ANC an even more effective instrument of liberation in the hands of the people,

"and that I will defend the unity and integrity of the organisation and its principles, and combat any tendency towards disruption and factionalism."

Over the last few days we have considered a great number of issues that are critical to the future of our country. I believe that when we report to the nation what we have decided, our people will have every reason to be comforted that the leading political formation in our country remains firm in its commitment to advance their interests and respond to their aspirations.

Apart from sitting in our plenary sessions, to listen to the integrated reports about the work done in the various commissions, I, like other members of our National Executive Committee, had the possibility to visit some of the Commissions.

It was indeed very inspiring to see from the quality of the delegates' contributions to the discussions that you, comrades, had indeed studied the discussion documents. In addition, it seemed clear to me that over time, you had made a serious effort to understand both the intricacies of the issues on the agenda of the NGC, and the objective situation in our country that we had to consider.

I feel especially privileged to convey the sincere appreciation of the leadership and the whole of our movement for the effort you, members of our organisation, have clearly made to conduct yourselves as true cadres of the African National Congress, the agents of progressive change that our people and the national democratic revolution need.

It is a matter of great comfort and pride to know that we have a membership that can honestly emulate the combatants of Umkhonto we Sizwe and say - we serve the people of South Africa!

I am certain that if we implement the decisions on cadre development that emerged from the Commissions that discussed this important matter, we will succeed further to build the ANC into the kind of instrument for progressive change that the challenges ahead of us demand.

The Oath that the National General Council has said should form part of our membership form, administered to new members upon joining, says that our members commit themselves to "work towards making the ANC an even more effective instrument of liberation in the hands of the people".

To achieve this goal means that we, the members of the ANC, must see and conduct ourselves as part of this effective instrument of liberation that serves and is part of the masses of our people.

This means that we must in the fullest meaning of these words, internalise the principled position that we have joined the organisation voluntarily and without motives of material advantage or personal gain, as our Oath says.

Our historic democratic victory has put our movement into a position of political power. Since 1994, the 82nd year of the existence of our movement, our people have mandated us to assume the position of a ruling party.

To be a ruling party means that we have access to state resources. It means that those who want to do business with the state have to interact with those who control state power, the members of our movement who serve in government.

It means that those of us who serve in the organs of state have the possibility to dispense patronage. It therefore means that we have the possibility purchase adherents, with no regard for the principles that are fundamental to the very nature of the African National Congress.

All this makes control of state power a valuable asset. It makes membership of the ANC an easy route of access to state power. It makes membership of the ANC an attractive commercial proposition. It makes financial support for the ANC an investment for some of those who want to generate profits for themselves by doing business with government.

None of this constitutes new information to the delegates to the National General Council. For this reason, the NGC agreed that in our documents we must state our unequivocal opposition to corruption and reaffirm our commitment to fight it.

Delegates made reference to resolutions we adopted at our 50th National Conference in Mafikeng in 1997, in which, among other things, we said: "Corruption adversely affects development and, as a consequence, results in poverty becoming more prevalent. Corruption undermines the objectives of the National Democratic Revolution."

In response to all this, the NGC has now decided, deliberately, that all of us, members of the ANC, must make the solemn commitments contained in our Oath that we would "abide by the aims and objectives of the African National Congress as set out in the Constitution, the Freedom Charter and other duly adopted policy positions. join the organisation voluntarily and without motives of material advantage or personal gain, and agree to respect the Constitution and the structures and work as loyal members of the organisation."

In our discussions we have frankly and honestly recognised the reality that despite the enormous progress we have achieved over the last 11 years, nevertheless we will still have to do a great deal of work before we succeed to eradicate the legacy of centuries of colonialism and apartheid.

In the Commissions the delegates made many detailed proposals about the specific measures we need to adopt further to accelerate the process of creating a better life for all and creating a people-centred society. These are summarised in the documents we have adopted.

These documents demonstrate our movement's resolve to live up to the commitments we have made to our people. They speak to the many challenges these masses face - the challenges of poverty, unemployment, underdevelopment, landlessness, homelessness, disease, ignorance, crime, and so on.

Concerned to address the interests of all our people, black and white, we have even decided that we must address the extent to which our traditional positions in our Strategy and Tactics document are consistent with the fundamental perspective handed down to us through the Freedom Charter, that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white.

This National General Council and its decisions derive their importance from the reality that they will impact significantly on the future of our country and people. However sound these decisions may look like on paper, the masses of our people have every right to suspend their belief as to whether we will implement them until they are implemented. However, the advantage we enjoy is that our people continue to share a large reservoir of confidence in our movement.

As we leave to go back to our branches, regions and provinces, we must, by our actions, continue to demonstrate to our people that that confidence is justified. Among other things, we must ensure that we maintain close contact with the people, able at all times to respond to their needs and to mobilise them into the army of reconstruction and development we spoke about in our last Election Manifesto.

During its history our movement has faced many difficult moments. It has always emerged from these stronger because of its loyalty to principle, its ability to act in unity and its commitment to one objective and one objective only, that is, to serve the people of South Africa.

Correctly the National General Council has expressed its support for our Deputy President during these trying and painful times. Once more we have emphasised the point that it is an imperative of natural justice that he should have an opportunity to defend himself against whatever accusations have been made against him.

We are all united around these principled positions and join him in hoping that the judicial processes will not be delayed unnecessarily.

I would appeal to all our members that while we await the outcome of these processes, we must conduct ourselves in a dignified manner befitting members of the African National Congress and consistent with the traditions of a movement that our people not only respect but genuinely love and admire.

We must take the greatest care not to act in any manner that would compromise the image of both the Deputy President and the ANC. It is indeed during difficult and painful periods such as the one we are going through that we face the greatest challenge to behave as genuine members of the ANC who would do everything to maintain its prestige, its unity and cohesion.

The National General Council has given us many tasks. It has pointed the way forward towards the further acceleration of the process of reconstruction and development. It has directed us to work even harder to strengthen the people's contract to advance the vision of the Freedom Charter. It has committed us to intensify our contribution to the continuing struggle for Africa's renewal.

It has directed that we must guard the unity of our movement and the unity of the Alliance like the apple of our eye. It has instructed that we should move forward together as this united force selflessly to serve all the people of South Africa and Africa, and act in solidarity with all other progressive forces throughout the world.

The conclusion of our work at the 2nd National General Council must mark the moment when we begin the work of implementing what we have decided. I am confident that in this regard, we will not disappoint the expectations of the masses of our people.

On behalf of the National Executive Committee I wish all delegates a safe journey home and declare the 2nd National General Council closed.

Amandla!