



AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS 55TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS

COMMUNICATIONS AND THE BATTLE OF IDEAS

INTRODUCTION

The 55th National Conference deliberated on the recommendations of the 6th National Policy Conference on Digital Communication and the Battle of Ideas. The Conference focused on policy issues in broadcasting and media transformation, Information Communication Technology, Postal Services, and the Post Bank, digitizing government, including economic transformation across all sectors of the ICT industry. The national conference reaffirms the resolutions of the 54th and the past national conferences on the matters under discussion. Having considered the recommendations of the national policy conference, the 55th the 55th National Conference adopts the following policies.

BATTLE OF IDEAS

1. Noting

- 1.1 The ANC is a broad movement of the people with the historic mission to build a united, non-racial, non-sexist, and a democratic and prosperous South Africa. The ANC, in its advance to transform society and redress the legacy of apartheid colonialism, continues to provide leadership in government and the advance the ideals of the Constitution.
- 1.2 The ANC is guided by its founding Constitution, the Freedom Charter, and the Strategic and Tactics, amongst others, as it engages on its popular task of organizational renewal including the work on Vision 2032 championed by the Renewal Commission.
- 1.3 The ANC emerged from the 54th national conference with a renewed sense of purpose invigorated by the adoption of the resolutions relating

to organizational renewal. Society's acceptance of this renewed sense of purpose is reflected in the positive voter sentiment in the last national general elections.

- 1.4 However, the national mood changed during the recent local government elections. There is a notable anti-ANC sentiment in the media and national discourse. Largely this arises out of non-transformation of the economy exacerbated by the low levels of economic growth. Inevitably, this has resulted in high levels of youth unemployment, poverty, and inequality.
- 1.5 Public concerns on poor service delivery of basic services at local government level, coupled with a lack of effective communication on key government interventions has resulted in negative public sentiment towards the ANC government.
- 1.6 The negative public sentiment occurs in the context of the rising global and domestic dominance of a conservative narrative relentlessly seeking to undermine progressive politics. In South Africa, conservative narrative is disguised as efforts to guard the sanctity of the Constitution and the rule of law. A closer scrutiny reveals that in essence, these efforts, are an antithesis to the transformation of society to reflect the values enshrined in the Constitution. The ANC has not been as forceful as is required by the prevailing conditions to champion a positive narrative based its progressive policies and ideological foundations.
- 1.7 While the ANC remains the dominant force in public discourse in society, its hegemony has declined, when measured through various election performances including the 2019 elections, and the local government elections in 2021, requiring a new sense of renewal in line with vision 2032, and pro-

gressive leadership in pursuing its historic mission of establishing a non-racial, non-sexist, and democratic society, and redress of the apartheid legacy. The ANC has retreated to a reactive information and publicity strategy

1.8 Further noting

1.8.1 the increasingly rapid uptake of social media by many of our citizens, especially the youth, and its increased primacy as a platform of choice for accessing and disseminating information. Social media use is fast surpassing traditional media consumption in some countries around the world. Public discourse largely takes place through this medium yet, in South Africa, it is not subject to any ethical norms, standards or regulation like other media. This results in unmitigated dissemination of fake news and the manipulation of national discourse.

ANC infighting, disunity, and use of media to engage in battles of ANC has undermined public trust, portraying an image of organizational paralysis. Challenges and divisions within the ANC and the broader mass democratic movement have created an opportunity for exploitation by opponents of the ANC.

1.8.2 ANC must hold government and its represented / deployees to account for the public service delivery in the government.

2. Therefore, it is resolved, that

2.1 The ANC recommits to itself to pursue its historical mission to transform South African society into a democratic, non-racial, non-sexist society based on the values that are enshrined in the Constitution. The ANC must lead national discourse on transformation.

2.2 ANC leadership deployment in the state must be progressively enhanced and implemented to serve the interest of the country, and governing party to instead of individual interests.

2.3 The NEC has an immediate responsibility to augment the research and policy capacity of the ANC to guide both the general membership and leadership to provide necessary leadership in public discourse, gauge public sentiment, and provide the requisite response.

2.4 The NEC should consider regular policy briefs to the public on topical matters to ensure coherent messaging on the implementation of ANC policies.

2.5 ANC leaders, public representatives and members should be continuously informed on prevailing ANC policies, ethos, principles, and conventions to ensure that in the battle of ideas, every comrade plays a part of influencing public discourse.

2.6 The NEC must capacitate and resource, the Department of Information Publicity (“the DIP”). The DIP must be calibrated into a world class communication instrument to advance ANC policy positions and programmes. In turn, the DIP must strengthen the communications machinery of the ANC across all structures including at branch level. The NEC must lead the Communication machine across the provinces and regions of of the organization, to consolidate the organisational hegemony in the battle of ideas.

2.7 The recalibrated DIP must be the custodian of communicating all ANC official positions. The communication must be coherent, centralized and validated against the established policies, principles, ethos, and conventions. At all times, leadership must uphold ANC communications protocol on ANC official positions and the NEC must lead by example

2.8 ANC must improve its communication machinery on the achievements of the ANC-led government, particularly the improvements of the lives of and access to service by South Africans who were previously excluded, based on the Manifestos of the organisation.

2.9 GCIS must be strengthened to coordinate the government communication machinery to support government departments in communicating ANC-led government/ departmental achievements based on the ANC Conference Resolutions and ANC Campaign Manifestos.

2.10 Furthermore, the NEC must take proactive steps to protect the ANC historic image and deliberately building the brand to appeal to all segments of society including young people.

2.11 The ANC should continuously review the organisation’s positioning in the public discourse to ensure that corrective measures are taken timeously.

BROADCASTING

3. Noting

3.1 Broadcasting services remains the most powerful method of imparting and receiving information. For any democracy to achieve the objectives of freedom and access to uncensored information, broadcasting policies need to be progressive and considering the evolution of technology, innovation, and the need to broaden access.

- 3.2 The progress made in the migration from analogue transmission to digital broadcasting as previously resolved by the past national conferences as the country has achieved national digital coverage to enable further release of spectrum
- 3.3 There is a need for a national discourse on the policy mandate and the sustainability of the public broadcaster to enable it to play its role in advancing the ideals of our democracy. The financial sustainability of the public broadcaster is important to promote social cohesion, educating, informing, and entertaining the nation.
- 3.4 The public broadcaster, the SABC, needs to be competitive to remain relevant, achieve world class news and entertainment broadcasting.
- 3.5 Over the past decade, the ownership of critical media assets in South Africa by historically disadvantaged persons or Black people has regressed. Furthermore, the policy environment, COVID pandemic and economic challenges has hamstrung the growth of community media thus undermining the objective of driving media diversity and facilitating participation of blacks, women, youth within the broadcasting sector. Community media remains a relevant bedrock for local content development. The evolution of broadcasting from traditional means of transmission to technologically advanced converged forms, i.e., digital broadcasting and new online platforms
- 3.6 Therefore, it is resolved that,
 - 3.6.1 The government must urgently embark on public consultation to review and define the public broadcasting mandate, framework, and funding model. In the interim, the government should take such legislative or policy measures necessary to stabilize the public broadcaster.
 - 3.6.2 In line with the previous resolution, government must find mechanisms to fund the public/ developmental mandate of the SABC, in addition to the commercial-wing of the SABC cross-subsidizing the developmental mandate. The household broadcasting levy must be considered to subsidize the SABC and replace the TV-license fees which is proving non-viable.
 - 3.6.3 The public broadcasting must be regulated in the public interest to enable access to digital broadcasting service by all South Africans.
 - 3.6.4 The SABC Bill/ Act must enable the exemption of the SABC from the PFMA, to enhance the corporation's ability to be competitive and survive amidst fierce competition including international.

- 3.6.5 The public mandate of the SABC must include the setting up of the Education, Health, Children and History, and others.
- 3.6.6 By 2023, government must finalize the audio-visual strategy to deal with the promotion of local content, local language, cultural diversity, and heritage and protect local media against unfair competition by international emerging media (streaming and social media).
- 3.6.7 By 2023, Government must table legislation to protect the sustainability of community media including progression to commercial media for media diversity instead of proliferation and promotion of new entrants in broadcasting.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

4. Recognizing that

- 4.1 The ICT industry has technological capability for the enablement of other sectors of the economy including Agriculture, Energy, Education, Health, and Financial services amongst others.

Further noting that:

- 4.2 In the next 5-years, Information and Communications Technology program will include amongst others, South Africa's participation fully in the Digital economy, and make South Africa competitive, through reliable, affordable, and ubiquitous ICT infrastructure.
- 4.3 High speed broadband access currently excludes rural areas and in urban areas, high speed broadband access and pricing remains exclusively for the rich.
- 4.4 Fibre connectivity and backhaul remains critical for the roll out of universal access to connectivity to all communities. There is a need to extend fibre to rural communities and townships to ensure attainment of the Fibre-To-The- Home (FTTH) policy goal.
- 4.5 ICASA has concluded the licensing of high demand spectrum. This enables the operators to invest in networks for the benefit of the economy, introduce new technologies and services.
- 4.6 Radio frequency spectrum is a limited scarce national resource. Its assignment must be informed by the need to broaden ownership to historically disadvantaged groups and its use to be extended to a variety of services including education, health, mining and manufacturing, and others.

- 4.7 Data prices remain excessively high hindering access to broadband for online services, e.g., government information, education and SMME opportunities.
- 4.8 Noting that the topographical lay and the population distribution of South Africa demands a mix of technologies to meet varying demands of our citizens. Meaningful impact and access to ICT services continue to thrive on the back of strong telecommunications infrastructure.
- 4.9 South Africa currently insources satellite capacity. Launching SA based Satellite should be explored to improve access to media and broadband services, enhance technological and state sovereignty, enhance information security, and create research and development and satellite management capacity.
- 4.10 Progress has been made on the rationalization of State-Owned ICT Companies towards the State Digital Infrastructure company that will lead the government's intervention in the roll-out of digital infrastructure including the consolidation of government's fibre assets and municipal-owned fibre. Consolidation of state infrastructure is critical to remove investment duplication and to promote shared access to Government owned telecommunications assets.
- 4.11 There is need for a review of the Integrated ICT Policy to align it with technological developments, sectoral, and economic development. New and innovative services have emerged from the intersection of ICTs and other economic sectors such financial services.
- 4.12 Human and society development is directly link to access to technology and economic opportunities. The ownership of the ICT sector must be inclusive and reflect more participation by historically disadvantaged groups, particularly Black people, women, and youth.
- 4.13 The country has a long way to go in addressing the economic transformation gap and creating space for new entrants in the Telecommunications sector as part of dealing with sector Monopolies and redressing historic exclusion.
- 4.14 Digital economy is a reality and has a direct bearing on South Africa's competitiveness as an investment destination.
- 4.15 South Africa has capability and capacity for high-speed data centre and cloud technology hosting but has not leverage on her capabilities.
- 4.16 Despite South Africa's resource base of rare minerals responsible for production of smart devices, import of electronic and digital ICT products remain high.
- 4.17 It is therefore resolved that,
- 4.17.1 The government should review the ICT policy environment, laws, and regulations to address transformation, technological, global developments, evolving regulatory environment.
- 4.17.2 Government must facilitate a conducive environment for data centre and cloud technology investment in the country
- 4.17.3 Data and cloud management capability is critical for protection of personal information and national sovereignty.
- 4.17.4 Spectrum assignment must be informed by the need transform the ownership and control in the sector to include wider participation, especially for Blacks, women, youth and people with disability. The use of spectrum should extent beyond exclusive holding by electronic communications licensees, to this extent, consideration should include the use of spectrum by education and health sectors, manufacturing, agriculture, mining and new industries.
- 4.17.5 The Spectrum policy should improve regulatory regime to promote efficient use of spectrum including spectrum trading.
- 4.18 The new round of spectrum licensing process must address the key empowerment imperatives to ensure that economic transformation and participation of new entrants is achieved.
- 4.18.1 A consideration of measures to accelerate the rollout of world class mobile infrastructure and fibre in rural areas and townships. These should include a combination of trade incentives, tax rebates, and agreed compact between the government and the sector.
- 4.18.2 The government must develop a roadmap for the decommissioning of 2G and 3G mobile network infrastructure and services and the roll-out of 4G and 5G mobile network including to rural areas in preparation for the advent of 6G technologies and services.
- 4.18.3 Finalize the establishment of the State Digital Infrastructure Company (SDIC) and ensure that it adequately capitalized and assigned sufficient spectrum to carry-out its public mandate.
- 4.18.4 The SDIC must facilitate an integrated approach to serving and developing the sector through SMME participation in the telecommunications sector on more

favourable terms and assist municipalities to utilize the fibre infrastructure as new revenue stream.

- 4.18.5 Government must create an enabling environment for investment in data centers and cloud technology to improve the competitiveness of South Africa to exploit opportunities offered by the digital economy. State Digital Infrastructure Company to build, enhance, secure, and operate government data centers and South African cloud capacity.
- 4.18.6 South Africa to take measures to realize its potential in satellite technology to increase access to communication, enhance technological and national sovereignty, and create R&D and satellite management capacity. This is also essential to improve the countries R&D index globally and positive impact the R&D aspect of our GDP positively.
- 4.18.7 Pragmatic measures, policy, and regulatory interventions to be considered to promote the intersection between ICT and other sectors and any other innovative solutions arising out convergence of technologies.
- 4.18.8 South Africa to develop a national digital economy blueprint by 2023. South Africa should accelerate the digitization or government and society and ensure that at least 50% of South Africa is digitized.
- 4.18.9 Government should ensure that it has world class capacity, capabilities and systems enable internet access and to curb cybersecurity attacks on government information and databases and prosecute cyber-related crimes.
- 4.18.10 ANC and Govt must support the transformation of SAPO to be competitive and viable in digital economy including the funding of the mandate of the Post Office.
- 4.18.11 Finalize the corporatization of the Post Bank and transform it into a state bank by the end of 2023.
- 4.18.12 Investigate the framework for governance and operation of online platforms in South Africa.
- 4.18.13 ANC-led government, through the DPME must develop a template for government to regularly report on implementation of applicable ANC Conference resolutions. The party must hold govt accountable.

DIGITAL ECONOMY

5. Recognizing that,

- 5.1 To make South Africa competitive, government and industry must invest in new technologies, ensure affordable devices and services, fibre connectivity, and focus on critical components of digital economy.

Further noting that,

- 5.2 There is need to develop and manage digital government, to ensure that as the government adjusts to this new digital world.
- 5.3 To develop and manage emerging technologies and applications for enablement policies for other sectors (tourism, banking, agriculture, creative industries etc.)
- 5.4 To manage the roll-out of digital empowerment programs (capacity development, digital entrepreneurship, and digital skills, data analytics and artificial intelligence skills) to foster digital economy empowerment (through localization including manufacturing of devices).
- 5.5 Data centre and cloud infrastructure is emerging as new area of international investment, with limited government and public data / cloud infrastructure
- 5.6 It is therefore resolved that,
- 5.7 Government must develop a framework with clear and coherent targets for harnessing the immense potential of digital economy, generate economic opportunities at scale and make these opportunities more open to broader South Africans.
- 5.8 The Government should develop an enabling policy and regulatory environment for digital, cloud and data services that ensures appropriate management of data and operations of cloud technologies to make South Africa competitive and secure in the management and flow of data.
- 5.9 The Government needs to develop a digital government strategy that spur innovation in the country so to improve the quality of services and promote generation and consumption of local content.
- 5.10 South Africa must build manufacturing capacity in the semi-conductor industry, taking advantage of the natural mineral resources as well as the skills capacity, entrepreneurial capability to produce digital products.
- 5.11 Government must create a conducive environment to promote the building of local chip manufacturing plants and infrastructure necessary to support the semi-conductor industry.

SECTOR TRANSFORMATION

- 6.1 Recognizing that:
- 6.2 The economic transformation remains a strategic policy as espoused in the strategy and tactics document, for addressing the imbalances of the past, ensuring economic emancipation of the historical disadvantaged groups.
- 7. Noting
- 7.1 The responsibility to transform the sector to be inclusive and address historical imbalances of the past, is not the exclusive domain of government, but must be jointly carried with the private sector.

It is therefore resolved that

- 7.2 Government must be deliberate in transformation of ICT and broadcasting industries by ensuring that all operators have 40% minimum ownership threshold, without equity equivalent, targeting designated groups, within the next 3-5 years.
- 7.3 On procurement, government must ensure a 40% minimum spend by and within the ICT sector benefits blacks, women, youth, and people with disability.



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