

BLACK MINISTERS CONFERENCE

The role of Civil Society in Nurturing Democracy

- Programme Director *- Rev Nyobele - Consultation*
- President of the Black Ministers ~~Conference~~
- General Secretary of the Black Ministers Conference
- Ladies and Gentlemen *Consultation*

1. Thank you for inviting me to participate and dialogue with you on nurturing our democracy. I would like me to congratulate you for continuing to realize the dream of the founding fathers and mothers of the BMC. I am pleased that you have become inclusive of lay women and men. When the BMC was established it was all male in character but the ordination of women has indeed enhanced its role.

2. Historians who write and reflect on revolutionary changes in society that takes place within a generation have a term for this phenomenon. They call it "Privileged moments of history". I consider myself to be one of those who have lived in the privileged moments of history because I have been in the ecumenical journey with many of the founders of this movement. Some liberals saw a movement drifting away from a non - racial church, yet it was necessary for us to rid ourselves of all the vestiges of inferiority that had been fostered and promoted by colour

bar and apartheid. We need Black Ministers Movement more than ever before in mobilizing society towards consolidating our democracy as directed by our founding President Madiba, when he said “We enter into a covenant that shall build a society where all South Africans, both Black and White will be able to walk tall without any fear in their hearts assured of their right to human dignity rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world.”

3. We will forever be uniquely blessed that we were a generation that had to be both witnesses and midwives of transition to democracy at the establishment phase of our society. Our country yields power influence in global politics taking a very active role in peacekeeping and security. We should always remember that we “a respected member of the global community”. Throughout the 20th Century South Africa became a global theatre of the ant – colonial and anti – apartheid struggle generally symbolized and became a workshop of combating racism hence the unprecedented number of Nobel Prizes, Luthuli Tutu, Mandela and De Klerk. We are a global experimental laboratory for struggle and justice, a pioneer in a homegrown political settlement and our Truth and reconciliation.

4. Without accountability democratic institution embedded deeply as you are in the society and public governance culture people may be subject to the whims of political

Content

power, personality or competing factions because elections are a competition for power and sometimes resources. It is our moral obligation to share knowledge and inform people, forums for dialogues, discussions sharing information, advising, supporting and learning. Stakeholder ownership of elections creates better rapprochement and synergy amongst various electoral stakeholders in order to enhance public trust and confidence in elections and in their outcome. This is my experience of managing elections in my country and in many other countries in the continent. As democracy takes hold of an increasing number of African Countries elections have become a pivotal role moment in their political development. No matter how small an NGO is any stakeholder has value and a contribution to fostering the legitimacy and credibility of elections. Countries like Ghana, Mozambique and Sierra Leone have excellent models.

MOST
DISTURBING

Member of the Panel of the vice Pre-Election assessment - lead the team. insist on Meeting Churches, Religious Groups, Women's groups, Youth groups, human rights.

9/10/20
EAT

Discussion

29/10/20

Mediator

5. South Africa has changed significantly during the 20yrs of democracy. The abolition of apartheid laws have transformed the political and social culture of the country. Advances have been made to entrench and consolidate human rights and restore human dignity of all South Africans. The sense of belonging to a country you can call your home, choice of where to live, the migrant labour

system has destroyed families for generations. The voting process is one democratic right of every person. The building of one national identity out of multiple identities based on class, race, gender, language, not forced to vote your homeland or geographic location and religion. There has been progress in institutionalizing the principle of an inclusive citizenship since 1994. All South Africans carry the same identity, the same common voters roll. The symbols are in place the flag, national anthem, street naming, parliament, judiciary, 56 government, departments chapter 9 independent institutions, free media. The newly acquired social mobility was an outcome of democracy, the growth of middle class is witnessed by all what of our progressive constitution. There has been many achievements some are not measurable.

6. Elections are an important national event that builds foundation to democracy. Many South Africans will never forget April 27 1994. This was a day to remember. In spite of the apprehension, April 26th, 27th, and 28th 1994 ushering celebrations of democratic rights that many of us had thought we would never live to see. Despite the last kicks of an apartheid system on those three days all of us voters of all races alike went to the polls to bury apartheid for good. Some started queuing at 5am wrapped in blankets against the early chill, they did not reach the polling booth till midmorning. Long neat lines of waiting

voters snaked out of polling stations into nearby streets or football fields. Some voters held umbrellas to shade themselves from the heat of the sun. Children hawked bananas up and down the queues. One elderly woman was transported to the polling booth in a wheelbarrow. We reclaimed our citizenship in a country that our fellow whites countrymen thought had never been ours. It also signified the death of a system that had narrowed our lives to the confines of our races either homeland or squalid township and had defined where I could live and what I could become. More destructive, though apartheid had tried for years to force us that we could never aspire to be an equal citizen in our own country. Now all of us were equal before the law. (Elections are high stake event populations see them as opportunities to express their will to improve their future prospects. For the chosen ones by the parties this is a rare opportunity to win power, influence and prestige, motivation differ but common in all elections is the considerable hope and expectations that gets invested in the exercise .Ofcourse these were also very emotional cathartic days for our fellow white citizens who entered the voting booth as oppressors but exited it free of those shackles. These were the results of months of voter education.... Mock election road shows a "democracy" game show could not get around the fact that 30%- 40% of us could not read or write. Photographs of each leader were put up to help those who cannot read or

Civil

DIGNITY -

write to identify with the party of their choice. I will never forget that less than a month earlier the IEC had concluded that it would be impossible to hold elections in KwaZulu-Natal. Inkatha's late entry into the polls meant that preparations there were hurried,

7. Today there is no pre-election violence. The last elections were contested by 29 parties registered nationally. Our young democracy is at the crossroads we are restless because the nation is stirred by protests against political, social and economic justice. One question that we should ask ourselves is whether these protests are an indication that people are growing impatient or misunderstand democracy. Perceptions of corruption and disrespect are complicating the party's relationship with the communities. There are many South Africans which have access to clean drinking water, electricity and receive grants. Though there are families in our country with homelessness, poverty, landlessness and unemployment. Poverty eradication, social justice and social economic development demands that civil society must engage in finding solutions to these national issues. We must understand the root causes of the problem we face is "What do we do to stand in solidarity with the poor" that means going beyond the acts of charity whether personal or societal. Brazilian civil society has established the biggest movement embracing all the emerging ideas

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from the struggle of the poor and marginalized people. There is a call to all of us as we nurture democracy to renew our commitment of mobilizing and unifying our own space as individuals. How many poor children are we supporting with their school fees, uniforms, food, and pocket money. (School) Bursary Funds, Unives

8. Our government has setup Africa's only broad based welfare state providing cash benefits as I mentioned. These cash benefits are for 16.5million people compared to 1996 figure of 3million people. 2.7 million low cost homes housing around 10million people about 80% of the total population now earn R6.000 a month. Most of the wealth still in the hands of the white people because they have higher skills obtained at the time when blacks were deprived opportunities of acquiring skills. Levels of poverty have dipped, there are families in this country who do not have the basic necessities like food. Inequality is one of the highest in the world and racial divisions are patent. Millions of our people still live in the shacks and in villages where there is no way of surviving. The question is, are we as middleclass leaders and members of the institutions mediating on behalf of these communities. The lack of jobs and spread of corruption is not helping our democracy.

9. We should work hard to foster civil societies, advance the levels of freedom and civil liberties. We have come

Inequality

from a history of courageous parents who struggled to end apartheid. We must now consolidate hard fought democratic gains and foster the development of civic education. Civil education plays an important role in the development of the political culture. Civil education will help voters of skills, knowledge, exposure and dispositions required to participate as informed responsible citizens. People will continue to use the method of violent protests as an only means available to them. It is our duty and privilege to be vocal about our view point and speak on behalf of the masses who they do not have access to the media, no forums, no researchers. The method of violent process is not good example to the future generation. Mothers, fathers and uncles, in some cases the whole family is in the protest march.

10. Humility and Humanity I used that expression in describing Beyers Naude when I was a guest speaker of his lecture in George last month. This is what I said
X COPY9 CIVIL SOCIETY IS ROBUST IN SOUTH AFRICA.

11. There are new battles that are emerging in our young democracy today. The emergence of the scourge of corruption in our society, corruption is not measured only by the amount that is stolen from the public coffers. Those who steal children's food from feeding schemes, food and clothing from patients in hospital, prisons and other state institutions are also corrupt. Those who are paid but fail to
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deliver books, paid to teach but never appear before a class, conduct businesses whilst in the employment of the state are also corrupt. It is up to you this generation to isolate this cancer and to eliminate it before it takes over our society. If the Black Ministers Conference is tackling this problem, please share your experience and method you use. We must share these models.

12. The cultural diversity has become a political challenge throughout the world and stems from a complex set of factors. One of the major factors of cultural diversification in various societies is globalization which South Africa has undergone very rapidly through the high level of migration, South Africa has become a major destination of migrants, displaced populations and refugees from all over the world mostly from the African Continent. How do we handle migration and the so called Xenophobia. Our own past is still with us. South Africans live in group areas, still do not trust people of other races, still asserts attitude of superior or succumb to feelings of inferiority, we decry affirmative action. Our national agenda is full and promoting diversity is one of the many challenges into the next decade of democracy.

Races

ETHNICITY

Accountability and respect is the one of the challenges in our nation. The electoral system we use makes very difficult for our leaders especially those that are in government. CODESA chose a PR system for very good

reasons at the time. The reasons were the following, - Blacks had no experience or knowledge in some cases of electoral system. Only the whites had that experience. - The black population had been fragmented and excluded - Some in exile – Others in homelands and in municipalities where they were imposed on people – Blacks had never ran political parties. Their experience was NGOS and liberation movement – A divided society in every aspect had to depend on the parties from all racial groups to recruit people from their membership and put them in the list as long as they were South African citizens. It was up to the parties to decide on the suitability of the candidate in terms of skill, commitment, participation in the party. It was also a very simple process, no individual had to campaign. The PR set a foundation for inclusivity, eg, women, minorities, urban and rural. Why the system should change, it is obvious that the people want leaders who are chosen and accountable to them. The problem at present is that the PR process and the nomination of candidates are entirely in the hands of the party. In some instances we are informed that the branches have two or three people who decide on the list of names hence the IEC during my time, had court cases sued by the party for accepting and processing a list of names that was not approved by the party. – The criteria of the people in the list in terms of their experience, skills, criminal record and education is set entirely by the party. – Most of the intra-

party tensions during my time were around conflicts of names in the list, power and in some cases acquisition of resources. – In some instances the leaders are not even accountable to the party. We read in the press about interventions from the HQS of parties. – It is alleged that there is corruption, bribery related to the lists. Even other electoral systems do not necessarily prevent corruption.

13. I want to conclude with a challenge and a charge unto you. It is not necessary enough though that we gather every year in occasions like this one, but we need to ask ourselves as to what the lives and sacrifices that many people made for our freedom means to us as people and the generations to come. We must at every opportunity we have inspite of the challenges and personal struggles to the maximum by giving few hours each month to citizen activities, by doing so we can continuously nourish our democracy. OUR DEMOCRACY DEPENS ON US. We must forever be reminded of the words of a great African leader AMILCAR CABRAL when he cautioned that “Always bear in mind that people are not fighting for ideas, for things in anyone’s head. They are fighting to win material benefits, to live better and in peace, to see their lives go forward, to guarantee the future of their children”. The civil society must create forums of information sharing

I THANK YOU :