



**YEARS OF THE**  
**FREEDOM**  
**CHARTER**  
**1955 - 2025**

**MESSAGE BY THE ANC**

**Delivered by Cde Nomvula Mokonyane,  
1<sup>st</sup> Deputy Secretary-General of the ANC  
on the occasion of the  
70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Freedom Charter**



**26 JUNE 2025**

**KLIPTOWN**





## A Vision that Inspired Generations

**T**he people of South Africa struggled for centuries to end an oppressive system, declared a crime against humanity. In the process of struggle, the ANC adopted a Bill of Rights in 1923 and the African Claims in 1943.

Both these documents are important contributions to the evolving rights based and democratic vision of South Africa, including the focus on our country as a sovereign state, within the broader community of nations.

It was however the Freedom Charter, adopted at the Congress of the People on 26 June 1955, that captured the imagination of generations, informed the first Constitution of a democratic and free South Africa, the foundations of governance during the first three decades of democracy and the freedoms we continue to fight for, side by side.

The reasons for this does not merely lies in its revolutionary content and foresight. Its durability as a vision for the future is how it was developed - with the involvement of thousands of people, peasants and intellectuals, men and women, rural and urban dwellers, workers and the petty bourgeoisie, black and white.

Rising to the occasion, women came together in 1954 to launch the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW), and on the occasion also adopted the first Women's Charter. This Charter advocated for women's equality, and for the

inclusion of not only political rights, but also social and economic rights, taken forward in the Freedom Charter the next year.

The contributions from across the country and various sectors, were collated into themes and on 25 and 26 June 1955, as over 3000 delegates gathered at the Congress of the People in Kliptown, the demands and aspirations were read out and discussed. The police stopped many from attending and eventually raided the event, trying to seize all copies of the Charter. But the Freedom Charter prevailed, as a year later 156 ANC and Congress Alliance leaders were charged with Treason Trial.

The Freedom Charter was adopted by the ANC as its statement of principles in 1956, elaborated at its 1969 Morogoro National Consultative Conference, and 1980 was declared the Year of the Charter.

The Charter went on to inspire generations of youth, student, civic, women, rural, religious and trade union organisations, rallying behind its vision of a society of freedom and equality, and the aspirations of each sector.

As mass struggles, the armed struggle and the international isolation of the apartheid regime intensified towards the end of the 80s, core ANC documents during this period, including the Harare Declaration (1988), Ready to Govern (1991), the Constitutional Principles for a Democratic South Africa (1992) and the Reconstruction and Development Programme (1994) reflected the vision and aspirations of the Freedom Charter.



## THE FREEDOM CHARTER AND A DEMOCRATIC SOUTH AFRICA



The anniversary of 70 years of the Freedom Charter takes place in the context of 31 years of democracy, when we committed in 1994 to use the transition to democracy as a beach-head to advance the vision of the Freedom Charter. The Freedom Charter's mission and aspirations therefore also informed our programme of transformation and governance over the last thirty years.

### The Charter and the Constitution

The first critical task for our new-found democracy, was the drafting of the Constitution, through a democratic Constituent Assembly, leading to its adoption in 1996.

Retired Constitutional Court Judge Albie Sachs observed “... as much as some individuals, including politicians would like to discount the critical role played by the Freedom Charter, the people of South Africa would never allow the Freedom Charter to be relegated to the dusty archives of South African history. After all, its principles are firmly entrenched in the Constitution of South Africa”.<sup>1</sup>

Another member of the ANC Constitutional Committee, cde Brigitte Mabandla and one of our post-apartheid Ministers of Justice and Constitutional Development, explains:

*“The final Constitution of 1996 embodies the Charter’s ideals in law. Its Preamble, founding provisions, and Bill of Rights translate the aspirations of Kliptown into enforceable rights and state obligations. From the right to dignity and equality to access to housing, education, and healthcare, the Constitution echoes the Charter in both spirit and structure.”<sup>2</sup>*

The South African Constitution therefore, in its commitment to political, social and economic rights for all, to a government based on the will of the people, its call in the preamble for redress to heal the wounds of the past, and to build a South Africa that belongs to all, echoes the aspirations of the Freedom Charter.

### The People Shall Govern!

*Every man and woman shall have the right to vote for and stand as a candidate for all bodies which make laws. All the people shall be entitled to take part in the administration of the country. The rights of the people shall be the same regardless of race, colour or sex. All bodies of minority rule, advisory boards, councils and authorities shall be replaced by democratic organs of self-government.*

Thirty years later, we have laid the foundations for a peoples government, that reflect the will of the people.

The Constitution guarantees free and regular elections, freedom of association and speech, freedom of the press and information. Laws and institutions have been put in place, including Chapter 9 and other institutions like the IEC and ICASA, to ensure these rights are promoted and defended. Over 31 years, our country held seven national and provincial elections and six local government elections that were free and fair.

We have through laws and practices, seek to build participatory democracy in communities. Local government has elected wall-to-wall ward councilors in over 4,000 wards across the country, who are required to hold regular community meetings. Our laws allow for any citizen to attend a Council meeting and ask questions. Local government is required to

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Ngculu, James (2025). “A Profoundly Revolutionary Document.” In *70 Years of the Freedom Charter. Volume 1 Reflections on the Charter Today*. African National Congress. Forthcoming, June 2025.

<sup>2</sup> Mabandla Brigitte. (2025) “The Freedom Charter and the Constitution: Foundations of Justice, Governance, and Equality.” In *70 Years of the Freedom Charter. Volume 1 Reflections on the Charter Today*. African National Congress. Forthcoming, June 2025.

consult residents on the integrated development programme (IDPs), before they adopt their Council budgets each year.

The system of traditional leadership, that played such a critical role in resistance to colonialism and apartheid, and in the formation of the ANC, has been integrated into our system of governance, from local to national levels.

All laws, policies and regulations of government are published, and Parliament and Legislatures are required by the Constitution to do public outreach and receive public submissions.

The Freedom Charter sub-clause also speaks to the participation of all people in the administration (public service) of the country. From many racially divided and patriarchal departments, we now have a single national and provincial public service, as well as local administrations, and through employment equity and affirmative action, ensured that it reflect the demographics of the nation.

Employment equity has been extended to the private and non-government sectors, to address the legacies of discrimination and the colour bar. Initially voluntary, the 2022 Employment Equity Amendment Act gives the Minister of Labour and Employment powers to set targets across different economic sectors, public or private.

However, we are also seeing democracy under challenge, with declining trust in public institutions, poor voter registration and turnout especially amongst young people, and the organs of peoples participation established are not working optimal, to ensure peoples voices in development and governance<sup>3</sup>.

The capacity of the state, at all levels, but especially local government remains a challenge, and although we aimed to build a capable developmental, there are major fault lines in the role, capacity, responsiveness and ethical foundations of the post apartheid state.

Many citizens feel disillusioned with the political process. The National Dialogue is a critical and



timely process to reignite popular and citizen-led participation in resolving the pressing issues facing communities, sectors and the country and agreeing on a common vision for the South Africa we want.<sup>4</sup>

## **All National Groups Shall Have Equal Rights!**

*There shall be equal status in the bodies of state, in the courts and in the schools for all national groups and races. All national groups shall be protected by law against insults to their race and national pride. All people shall have equal rights to use their own language and to develop their own folk culture and customs. The preaching and practice of national, race or colour discrimination and contempt shall be a punishable crime. All apartheid laws and practices shall be set aside.*

Apartheid colonialism sought to racially segregate people, and to divide by assigning differential though still very limited and discriminatory rights to some.

The vision of the Charter of a South Africa that belongs to all, and where all national groups have equal rights, informed the struggle for non-racialism by the Congress movement, the building of the ANC as a non-racial and non-sexist movement formalised at its consultative conferences in Morogoro (1969) and Kabwe (1985).

It inspired non-racial youth, women's, students, trade unions and other movements, as a powerful

<sup>3</sup> Pemba, Bobo. (2025). "Implementing the first clause of the Freedom Charter." In *70 Years of the Freedom Charter. Volume 1 Reflections on the Charter Today*. African National Congress. Forthcoming, June 2025.

<sup>4</sup> Moloi, Nchaka (2025) "Why the Freedom Charter must guide our National Dialogue." In *70 Years of the Freedom Charter. Volume 1 Reflections on the Charter Today*. African National Congress. Forthcoming, June 2025





## All Shall be Equal before the Law

*No one shall be imprisoned, deported or restricted without a fair trial; No one shall be condemned by the order of a Government official; The courts shall be representative of the people; Imprisonment shall be only for serious crimes against the people, and shall aim at re-education, not vengeance; The police force and army shall be open to all on an equal basis and shall be the helpers and protectors of the people; All laws which discriminate on grounds of race, colour or belief shall be repealed.*

Strides have been made in ensuring that there is access to justice for all, building more courts, including specialist courts and through the provision of legal aid.

Over the three decades of democracy, strides have been made to “...create courts representative of all the people”. In 1994, the Judiciary comprised of 165 judges: 160 white males, three black men and two white women. There was not a single black woman judge in 1994!

Today, there are about 252 Judges in all the Superior Courts: 131 men and 121 women judges; 175 Black and 77 Judges White. The Magistracy has fared better in terms of gender transformation: of the 1,724 magistrates, 934 are women. This means that 54% of the total number of magistrates are women.<sup>6</sup> Access to justice, however, is still limited by factors such as the high costs of litigation and legal advice; long delay in resolving legal disputes and court cases; and many South Africans still live long distances away from courts.

Socio-economic standing thus limits access to courts and therefore justice. This is a stark reminder that the pursuit of substantive equality before the law cannot be separated from the material well-being of the people.<sup>7</sup>

antidote to the racist and sexist chauvinism of apartheid. The vision of non-racialism and non-sexism is therefore a central feature of our Constitution and policies.

It provided the foundations to dismantle apartheid and patriarchal laws, policies and institutions, within the context of a rights-based Constitution, and for the creation of democratic institutions representing all the people. We passed affirmative action laws, implemented BBBEE, and ensure access to education and training, opportunities and other basic services to all, regardless of race and gender.<sup>5</sup>

The struggle for non-racialism, and the social cohesion of our country after three decades of freedom, still finds expression in the material conditions, and therefore inequalities, experienced by different national groups. Sadly, it also find expression in the domestic rightwing, who has been emboldened to claim a ‘white genocide’, not recognising their continued position of intergenerational privilege.

We must therefore continue to address the national question in all its dimensions and build non-racialism and non-sexism, with a common sense of belonging, solidarity, equality and patriotism.

<sup>5</sup> Jacobs, Faiez (2025) All National Groups Shall Have Equal Rights”: Reaffirming the National Democratic Promise.” In *70 Years of the Freedom Charter*. Vol. 2. *Reflections - Let us Speak of Freedom*. Forthcoming in July 2025

<sup>6</sup> Kubayi, 2025. op.cit.

<sup>7</sup> Kubayi, Mmamaloko. (2025). “All Shall be Equal before the Law and access to Justice.” In *70 Years of the Freedom Charter*. Volume 1 *Reflections on the Charter Today*. African National Congress. Forthcoming, June 2025.

## THE LAND SHALL BE SHARED AMONG THOSE WHO WORK IT!



*Restriction of land ownership on a racial basis shall be ended, and all the land re-divided amongst those who work it, to banish famine and land hunger; The state shall help the peasants with implements, seed, tractors and dams to save the soil and assist the tillers; Freedom of movement shall be guaranteed to all who work on the land; All shall have the right to occupy land wherever they choose; People shall not be robbed of their cattle, and forced labour and farm prisons shall be abolished.*

The foundations of colonialism and apartheid were based on the dispossession of the majority of South Africa's indigenous people, and after the Union of South Africa, advanced whole scale dispossession through the Land Acts, the Group Areas Acts, the bantustan system, removing millions of people from their land, homes and livelihoods.

"South Africa's colonial past is probably one of the most brutal and the one of the most violent across the entire European settlement in Africa. Land dispossession was a violent encounter."<sup>8</sup>

The Preamble of the 1996 Constitution recognised the imperative to heal the wounds of the past

through redress, whilst Section 25 of the Constitution provides a framework for land reform and food security. "The 1996 Constitution reflected parts of the Charter's vision, and land reform (therefore) became a central promise of the new democratic state. A three-part program was introduced: restitution, redistribution, and tenure reform. The Restitution of Land Rights Act (1994) was the first step. It gave people displaced after 1913 the right to lodge land claims."<sup>9</sup>

"In terms of the land restitution, government created the Commission on Restitution of Land Rights to solicit, investigate and attempt to resolve land claims. Between 1994 and 2024, a total of 83,067 claims have been settled, leaving 5407 outstanding claims to be settled, as a cost of R25 billion on restitution of the 3,9 million hectares. An additional R22.5 billion was spent on financial compensation to settle land claims."<sup>10</sup>

"With regards to redistribution and tenure reform pillars, government introduced three programmes through which government managed to redistributed 5,2 million hectares between 1994 and 2024. This helped to strengthen the tenure security of vulnerable persons, labour tenants, farm dwellers, and promote the asset accumulation of women and youth.

"On the agrarian reform, the agricultural output has more than double, and exports grew five times between 1994 and 2024. The South African agricultural products are marketed in 181 countries across the world, implying that the ANC government has created new and better opportunities for agriculture post-apartheid era.

Despite the adoption of technologies and machinery to improve productivity and efficiency in the past 30 years, agricultural employment has remained stable at around 845,000 people, accounting for 6.3% of total employment. A fundamental drawback is that the growth has been exclusive and the black farmers' contribution to total agricultural output equates to just 10.1% in 2019.

While the land transfer target of 30% has not yet been achieved, a significant amount of hectares has been restored to their rightful owners

<sup>8</sup> Quote by Adv Thembeke Ngcukaitobi in "PowerTalks Key quotes from land discussion with Iman Rapetti." Summary by staff reporter on 7 March 2018

<sup>9</sup> Ngakane, Tokologo (2025). "The Land Shall Be Shared Among Those Who Work It: A Reflection on the Charter's Promise, the Politics of Dispossession, and the Long Wait for Return". In *70 Years of the Freedom Charter. Vol. 1 Reflections on the Charter Today*. African National Congress. Forthcoming, June 2025.

<sup>10</sup> Ntombela, SM (2025). "The land shall be shared amongst those who work it. South African Land and Agrarian Reforms: The Distorted Nexus." In *70 Years of the Freedom Charter. Vol. 1 Reflections on the Charter Today*. African National Congress. Forthcoming, June 2025.



despite the challenges of inflated land prices and maladministration coupled with complex bureaucratic systems.”

## All Shall Enjoy Equal Human Rights



*The law shall guarantee to all their right to speak, to organise, to meet together, to publish, to preach, to worship and to educate their children; The privacy of the house from police raids shall be protected by law; All shall be free to travel without restriction from countryside to town, from province to province, and from South Africa abroad; Pass laws, permits and all other laws restricting these freedoms shall be abolished.*

Apartheid colonialism, to maintain such a highly exploitative and oppressive system, was deeply violent and invasive of basic rights.

The Constitution and laws of a democratic South Africa guarantees basic rights, such as freedom of movement and speech, freedom to organise, to worship, to travel.

It furthermore recognises other forms of discrimination - against persons with disability, LGBTQI and so forth - and the need to outlaw and advocate and act against them.

The vicious powers of the police, to invade homes, to detain without trial, to torture were also curbed, and public safety policing transformed.

These, however are not freedoms that we can take for granted. We must work side by side to promote these freedoms, defend and advance them, working together with Chapter 9 institutions, civil society and as political parties and movements.

## There Shall be Work and Security!

*All who work shall be free to form trade unions, to elect their officers and to make wage agreements with their employers; The state shall recognise the right and duty of all to work, and to draw full unemployment benefits; Men and women of all races shall receive equal pay for equal work; There shall be a 40-hour working week, a national minimum wage, paid annual leave, and sick leave for all workers, and maternity leave on full pay for all working mothers; Miners, domestic workers, farm workers and civil servants shall have the same rights as all others who work; Child labour, compound labour, the tot system and contract labour shall be abolished.*

Workers today have freedom to form trade unions, to collective bargaining, employment benefits, including unemployment benefits, sick and maternity leave, the national minimum wage for vulnerable workers, skills development, not to be subjected to sexual harassment in the work place. However, outsourcing, informal employment, immigration and impact of new technologies have introduced new challenges of precariousness for workers, with the working poor making up close to 20% of the employed<sup>9</sup>.

The fragmentation in the labour movement is a real and current challenge, manifested in union duplication at sector and company levels, competition and weakened solidarity, declining membership, internal conflicts, and challenges of organising vulnerable workers and the informal sector.

COSATU President cde Zingiswa Losi, in reflections on the Charter and workers rights wrote:

*COSATU as leader of the progressive trade union movement is often challenged on what workers have achieved since the democratic breakthrough and through the Alliance.*

*Under our progressive Constitution and labour laws workers have the right to unionise and collective bargaining, to be protected from unfair*

*discrimination and to equal pay for equal work, to work in a safe environment, and receive financial support when on maternity or parental leave, when retrenched or dismissed, or injured or in the event of death at work.*

*Child labour has been criminalised. In 2019 the National Minimum Wage Act came into effect raising the wages of 6 million farm, domestic, construction, hospitality, security, transport and other vulnerable workers.*

*Yet many workers struggle to exercise their hard-won labour rights, especially when facing a 43.1% unemployment rate. Recent moves by government to drastically expand the number of labour inspectors are a bold step towards ensuring the rights of all workers are respected. Employers who break the law must face consequences.<sup>11</sup>*

Indeed, the aspiration of the Freedom Charter for Work, has been a challenge since 1994. Although the numbers of people in employment have increased from 8.3 million in 1996 to 17 million in the last quarter of 2024, the number of jobs have by far not kept pace with the growth of the population and the labour force.

Thus, with unemployment reaching crisis levels over the last decade at over 30% and more than 50% for young people, it fundamentally undermines this aspiration of the Freedom Charter.

Inclusive economic growth that create jobs and economic opportunities for all therefore remains an urgent priority, in everything that we do, including the commitments we made in the 2024 ANC Manifesto for a National Jobs Plan and Building an Inclusive Economy through industrialization. It is an issue that should be top of the agenda for the Government of National Unity and the upcoming National Dialogue.

## **The Doors of Learning and Culture Shall be Opened to All!**

*The government shall discover, develop and encourage national talent for the enhancement of our cultural life; All the cultural treasures of mankind shall be open to all, by free exchange of books, ideas and contact with other lands; The aim of education shall be to teach the youth to love their people and their culture, to honour human brotherhood, liberty and peace; Education shall be free, compulsory, universal and equal for all children; Higher education and technical training shall be opened to all by means of state allowances and scholarships awarded on the basis of merit; Adult illiteracy shall be ended by a mass state education plan; Teachers shall have all the rights of other citizens; The colour bar in cultural life, in sport and in education shall be abolished*

Apartheid education was not just racist, unequal and patriarchal, but was part of deliberate underdevelopment of the majority, characterized by grossly unequal spending per learner based on race, and with high levels of adult illiteracy.

Since 1994, government has invested in basic education<sup>12</sup>, with spending per learner more than 100% higher in real terms in 2016 than it was in the final apartheid years. This also meant that we moved from 13 racially-based departments to a single system of education and training, built new and renovated schools across the country, equalized teachers' pay and benefits, introduced new national curriculum, a national school nutrition programme, no-fee schools and scholar transport.

By 2024, close to 100% of children up to the age of 15 years were in school (around 12.5 million in 2024), with 62% of young people completing Grade 12 in 2024.

Over the last decade or so, first with the introduction of Grade R and now the incorporation of ECD into DBE through BELA, there are about 3 million children accessing learning.

Curriculum reform has been ongoing, and currently the Department of Basic Education (DBE) is introducing a "Three Stream Model" to provide

<sup>11</sup> Losi, Zingiswa. (2025). "Strides towards realising the Vision of the Freedom Charter." In *70 Years of the Freedom Charter. Volume 1 Reflections on the Charter Today*. African National Congress. Forthcoming, June 2025.

<sup>12</sup> Mhlaule, Regina (2025). "The doors of learning and culture shall be open to all." and Manamela, Buti (2025). "The Doors remain Ajar. Learning, culture and the struggle for Emancipation." In *70 Years of the Freedom Charter. Volume 1 Reflections on the Charter Today*. African National Congress. Forthcoming, June 2025.



diverse learning pathways, to address the mismatch between skills taught in schools and the economy: academic, technical vocational, and technical occupational.

Similar advances have been made in the post school education and training sector (PSET) to open the doors of learning to all, especially with free higher education for poor students through NSFAS.

There are however challenges, including infrastructure and teacher backlogs; slow introduction of mother-tongue education and curriculum reforms; and the challenges of the PSET system with NSFAS.

The struggle to open the doors of learning therefore remain relevant today, within a new context. The campaign by the South African Students Congress (SASCO), for a Students Charter is an important initiative, building on the struggles of the Fees Must Fall Movement, to articulate the issues faced by students as we keep pushing to ensure that the doors of learning are open, and leaves no-one behind.

**The Doors of Culture:** Many of the creative legends of our land, Miriam Makeba, Jonas Gwangwa, Thami Mnyele, Letta Mbuli, Hugh Masekela, Gerald Sekoto, to name but a few amongst many, saw culture as a powerful instrument for liberation.

Furthermore, as one of our cultural activists wrote, “the Freedom Charter did not separate cultural liberation from economic liberation – rather it seems to have understood them as interconnected.”<sup>13</sup>

Despite insufficient resources for artists, creatives and the art over the last 30 years and a fast-changing industry that can be very exploitative, we have seen a creative renaissance in South African arts and culture: in literature and the performing art, in music, dance, craft and art.

Our Constitution furthermore recognises the diversity of our languages, with institutions such as the Pan South African Language Board established to promote all languages, especially indigenous African languages.

We now recognise twelve official languages, including the most recent South African Sign Language. Attempts are also made to rescue the Khoe and San language from extinction, through such initiatives as a dedicated public language radio station as well as developing dictionaries.

Through the public broadcaster SABC all our languages are carried on television channels and through eleven dedicated African Language Radio Stations, servicing millions of the population with news, information and entertainment, and contributing to the development of our languages. Culture and language remain a terrain of struggle, as we are reminded about the important contribution that the creative sector and culture, as well as community culture, not only to our sense of identity, but also to social cohesion and the economy of our country.

## **The People shall Share in the Country's Wealth!**

*The national wealth of our country, the heritage of all South Africans, shall be restored to the people; The mineral wealth beneath the soil, the banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole; All other industries and trade shall be controlled to assist the well-being of the people; All people shall have equal rights to trade where they choose, to manufacture and to enter all trades, crafts and professions.*

Democratic South Africa inherited an apartheid and patriarchal economy in crisis, with low GDP growth, high public debt, inequality, poverty and unemployment.

The labour market was racialised and gendered and Apartheid policies barred black South Africans from entrepreneurship, capital accumulation, and land ownership. Thus wealth and economic power were in the hands of a small minority of white-owned firms, which dominated all major sectors of the economy and with high levels of concentration.

To transform the economy, South Africa's development path over the three decades was characterised by the following major policy thrusts:

<sup>13</sup> Le Roux, Gabi. 2025. “The Freedom Charter in our Collective South African Culture.” In *70 Years of the Freedom Charter. Volume 1 Reflections on the Charter Today*. African National Congress. Forthcoming, June 2025

(a) fiscal policy that promotes sustainability and intergenerational equity, (b) inflation-targeting monetary policy, (c) a market-determined exchange rate, (d) regulation of the financial sector, (e) redress through the Black economic empowerment and small business development (f) reforms to labour laws, (g) strengthening competition policy and (h) integrating the economy internationally.<sup>14</sup> These found expression in such plans as the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) in 1996; the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA) in 2006; the New Growth Path (NGP) in 2010, the National Development Plan (NDP) in 2010 and more recently the Economic Recovery and Reconstruction Plan.

Between 2000 and 2009, the economy grew by around 3.6%, however since 2010, this dipped below 2% and for the last decade averaged below 1%. This trend also had an impact on jobs, unemployment above 30%, and with the number of employed persons growing from 8.9 million in 1994 to 17 million by the final quarter of 2024.

As a result of poor economic growth and high unemployment and inequality, per capita growth has been stagnating. The situation is particularly dire for young people, with unemployment for black youth at over 50%.

Programmes to ensure economic inclusion like affirmative action, asset transfers, access to education and particularly free higher education for the poor through NSFAS, as well as broadbased black economic empowerment and SSME development, has seen the growth of a black middle class, which now represents over 50% of the total strata.

Other efforts led to the introduction of the *Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act of 2002*, and the *Mining Charter of 2004*. In keeping with the Freedom Charter's call that "*the mineral wealth beneath the soil... shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole*", the MPRDA bestowed the mineral resources under the custodian of the state for the benefit of all South Africans.

It is encouraging that black ownership in the South

African mining industry increased from 02 percent in 2004 to over 30 percent in 2024. Whereas the *coal mining* is largely black owned and managed, black ownership is emerging in sectors such as manganese, gold, and platinum group metals (PGMs).

Well over 70 000 women are now active participants in the industry, some of whom hold executive positions in multinational companies.<sup>15</sup>

Despite these advances, the deep legacy of Inequality remains a persistent and defining challenge, with our Gini coefficient worsening to 0.64, reflected in stark inequalities based on race and gender in income, assets and wealth.

It is for these reasons that the ANC 2024 Manifesto emphasised a National Jobs Plan, and Inclusive growth through Industrialisation and Infrastructure development as central, to ensure that the Wealth of the land is genuinely shared amongst the people.

### **There Shall be Houses, Security and Comfort!**

*All people shall have the right to live where they choose, to be decently housed, and to bring up their families in comfort and security; Unused housing space is to be made available to the people; Rent and prices shall be lowered, food plentiful and no one shall go hungry; A preventive health scheme shall be run by the state; Freemedical care and hospitalisation shall be provided for all, with special care for mothers and young children; Slums shall be demolished, and new suburbs built where all have transport, roads, lighting, playing fields, creches and social centres; The aged, the orphans, the disabled and the sick shall be cared for by the state; Rest, leisure and recreation shall be the right of all; Fenced locations and ghettos shall be abolished, and laws which break up families shall be repealed.*

The generation of 1955 recognised the deep wounds of poverty and underdevelopment inflicted by apartheid on the people. The clause calling for **Houses, Security and Comfort** therefore finds expression in the foundations for the social wage laid over the last 30 years.

Amongst the lead Presidential programs announced

<sup>14</sup> DPME (2024). Towards a 30 Year Review. p48

<sup>15</sup> Mantashe, Gwede (2025) "The Freedom Charter at 70: Reflections on the journey towards transforming South Africa's mining industry." *In 70 Years of the Freedom Charter. Volume 1 Reflections on the Charter Today*. African National Congress. Forthcoming, June 2025

Mxakato-Diseko Nozipho J. (2025). The Mineral Wealth Below The Soil. South Africa's Critical Minerals. *In 70 Years of the Freedom Charter. Volume 1 Reflections on the Charter Today*. African National Congress. Forthcoming, June 2025



by President Nelson Mandela in 1994 was the plan to build a million houses for the poor (RDP houses), expanded over the last three decades to encompass a comprehensive human settlements programme.

By 2019, government built 3,2 million houses and in the sixth administration (MTSF 2020-2024) delivered a further 239,874 BNG houses, 231,000 sites serviced, 13,286 rental housing built, 25,873 households receiving funding through FLISP and 623 informal settlements upgraded<sup>16</sup>. With disasters such as fires and increasing floods, emergency housing has been incorporated into the mandate of human settlements.

The programme of building settlements by government have significantly slowed down over the last decade, and therefore not able to keep pace with a growing population, rapid urbanization and decreasing household size. The department in 2024 reported that there were 3 million households registered on the National Housing Needs Register<sup>17</sup>. According to the latest General Household Survey 2024<sup>18</sup>, we have also made steady progress with 84,1% of all households living in formal dwellings, 11,7% lived in informal dwellings.

Nationally, three-fifths (60,1%) of households owned (paid off or being paid off) the dwelling they lived in. A further 25,1% rented their dwellings. Nationally, nearly a third (30%) of households live in government-subsidised housing<sup>19</sup>.

Under apartheid, African women were regarded legal minors and marriage laws generally made it near impossible for women to own property without consent from or unless jointly with their spouse. Since 1994, deliberate programs are in place to ensure women's access to property. Thus, in 2016, 27.8% of women owned housing individually or jointly, single women accounted for 30% of the property owners in 2019, and recent reports from the property market shows that women increasingly dominate the market in townships as new home buyers.<sup>20</sup>

Linked to the provision of housing, has been the programme to ensure progressive access to other basic services. The General Household Survey 2024 recorded progress in access to electricity, water and sanitation, refuse removal and internet.

The above shows progress, but should not hide the immense challenges of basic services due to ageing infrastructure, the need for new bulk infrastructure to keep up with population growth and urbanisation, as well as poor expertise and expenditure on maintenance by local municipalities.

Critical other aspects of the Freedom Charter's commitment to this aspiration, include other sub-clauses referring to access to basic services, recreation, transport, health, social security and food security.

The social assistance program has grown substantially in 30 years, covering: Foster Care Grant; Child Support Grant; Care Dependency Grants Old Age grant; War Veterans Grant ; Grant in Aid; Disability Grant totaling 18 million people, on average and with the extension of the SRD grant, the total grant recipients average 27.7 million.

In 2024, 73,1% of household members first consulted personnel at a Public Clinic or hospital while 25,3% turned to the private sector, whilst only 15.5% of individuals are covered by medical aids<sup>21</sup>.

The implementation of the NHI is therefore important to ensure that distribution of resources between the public and private health sectors are more equitable, towards universal health coverage. According to the General Household Survey 2024, nationally, 22,2% of households considered their access to food as inadequate or severely inadequate. Food insecurity particularly affect children, with child hunger and stunting that remain a challenge. Interventions such as the school nutrition programme, public responsibility for early childhood development and the first 1000 Days programme<sup>22</sup> are therefore critical, as well as community level programmes to ensure no child is left behind.

<sup>16</sup> Dept of Human Settlements (2024). *Annual Report 2023/2024*. Vote No.33, p57.

<sup>17</sup> Dept of Human Settlements (2024), op.cit. p42

<sup>18</sup> Percentage of households living in formal dwellings was 77.6 in 2011 and 65.1% in 1996, and people living in informal dwellings 1.6% in 2011 and 16.2% in 1996.

<sup>19</sup> falseCenter for Affordable Housing in Africa. 2024 South Africa Country Profile. [www.housingfinanceafrica.org](http://www.housingfinanceafrica.org)

<sup>20</sup> "Women in their 30s dominate SA's township property market." [www.propertywheel.co.za](http://www.propertywheel.co.za) , 30 July 2024.

<sup>21</sup> StatsSA (2025) op.cit. p15-16. In 2004, 69% first visited a public clinic or hospital.

<sup>22</sup> Department of Health (not dated). *Road map for the provision of a maternal and child health package of care for the first 1000 days*

## There Shall be Peace and Friendship

*South Africa shall be a fully independent state, which respects the rights and sovereignty of all nations; South Africa shall strive to maintain world peace and the settlement of all international disputes by negotiation-not war; Peace and friendship amongst all our people shall be secured by upholding the equal rights, opportunities and status of all; The people of the protectorates-Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland-shall be free to decide for themselves their own future; The right of all the peoples of Africa to independence and self-government shall be recognised, and shall be the basis of close cooperation.*

“The African National Congress (ANC), the leading and oldest liberation movement in South Africa is renowned for its progressive and forward looking political philosophy and ideals. From the date of its formation in 1912 the ANC has been a future oriented sophisticated conveyor of modern ideals on human rights, diversity and international cooperation.”<sup>23</sup>

In our international relations and policy, we sought to remain true to the precepts of the Freedom Charter.

Since 1994, South Africa has advocated for respect for the independence and integrity of all sovereign member states of the United Nations (UN) and the OAU/AU. South Africa has not attempted to invade any country, overthrow any government nor to wage war. We assert the independence of our democratic state.

Since 1994, we played leading roles in promoting peace and negotiated settlements - in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Madagascar, Northern Ireland and closer to home in the Kingdom of Lesotho, as well as Timore Leste, Palestine and Sri Lanka. All these initiatives confirmed the continued importance of the Freedom Charter support for peace and negotiation.<sup>24</sup>

South Africa has made efforts to secure regional and continent wide cooperation and peace, through its commitment to the African agenda, through the OAU and its transformation into the African Union, through its role in SADC, as well as the development of key continental frameworks such as the

Constitutive Act of the AU, the NEPAD programme and Agenda 2063 and other frameworks, including the African Continental Free Trade Area.

Since 1994, we have also advocated for progressive multilateralism, for a just and equitable global system, and played an important role in structures of the Global South such as the Non Aligned Movement, the G77 and BRICS+, as well as North-South forums such as the G20.

## Our Programme to Celebrate 70 Years of the Charter

We are therefore launching today a six-month celebration of this iconic document, including the ANC National General Council at the beginning of December 2025 and culminating in our 114<sup>th</sup> anniversary in January 2026.

The objectives of these celebrations are to:

- **Reflect on Progress and Challenges:** Assess achievements and shortcomings in realizing the principles enshrined in the Freedom Charter since 1994, since the dawn of our democracy in 1994, engage in critical discussions about the socio-economic inequalities that still exist and how they are tackled.
- **Mobilize Grassroots Participation:** Strengthen grassroots presence through local events, fostering community involvement and dialogue. Encourage branches to take ownership of the celebrations, ensuring that they reflect local realities and aspirations.
- **Reinforce Unity and Solidarity:** Promote a sense of unity among South Africans, emphasizing collective responsibility in achieving the Freedom Charter's vision as we participate in the National Dialogue. Build alliances with civil society organizations, youth groups, and other stakeholders who share a commitment to social justice and equality. Also link the Freedom Charter to the African Union Agenda 2063 and the Africa We Want.

<sup>23</sup> Pandor, Naledi (2025). “The continued relevance of “There Shall be Peace and Friendship.” In *70 Years of the Freedom Charter. Volume 1 Reflections on the Charter Today*. African National Congress. Forthcoming, June 2025.

<sup>24</sup> Pandor, 2025. op.cit.



- **Educate and Inspire Future Generations:** Raise awareness about the Freedom Charter's significance and its relevance to contemporary South African society. Inspire youth and future leaders to engage with the principles of the Charter and to take an active role in shaping South Africa's future.
- The activities that we will embarked on, will speak to these different objectives.
- The major kick-off event will be the **national Freedom Charter Anniversary Public lecture on 7 July 2025 in Kliptown, that will be delivered by President Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa**. The lecture will be joined virtually by ANC branches and structures through out the country. It will be an important event of public conscientising on the Freedom Charter, its history and implementation over the three decades of democracy, and as mass political education of members and supporters.
- The ANC Veterans League on **28 June 2025** will host an **Intergenerational dialogue on the Freedom Charter** with young people, members and leaders of the Progressive Youth Alliance, including the ANC Youth League, the progressive student movements COSAS and SASCO, the Young Women's Desk and other youth formations. The aim is to use the Freedom Charter and its mission and aspirations, to cross the bridges between generations, in an event of mutual learning.
- The Freedom Charter clause, that There shall be Peace and Friendship, is very relevant in a world in turmoil today. Already the ANC International Relations department on **25 June 2025** held a **Coloquim with the Frederich Eubert Stifting on Progressive Multilateralism**, which tackled these issues. **On 27 June 2025, the ANC Gender and Equity Committee** will have another **Dialogue and exhibition on Women in Diplomacy and the G20**.
- The ANC will launch the first in a **series of e-books on 70 Years of the Freedom Charter, Reflections on the Charter** today, with contributions of historians like cde Z Pallo Jordan, veterans like James Ngculu, Brigitte Mabandla and Rob Davies and Norman Levy (who were at the Congress at the people) as well as younger and middle generations.
- We welcome the many contributions already received and encourage all South Africans and ANC members, to submit their reflections on the Freedom Charter today and to the future.
- The Freedom Charter will be linked to the various focus months of our nation, including of the Founder of our Democracy Nelson Mandela in July, the August Womens Month, September Heritage Month, Celebrating the legacy of OR Tambo and Albertina Sisulu and others in October.

### THESE FREEDOMS WE SHALL FIGHT FOR

The Freedom Charter remains an inspiration and a vision for the South Africa we want, in its political, social and economic dimensions. Thirty years into democracy, we have come a long way, but we still have many more hills to climb.

As we therefore celebrate and reflect on 70 years of the Freedom Charter, we must recommit to fight side by side, until we have won all our liberties.

### Conclusion - Side by Side

We call on all South Africans to remember and take lessons from the generations of 1955 who had this foresight and vision, that led to the drafting of the Freedom Charter, as we participate in the National Dialogue.

We must all vow to work tirelessly, sparing no effort, until we have won our complete liberty, politically, socially, culturally and economically!

**Kliptown, 26 June 2025**