



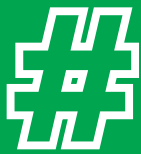
UMRABULO



NGC2025 SPECIAL EDITION

SEPTEMBER 2025

LET'S TALK POLITICS



NGC2025

DISCUSSION DOCUMENTS

**ANC RENEWAL TO ADVANCE
THE FREEDOM CHARTER**







ANC 5th National General Council Base Document

ANC RENEWAL TO ADVANCE THE FREEDOM CHARTER

Forward to a National Democratic Society Based on Social Justice, Shared Prosperity and Human Solidarity

The Current Balance of Forces—What is to be Done?



ROADMAP TOWARDS THE ANC 5TH NATIONAL GENERAL COUNCIL

8-12 December 2025, NASREC

NGC Delegation:

1650 total delegates.

750 from Branches,

270 from RECs (5 per REC);

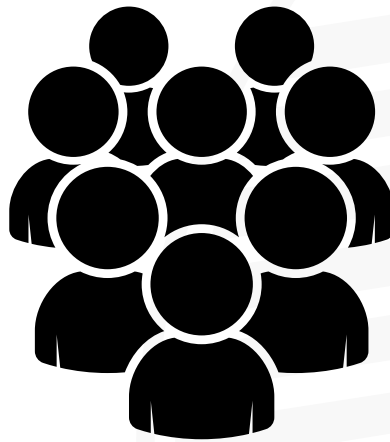
90 from PECs (10 per PEC;

2 per League per province;

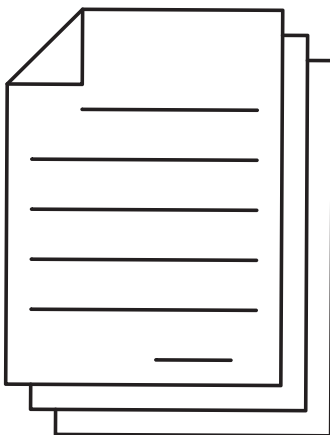
30 per League National;

20 MKLWV;

Alliance and Sectors.



All delegates must be members in good standing by **30 September 2025**, completed all 5 Modules of the ANC Foundation Course and attended a branch, regional or provincial workshop on the NGC Base document.



NGC will discuss two **main documents**:

- NGC Base Document on the State of the National Democratic Revolution and the Balance of Forces.
- Mid-Term Report and Review of implementation of 55th National Conference Resolutions.



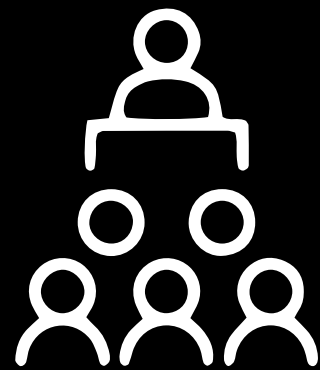
On 1 - 4th August 2025, the NEC discussed and approved the NGC Base Document titled ***“ANC Renewal to Advance the Freedom Charter Forward to a National Democratic Society Based on Social Justice, Shared Prosperity and Human Solidarity”***. This document frames all the strategic questions that face our movement and our country at this moment.

Every Branch, Executive Structure, Leagues and every sector should discuss the Base Document and make specific proposals on how the movement should respond to all the challenges. The ANC will also engage the Alliance on the NGC Base document

The NGC Base document was launched at special Regional Meetings throughout the country on 30-31 August 2025.

Political Education Subcommittee will train facilitators for provincial, regional and branch workshops on the NGC process in September 2025.

ANC Branch Meetings to discuss and make submissions: September - November 2025. All branches must complete the Foundation Course training and then discuss the document for the NGC and make submissions. All PECs, RECs and ANC branches, and the Leagues are expected to discuss this document, and make recommendations. 01 October to 30 November 2025 is the timeframes for Branch General Meetings.



Submissions on NGC Base Document

All submissions, inputs and comments on the document can be send to
ngc@anc1912.org.za



Base Document

2025 marks seventy years since the Freedom Charter and thirty years of democracy, two milestones that require deep reflection. The country faces domestic and global crises, including rising poverty, inequality, and unemployment, corruption, and new global challenges.

The NGC Base document provides a framework for renewal by assessing the direction of the National Democratic Revolution. It assesses both achievements and setbacks, and asks the central strategic question: *what is to be done to achieve our vision of a democratic, united, non-racial and non-sexist society*. The document places the current challenges in their historical context, showing continuities and change since the democratic breakthrough of 1994.

It recognises that South Africa is at a crossroads, with the possibility of either renewal and reinvigoration, or decline and total defeat of the revolution. It challenges activists and cadres to approach the future with honesty, courage, and an unwavering commitment to fundamental transformation of our society.

Core Theme: Renewal cannot happen without raising the bar on the quality of leadership

The NDR cannot advance without a deep process of renewal that must happen in society, the organisation, and our ideology and values.

Societal renewal cannot happen without national rejuvenation, the raising of the bar on the quality of leadership, and the pursuit of people-centred development that addresses inequality and restores dignity.

Organisational renewal demands the rebuilding of the ANC's discipline, integrity, capacity and effectiveness as a movement that leads society.

Ideological renewal calls for the reaffirmation of the values of the NDR, the deepening of political education, and the decisive countering of corruption, careerism, and factionalism.

Renewal is not a slogan but a strategy on which the survival of the revolution depends. The renewal process must confront entrenched corruption, complacency, and factionalism that have weakened the ANC. It must also cultivate a new culture of accountability, service, and principled leadership across all levels of the movement.



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PART A. STATE OF THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION

INTRODUCTION

1. The 5th National General Council (NGC) will take place in the year of the 70th Anniversary of the Freedom Charter, and to mark the beginning of the fourth decade of democracy. These two major milestones call on us to critically assess the journey travelled and boldly map the road ahead for our country. South Africa and its people face severe headwinds amid a volatile, uncertain and insecure global situation. This is more than just bad weather– we are in the eye of a storm. Domestically and globally, we are confronted by a confluence of forces that seek to derail the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) and inflict lasting and irreparable damage on the African National Congress (ANC) and the revolutionary Alliance, the historic locomotive of progressive transformation in our country. The national project of transformation is under severe attack. These stark realities call for urgent and thoroughgoing societal, **organisational** and **ideological** renewal of the ANC in a rapidly changing domestic and global environment. **Consolidating democracy** and **accelerating fundamental transformation** towards **shared prosperity, social justice** and **human solidarity** remain at the core of the ANC’s historic mission.
2. This paper, the **NGC Base Document**, is the strategic framework discussion document for the 5th NGC that will be held in December 2025. It focuses on the following key issues: (1) **reflecting on 30 years of democracy**, (2) **assessing the balance of forces**, (3) **characterising the nature of the crises we face and the implications for the NDR**, and – above all – concludes with (4) **What is to be Done?** It responds to the resolution of the 55th National Conference that the ANC undertake comprehensive discussions on the state of the NDR and accordingly lay the ground for review and possible amendment of the Strategy and Tactics¹ document at the 56th National Conference in 2027. In focusing our analysis on solutions, we also ask whether the ANC’s current organisational character, design and processes are **fit for purpose for an effective revolutionary movement and agent of change**. Without a revitalised core of disciplined, conscious cadres, the ANC cannot hope to lead society to the desired destination.
3. Fundamentally, we emphasise the theme of **societal, organisational and ideological renewal**. Renewal has become a strategic question on which the fate of the NDR depends. On the one hand, the ANC and the Alliance require

¹ In ANC terminology, *strategy* refers to the long-term objectives of the NDR, while *tactics* refer to the immediate and medium-term tasks and methods through which the objectives are to be achieved.

ideological and organisational renewal to correct mistakes, weather all the storms and advance the NDR in the current phase. On the other hand, there is also a need for national rejuvenation and renewal, given the many social, political and economic challenges that our nation faces. Critically, renewal should enable both the nation and the movement to achieve the following twin tasks: **Firstly**, raising the bar on the quality of leadership and quality of governance across all sectors and institutions of society in order to address our nation's development aspirations and transformation agenda. Without leadership, there can be no successful national development and rejuvenation effort; and **secondly**, placing the people at the centre of the transformation initiatives and development agenda of our country – the agency, activism, empowerment and popular involvement of citizens and society is the only guarantee of the success and continuity of any revolution.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION

4. The ANC's *Strategy and Tactics* document elaborates comprehensively our theory, strategy and programme of the NDR. The main objective of our liberation struggle remains the attainment of political and economic freedom for the oppressed – Africans in particular and blacks in general (this includes all national groups that faced oppression and exploitation under apartheid and colonialism) – the working class and women, within a society of which the white minority is an inextricable part. **The NDR seeks to end Colonialism of a Special Type (CST) which is underpinned by three interrelated, antagonistic contradictions that cannot be resolved through mere reforms: race, class and gender. These manifest as national oppression based on race; class super-exploitation of black and women workers; and the triple oppression of women by race, class and gender.** Eliminating or abolishing these combined sources of social conflict and injustice is at the heart of our revolution. It must also liberate the white community from the false ideology of racial superiority and the insecurities of privilege. In essence, the NDR has both national and democratic tasks – to address historical injustices and build a thriving nation united in diversity – and a social content aimed at achieving social justice, shared prosperity and human solidarity. It is for this reason that the *Strategy and Tactics* document asserts that “the NDR seeks to build a society based on the best in human civilisation in terms of political and human freedoms, socioeconomic rights, value systems and identity”.
5. The vision of the NDR, informed by the Freedom Charter, can be summarised in the goal of a **National Democratic Society (NDS)** with the following attributes:

- **A united, capable and ethical developmental state** based on the will of the people, regardless of race, sex, belief, language, ethnicity or geography – incorporating representative, participatory and deliberative elements so that “*the people shall govern.*”
 - **An improving quality of life for all** through access to affordable, quality basic services; equal rights and human dignity; and broad opportunities for every citizen.
 - **An inclusive, transformed and thriving economy** that offers decent livelihoods to all, including restoring the birthright of all South Africans to access land, the nation’s wealth, finance and other resources – within a growing, integrated African continental economy.
 - **A nation with a common identity** as an African country, underpinned by non-racialism, non-sexism, unity in diversity, and a spirit of global human solidarity.
6. In short, our theory of change mandates that the NDR must resolve the interlocking “*triple challenges*” of **inequality, poverty and unemployment²**, along with their persistent race, gender, geographic and class dimensions. The litmus test of progress towards a National Democratic Society is whether we are improving the quality of life for all, especially the formerly oppressed majority.
7. To remain true to these objectives, the ANC and the broad liberation movement must continually hegemonise, clarify and popularise the vision of the NDR. This also means updating our *Strategy and Tactics* in the light of the current conjuncture, deepening our cadres’ theoretical understanding of CST and its manifestations today, and ensuring that every policy and program of the movement is aligned to the strategic goals of a united, non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and prosperous society. It also means candidly assessing where we have fallen short in realising the Freedom Charter’s aspirations, and taking corrective action informed by our ideological principles. The ANC should invest in comprehensive political education – including raising levels of intellectual debate and deepening ideological clarity, empowering members to understand development theory and practice, national security and national interest political economy and economic leadership, social policy and human development, mastery of statecraft and the art of policy execution, our own revolutionary heritage, study of contemporary progressive and left theories including Marxist-Leninist classics, international issues and trends, technology, ethical and servant leadership – so that all leaders and activists are grounded in the core mission of the NDR and conduct themselves in accordance with its values.

²The debate about whether we should exclude Unemployment from this equation, since it is a contributing factor to the other two has been raised in the Political Education Committee debates on the Base Document. However, historically, unemployment has been a central pillar of the system of super-exploitation perpetuated by CST: destroy black livelihoods through land dispossession, livestock theft, restrict them to barren underdeveloped reserves and later dormitory townships, and through influx control keep them as a reserve army of unemployed and deposit the age and those who can no longer work; restrict the movement of women to undertake the social reproduction roles, whilst treating them as third class citizens.

A CONJUNCTURAL RETHINK OF THE NDR?

8. As we approach four decades of democratic governance and the evolving terrain of struggle, it becomes necessary to ask ourselves new questions and interrogate whether the foundational assumptions of the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) still hold. The historical theory of change that guide our movement - **the idea that a united bloc of motive forces can steadily and irreversibly transform South Africa into a united, democratic, non-racial, non-sexist, prosperous, more equal and inclusive society, through consistent transformation in the five pillars of struggle** - now faces new and complex realities. South African society has shifted in profound ways. The motive forces we once defined as cohesive and *mobilisable* are now increasingly fragmented, stratified, and ideologically disoriented. While poverty, inequality and unemployment remain enduring features of the historical national grievances, the lived experiences of different social strata have diverged. There are widening gaps even among the historically oppressed—between the working poor and unemployed youth, between formal and informal labour, between rural and urban communities, and between the aspirant middle classes and the excluded majority.
9. These changes compel us to ask: who are the motive forces today? What unites them? Is our vision of the revolution still sufficiently clear, coherent, and compelling? What is the national grievance around which these forces can rally? And, critically, how must our theory of change evolve to reflect a changing society, economy, and political landscape? Answering these questions is not an academic exercise. It is fundamental to repositioning the ANC and the broader Alliance within the ongoing struggle for fundamental transformation. The balance of forces is always in motion, shifting—both locally and globally. Equally, the strategic and ideological cohesion of the Alliance is now in question. The path forward demands ideological clarity, political discipline, foresight, firmness of principle and tactical agility within the context of a renewed strategic posture capable of guiding the next phase of the NDR.

Progress and Trajectory: The NDR since 1994

10. As indicated earlier, we are approaching forty years since the negotiated democratic breakthrough of 1994. In this period, we adopted the Constitution that established the democratic state with a commitment to redress all the injustices of our past and advance political, social and economic rights outlined in the Freedom Charter. Guided by the Constitution, we began transforming state institutions: **integrating the public service, creating a new system of local government, and establishing independent bodies for oversight and rights** (such as the Constitutional Court and Chapter 9 institutions). However, we still have a long way to go in meeting the vision of the Freedom Charter and Constitution of

our Republic. Over time, the institutions of our democratic state were severely undermined during the era of “state capture”. Corruption, poor service delivery and incompetence have eroded the legitimacy and authority of the democratic state. However, in the past few years we have seen resilient fightbacks – green shoots of recovery – even as local government remains embattled and many state-owned enterprises (SOEs) continue to face crises. We need more deliberate and decisive action. The gains of freedom must be defended. The regression and reversals must be confronted. Corruption and Counter-revolution must be defeated. We must rebuild the capacity and integrity of state institutions and adopt tough measures to ensure our country is governed well. **Citizens must be mobilised to reclaim agency and contribute to national rejuvenation and renewal. For, the masses are and will always be their own liberators.**

11. Politically, we have just emerged from the **thirteen national, provincial and local elections** since 1994, all peaceful, credible and declared free and fair, with mechanisms for electoral disputes. However, since 2014 voter participation has declined at every election. Voter turnout hit an all-time low in the 2024 national and provincial elections (NPE 2024). Over 9 million eligible South Africans under the age of 30 are not even registered to vote. This massive withdrawal from the electoral process is a democratic malaise that mirrors the waning levels of trust in and legitimacy of public institutions in general and liberation movements in particular. There is increasing doubt that the country is on the right track – reflected in the ANC’s drop to 40% of the vote in 2024 (down from 57% in 2019 and 46% in 2021 local elections). **This erosion of popular confidence is a direct threat to the ANC’s transformation project and to the NDR. However, there is also evidence that people have not lost confidence in the liberation ideals. Rather, they are losing confidence in the vehicle for liberation.**
12. On the socio-economic front, guided by the clarion call of a “*Better Life for All*,” the democratic state made great strides in addressing the apartheid legacy of mass deprivation. We expanded investment in basic services and infrastructure, enabling millions of citizens to have access to housing, education, social security and income support, water, sanitation, electricity, roads and healthcare – as documented by Statistics South Africa’s 2024 General Household Survey. We developed an expansive **social wage** comprising free basic services, social grants, education and health subsidies, amongst others that now accounts for over 60% of the national budget, fulfilling the Constitution’s injunction to progressively realise basic needs. There has been progress in redress: land restitution and redistribution (albeit limited), growth of a black middle class and black-owned SMMEs via affirmative action, procurement and Broad-Based BEE, together with a sizable public investment in socio-economic infrastructure. The economy grew

(with per capita GDP rising) and employment expanded in the first 15 years of democracy – though growth targets in our plans (like RDP, GEAR, AsgiSA, NDP) were far from fully met.

13. Yet, after 30 years, we must ask to what extent these gains have translated into *“a sustained improvement in the quality of life for all”* as envisioned by the Freedom Charter. **While the social wage has undeniably uplifted millions, the true measures of the NDR’s progress are trends in poverty and inequality – and by those measures, our country faces a crisis.** By 2025, poverty and inequality indicators show alarming backsliding, threatening to derail the NDR’s aims of a National Democratic Society, based on the foundations of social justice and shared prosperity.

The NDR and the War on Poverty and Inequality

14. The **Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP)** of 1994 memorably observed that South Africa was a country where “poverty and degradation exist side by side with modern cities and a developed mining, industrial and commercial infrastructure. Our income distribution is racially distorted and ranks as one of the most unequal in the world – lavish wealth and abject poverty characterise our society. No political democracy can survive and flourish if the masses of the people remain in poverty, without land, without tangible prospects for a better life. Attacking poverty and deprivation must therefore be the first priority of a democratic government”. These words set the mission for the first democratic administration and have echoed through every ANC Manifesto since.
15. For a time in the early democratic period (up to roughly 2010-2011), we saw steady progress in the reduction of poverty and inequality. This was driven by relatively high economic growth, expansion of social grants and services, wage equalisation and above-inflation wage increases for low-income workers, controlled inflation, some financial inclusion, investments in basic services and the rise of a black middle class through affirmative action and expanding access to higher education. During those years, **poverty levels fell, and inequality moderated**. However, over the past 15 years, that progress has stalled and in some respects, even reversed:
 - **Poverty:** There has been a regression in poverty reduction. Millions of households are experiencing food insecurity; child stunting and hunger once again plague communities. The number of people dependent on social grants exploded from about 5 million in 2003 to around 18 million (over 30% of the population) in 2024. Today more than half of all households rely on at least one social grant for survival, and in poorest provinces (Eastern Cape, Limpopo, Northern Cape) over

one-third of households count grants as a main source of income. While grants alleviate extreme destitution, the persistence of such reliance underscores the failure to create sustainable livelihoods.

- **Inequality:** South Africa remains the most unequal country in the world by income. Our income Gini coefficient stands around **0.67**, the highest of any country with measurable data. Other inequality metrics (wealth concentration, household expenditure, asset ownership) are equally dire. According to the latest Income & Expenditure Survey 2022/23 (StatsSA, 2025), the average white-headed household earns almost **5 times** the income of the average black African-headed household, and nearly **3 times** that of the average Coloured-headed household. The structure of our economy continues to entrench these disparities. Unemployment and wage gaps are the biggest contributors to income inequality – South Africa’s wage inequality is roughly double that of peer countries, and our official unemployment rate has stayed above 25% since 2012, above 30% since 2019, and now hovers around 33% (over **42%** by the expanded definition including discouraged jobseekers). The situation for youth is catastrophic: youth unemployment exceeds 50%, with 45% of young people (15–34) **not in employment, education or training** (NEET), and even graduates face ~12% unemployment in 2025. Gender inequality also persists: female-headed households on average spend and earn far less than male-headed households, labour market outcomes for women lag behind men, and the gender pay gap endures. South Africa’s ranking in the Global Gender Gap Index plummeted from #20 in 2023 to #33 in 2025, reflecting stagnation or reversal on several gender equity fronts.
16. International comparisons underscore our predicament. We long vied with Brazil for the unwanted title of most unequal economy. But **Brazil managed to reduce its income inequality to a Gini of ~0.53**, through deliberate redistributive policies over two decades, whereas South Africa’s inequality remains sky-high at 0.67. Among other BRICS nations, China’s Gini is about 0.38, India’s 0.35, Russia’s 0.37 – all vastly more equal than ours. Even within SADC, our Gini (by income) is worse than Namibia (0.59), Zambia (0.57) or Mozambique (0.54). **To be fair, 30 years is a short time to overcome 300+ years of colonialism, segregation, patriarchy and apartheid.** But many countries over the past generation – including some with lower starting bases than ours – have lifted tens of millions out of poverty within a matter of decades. We must ask why democratic South Africa, with all its resources and expertise, has not replicated such success.
 17. Behind these statistics are **lived experiences** of millions of people – the very *motive forces* whose upliftment is the NDR’s *raison d’être*. Crushing

inequality and persistent poverty erode social cohesion, fuel violent crime and gender-based violence, leaving citizens feeling insecure and hopeless about the country's direction. Surveys show a majority believing the country is going "in the wrong direction," a sentiment closely tied to living standards and economic marginalisation. When the conditions of the motive forces stagnate or deteriorate, and when people's own perceptions turn pessimistic, we must recognize that our country faces a profound crisis. Elements of this crisis have been visible for some time: back in 2002, the ANC's 51st National Conference (Stellenbosch) declared in its closing message:

"As a disciplined force of the left, the ANC's policies are rooted in the needs and aspirations of the overwhelming majority of South Africans, many of whom are poor. Their interests are at the heart of the ANC's agenda. To this end, Conference reaffirmed that the central challenge remains the eradication of poverty and inequality through economic growth and development, job creation and social equity. The legacy of the past still imposes a heavy burden on South African society, especially on the poor, on women, youth, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities."

18. Less than a decade later, the National Planning Commission's diagnostic report (2011) similarly warned that persistent widespread poverty and extreme inequality in a middle-income country "*pose a major threat to social cohesion and nation-building.*" Over the last decade, that burden of poverty and inequality has grown heavier. We are faltering on our core objectives, and a cycle of decline has emerged in critical spheres – dramatically exposed during the **COVID-19 pandemic**, the **July 2021 unrest**, and finally the electoral losses of the ANC in 2021 and 2024.
19. Our foremost priority must be to reignite an aggressive, multi-pronged war on poverty and inequality. This entails re-aligning the state's economic and social policies towards redistribution and inclusion as top imperatives. We should:
 - **Adopt bold anti-poverty programs** that includes a mass public employment drive, expansion of the social security net towards a Basic Income Support Grant for the most vulnerable, comprehensive food security initiatives, and scaling up support for subsistence and smallholder farming to reduce hunger.
 - **Radically address unemployment** by stimulating job creation in key sectors (through a comprehensive industrial policy and strategy that links growing targeted sectors, infrastructure investments, incentives for labour-intensive industry, building township and rural economies, and a revived public works programme) and implementing targeted youth employment programs. A Marshall Plan for

youth employment is needed, linking skills training, incentives to hire youth, and entrepreneurship support.

- **Intervene to reduce inequality** enforce equity measures like stronger progressive taxation and wealth taxes (to fund investment and social programs), strictly implement employment equity. We must also negotiate a new social compact with business and labour on wage inequality – reduce income differentials at workplaces, address the gender pay gap and raising the income floor for the lowest-paid through mechanisms like a living wage campaign and strengthening collective bargaining for vulnerable workers.
 - Improve **educational attainment** both in quantity and quality especially with regard to relevance of content to employment and self-employment.
20. Accelerate **access to land and redistribution of assets** through Employee and Community Share Ownership Schemes, land reform and urban land release and expanded support to micro and informal enterprises, reduce the regulatory, capital and market challenges they face.
 21. **Measure and track** poverty and inequality outcomes rigorously. The under-funding of Statistics SA must be reversed so we have up-to-date data (census, household surveys) to drive evidence-based interventions. For example, it was a planning blunder that the National Development Plan’s targets were based on a projected 2030 population of 64 million, when Census 2022 already counted over 62 million – underscoring the need for accurate data.
 22. **Mobilise the *motive forces*** the ANC must forge a renewed pact with communities, unions, civics, and NGOs to fight poverty and inequality. This includes mass campaigns (akin to the RDP forums of the 1990s) where communities identify priority needs and local solutions, reinforcing people’s agency in development and a responsive, capable and ethical developmental state that implements local development plans. Only through democratic involvement and effective governance can we rebuild trust and unify society behind the difficult reforms needed.

What Is The Nature Of The Crisis We Face?

23. That our country’s poverty and inequality indicators have moved in the wrong direction is not only a socio-economic crisis – it is a political catastrophe for the ANC. It strikes at the heart of our legitimacy and the NDR’s promise. We have to critically evaluate **how** and **why** we have arrived at this juncture, so as to inform the remedies. The ANC’s *Strategy and Tactics* since 1994 identified five pillars of social transformation: **the State, the Economy, Ideological Work (Battle of Ideas),**

Organisational Work, and the International Arena. These pillars are distinct yet interconnected; advances or setbacks in one inevitably affect the others. In the last decade or so, we experienced a *confluence of setbacks across all five pillars*, compounding the burden on the *motive forces*. Multiple explanations – both objective and subjective – have been offered from within and outside our ranks.

Key factors include:

24. **Demographic changes and development challenges:** Rapid urbanisation, population growth, changing household structures, and international migration have all raised the bar for service delivery and job creation. Our investments struggled to keep pace with both historical backlogs and new demands. For instance, housing and infrastructure delivery could not fully absorb the influx into informal urban settlements.

Inadequate planning data worsened the mismatch, StatsSA’s capacity issues meant we only ran a proper census every 10 years, leading to underestimation of needs. These **objective factors** made our development trajectory harder, but they do not excuse our failures – they needed to be anticipated and managed with better planning and resource allocation.

25. **Succumbing to a neo-liberal paradigm in public policy, especially our economic development path and the organisation and orientation of the state:** South Africa’s democratic transition coincided with a triumphant global wave of **neo-liberalism** in the 1990s. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the “end of history” mood declared *there was no alternative* (TINA) to rampant free-market capitalism. Even socialist-oriented countries like China were saying, in Deng Xiaoping’s words, *“It doesn’t matter whether a cat is black or white, as long as it catches mice.”* In Africa, the 1990s were dominated by Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP’s) that discredited state-led development. The late-1990s Asian financial crisis further dented confidence in heterodox paths (until those countries recovered in the 2000s on their own terms). In this context, the ANC government faced immense pressure to adopt market-friendly policies and reassure investors. The most dominant ideology – neoliberalism – preached that unfettered markets allocate resources efficiently and ensure liberty better than any government. It advocated deregulation, privatisation, austerity in public spending, and a minimal economic role for the state beyond creating an investor-friendly climate.

26. **Threat of Counter-Revolution:** The ANC January 8 Statement in 2024 posed the question, on the eve of the 2024 National and Provincial Elections, whether South

Africa's transformation from an apartheid, colonial, patriarchal and divided past may be halted or reversed, or whether democratic renewal, national rejuvenation and socio-economic agenda shall gain new impetus. It thus noted the social and political forces set on undermining the gains of freedom of the last three decades, aiming to stop the march towards a united, non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and prosperous country, that truly belongs to all.

27. There is convergence and common cause between the anti- transformation forces and the state capture forces to destroy the ANC from within and dislodge it from power. These forces are two sides of the same coin: **counter-revolution**. The ANC's *Strategy and Tactics* document asserts: "[T]he immediate objective of the counter-revolutionary forces is to disorganise, weaken and destroy the ANC, the vanguard of the NDR, both from within and from outside its ranks... counter-revolutionary mobilisation can only take root if there are real grievances to exploit, whether these grievances are deliberately engineered or not. The democratic movement itself needs at all times to be vigilant that its own actions and omissions do not assist such mobilisation."
28. Part of the counter-revolutionary tactic is to promote break-away parties to erode the support *base* of the ANC. Some of these parties masquerade as more radical than the ANC, but their revolutionary- sounding rhetoric cannot hide the reality that they have common cause with the forces opposing transformation. The shared goal of all these forces is to deprive the ANC of the ability to use state power to effect change.
29. *Some* in our movement argue that the past 30 years can be divided into two broad eras. From 1994 to the late 2000s, the foundations of the social wage were laid and poverty/inequality were improving. However, the post-2007 Polokwane Conference represented a period of *political, ideological and organisational degeneration* as a result of a fractured leadership succession which, if properly managed, would have had avoided some of the challenges we face. This resulted in an internal counter-revolutionary onslaught, which had a dual strategy:
 - a) **Undermine the ANC's ideological and organisational integrity** – accelerate the sins of incumbency like factionalism, money politics and ethical decay; weaken ideological training and mass connections; erode the ANC's values and moral standing as a people's tribune.
 - b) **Sabotage the ANC's governance capability** – hollow out state institutions and SOEs through deployment of unethical or incapable individuals, foster corruption and patronage networks (state capture), and thereby cripple service delivery and development capacity. This tendency effectively **sought to make the ANC fail in**

government, so as to discredit it among the people.

30. Elements of this “*counter-revolutionary onslaught against the NDR*” involved apartheid-era infiltrators and rogue intelligence elements, allied with forces of monopoly capital and global right-wing interests. They employed populism, pragmatism and pseudo-radical slogans to deviate from ANC policy, inserted agents and opportunists into ANC structures and government posts, and manipulated inexperienced comrades to advance a counter-revolutionary agenda. All of this compromised the ANC’s character and effectiveness.

Some argue, in hindsight, that **we made a strategic error in 1994** in assuming that apartheid forces had been decisively defeated and would never regain influence. Instead, they regrouped in new guises. The critical questions now are: How did we allow this rot to take hold so deeply? Which factors in the ANC’s own practices (membership system, leadership election processes, cadre deployment criteria and government policies) made us vulnerable to such hijack? And most importantly, how do we root out this and other anti-people tendencies and inoculate the movement against its return?

31. Over 30 years, the ANC has tried to **navigate this treacherous terrain**. Especially in the past two decades, we articulated the concept of a “*developmental state*” rooted in our realities - state that guides national development, intervenes for higher growth and employment, addresses unemployment and underdevelopment (especially for vulnerable groups) and mobilises all of society as active participants in change.

However, looking at outcomes, we fell short on critical aspects of building such a developmental state. Some critics charge that we effectively **chose a neoliberal path** after the mid-1990s – abandoning the RDP’s more radical program in favour of the GEAR strategy in 1996 – and thereby entrenched what amounts to “*neo-colonialism of a special type.*” In this view, an elite minority of black people (and a few women) were incorporated into the existing (white, patriarchal) capitalist structure via BEE and affirmative action, but the fundamental economic power relations remained unchanged.

The state, meanwhile, was partly hollowed out by outsourcing, privatisation, use of consultants, and a fixation on New Public Management techniques. Fiscal constraints and budget cuts under austerity further weakened the state’s capacity. Government’s role shifted to primarily a regulator and grant-giver – ensuring “macroeconomic stability” so that corporate profits were secure – while managing the majority’s needs through service delivery and social grants

in a piecemeal way. Under this critique, we ended up with a “two-tier” reality: a *first economy* thriving on globalized capital, and a *second economy* of the poor, mitigated just enough to forestall rebellion.

32. On the other hand, one must acknowledge that **social transformation is inherently complex**, full of ebbs and flows. There is no question that we face a crisis 30 years into democracy. But multiple factors converged: the compromises of the negotiated settlement, the deep structural underdevelopment we inherited, the global neoliberal dominance of the 1990s limiting our policy space, global financial crises and the COVID-19 pandemic, demographic pressures, the internal sabotage of counter-revolution from within, the reluctance of domestic capital to invest and transform unless forced, and the cancer of corruption – all have contributed to the crisis.

Our national development path did achieve some positives: entrenched democracy and constitutional rights, a robust social wage, institutional checks and balances, formal workplace rights, significant infrastructure expansion. Yet, when it came to **transforming the economy**, our efforts were often long on lofty goals and short on implementation and consistency. Grand targets were proclaimed - e.g. halving unemployment by 2014 (ASGISA), or 6% unemployment by 2030 (NDP) - but policies lacked internal coherence, faced capacity problems, or were abandoned with changing administrations.

We did not sustain a systematic industrial policy to alter ownership and production patterns; our land reform was timid; our education and skills revolution never fully materialised. At the same time, programmes that had some promise such as the Anti-Poverty Strategy were abandoned as new political incumbents (from the same movement) took office. **In sum, the balance of evidence suggests that neither an outright neoliberal approach nor our tentative developmental state vision delivered the desired outcomes. This calls for a thorough strategic debate on our economic path forward.**

33. In combination, **all the above factors** (objective and subjective) have produced a multi-dimensional crisis. The ANC must avoid simplistic blame narratives – instead, we need a sober analysis that recognises *our own mistakes and missteps*. There is truth to the argument that a revolutionary movement can adopt wrong tactics or read the balance of forces too timidly, thereby delaying or undermining the revolution. Conversely, overestimating our strength or pursuing adventurist policies could also court disaster. *Strategy and Tactics* (2017) reminded us that fundamental transformation in pursuit of the NDS is a *radical, revolutionary undertaking* that can be derailed by weaknesses in implementation or misreading of conditions.

THE CURRENT BALANCE OF FORCES

34. Ahead of the 55th National Conference in 2022, the ANC developed a detailed discussion document on the **Balance of Forces**. We will summarise and update its key points here, focusing on the five pillar, that is: **the state, the economy, ideological struggles and the battle of ideas, motive forces and organisational work and international work**. *Strategy and Tactics* reminds us that continuous analysis of domestic and global balance of forces is essential to successfully advance our revolutionary project. We need a clear appreciation of objective conditions and subjective factors – the opportunities and threats that can expedite or impede transformation, so that we can devise pertinent ways to achieve our goals. In 2025, what is the balance of forces confronting the NDR?

Let's examine each pillar in greater detail:

Pillar One: The State

35. Significant progress was made in building a post-apartheid state under the Constitution's framework, which mixes representative and participatory democracy. Significant progress has been made in shifting the state towards the developmental needs of society as a whole, and the majority in particular. South Africa has one of the most comprehensive social wage policies in the world. Our Constitution frames the responsibilities of all governments in transformative terms to ensure redress and impels the state to progressively meet socio-economic needs of all the people.

36. However, several **negative trends** emerged in the last decade, which we categorise into four areas:

37. **First, regression due to state capture and corruption:** The era of state capture (approx. 2009–2018) saw an unprecedented erosion of state capacity and public trust. The Zondo Commission exposed "*extensive networks through which public servants, senior government officials and corporate executives have been involved in widespread looting of public finances*". This systemic rot diverted billions from public coffers and hollowed out institutions from SARS to SOEs. In recent years, efforts have been made to recover from this nadir: anti-corruption agencies have been bolstered; some prosecutions of high-profile wrongdoers are underway and stolen funds are being traced. Yet, a "**lumpen**" element remains pervasive across various sectors – a parasitic layer of individuals in politics, business, civil society (even within our movement) who prioritize crass self-enrichment over ethics and service. These elements treat capable, meritocratic institutions as obstacles to their rent-seeking; they span party lines and professional spheres in a web of patronage.

38. New corruption scandals still come to light regularly, from procurement fraud (e.g. COVID-19 PPE, construction mafias muscling in on projects) to collusion in the private sector. This ongoing corruption undermines services, cripples government capacity, undermines competition and shatters social cohesion. ***Unless the ANC and government deal decisively with corruption and patronage, the vision of a truly developmental state will remain out of reach.*** The ANC has introduced mechanisms like the Integrity Commission and “step-aside” rule for charged leaders, but enforcement has been uneven. We may need to draw a much harder line, taking inspiration (though not necessarily identical methods) from countries like Vietnam, China and even Singapore, which have shown zero tolerance by harshly punishing corruption at all levels.

In Vietnam’s recent anti-graft campaign, for example, over 24,000 Party members were disciplined for corruption in a single year, and China’s decade-long anti-corruption drive punished an astonishing 4.7 million people. The lesson is that *firm and wide ranging action* can and must be taken to excise the cancer of corruption. Unfortunately, there is the perception that some in the leadership are affected by this, hence the slow response to corruption which is an enemy of the people.

39. **Second, the July 2021 unrest and state security weaknesses:** The violent unrest and attempted insurrection in July 2021 (following the imprisonment of former President Zuma) was a wake-up call. It revealed both coordinated attempts at *counter-revolution*, aiming to undermine the legitimacy of the democratic state and even topple it by extra-constitutional means – and the state’s worrying incapacity to respond swiftly. In an era where “colour revolutions” and coups can be instigated against elected governments, we cannot be complacent. The fact that a core of aggrieved elements (including ANC members expelled or facing charges) could orchestrate such chaos, and that it ***drew in sections of the impoverished motive forces*** (who looted out of desperation or opportunism), shows how poverty and social frustration can be weaponised by counter-revolutionaries.

40. The 2022 ANC discussion paper on Balance of Forces noted that *“failure to visibly and progressively address the people’s aspirations can only encourage this counter-revolutionary culture to spill over into other institutions, with devastating consequences for democracy and our constitutional values.”* In short, socio-economic grievances can fuel unrest if not alleviated, and rogue actors will seize any opportunity to destabilise the state. The state must bolster its capacity to ***defend sovereignty and constitutional order***, this means better intelligence coordination, swift law enforcement response to unrest, and addressing root causes (joblessness, inequality) that make communities susceptible to manipulation.

41. **Third, the crisis in local government and basic services:** Local government is the coalface of delivery, but many municipalities are dysfunctional, plagued by financial insolvency, corruption, and capacity shortfalls. Service delivery protests have become frequent as residents grow frustrated with water cuts, power outages, sewage spills and dilapidated infrastructure. The inability of municipalities to collect revenue (especially in poor areas where residents genuinely cannot pay, and in affluent areas where there are tax revolts) undercuts their viability. The ongoing electricity blackouts (loadshedding), although a national utility issue, manifest locally and erode public confidence in government's competence.
42. If basic services crumble, the entire NDR project suffers because the state loses credibility among the people. Thus, fixing local government is urgent: it requires immediate interventions to restore service delivery, while we also **review the local government model** (revenue sources, size and number of municipalities, the district model implementation, etc.) to ensure sustainability. We must professionalise municipal administrations, enforce accountability for mismanagement, and consider legislative changes to manage unstable coalition councils (which have proliferated since 2016 so that local governance does not collapse due to political infighting).
43. **Fourth, outsourcing and state capacity:** A less discussed but hugely consequential factor is the extensive outsourcing of state functions to private consultants and contractors, and how this has weakened government's institutional capacity while fuelling corruption. Mariana Mazzucato and Rosie Collington, in *The Big Con*, argue that excessive reliance on consultancies leads to governments "*knowing less than they claim, costing more than it seems, and preventing the public sector from developing in-house capabilities - it infantilises government and warps economies.*" In South Africa, the Public Affairs Research Institute (PARI) found that post-1994, procurement was massively decentralised, and by the 2010's there were tens of thousands of procurement points across departments and municipalities. This created fertile ground for fraud and inflated pricing.
44. As veteran ANC MP Ben Turok warned back in 2007, "*the public service does not deliver, it procures services.*" Essentially, the state in many areas became a middle-man, paying private firms to do everything from preparing budgets and writing policies to fixing potholes and training staff. This not only opened opportunities for corrupt *tenderpreneurship*, it also **eroded the state's internal skills**. Why build a cadre of municipal engineers if one can just tender out every project (and perhaps take a cut)?

45. The counter-argument has been that procurement was used to drive black empowerment and grow black-owned enterprises, and indeed government spending is a powerful lever for inclusion. But the downside has been severe: over-priced contracts, poor quality work, collusion cartels (e.g. construction companies in 2010 stadium projects) and an atrophied civil service that lacks core competencies.

The new Public Procurement Act aims to balance empowerment with value for money and transparency. Nonetheless, to build a capable developmental state, we must dramatically reign in over-outsourcing. Government should insource critical expertise, rebuild cadres of professionals in key fields (health, infrastructure, finance) and utilize outsourcing *strategically* rather than as a default. Where outsourcing continues, strict oversight and cost control are needed. Ultimately, the state must regain its ability to directly implement and innovate, not just commission work from others.

46. In sum, the **state** remains a primary terrain of struggle. To fulfil the NDR, we need a state that is at once **ethical, capable, developmental, and people-centred**. Key issues to keep in mind include debates on the state's mission and size, professionalisation of the public service, the balance between fiscal sustainability and developmental spending, and the state's role in the economy (regulator vs. owner vs. driver of investment). The ANC must pay constant attention to state reform, because without an effective state, even the best policies on paper will not translate into change on the ground.

Pillar 2. The Economy

47. The evolution of political economy in South Africa and the development of our society have been fundamentally shaped by colonialism of a special type. This created a dual economy that entrenched inequality through the dispossession of land, the exploitation of black labour, and the exclusion of the majority from meaningful participation in the economy. Over the last three decades, efforts have been made to dismantle this legacy, but the structural features of our economy: **highly concentrated ownership, racialized wealth disparities, and spatial inequality**, remain largely intact.
48. The democratic breakthrough ushered in a period of social and economic progress, expanding the black middle class, rolling out social grants, and improving basic services. However, this period was also marked by compromises that tempered the pace of structural change. The state's capacity to direct development has been undermined by both external pressures and internal weaknesses, including corruption and a lack of coherent long-term planning. Strengthening a capable developmental state is critical to drive transformation in the next phase.

49. At the global level, political economy has shifted since then. The **rise of emerging markets, technological advancements, and changing trade dynamics have opened new opportunities**, but South Africa's economy has not fully leveraged these changes to benefit the majority. While we have deepened integration into the global economy, this has often been on unfavourable terms, reinforcing dependency on raw mineral exports and foreign capital inflows. The challenge is to reposition our economy to benefit from globalization in a way that advances inclusive development and national sovereignty.
50. South Africa has experienced **de-industrialization**, marked by the decline of manufacturing and the erosion of skills in key sectors. The commodity boom masked some of these trends, but the underlying vulnerability remains: our economy relies too heavily on exports of un-beneficiated commodities and imports of finished goods. Reindustrialization, through targeted support for sectors like manufacturing, agro-processing, and beneficiation of minerals, is necessary to create jobs and reduce our trade imbalances.
51. The hegemony of global capitalist neoliberal order, through multilateral institutions and international finance, has **constrained the policy space and reinforced underdevelopment** in the Global South. South Africa's post-apartheid economic framework has at times been overly influenced by these neoliberal orthodoxies that prioritize macroeconomic stability over transformation. The 2007/8 global financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic further triggered rethinking of economic orthodoxy worldwide, as states used Keynesian and unorthodox measures to protect jobs and economies. Countries that have escaped the neoliberal playbook have done so by leveraging developmental states, combining state intervention with market mechanisms to tackle poverty and inequality. Reclaiming economic policy sovereignty is essential for pursuing an agenda that prioritizes industrialization, job creation, and broad-based empowerment over the narrow interests of global capital.
52. The **spatial configuration of our political economy** further reproduces the underdevelopment of townships and rural areas. Apartheid geography continues to shape economic opportunities; former homelands and township communities face high unemployment and poverty due to their distance from economic centres and infrastructure. Spatial transformation, which should include investing in local economic development, infrastructure, and reconnecting marginal areas to urban hubs, is needed to break this pattern and spread growth across all regions.
53. Having opened the doors of learning, professions, and business to the black majority, there is still a need to ensure these opportunities translate into

substantive participation in the economy. **Education and skills development** remain key constraints; the poor quality of schooling for many black children perpetuates inequality. A more aggressive skills revolution and mentorship for black professionals and entrepreneurs are required for them to thrive in sectors historically closed off, thus truly deracialising ownership and management of the economy. Despite progressive policies - a labour rights framework, BBBEE, ownership and share schemes - transformation of economic ownership patterns has been shallow. Concentration remains high: a 2021 Competition Commission study found 69.5% of economic sectors highly concentrated, and 40.3% dominated by a single firm.

54. Macroeconomic policy has not delivered inclusive growth. Post-1994, the ANC committed to **“macroeconomic stability that supports inclusive growth and enables the acceleration of social and economic transformation.”** However, stability has too often been interpreted **narrowly as fiscal consolidation and inflation targeting, resulting in austerity, budget cuts, and underinvestment in productive sectors.** As per the resolution of the ANC 55th National Conference, **“maintaining the status of the South African Reserve Bank with respect to form, mandate, and independence”** is important, **but it must operate in a manner that supports transformation and development.** This means monetary policy should be balanced with developmental objectives: while containing inflation, and it should also consider employment and growth. Similarly, the financial sector should be more accountable to development needs, for example by easing access to credit for small businesses and priority sectors.
55. The **financialization of the South African economy**, with total assets amounting to 333% of GDP, has yet to adequately serve the transformation agenda. The deepening of the financial sector has **not translated into sufficient investment in productive sectors.** For example, **pension fund regulations (such as Regulation 28, which limits exposure to non-listed companies) inherently discourage investment in new enterprises and black industrialists, as the majority of assets are allocated to JSE-listed firms.** Aligning financial sector policies with developmental objectives - by incentivizing investment in infrastructure, emerging industries and SME's - will help channel capital into transformative economic activities.
56. **Our state-owned enterprises (SOEs)** are central to the creation of a capable developmental state and to driving industrialisation. However, many SOE's have been plagued by mismanagement and have become a burden on the fiscus, undermining their developmental mandate. The ANC must ensure that SOE's are reformed and repositioned: improving governance, rooting out corruption

and refocusing their operations on catalytic projects (in energy, transportation, telecommunications, etc.) that crowd in private investment and deliver public value.

57. Investment in the productive sectors of the economy has not reached the levels required to fundamentally transform the economic base. **Private sector investment remains cautious**, often preferring quick returns in financial markets over long-term commitments in the real economy. Public investment has been constrained by fiscal pressures and capacity issues. To overcome this, we need a **social compact that encourages reinvestment of profits into the domestic economy, alongside strategic use of development finance and public-private partnerships** to fund infrastructure and industrial projects.
58. High regulated prices contribute to structural inflation, which increases the cost structure of doing business, making the economy uncompetitive relative to our industrial ambitions and on a global scale. **Administered prices in energy, transport, and other utilities often rise above inflation, placing additional burdens on manufacturers and consumers.** The state must intervene to ensure that pricing of key inputs supports competitiveness—through regulatory reforms, efficiency improvements in SOEs, and, where necessary, subsidies or price caps—to prevent these costs from stifling growth and job creation.
59. **A paradigm shift is required** to place our political economy trajectory on a path that addresses inequality, which in turn reproduces poverty and unemployment. This reality poses a critical task for the ANC: to define a context-specific, ideologically grounded perspective of what constitutes a post-neoliberal policy trajectory for South Africa. In practical terms, this means moving beyond the market-driven approaches of the past and developing an economic program rooted in our unique conditions, one that strengthens state-led development, prioritizes the needs of the poor and working class, and breaks with policies that have entrenched inequality and exclusion.

Elements of this paradigm shift should include:

- **A recalibration of industrial and macroeconomic policy**, ensuring they work together to drive **equitable growth**
- Rebuilding SOEs as drivers of productive investment
- **Reforming the financial sector** to align credit and investment with national development goals
- **Reviewing regulated prices and addressing structural inflation** to lower the cost of living and doing business
- **Accelerating land reform, SMME development, and broad-based ownership** to

- break racial, spatial and class concentration
 - **Leveraging AfCFTA and African integration** to build regional value chains and reduce dependency on extractive global markets
 - Advancing a **green industrial policy** to meet climate change and development goals
60. South Africa stands at a crossroads: to either remain locked in a cycle of underdevelopment, inequality, and stagnation; or to chart a bold new developmental course. The ANC's task is to craft a strategy that both disrupts inherited patterns and rebuild the institutional and economic foundations of a just, inclusive, and prosperous South Africa. This must connect to Africa's Agenda 2063 and the global struggle for a rebalanced, post-neoliberal order.

Pillar 3. Ideological Struggle and the Battle of Ideas

61. The **theatre of ideas** is a vital front of any revolution, because it concerns the values, narratives and consciousness that predominate in society. Achieving hegemony and influence, where progressive agenda and liberation ideals are embraced by the majority in society becoming "common sense", is critical for the success of process of social change. Today, our ideational dominance is being challenged by domestic and global right-wing narratives opposed to the transformation of South Africa into a more inclusive, equitable and just society. We face a complex **battle of ideas** with two conflicting tendencies:
62. *On one hand*, the democratic breakthrough codified many of the ANC's ideals (from the Freedom Charter) into the Constitution. The broad values of a non-racial, equal, democratic society are enshrined as the guiding framework of the nation. This could be seen as a high point of our ideological influence, our vision became the law of the land. *On the other hand*, **due to poor governance performance in recent years, high-profile corruption, and incoherence in our messaging**, the ANC's once-legendary moral and intellectual dominance in society has sharply diminished. The "Brand ANC" is tarnished; many in the public no longer automatically accept the movement's pronouncements or trust its intentions. This has had the effect of undermining the liberation and transformation paradigm and the hope that is meant to sustain popular support for fundamental change.
63. This raises fundamental questions: *Can a revolution triumph without a revolution in values and ideas?* History suggests not - sustainable transformation requires that society's dominant values align with the revolutionary project. In other words, the core values and ideals of a National Democratic Society must take root in the post-apartheid society. Yet in our communities today we see disturbing trends:

growing materialism and culture of individualism, normalization of violence and criminality (from gender-based violence to vigilantism), and re-emergence of racism and tribalism in new forms. How is it that after decades of promoting non-racialism and social solidarity, we witness such “*inhuman behaviour and conduct*” in our midst? What accounts for the **moral decay** and loss of social cohesion even as we tried to build a “better life”? The membership of the ANC-led Alliance is not insulated from this social malaise. *In fact, it can be argued that the democratic movement is itself getting transformed by the system it sought to transform.*

64. Part of the answer lies in the **battle of ideas being waged by our opponents**, and part lies in our own failures to wage that battle effectively.
65. In the run-up to 2024, there was a **well-funded, concerted campaign to discredit the gains of democracy and implicitly the ANC**, aiming to push the ANC below 50%. The communications landscape is now highly contested and fragmented. Traditional media (print, broadcasters) have largely adopted a critical or even adversarial stance towards the ANC, partly due to genuine scandals and failings but also reflecting ownership biases and professional cynicism. At the same time, digital and social media have risen as powerful platforms, where narratives (true or false) spread rapidly without filters. Our *legendary communications machinery* of the liberation days did not adapt well to this new environment.

As a result, **public perceptions of the ANC are dominated by narratives of corruption, incompetence and internal division**, drowning out recognition of our achievements. The formation of the Government of National Unity (GNU) after May 2024 somewhat boosted public mood – Ipsos polls show optimism about the country’s direction doubled between April and June 2024 – but mainstream commentary often credits this to opposition parties’ involvement, downplaying the ANC’s role. We know, in fact, that much of the positive change came from the ANC’s own renewed commitment to fix problems and defend transformation, but that’s not the dominant story told.

66. Globally, there is a **right-wing backlash** against the values of equality, diversity and human rights, denigrated as “wokeness” by its detractors. This ideological offensive valorises individualism, chauvinist nationalism, patriarchal norms, and even overt racism in some quarters. In South Africa, we see its echoes: the resurgence of open racial nationalism (e.g. fringe groups claiming “white genocide” conspiracies), cultural chauvinism, and patriarchal pushback against gender liberation. These narratives attack the very foundation of the ANC’s values: non-racialism, non-sexism, Ubuntu, and multilateral cooperation. They

exploit fears and insecurities amid economic hardship – scapegoating immigrants, blaming affirmative action for unemployment, or mocking anti-racism as “political correctness.” If unchallenged, these ideas can unravel the inclusive national identity we seek to build.

67. Meanwhile, *within our own movement*, ideological clarity has suffered and intellectual rigor has also declined. After 1994, the urgency of daily governance often crowded out systematic ideological work. Political education sessions became irregular. A “technical” mindset took hold in parts of government, focusing on service delivery metrics without contextualising them in our liberation mission. At the same time, some among us began advancing **radical-sounding slogans without substance**, or making promises that cannot be immediately fulfilled (so-called *revolutionary phrase-mongering*), fuelling popular impatience when those promises aren’t met. Incoherent or populist messaging from within the broad movement (including Alliance partners or breakaway factions) has sometimes confused our constituency. Additionally, government’s communication on both achievements and challenges has been poor often reactive, defensive, and fragmented. All this contributes to a diluted ANC narrative.
68. To occupy the frontline and centre stage of the battle of ideas, the ANC must **renew its ideological and intellectual capacity** and reassert itself as the leading moral voice for progressive change. Historically, the ANC defeated apartheid not just militarily or politically, but *morally* and *intellectually*. We forged a vision of a South Africa that belongs to all, which ultimately won over the majority. We must redefine the ideologies and intellectual capability. We must rekindle that moral and intellectual leadership today for the new phase of struggle. As we do so, we must also combat regressive tendencies and ideas *within* our ranks: for example, narrow Africanist or ethnic chauvinist views that reject non-racialism (when an ANC leader flirts with “divide and rule” rhetoric, it undermines decades of non-racial stance), or dismissiveness toward gender equality struggles. We must pushback against a growing culture of greed, individualism, consumerism and conspicuous consumption in our ranks – which is the key driver of corruption. These are not minor slips, they “*strategically bedevil the mobilisation of the motive forces for the new phase of struggle,*” as the paper notes.
69. Two decades ago, we resolved to leverage **education as a transmitter of new values** – instilling constitutional values, non-sexism, and non-racialism in the young. Yet we have not fully implemented that vision. Civic education in schools, national history that fosters pride and unity, and values of respect and equality need to be woven into curricula and public campaigns. The persistence of racism and sexism suggests this work is incomplete.

Pillar 4. The Motive Forces and Organisational Renewal

70. A holistic understanding of how social forces in South Africa have shifted over 31 years of democracy is vital. The ANC's support and the alignment of various classes and strata ("motive forces") behind the NDR cannot be taken for granted; they evolve with material conditions and the ANC's own conduct. We must assess changes in **the working class, middle strata, rural masses, women, youth**, and those who own capital, to see how the balance of class forces has changed. Our organisational work – *how we organise these constituencies* – must adapt accordingly.

The Working Class

71. The working class has always been the **core motive force** of the NDR. As SACP stalwart Moses Kotane asserted, in South Africa the liberation struggle must *deliver the emancipation of the black working class* for it to have real meaning. This class, comprising both employed and unemployed workers, is the majority of our society - it is central to production - historically it has shown the highest levels of progressive consciousness and ability to organise and mobilise. Without an organised, conscious working class, the NDR cannot advance to true social emancipation.

72. Over 1994–2025, the working class in South Africa has grown in absolute size and changed in composition:

- The number of employed people more than doubled from around 8 million in 1994 to about **16.8 million by early 2025**. This is a significant gain in formal labour absorption, accompanied by strong worker rights (the Constitution and labour laws guarantee the right to unionise, collective bargaining, etc.). However, much of this job growth came in certain sectors: services (like retail, security, hospitality) and some in construction and public services, while **traditional industrial jobs declined**. Mining and manufacturing shed large numbers of jobs due to mechanisation, global competition and in some cases mismanagement or labour unrest. Public sector employment plateaued (aside from social services like education and health).
- The rise of the **informal sector and outsourcing** has changed the nature of work. Many jobs created **are** insecure, low-wage and outside traditional union reach e.g. outsourcing of cleaning, transport etc. and the gig economy. We have a growing stratum of the "*precarious class*" and "*working poor*" – people living in a state of uncertainty even though some have low paying jobs without any benefits.

73. These trends have fragmented the labour movement. Over 31 years, South Africa's once-united union movement has become **less cohesive**. COSATU, our

Alliance partner, experienced splits (e.g. SAFTU, AMCU). Many industrial unions left COSATU or collapsed, leaving COSATU today dominated by public-sector unions. This shift brings its own dynamic: when the state is the main employer for many union members, labour's stance can soften toward government or, conversely, create tension (witness public-service strikes). The fragmentation into multiple federations and unaffiliated unions has weakened the collective power of labour vis-à-vis capital and sometimes vis-à-vis the state. Union density in the private sector has declined, and fewer young workers are unionised (partly because many are in informal or precarious jobs).

Weak workplace organisation and lower union penetration means the working class is not as organisationally strong as in the 1980's or 1990's. There is also a tendency towards increasing fragmentation instead of consolidation and unity of the trade union across industries and sectors. This weakening of labour's muscle has broad implications: it reduces a key pillar of support for the ANC-led project, and it allows capital more leeway in resisting transformation (since a divided working class can be more easily managed).

74. Meanwhile, the **unemployed** segment of the working class has swelled due to chronic high unemployment. Again here, a large section of the working class is finding itself living precarious lives. These millions of jobless (especially youth) face debilitating conditions – poverty, reliance on grants or family support and social marginalisation. Government social assistance (the social wage) provides some relief e.g. free basic water/electricity in some areas, housing for some, and education/health access. But unemployed and poor communities remain highly dependent on the state, and when services fail, they feel it directly. Their exclusion from formal economic activity also makes them susceptible to populist rhetoric and even to exploitation by criminal networks or demagogues.

The July 2021 unrest showed how easily desperate, idle youth can be mobilised for destructive ends if given a spark. Millions long for the dignity of work; if the ANC cannot channel that desire into hope and opportunities, others will channel it into anger and disorder.

75. In rural provinces and peri-urban townships, **urbanisation** and migration patterns are reshaping the working class. Many families oscillate between rural homes (sustained by pensions and subsistence farming) and urban informal settlements (where younger members seek work). This creates stresses on social fabric and municipal services. Yet, notably, the rural and urban poor have remained among the ANC's most loyal voters for a long time – because they see the ANC as the provider of what little they have. That loyalty, however, is being tested as material conditions stagnate or worsen.

76. From an organisational perspective, the Alliance needs to **rethink and reconfigure how we organise the working class**. Historically, COSATU was the vehicle to mobilise workers and inject working-class perspective into the ANC's politics. With COSATU's weakening, the ANC must find ways to engage the broader labour movement, including independent unions, on common issues (like pushing for a living wage or worker ownership schemes). We should convene a summit of all progressive labour formations to rebuild unity on an NDR agenda. ANC branches have struggled to recruit active worker members, especially in urban areas. Many unionised workers participate more in their unions than in ANC structures. We may need to rethink branch formats or create workplace-based ANC units to accommodate workers' schedules and tap into issues at the workplace.
77. The **unorganised and unemployed** require creative organising. Concepts like community forums or volunteer corps for unemployed youth (who can then be integrated into ANC programs or public employment projects) could give them a sense of belonging and purpose, and also politically educate them so they are not swayed by anti-ANC rhetoric.

Rural Masses

78. The rural population, particularly in former Bantustan areas, remains one of the poorest and most marginalized groups, yet has historically been a strong base of ANC support. Three decades of democracy have brought visible improvements to many rural areas – access to clinics, schools, roads, water, and social grants – but rural communities still bear the **scars of deliberate underdevelopment** from the past. In some places, progress has stalled or reversed: many rural municipalities are fiscally distressed, unable to maintain services as their residents are too poor to pay and administrative capacity is low. This is a structural weakness that directly hampers the NDR's promise of improving lives in the countryside.
79. The **land question** remains a hot issue in rural South Africa. While the ANC government has pursued land reform and restitution, outcomes have been limited and slow. Many rural people still lack secure land tenure or sufficient land to make a living. Government support (financial, training, extension services) to emerging black farmers has often been inadequate, resulting in some redistributed farms failing to produce. This feeds into frustration that “real” economic empowerment has not reached rural communities. Yet, interestingly, rural voters (particularly older generations) have stayed more loyal to the ANC than urban voters – perhaps due to appreciation of social grants and the historical allegiance through traditional leaders. However, even rural support saw a dip in 2024, signalling that patience is wearing thin.

80. Traditional leaders remain influential in many rural communities and are formally part of the governance system (through houses of traditional leaders and municipal roles). The ANC's relationship with traditional authorities has been generally cooperative post-1994, although tensions occasionally surface (e.g., around land rights for women, or jurisdiction over development projects). As we pursue rural development, we must continue engaging traditional leaders as stakeholders in change – while also ensuring that democratic rights (especially for women and youth in those areas) are protected.
81. As a result of land reform, investments in communal land areas and agricultural policies, we are also beginning to see the emergence of a black farming sector (both commercial and subsistence), now accounting for around 10% of agricultural output. This is an important constituency that must be supported and harnessed, as part of our national strategy for food security and addressing the historical injustice.
82. Given that rural masses have been pillars of support, the ANC must **reinvest in rural development and mobilisation**:
- Organisationally, strengthen ANC branches in rural areas to not just be election machines but to actively solve local problems (e.g., mobilising for infrastructure repairs or monitoring grant distribution).
 - Ensure **agrarian transformation and rural development** is high on the policy agenda: this is not possible without significant land redistribution (with proper post-settlement support), modernising rural infrastructure by investing in public transport, roads, water and sanitation, internet and electrification (off-grid solutions where needed), and supporting sectors like small-scale farming, agro-processing, and rural tourism to create jobs.
 - Continue and expand targeted programs like the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP) and work with entities like the Land Bank (ensuring they focus on small farmers and look at its recapitalization). We can draw lessons from countries like **Brazil** (which had extensive family farming support programs under Lula) or **China** (which focused on rural industrialisation and poverty alleviation campaigns) on how to transform rural economies.
 - Politically, guard against new **ethno-nationalist movements** that try to exploit rural discontent by promising parochial solutions. The ANC's message of unity and shared progress must reach rural youth especially, who might otherwise be attracted to identity-based or populist alternatives.

The Middle Strata

83. One notable social change since 1994 is the expansion of the **black middle strata** (popularly referred to as *middle class*). This has been an intended outcome of economic transformation and empowerment policies. A growing middle class is seen as beneficial for development: it boosts social mobility, consumer demand, investments in education/skills, and can bring social cohesion and stability in society. It is also a generator and medium for transmission of social ideas, values and more. By various measures, the black middle class more than doubled in size between the early 2000's and mid-2010's. By 2018, roughly half of South Africa's middle-income population was estimated to be black (African, Coloured, Indian), whereas in 1994 it was overwhelmingly white. This is a significant transformation in the social structure.
84. However, the middle class is **heterogeneous**. It includes professionals (teachers, nurses, managers, academics), small business owners (petty bourgeoisie), mid-level managers and officials, and political elite and senior bureaucrats (some of whom may be quite wealthy). Different sub-groups have different interests and outlooks. Historically, the middle class can be a force for either stability or change - sometimes championing reforms, other times leaning conservative to protect status.
85. In South Africa, the **political allegiance of the black middle strata** has been an area of analysis and concern. In the early democratic period, many black middle-class people were part of the ANC's core support base (and indeed ANC leadership). But disillusionment has grown among some of them, especially younger professionals, due to corruption, poor governance and slow pace of economic transformation. We see some drift of this group towards apathy or even opposition parties on the right and professed left. Meanwhile, white middle-class voters have overwhelmingly consolidated behind the DA, with many who were more open-minded abandoning any flirtation with the ANC. Some of our mistakes include a period where a discourse of anti-intellectualism was allowed to take root among some in the leadership of the ANC, a tendency that runs counter to the proud history of how Black intellectuals and professionals played a key role, side by side with working class leaders, in the revival and radicalisation of the ANC in the different phases of the liberation struggle.
86. The ANC must pay attention to the dynamics of the middle strata:
- These are often opinion-makers in communities (teachers, community leaders, etc.). Losing them means losing connectors to broader society.
 - They also tend to be the taxpayers and skilled professionals needed for running both public and private sectors.

- The deteriorating economic conditions and the rising cost-of-living have impacted negatively on the black middle strata too. Many are struggling to make ends meet and live under constant fear of falling back to whence they came. The ANC gets blamed for this near-precarity of the black middle strata.
87. Renewal must entail finding news of **organising the middle strata**. Traditional ANC branch activities may not appeal to busy professionals or entrepreneurs. We might need flexible forums - like interest groups or professional networks affiliated with the ANC - to draw them in. For instance, an ANC Professionals Forum, or Business Forum, where those in the middle strata can discuss policy ideas and feel their voices heard. The paper notes *“the ANC must connect with the huge community of professionals our transformative policies have produced.”* This is crucial for renewal.
 88. At the same time, we must guide the middle strata to align with national goals, not just narrow interests. Revolutionary vigilance means being aware that the middle class can sometimes swing to reaction if they feel threatened (e.g., by crime or economic instability). We have to persuade them that their long-term security lies in an equitable society with opportunities for all, not just protecting what they have.
 89. A proactive step would be to incorporate more middle-strata friendly campaigns in our work: anti-crime initiatives in suburbs (to show we care about safety), anti-corruption drives (middle class abhors corruption that wastes tax money), and opportunities for volunteerism (like involving professionals in mentoring youths, etc. giving them stake in social upliftment).

The Patriotic Bourgeoisie

90. One important and often overlooked force in this new conjuncture is the **Patriotic Bourgeoisie**. Unlike the traditional category of monopoly capital, which remains entrenched and resistant to meaningful transformation, the patriotic bourgeoisie consists of white and emergent black capitalists whose interests are not only materially tied to the democratic project, but also ideologically shaped by a lived history of marginalisation and a commitment to national development.
91. These strata of entrepreneurs, industrialists, and businesspeople is not monolithic, and certainly not without contradictions. Yet, they represent a crucial layer that stands to benefit directly from the success of the NDR - provided that it is oriented toward inclusive growth, developmental outcomes, and a democratic public ethos. When mobilised as part of a broader progressive bloc, the *patriotic bourgeoisie* can act as a stabilising force for investment, a partner in localisation and skills development, and a bridge between the state and productive sectors of the economy.

92. Their responsibilities, however, are not limited to private gain. They must be called upon to contribute to industrial strategy, invest in local communities, to uphold labour rights and ensure decent work, to honour procurement agreements with transparency, and to reject corruption and cronyism. In turn, the ANC and the Alliance must create space for their participation - not by diluting the NDR, but by advancing a shared agenda rooted in national unity, economic inclusion, and social justice.
93. Working with this group and expanding the co-operation between progressive forces and the capitalist class as a whole (as in implementing the programme for economic reconstruction and recovery) and aligning it with the programme of transformation is both a tactical and strategic necessity. It repositions economic transformation not as a zero-sum game, but as a project of building national capacity, deepening sovereignty, and achieving sustainable development. In the current climate of economic volatility, the mobilisation of the patriotic bourgeoisie is vital. Indeed, it can be argued that a growing economy, a stable society in which everyone benefits from a rising standard of life and a capable and ethical state are in the interest of the overwhelming majority of South Africans – black and white – and it behoves the ANC to demonstrate this in its articulation, practical programmes and conduct.

Women and Gender Equality

94. The ANC and broader liberation movement, propelled by women's struggles, have come to embrace **non-sexism and gender equality** as its core principles. Over decades, women fought within and outside the ANC from the 1954 Women's Charter that influenced the Freedom Charter, to the 1990's push for representation and the ANC's adoption of a 50/50 gender quota in leadership. These efforts translated into significant gains: today women's representation in government is much improved (near parity in Parliament and cabinet), and we have a Ministry and various mechanisms for women's empowerment. Many laws and policies explicitly aim at gender equality (from inheritance rights to workplace equity). In these respects, we have some success to acknowledge: **the public sphere is far more open to women** now than under apartheid or even the 1990's.
95. Yet, **patriarchy remains deeply entrenched** in our society. Despite all the efforts we have made in empowering women, the material conditions of many women, especially black working-class women, remain very difficult and precarious. Women are disproportionately affected by poverty and unemployment – they sit at the bottom rung of most socio-economic indicators. Female-headed households are on average poorer. The economy still often confines women to lower-paid, insecure forms of work, and our culture still burdens them with most unpaid care work.

96. Most horrifying is the persistence (even increase) of **gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF)**. South Africa has extremely high rates of rape, intimate partner violence and murder of women and girls. This “shadow pandemic” means that even with formal equality, women’s actual freedom is undermined by fear and trauma. Despite new laws and a National Strategic Plan on GBV, implementation is lacking. The struggles of women risk being ghettoized as “women’s issues,” whereas they should be seen as society-wide crises.
97. Gender based violence is presented as a women’s issue, but takes place in a broader context of male violence: against women, children and other vulnerable groups, but in even greater numbers, against each other. Police homicide statistics show that 87% of femicide victims are male, 93% of perpetrators are male, and 63% knew each other. As noted by Matzoupolus and other, *“certainly, violence at its core is gendered, and South Africa remains a country with a capacity for extremely gendered violence. However, a plethora of complex and intersecting factors exacerbates the violence risk. These include social and economic inequality, patriarchal versions of masculinity, lack of social cohesion, alcohol, firearms, and legacies of colonialism, migrant labour, slavery, other forms of discrimination and human rights violations. For many men, achieving dominance is expected. Interviews with incarcerated South African men highlight that violence is considered a normative resource to establish control in their lives.”*
98. Within the ANC, the ANC Women’s League (ANCWL) has been an important vehicle to mobilise women (and indeed the majority of ANC members are women). The ANCWL also now includes desks for young women and LGBTQI+, acknowledging a broader gender constituency. However, some criticisms are that gender issues are still often seen as a “women’s league thing” rather than central to the ANC’s agenda. Men in the movement have not always been active allies - changing gender power relations is sometimes treated as secondary. We must change that mindset: *gender equality is integral to the NDR*. Non-sexism is as fundamental as non-racialism. Gender-based violence poses a serious counter-revolutionary threat to the NDR. Like corruption, GBV must be declared the enemy of the revolution. It must be tackled with the resources and energy that we have.
99. It is also critical to campaign around this issue as a societal one – involving both women and men – and challenging the narratives of misogyny (hatred of women) and the emerging misandry (prejudice against men), which has been used in countries such as the US in its recent elections to mobilise especially young men behind right-wing causes.

The Youth

100. Young people have always been a motor and moral conscience of the struggle – from the 1940s to students of 1976 to the young lions of the 1980s. In every era, youth injected militancy, idealism and urgency into the liberation movement. Today’s youth (broadly those born post-1994, the “born free” generation) face a paradox: they have political freedom and rights, but many socio-economic aspects of apartheid’s legacy remain – unequal (access to) education, wealth disparities, job scarcity, spatial segregation. They inherited the *dream* of the Freedom Charter, but encounter the *reality* of unemployment, exclusion and frustration.
101. For many young South Africans, the ANC does not hold the same emotional connection as it did for earlier generations. They did not experience apartheid first-hand nor the euphoria of 1994. Instead, they see the ANC in government speaking *at* them, not *with* them, with seemingly outdated or distant language and methods. Many do not identify with the “Congress tradition” or formal politics at all – evidenced by extremely low youth voter registration and turnout. But this does not mean youth are apolitical. In fact, the last decade saw powerful youth-driven movements (#RhodesMustFall, #FeesMustFall, etc.) forcing national debates on decolonization, education access, identity and more. Young feminists led campaigns like #TotalShutDown against GBV. The youth are active in *issue-based* mobilisations and online activism, though often outside established structures.
102. The challenge is that *youth energies are fragmented* and often fleeting (a hashtag trend spikes and then dies down). Without an organising centre or a political home, much of the outrage doesn’t translate into sustained power, and can breed cynicism when immediate change doesn’t come. Opportunistic forces sometimes exploit this vacuum, luring youth with populism or even into criminality.
103. Several specific issues shape the youth condition:
 - **Unemployment:** As noted, around half of young people are unemployed, and many more are stuck in precarious informal work. This is a structural economic failure that breeds despair. Each year hundreds of thousands of matriculants and graduates enter a labour market that cannot absorb them.
 - **Education and skills:** While access to basic education is near universal, quality is uneven. Many youth leave the schooling system without skills. TVET colleges and other training often don’t match market needs. NSFAS has enabled more poor youth to attend tertiary education, but funding shortfalls and throughput issues persist, with growing graduate unemployment.
 - **Social ills:** Lengthy unemployment and marginalisation contribute to problems

like mental health crises (e.g. youth suicides, especially among young men), substance abuse (like the scourge of nyaope), high rates of teenage pregnancy (often reflecting lack of opportunity and poor life orientation), and susceptibility to crime (either as victims or perpetrators).

- **Exclusion from leadership:** Youth, especially young black women, are underrepresented in leadership across sectors. Boardrooms, political offices, and civic leadership often skew older, which can make youth feel their voice is not heard where decisions are made.
104. The ANC's traditional vehicle for youth, the **ANC Youth League (ANCYL)**, sadly collapsed around 2012 and has struggled since. Factional battles, an inward focus on ANC 'palace politics' and mismanagement left a void at precisely the time when youth needed organisation during the mooted "economic freedom" second phase. Some in the ANCYL were co-opted by state capture networks, others drifted away. The Progressive Youth Alliance (PYA) components (like SASCO, YCL, COSAS) also weakened, and we lost ground especially in student politics to the opposing political students formation.
105. Recently, there are positive signs and **green shoots** of a Youth League revival over the last few years with various task-teams of the ANC Youth League ultimately leading to its Congress. This must be consolidated and accelerated. We have a new generation of youth leaders trying to rebuild structures and credibility. They need support, resources, and political space to be militant and innovative voice of South Africa's young people. In the movement, the Youth League should be a source of new ideas and fresh perspective on how to radically change the stubborn realities of the apartheid and colonial political economy.
106. A key feature of modern youth is their **digital nativity**. They mobilise on social media more naturally than in branch meetings. They value horizontal networks and quick action. The ANC must adapt – our youth mobilisation must marry online activism with on-the-ground work. Also, youth activism today is more intersectional – linking issues of race, gender and environment. The ANC should engage with these intersectional movements, showing that our broader NDR program encompasses their aspirations too. As Oliver Tambo warned, *"A country, a movement, a people that does not value its youth does not deserve its future."* We must act on this wise counsel by putting youth at the centre of our renewal project – not just as beneficiaries, but as drivers. If the ANC can harness the passion and creativity of this generation, and genuinely address their concerns, we will inject new life into the NDR.

Pillar 5: The International Balance of Forces

107. South Africa's global and African role has evolved. In the first 15 years after apartheid, we were at the forefront of the "African Agenda": contributing to peace and security efforts, promoting regional integration and development, and shaping Africa's relations with the world. We helped transform the Organisation of African Unity into the African Union, and drove creation of key institutions like NEPAD, the APRM (African Peer Review Mechanism), the Pan-African Parliament, and the Peace and Security Council. We took pride in being a champion of African interests on the global stage.
108. However, in the last decade or so, it is perceived that we "dropped the ball" somewhat. Domestically, our attention turned inward with our own crises, and our influence in continental affairs waned. Partnerships for a progressive African agenda have dissipated and anti-progressive or narrowly nationalist forces (and external meddling) have increased in some African regions. Recently, we've made efforts to regain initiative. The government has been active in bilateral diplomacy with neighbours, pushing for AU inclusion in G20 (which succeeded in 2023), and supporting the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). These are important for reasserting African leadership and South Africa's positive role.
109. Globally, we face turbulent times: constant wars (with non-state actors, proxy wars, etc.), the threat of great power conflict (e.g., in Eastern Europe or the Middle East possibly spiralling), and even nuclear risks. We've seen how one war (like Russia/Ukraine conflict) can disrupt global supply chains, upset global markets, fuel inflation and energy crises that hit us as well. Geopolitical risk is now part of our daily reality. International stability, solidarity and multilateralism matter greatly for the survival of humanity because no single nation or bloc can single-handedly safeguard the future of humanity.
110. The shift from a unipolar world (US hegemony after Cold War) to a **multipolar world** is decidedly underway, though it will be a slow and protracted process. China's rise as an economic superpower and India's and others' growth is steadily creating a new balance. This multipolarity can benefit countries like South Africa by providing alternatives in partnerships and more space to assert our interests. Indeed, forums like BRICS emerged to voice a non-Western perspective and foster cooperation (and BRICS's expansion in 2024 indicates appetite for this among many nations).
111. Western powers are resisting losing dominance; the US in particular under its nationalist leadership is using all tools (economic, military, communication and cultural) to maintain its primacy as a dominant superpower. This leads to a possibly dangerous period of rivalry. Small and medium countries can be they unless we band together.

112. South Africa, due to its history and geographic position (southern tip, key maritime routes, strategic minerals), is definitely in the “crosshairs” of geopolitical competition. We’ve already felt pressure via diplomatic spats (like around Ukraine stance, or false allegations about arms shipment, and now manufactured lies around ‘white genocide’). We need to be both strategic and tactically savvy to navigate the geopolitical risks and seize the opportunities presented by this situation. Our approach remains anchored in our values. We **support multilateralism, peaceful resolution of conflicts, and a reformed global governance system** that is fair (the democratisation of the United Nations and multilateral finance institutions, for instance), **alignment with the Global South solidarity tradition** through our participation in the G77 and the Non-Aligned Movement amongst others, and are **championing development rights and sovereignty of developing nations**.

However, we must also **protect our national interests**: trade relations with the West are still significant, and there are many areas in which we are at one with the EU on issues such as pursuit of social justice, a just energy transition and human rights. We refuse to be bullied into choosing camps, but we also should avoid reckless provocation. A principle of “friends with all, enemies with none” as long as our core values are respected, should guide us.

113. This international balance of forces therefore represents various opportunities and accompanying threats. For instance, nascent multipolarity gives us an opportunity to diversify partnerships and leveraging platforms such as the BRICS New Development Bank as alternative finance, or the massive Chinese investment in infrastructure amongst others. African integration through the AfCFTA could boost our economy and leadership. We chair G20 in 2025 and can showcase leadership on key issues affecting the African continent and the developing South.

Being in G20 and UN bodies allows us to influence global agenda (like climate change, where Africa’s voice is needed). The global economic volatility, along with great power tensions can harm our economy through capital outflows and commodity price swings, therefore presenting a major threat. We have also seen how external influence could undermine our sovereignty or try to shape our politics (e.g., funding opposition or civil unrest). Also, if we mismanage diplomacy, we could lose key economic ties or provoke some form of sanction

114. We should continue to advocate for a just world order, including our support for **Africa and Latin America serving permanently in the UN Security Council**, that **international finance rules be fair, strengthen South-South cooperation** (with Latin America and Asia too, not just BRICS). Within the continent, we should

continue to play a **proactive role in conflict resolution** (as we do in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan and Eswatini), working through AU and SADC. We must consistently ensure that South Africa is seen as a partner, not a hegemon, by respecting peers and contributing fairly.

115. In essence, on the international front we must be true to our principles of a better Africa and better world, while being pragmatic about protecting and advancing South Africa's interests in a tough global environment. Our foreign policy has always been an extension of our domestic transformation agenda – thus, fighting for a more equitable international order is part and parcel of the NDR.

Forces Resisting Transformation

116. In analysing balance of forces, we must also frankly assess those **forces arrayed against the NDR and progressive transformation** – whether consciously or objectively – in the current period. These include elements of the old order and beneficiaries of the status quo who resist change, and can be summed up as follows:

117. **Right-wing consolidation among elements in the white populace:** The white community, by and large, has thrown its lot behind parties like the Democratic Alliance (DA) and Freedom Front Plus (FF+), and a small but significant group supports vocal lobby groups like AfriForum and Solidarity. These entities, while operating within legal bounds, push back against many transformation policies. The DA's platform has increasingly been openly against affirmative action/BEE, often opposing efforts to integrate and uplift historically disadvantaged groups. They frame their stance as “non-racialism” or “meritocracy,” but in effect it protects existing privilege. AfriForum and similar NGOs go further – mobilising international sympathy by portraying Afrikaners as a threatened minority, raising the spectre of “farm murders” and “genocide” to pressure government to halt reforms. They even find encouragement in some foreign quarters (e.g., some politicians in the West who echo their concerns). Then there is the independence movement in the Western Cape, advocating for secession from the rest of South Africa, presumably as a white-dominated enclave. Although small, such a movement should not be ignored, given how often separatism eventually translates into violence. These narratives are potent in maintaining a laager mentality among many whites and dissuading them from buying into a shared South African project. We must counter these both with facts (crime affects all, not just whites) and by ensuring our reforms are fair and effective (so they have less to latch onto).

118. Business elite and monopoly capital: The largely white, and still heavily concentrated, business sector has adapted to democracy in terms of operating environment, but many core attitudes remain unchanged. They have benefited from integration into global markets, and many do quite well financially (as seen in high executive pay and company profits, aside from downturns during load-shedding and recessions). Many of them are enthusiastic partners of government in devising measures that would generate economic growth. However, some of them promote interventions that would denude the state of its strategic economic assets and leverage.

Investment levels in the domestic economy have been anaemic – much capital is either sitting idle or flowing out (capital flight). Confidence has been low in part due to issues like power generation instability and policy uncertainty, but mainly because some established businesses are reluctant to support transformation policies (losing market share or having to partner with new entrants). Echoing neoliberal mantras, sections of business often lobby for minimal state intervention and labour “flexibility” (code for weakening worker protections). There is evidence that some big businesses have, behind the scenes, supported the opposition or the fragmentation of the black vote to diminish ANC dominance (through funding campaigns, etc.)

Thus said, the relationship between the democratic state and business has not been outright antagonistic, forums like NEDLAC have seen both unity and struggle. We have partnered on various compacts (e.g., the jobs summit, the energy action plan and the Vulindlela interventions) which shows potential for alignment if interests converge. But overall, one can classify the stance of “monopoly capital” as ambivalent-to-negative towards fundamental transformation. While they prefer social stability, they resist measures aimed at reducing inequality: reflecting a lack of appreciation of the symbiosis between these two imperatives.

119. International forces and Western hegemony: Globally, the 2020s are characterised by tension between the established Western powers (esp. US/EU) and emerging powers (China, Brazil, India, etc.), and a scramble for spheres of influence. South Africa, given its BRICS alignment and independent foreign policy, is seen by some Western hawks as needing to be brought “in line.” The current US administration’s aggressive posture (MAGA doctrine) regards progressive governments with suspicion and has been willing to use **transactional pressure** – economic or diplomatic or possibly security – to assert its interests.

120. There is an attempt to recast multilateral institutions and global rules to benefit the US and its allies at the expense of the Global South. South Africa’s positions (like non-alignment on great power conflicts, pushing for a multipolar order,

trading with China/Russia) could invite covert or overt meddling. There appears even to be funding funnelled to opposition groups, traditional and social media or civil society to amplify criticism of the ANC. We must be vigilant: external forces may prefer a weaker or pliant government that would toe their line, which goes against improvement in the living experience of Black South Africans.

121. In Africa too, **anti-progressive forces** have grown in some regions – militant extremism, civil wars, foreign interference to exploit resources, all undermining the sovereignty, peace, integration and development agenda of the continent. If South Africa is unstable or backslides, it would embolden these trends. Conversely, our success could inspire progressive forces across the continent.

122. Acknowledging these opposing forces is not to breed paranoia, but to realistically gauge challenges.

The ANC should:

- Continue **engaging business** through platforms like NEDLAC to find win-win solutions (e.g., encouraging investment in infrastructure in exchange for policy incentives). But also be ready to regulate or confront them when the public interest demands (like prosecuting cartels, enforcing BEE).
- Isolate the extreme right narratives by **building broad social fronts**: for example, other moderate voices in white community (religious leaders, academics) who support democracy should be engaged to speak against those stoking racial paranoia. Strengthen legislation against hate crimes and ensure swift action on things like racially inflammatory social media incidents, to set the tone.
- Internationally, **double-down on multilateralism**: strengthen our alliances in BRICS, G77, AU to collectively resist bullying and push for reforms that benefit the global South. But also maintain pragmatic diplomatic ties with the West, avoid giving any excuse for punitive measures. We must articulate clearly that our stance (e.g. on not picking sides in great power rivalry) is principled and in line with our national interest.
- Use public diplomacy to **highlight successes and counter negativity**: e.g. amplify that we have had peaceful transfers of power, an independent judiciary tackling corruption (Zondo Commission) etc. to counter the failed state narrative. If we implement renewal seriously, it in itself, will neutralise many naysayers.

STATE OF THE ANC AND CHALLENGES TO ITS RENEWAL

123. All the above challenges facing various *motive forces* have unfolded while **the ANC itself** has been going through an existential crisis. Over the last decade, our movement's structures became **weak and internally conflicted**. This severely hampered our ability to provide leadership to society.

Notable symptoms include:

- Many **ANC branches became inactive** or were **mobilised only for conferences** and nomination processes rather than community work. **Links between ANC structures and communities/masses have frayed.**
- **Endemic factionalism** and **internal divisions** – often along lines of patronage or personality cults – have sapped energy and credibility. Instead of unity in pursuit of NDR goals, too much focus went into internal battles and the pursuit of leadership positions within political structures by certain members appears to be driven more by personal ambition and the desire for status than by a genuine commitment to the principles of cadre-ship and the advancement of community well-being.
- Core values and ethos – **humility, selflessness, service to the people** – were undermined by scandals of corruption and ill-discipline. This tarnished the ANC's moral authority.
- **Political education** and **cadre development** in the ANC **waned**, leading to a decline in ideological coherence and the rise of careerism (people joining for personal advancement rather than service).

124. The programme of **Organisational Renewal** – which has been emphasized for at least a decade – is therefore not just a slogan but a necessity for survival. We have spoken of building *active branches*, reviving *sectoral work*, strengthening the *Alliance*, rolling out mass *political education*, and reasserting *ANC integrity and values*. These remain critical tasks. Some progress has been made (e.g. renewing the membership system, expelling or sidelining some corrupt elements), but much more needs to be done consistently across the board to truly renew the movement and regain society's trust. This includes deft management of leadership succession within our ranks, failure could plunge the ANC into even deeper crises.

125. The **Alliance** (ANC, SACP, COSATU) has held together for 30 years post-1994, which is an achievement, but it has been strained at points. Episodes like the adoption of GEAR in 1996, major public sector strikes, and policy disagreements tested Alliance unity. Nonetheless, during elections, the Alliance generally presented a united front and jointly crafted manifestos focusing on progressive and popular issues. Lately, unresolved debates about the Alliance's (re)configuration have loomed larger.

The SACP's decision in principle to contest elections outside the ANC-led alliance is a serious development. It coincides with the ANC's electoral support dipping to 40% and the concerted campaign against it by local and international anti-transformation forces. If the SACP runs separately, it is bound to confuse the motive forces of NDR, split the 'national democratic forces vote further and complicate dual membership (leading to witch-hunts and organisational conflicts). We must handle this carefully – maintaining the strategic unity of purpose among progressive forces even if tactical forms shift. Open and strategic dialogue at top leadership level is required to navigate this new landscape.

126. It's also worth noting that each component of the Alliance has its **own weaknesses**. COSATU has lost membership and some affiliates; SACP's influence among the working class and poor is limited; and the ANC's issues are catalogued above (and they have involved members of both the SACP and COSATU). Therefore, Alliance renewal must accompany ANC renewal. Perhaps what is needed is a re-imagining of the Alliance in current conditions: **the question whether it is practicable to align on a common minimum program for transformation and allowing more independence in tactics while preserving unity on fundamentals is an epoch-making ideological, political and organisational one that requires mature leadership.**
127. Beyond the Alliance, **civil society** has changed since the apartheid era. Early in democracy, many NGO's struggled as donor funding shifted to the state. But over time new formations arose: community-based organisations around service delivery issues, social movements in informal settlements, women's rights networks, youth formations, faith-based groups, and even NGO's started by former liberation stalwarts. Some of these civil society actors have been critical of the ANC government (e.g. social movements against evictions, or NGOs litigating for service rights). **We should not view them as adversaries but as partners in transformation where applicable.** The *unity-in-action* of the Mass Democratic Movement in the '80s is hard to replicate, but we should aim for at least *strategic engagement* with today's civil society. For example, working with civic groups on anti-corruption or local improvement initiatives can build trust. Where civil society highlights government failures (like Section27 on education or Treatment Action Campaign on HIV), the ANC should listen and fix issues rather than getting defensive.
128. Ultimately, ANC renewal is about returning to being a genuine people's movement – rooted among the masses, driven by a clear revolutionary vision and agenda, and exemplifying the values we want society to have. Renewal also relates to

building the capacity of the ANC cadres to govern and lead South Africa well in order to create a society based on the best in human civilisations. Achieving even 50% of the renewal objectives in the next few years will go a long way towards restoring the legitimacy and moral authority of the ANC to lead the next phase of the NDR.

The National Question

129. The **National Question** is one of the vexed questions of all social revolutions. Who constitutes the nation and what is the character of that nation? In the South African context, building a truly non-racial, non-sexist nation that is united in its diversity has been one of the central objectives of the NDR. How far have we progressed towards building this kind of nation and what have been the setbacks?
130. Post-1994, our emphasis was on “*unity in diversity*”, fostering reconciliation and equal opportunity for all national groups. We outlawed racial discrimination and implemented policies to redress past inequities. There are many individual success stories and greater interaction among races than before. However, several worrying trends have emerged:
- **Political fragmentation along racial and ethnic lines:** The 2024 elections showed the white minority vote coalescing overwhelmingly around two parties (the DA and FF+), while the black (African, Coloured, Indian) vote has splintered among many parties. The weakening of the ANC (traditionally a non-racial movement) has also weakened the non-racial centre of our politics. We see new ethnic or regional parties gaining ground (e.g. parties appealing specifically to ‘Zulu nationalism’ in KZN or ‘Coloured identity’ in the Western Cape). This balkanisation of politics is concerning for national unity.
 - **Declining presence of all national groups (particularly national ‘minorities’) in the ANC:** As ANC support shrank in some communities, our structures among Indian, Coloured and White South Africans also waned. For example, ANC branches in predominantly Indian areas or historically Coloured communities have seen less activity. The Northern Cape was an exception until recently, but overall we have lost ground in ‘minority’ communities each election since 2004. This trend can become self-perpetuating: fewer members from those communities means fewer tailored messages and policies, and fewer organic leaders, which further alienates voters there.
 - **Perceptions of alienation:** Many working-class Coloured people, for instance, feel alienated from the democratic project – some believe (wrongly) that apartheid’s limited privileges for them have been replaced by marginalisation

under ANC rule. This reflects our failure to sufficiently include and uplift *all* poor South Africans irrespective of race. Similarly, some Indian South Africans, though generally economically better off now than before, may feel politically sidelined or fearful of crime and instability.

- **Rise of right-wing narratives:** On the other side, right-wing voices among sections of the white community have grown more vocal and emboldened in their push-back against transformation, using false narratives such as the so-called “white genocide”. These forces have cultivated a siege mentality and look to foreign conservative allies (e.g., elements of the US right-wing) using ethnic mobilisation. The narrative of white victimhood seeks to camouflage the reality that whites continue to benefit disproportionately from our economy, whilst the face of poverty and unemployment remains Black, female and young. This narrative undermines our nation-building efforts.
- **Material inequality fuelling division:** Social cohesion (or lack thereof) still largely follows racial lines because inequality does. The wealth gap between average white and black households is enormous (as cited earlier), meaning different races live fundamentally different lives (a legacy issue). This breeds resentment on one side and defensiveness on the other, hampering true social integration. The persistence of mostly-black informal settlements next to affluent mostly-white suburbs keep the physical imprint of apartheid alive. However, as we assess this reality, we should also acknowledge the trend of growing inequality within the Black community, with a few within this community integrated into the advanced part of the South African economy. How to manage this class differentiation, while demonstrating common interest among these sectors is a challenge that needs to be deftly managed.
- **Patriotism and common identity deficits:** Also, we have not fostered a strong shared patriotism. National symbols and holidays as well as sporting successes are celebrated, but many people retreat into their group identities under stress. The xenophobic attacks against foreign African nationals reflect a social reality that has been poorly managed, and is another manifestation of weak social cohesion.

131. Given this picture, it is clear we have *unfinished business* on the national question. If anything, we need to double-down on building non-racialism and non-sexism into the fabric of everyday life. The ANC’s unique strength historically was its ability to bring together all races and cultures under one umbrella of common nationhood. We must revive that approach actively:

- Ensure the ANC’s leadership and membership reflects South Africa’s diversity. Proactively recruit and promote capable comrades from minority communities not as tokenism, but to demonstrate that the ANC is for all.
- Address legitimate concerns of various groups *within* the framework of non-racialism. For instance, some Coloured and Indian communities fear that BEE or affirmative action overlooks their poor – we should be attentive to poor of

all communities and design inclusion programmes accordingly (like geographic targeting of poverty). Non-racialism does not mean being blind to diversity; it means *no one is excluded from progress due to their identity*.

- Intensify **social cohesion programmes**: in schools (promote integration, mother-tongue plus English bilingualism to respect all languages, history teaching that covers all communities' contributions), in communities (support cross-cultural sports and arts programs). Also support civil society initiatives that bridge communities e.g. dialogues between township and suburb residents, "exchange" programs for youth from different backgrounds.
 - Take a **hard line against any form of racism, tribalism or chauvinism** that emerges. Whether it's an ANC member making an ethnic slur or an official practicing favouritism, sanction it strongly. The ANC must live up to being a non-racial vanguard.
 - On the right-wing threat: uphold the law against hate speech and racism; and where AfriForum or other groups spread misinformation, counter it with facts and outreach. As before, we should intensify the campaign to emphasise that white South Africans not only have a place in the country but also stand to benefit from a prosperous society whose benefits accrue to all, especially the poor and marginalised. The Freedom Charter's injunction that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, is underpinned precisely by the Charter's clauses about political, economic, social and other rights.
132. The national democratic revolution was always about forging a single nation out of disparate groups, in a just society. If we allow separatist or racial thinking to grow, we betray that ideal which would certainly precipitate social division and instability. Therefore, renewing the NDR means **renewing our commitment to a non-racial, non-sexist and united South African nation** where diversity is cherished within a common national identity and common citizenship.

International Migration post-1994

133. As we address the national question, we cannot avoid the post-1994 wave of international migration. International migration - the movement of people across borders is a global phenomenon, which fluctuates with conflicts, search for economic opportunities and climate change, affecting every country in the world: as receiving or originator country. With South Africa's pariah status in the world ending in 1994, our country too saw new dimensions of immigration, intertwining with development, opportunities, irregular migration, social conflict, knowledge exchange and brain drain.
134. South Africa of course, is no stranger to immigration, from the waves of European colonial settlers (Dutch and British, but also French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Eastern European), Malay slaves from Dutch Indian Ocean colonies,

Indian indentured labourers brought to work the sugar plantations of Natal and mineworkers recruited from neighbouring countries. These migration waves, have been sources of conflict with European colonial settlement as the most fundamental. The post-apartheid migration patterns show that South Africa has become the receiver of most migrants from African countries, 2.4 million according to Census 2022, representing 3,9% of the population, with 22% having acquired SA citizenship. The overwhelming majority of immigrants are from SADC countries, followed by other African countries, the UK and Europe and Asia. South Africa during the same period also experienced a brain drain, particularly losing critical health, engineering and other skills, mainly to the UK, Middle East, the USA, Canada and Australia.

135. The patterns of immigration have become a source of conflict in South Africa, particularly around undocumented migrants, reflecting in essence competition for scarce resources and access to public services among the marginalised. The formation of the Border Management Authority and the draft White paper on Citizenship, Refugees and Asylum developed during the 6th administration sought to ensure greater coordination, clarity and enforcement of migration laws and regulations. While a security-centric approach may stem a small part of the problem, the answer lies in ensuring political stability and inclusive growth in the southern African region at large.

THE 2024 STRATEGIC SETBACK AND THE GNU

136. The ANC-led democratic movement suffered a strategic electoral setback in the 2024 national and provincial elections. We lost an outright majority both in Parliament and in three provinces, including two that are the biggest economic hubs and largest population centres (Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal). The 2024 electoral outcomes and the subsequent formation of the GNU marked a significant shift in the political landscape.
137. Post-elections, the movement decided to engage all parties on the necessity to form an inclusive Government of National Unity (GNU) led by the ANC and ten parties agreed to join. This development cannot be treated as merely an electoral accommodation or a short-term governance mechanism. It is a defining feature of the current balance of forces and must be understood as both a constraint and a potential enabler of the NDR.
138. The GNU emerged in the aftermath of a highly contested election in which no party secured an outright majority. It now comprises multiple parties, including the ANC, DA, IFP, and others. The founding Memorandum of Intent reflects consensus on

key governance issues; economic stability; public service delivery; infrastructure rollout; and land reform many of which align with the transformative agenda of the ANC and, broadly, the progressive injunctions in the country's Constitution. However, the ideological divergence among GNU partners is palpable. Some, like the DA, remain committed to a neo-liberal, anti-transformation agenda. Their discomfort with principles such as non-racialism, affirmative action, inclusive immigration, and social solidarity is well-documented.

139. In this context, the GNU represents the “unity and struggle of opposites”. It has inherent contradictions, with both risks and opportunities. If not well managed and properly led, it may dilute the ANC's ideological clarity, hinder decisive policy action, and constrain the pace of transformation. At the same time, it offers the movement a platform for preserving state stability, lead the process of rebuilding governance credibility, and restoring public trust. It has temporarily neutralised the threat of right-wing populism and provided breathing space for the ANC to regroup. In the same vein. it offers other parties the platform to showcase what they can or can't achieve.
140. To safeguard the revolution within this complex arrangement, the ANC must treat the GNU as a **tactical cooperation**. It is neither a strategic alliance nor a strategic compromise. The ANC must lead the GNU from a position of principle, not pragmatism. The NDR cannot be subordinated to lowest-common-denominator imperatives. Rather, the ANC should utilise the GNU to demonstrate disciplined leadership that is pre-occupied with building national unity and stability; pursuing a transformation agenda and effective service delivery; and showing political maturity and ability to work with other parties across the ideological divide **while simultaneously working to rebuild its electoral base**. Expanding electoral bases is not a conspiratorial proposition: it is precisely what all the other partners in the GNU (and outside) seek to do.
141. The goal remains to restore the ANC to majority status, in Parliament and in society. This does not require hostility to the GNU, but rather a clear-eyed assessment of its limits. In municipalities like eThekweni and Tshwane, where the ANC has changed or regained leadership, public confidence has improved. These examples suggest that even under coalition or GNU conditions, an assertive, principled ANC can win back trust - if it governs with integrity and effectiveness.
142. The ANC's approach to current and future coalitions, GNU formations, and political alliances must be informed by a long-term strategy. This includes protecting its relationship with its Alliance partners COSATU, SACP and SANCO while leading the

ideological content of the broader political and social movement. **The ANC must never lose sight of the fact that its historical mission is not simply to govern, but to transform society - our presence in any government should always be assessed against this strategic objective.**

143. Despite the noisy contradictions among the GNU parties, the ANC has used this platform to ensure South Africa's domestic policy agenda and international relations perspective reaffirm the progressive thinking of the National Democratic Revolution.

The Role of Parliament in the Current Conjuncture: *From Performative Theatrics to Transformative Oversight*

144. The outcomes of the 2024 elections have reconfigured the political architecture of Parliament in unprecedented ways. With no outright majority, the ANC, as the leading party in a Government of National Unity (GNU), now operates within a far more fluid, contested and even more performative legislative terrain. The rules of engagement have shifted, as have the responsibilities of those occupying parliamentary benches both in government and in opposition.
145. A key feature of this new parliamentary reality is the **ideological and tactical ambivalence of some GNU partners**, most notably the Democratic Alliance. While occupying executive portfolios in Cabinet, the DA continues to posture as an opposition force in Parliament. Its dual role of governing while opposing is both contradictory and opportunistic using committee platforms, media engagements, and sittings of the National Assembly to undermine ANC-led governance efforts, even while it benefits from the same governance structure.
146. Recent developments on the politicisation of the VAT exemption debate, and the attempted humiliation of ANC Ministers during committee hearings have revealed a growing tendency towards **parliamentary theatrics and populist agitation**, often aimed less at governance than at scoring electoral points. The space of Parliament is increasingly being used as a **stage for disruption and purporting populism**, rather than a forum for democratic deliberation and institutional oversight.
147. In this context, the ANC faces a strategic dilemma. There is growing pressure to respond in kind - to meet spectacle with spectacle - to "win the battle of the soundbite" or to use limited majorities to bulldoze decisions through Parliament. But this temptation must be resisted. The ANC cannot afford to lose sight of its dual responsibility - to govern effectively and to exercise disciplined, principled parliamentary oversight, even when the ministers in question come from within the ranks of the ANC.

148. To navigate this complex terrain, the ANC must reposition its parliamentary caucus as both **a vigilant oversight force and a disciplined political engine of transformation**. This requires a shift in posture, from defensive reaction to proactive engagement. Ministers must come to Parliament fully prepared, not merely to defend, but to advance the strategic goals of the movement. ANC MP's must approach their work with clarity of purpose, ideological consistency, and unity of voice. The days of ad-hoc attendance, incoherent contributions, and poor caucus discipline must be left behind.
149. At the same time, Parliament must be reimagined as a space to **reassert the hegemony of the ANC's ideas – the ideas of fundamental change** – to communicate clearly with the public, and to mobilise popular understanding around key policy positions. This means building MPs' capacity in **legislative processes, political communication, constituency work, and committee oversight**. ANC MP's must be trained not only in foundational political theory, but in the practical tools of parliamentary struggle: public speaking, media engagement, legislative drafting, and policy communication. Parliamentary caucuses must become **schools of revolutionary governance**, not merely platforms for posturing.
150. The ANC must also consider **new mechanisms for coordinating within the GNU in Parliament**, including the possibility of **joint caucus processes**, better alignment of whips, and structured engagements with GNU parties. This does not imply ideological dilution but recognises the need for effective governance coordination in a coalition era. The task is to remain principled in values, but agile in tactics.
151. In all this, the **discipline of presence and participation** remains fundamental. The ANC cannot project leadership if it cannot consistently fill its benches and capture the public imagination through its clarity of thought and principled approach. A new era demands **a new exercise of parliamentary discipline**, not just about voting numbers, but about the tone, substance and impact of ANC voices in legislative forums.
152. Ultimately, Parliament remains one of the key battlefields of the National Democratic Revolution. It is where laws are passed, institutions are shaped, and ideas are contested. The ANC must claim this space not only through numbers, but through political clarity, ideological consistency, and organisational discipline. We need a changed ANC in Parliament: dynamic, grounded, responsive and radically committed to the project of transformation.

THE NDR: ON TRACK OR SLOWED DOWN?

153. Given all these subjective factors and objective conditions – volatile geopolitics and geo-economics, political and socio-economic setbacks, internal weaknesses of the ANC and its Alliance partners, emboldened domestic and global forces opposed to transformations – a central question arises: Has the NDR been derailed **and defeated** or has it **slowed down and is losing momentum**? In other words, can the NDR still correct course and regain its transformative and emancipatory momentum? What will it take to correct course?
154. Based on the analysis of the macrotrends, our conclusion is that the NDR has suffered several strategic setbacks but these do not amount to its total defeat and derailment. The ideals of liberation still enjoy overwhelming support among the motive forces. What **we face is the crisis of the legitimacy in the ANC as the primary vehicle for liberation**. This is due to the multiple crises of poverty, inequality and unemployment; instances of corruption and state dysfunction; erosion of the moral standing of the ANC; the relative success of domestic counter-revolutionary infestation. However, the core aspirations of the NDR and the vision of the Freedom Charter—that the black majority should not remain impoverished and landless, that South Africa should belong to all, that the wealth of the country be shared – **remain undisputed moral imperatives**. This dream is alive among the majority of South Africans, although people have increasingly been losing faith in the ability of the ANC to deliver on this vision. This is the cold reality that has been evolving since the 2009 elections.
155. The question is whether the ANC has the capability and will to **renew not only itself but also the execution of the NDR, and consequently, our society**. History shows that many nations and movements face critical inflection points in cycles of about a generation (30-40 years). We are exactly at that junction. If we fail to renew and adapt, the NDR could indeed **collapse** – *meaning* South Africa remains a nation of racialised poverty and privilege, potentially governed by unstable coalitions with no transformative agenda, and drifting away from the 1994 consensus. If we succeed, we can get the NDR back on track and even accelerate it, so that 30 years from now (2055, marking 100 years of the Freedom Charter) we have achieved the decisive socio-economic changes that have eluded us thus far.

The Glimmers of Hope

156. Our **conclusion**, therefore, is that we face grave multiple **crises and a set of strategic setbacks but these do not amount to a total defeat or derailment of the NDR**. Yes, there is a slowing down, stalling and regression in some areas but the overall trajectory is that the NDR still enjoys support among the overwhelming majority of the motive forces. The ANC can still correct course, and regain its transformative momentum and overwhelming popular legitimacy, if there is **decisive and coherent leadership** from the ANC and the revolutionary Alliance.

The calibre of leadership and the ability to mobilise and reconnect with the motive forces and society in general will determine the trajectory of the NDR over the next five to ten years. It will also require bold socioeconomic changes and a qualitatively improved way in which we govern our country. Above all, it will require difficult choices and sacrifices from disciplined and committed cadres and activists of the revolutionary Alliance.

157. It is encouraging that even amidst the negativity, there are **glimmers of hope**:

- The formation of the GNU in 2024 as a response to electoral reality demonstrated the ANC's ability to pull the country together and provide leadership. However, there is a need for a more coherent, purposeful and shared national development agenda among the parties that are part of the GNU if it is to succeed. The current contradictions and contestations undermine cohesion and the possibility to make progress is hampered by narrow partisanship and infantile performative politics particularly by the DA, the second largest partner in the broad coalition. The ANC has sought to act and should continue acting as the adult in the room.
- We have examples of institutional resilience (e.g., judiciary, tax authorities and other parts of civil service).
- Youth movements and civil society activism indicate that people have not given up on fighting for a better society – they just need better political alignment with the NDR's aims. The National Dialogue has a potential to contribute to raising the level of citizen agency and activism.
- Internationally, the changing balance of forces and the shift to multipolarity offers progressive forces new economic opportunities to pursue their development agenda and national interest more confidently.

158. However, we know that hope alone is not a strategy. It comes down to **moral and intellectual leadership and action**. Does the ANC have the leadership, organisational cohesion and moral courage to correct its course and that of the NDR and renew itself and the nation? We believe the movement can – if it heeds the clarion call: Renew or perish. Renewal or death! We conclude this paper by turning our attention to the next critical question.

SO, WHAT IS THE CAUSE OF ACTION ?

159. Proposals in this section are grouped into four broad areas of intervention (in line with the structure of this document). To restore momentum to the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) and avert its derailment, the ANC should urgently embark on a programme of renewal and transformation focused on four strategic pillars:

- Defining an **Effective Developmental Path for Growth and Social Equity** – for better outcomes and impact toward the South Africa we want
- **Nation-Building, Social Cohesion and Empowerment of the Motive Forces** – to unify society behind the cause of transformation manifested *a better life for all*
- **Renewal of the ANC as the Leading Agent of Change** – to rebuild the leadership, organisational and ideological capacity needed to drive transformation
- **Navigating a Complex Global Situation** – to protect and advance our national interests and the African agenda amid global shifts.

160. These pillars are interrelated and must be pursued in tandem.

A. Defining and Implementing an Effective Developmental Path for Growth and Social Equity

161. We need a recalibrated economic and social development strategy that directly addresses the failures and shortcomings identified in this base document. That developmental path should decisively confront unemployment, poverty, and inequality — recognising that business as usual is not working. Key elements include:

162. A bold Economic Reconstruction and Transformation Plan: Build on the post-Covid Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (ERRP) while sharpening its focus on structural and systemic changes. This plan should involve a massive infrastructure-building programme (energy, transport, water) to remove growth bottlenecks and create jobs, financed creatively (through development finance, public-private partnerships where appropriate, and possibly more flexible fiscal constraints given the multiplier effects of such investments). It must also aggressively promote industrialisation by identifying sectors where South Africa has potential (e.g. the green economy, manufacturing inputs for infrastructure, agro-processing, digital industries) and providing targeted support (industrial financing, tariff protection where needed, local procurement mandates). A core objective is to increase domestic production and reduce import dependency, thereby generating jobs.

- 163. Employment at the centre of macroeconomic policy:** Shift macroeconomic policy from a narrow focus on inflation targeting to a balanced approach that also prioritises employment creation. This might mean accepting slightly higher inflation in exchange for lower interest rates to stimulate investment. The South African Reserve Bank’s mandate could be updated (via statute or shareholder directive) to explicitly pursue employment and growth. Similarly, prudent fiscal policy should not equate to austerity in a joblessness crisis — government should be willing to run deficits to finance growth-promoting investments, as long as debt remains sustainable in the long run – with the debt-to-GDP ratio reduced by a higher denominator (GDP). Creatively accessing concessional development funding can also be part of the financing mix.
- 164. Social compact for inclusive growth:** Government should spearhead a “Social Compact 2.0” with business and labour where each contributes to common developmental goals. For example, business might commit to a domestic investment target (e.g. R X trillion over five years), labour could moderate wage demands in exchange for job retention and creation, and government would implement structural reforms (reducing red tape, ensuring reliable electricity, improving public services). This compact must have monitoring mechanisms and real “teeth” perhaps even a legislated framework to enforce commitments. Communities can also play their part by, for instance, paying for services (beyond free basic provisions), and observing guidance on re-blocking of informal settlements and not settling below flood-lines. All partners should also commit to an uncompromising fight against corruption.
- 165. Revamp empowerment policies:** BEE and affirmative action must be reoriented to benefit more than an just elite few. Measures could include promoting employee ownership trusts and cooperatives, providing better support for small, black-owned businesses (for instance, a public venture capital fund or credit-guarantee scheme), and linking BEE incentives more directly to actual job creation. Land reform should be accelerated within the law utilising legislation as well as the concrete proposals contained in the National Development Plan and Agriculture Masterplan. This includes providing stronger post-settlement support to beneficiaries (grants, extension officers) so that redistributed land becomes productive.
- 166. Strengthen the social security net in a sustainable way:** Evaluate the feasibility of a Basic Income Grant to alleviate extreme poverty while stimulating demand. At the same time, such grants can be linked to pathways out of poverty, for example, require able-bodied grant recipients to participate in skills training or community work programmes to retain benefits, thereby

improving their employability - including through measures contained in the household-focussed Anti-Poverty Strategy adopted some twenty years ago.

- 167. Education and skills revolution:** Truly prioritise fixing educational quality at all levels. This starts with early childhood development (invest in early childhood centres and train more ECD teachers) and continues through basic education (massively improve teacher training, enforce accountability for performance, modernise curricula to include digital skills, and roll out coding/robotics instruction widely, as is currently being piloted). Expand vocational and technical training aligned with industry needs (for example, strengthen the apprenticeship system with incentives for companies to take on trainees). Also harness opportunities in the digital economy: provide free or subsidised internet access to township and rural youth so they can learn online, work as freelancers, or start businesses. Explore partnerships with global tech firms to train South African youth (some programmes exist already - scale them up).
- 168. Public sector reform for service delivery:** Implement the National Development Plan's recommendations on professionalising the public service. This includes merit-based appointments (with certain technical posts removed from political deployment processes), stronger performance management (reward high performers and sanction non-performers), and robust capacity-building programmes. Leverage technology to improve service delivery (e-government systems to reduce queues and curb corruption). A more capable state will ensure that developmental programmes (housing, healthcare, etc.) actually reach people effectively, improving outcomes and bolstering citizens' confidence in government.
- 169. Enhance the nation's safety and security by strengthening crime fighting and law-enforcement agencies and partnerships with communities and sectors.**
170. Essentially, our new developmental path must be people-centred and state-led, but pursued in partnership with all stakeholders. It must break decisively from the current unemployment crisis by directly creating jobs (both public and private) and ensure that economic growth translates into reduced inequality. We can draw lessons from countries like Vietnam, China or Singapore, which maintained strategic state direction and achieved high growth with massive poverty reduction. Our context differs, of course, but the principle holds: clear state direction and broad social mobilisation can drive development.
171. What is to be done immediately? The upcoming NGC should update ANC economic policies in line with the above ideas, feeding into government's mid-

term adjustments and the next budget. Additionally, government could establish a dedicated “War Room” to track implementation of these programmes and coordinate all departments toward that single goal (similar to how a Covid war room functioned - in this case, a **war on unemployment**).

Nation-Building, Social Cohesion and Empowerment of the Motive Forces

In parallel with economic revival, we must heal and strengthen our social fabric by empowering the motive forces of change and rekindling hope and unity among the people. Key initiatives include:

- 172. Community development and participation:** Implement the long-discussed vision of developmental local government by creating genuine structures for community involvement in planning and monitoring. For example, re-establish Community Development Forums or strengthen ward committees with real authority to influence local budgets and projects. Communities that feel heard and involved will be more cohesive. We should also encourage local problem-solving initiatives (for instance, support community policing forums, provide training for school governing bodies, etc.). This critically depends on the quality of political functionaries that the ANC deploys.
- 173. Mass campaigns to address social ills:** Launch nationwide campaigns on pressing social issues that can also unite communities in common cause, starting with regular clean-up campaigns in all localities, working with councils and communities.
- **A Mass Literacy and Numeracy Campaign** (inspired by past efforts in countries like Cuba or Nicaragua) to eliminate remaining pockets of illiteracy (currently estimated at around 4 million people) and to help youth who dropped out of school catch up. This would mobilise volunteer tutors (such as older students or retired teachers) in a nationwide effort, fostering intergenerational solidarity.
 - **An ANC-led campaign against crime and violence:** Involve communities in reclaiming their neighbourhoods by organizing marches against gender-based violence, setting up local whistleblower protections, and forming neighbourhood watch programs in cooperation with the police. The goal is to show that public safety is not only a police matter but a collective responsibility.
 - **Health awareness drives:** Building on our success in expanding HIV treatment, pivot to areas like mental health (given rising youth suicide rates) and substance abuse rehabilitation. Use media campaigns and local dialogues to destigmatise these issues and encourage communities to support those affected.

- 174. Youth and women’s empowerment at scale:** We have many existing programs targeting youth and women, but they need to be expanded and better coordinated. For example, allocate more resources to the National Youth Development Agency so it can serve as a one-stop hub consolidating various youth opportunity initiatives. Similarly, elevate the status of the National Gender Machinery — ensure every government department and province has a functional gender focal point with a budget to implement the national GBV plan and women’s empowerment projects.
- 175. Grassroots sports, arts, and cultural activities:** Invest in community sports leagues and arts/cultural centres. These are not luxuries — they keep young people positively engaged, build local pride, and bridge cultural divides. For example, revive school sports leagues that bring schools from different areas together, and promote indigenous games and cultural exchange programs.
- 176. Celebrate and teach history inclusively:** As part of building social cohesion, intensify efforts to memorialise heroes of the anti-apartheid struggle from all backgrounds in public symbols (e.g. naming public infrastructure after them, maintaining museums and heritage sites). Develop educational content that highlights stories of unity — showing how South Africans of all races contributed to the struggle for freedom. An informed society that appreciates its diverse history will be more cohesive.
- 177. Foster civic education, involvement and patriotism:** Develop a charter of common citizenship values (for instance, an updated Bill of Responsibilities to complement the Bill of Rights) and popularise it. Use national commemorations (like the December 16th Day of Reconciliation or major sporting events) to promote narratives of unity rather than division. Encourage media that showcase positive stories of collaboration and success among ordinary South Africans.
- 178. Strengthen civil society partnerships and activism:** The government and ANC should systematically partner with NGOs, CBOs, faith-based organisations and other community groups that are doing good work at the local level whether it’s running feeding schemes, cleaning up the environment, or providing youth skills training. Offering small grants or in-kind support to these groups can amplify their impact. By working alongside civil society rather than in isolation, we empower communities and avoid duplicating efforts. ANC members must be active in their community groups, sectors, associations, and civil society, as key to being a good ANC member.
179. The overarching aim of these nation-building initiatives is to rebuild trust: trust between citizens and government (by delivering results and involving people in

decision-making), trust among different communities (through interaction and shared projects), and trust in the future (by highlighting positive changes and providing avenues for people to improve their lives).

180. We recognise that without winning back the hearts and minds of the masses, the workers, the unemployed, the rural poor, and the disillusioned middle strata - even the best economic policies will falter due to lack of public buy-in or potential social upheaval. Nation-Building is not a “soft” issue; it is fundamental to stability and progress.
181. One promising idea is the broad-based National Dialogue process, to unfold over 6 -12 months through citizen-led discussions at every level of society (from local communities up to national forums). These dialogues would focus on key issues (the economy, education, values, etc.) and culminate in a “People’s Accord” articulating a shared vision for the next 30 years. This recalls the spirit of CODESA or the process of formulating the Freedom Charter, but aims at forging consensus on social and economic transformation. If conducted sincerely, such a process could renew faith in our shared national destiny while also generating practical ideas and citizen involvement and oversight.

Paying attention to the Leadership Question: the ANC as Leader of Society

182. The question of leadership is not merely about the individuals who hold positions, but about the quality, character, purpose, and moral force of those individuals. In the current conjuncture - marked by a crisis of legitimacy in institutions, economic hardship, and heightened social impatience - the ANC is called upon once again to reflect on its role as a leader of society. This reflection cannot be superficial; it must be grounded in a clear understanding of the historic tasks of the NDR and the kind of leadership required to advance those tasks under today’s challenging conditions.
183. Leadership is critical to the success of any process of transformation and change. Thus, we learn from the Communist Party of Vietnam, who had remarkable success in steering their country’s development, when through their General Secretary, Cde To Lam they observed that the Party *“continuously studied, developed, supplemented, and perfected its leadership methods, and enhanced its leadership and ruling capacity. This is the key factor ensuring the Party is always pure and strong to steer the revolutionary ship through all challenges to victories.”*
184. The ANC’s foundational claim to leadership of society is not rooted in entitlement or tradition. It is anchored in our historic mission to liberate the oppressed,

unite the motive forces behind the national democratic project, and construct a democratic, non-racial, non-sexist, and egalitarian society. Fulfilling that mission requires a leadership cadre that genuinely understands, internalises, and advances the objectives of the NDR not as abstract slogans, but through the hard realities and decisions of governance, movement-building, and social transformation.

185. Leadership, in this sense, goes far beyond moral uprightness (though ethical conduct is non-negotiable). We require leaders who are ideologically grounded, who understand what it means for the NDR to succeed or fail, and how each policy choice or public posture contributes to that broader struggle. We need leaders who build unity and eschew factionalism; who listen not just to allies but also to critics and communities; who submit themselves to collective discipline; and who view leadership not as an accolade, but as a burden of service.
186. A true leader of the ANC today must pass through the proverbial “eye of the needle.” They should leave no doubt about their commitment to the people, to the cause, and to the movement’s values. They must be able to articulate the problems of South African society not only in theoretical terms, but in their historical development and real-world manifestations, including the intertwined dynamics of race, class, gender, and spatial inequality. They must know what is to be done - not as a rhetorical flourish - but as a practical, programmatic response to the crises confronting our society. They must reject the creeping culture of consumerism, the glorification of opulence, and the ostentatious display of ill-gotten wealth that have so tainted public perceptions of leadership. Above all, they must serve the people.
187. Discipline, humility, and respect are not optional traits; they are essential for building the kind of organisation and society envisioned by the Freedom Charter and our broader revolutionary tradition. Leaders must lead by example in Parliament, in the Executive, in the ANC, in communities, and even in their private lives.
188. Moreover, leadership in society is not confined to political parties or elected officials. If the ANC is to truly lead society, it must also elevate the standard of leadership across all sectors: in public administration, trade unions, civil society, religious institutions, academia, cultural movements, and the private sector. All of these sectors carry influence. All of them shape the moral and political tone of the nation. And all of them must be held to the same ethical and developmental standards that we apply to political office.

189. We must reject the myth that corruption, mediocrity, or authoritarianism are problems exclusive to the political arena – and attend to this scourge as a society-wide challenge. Churches have been led astray by charlatans; some schools and universities are run by people indifferent to youth development; NGOs can fall into donor-driven opportunism; and corporate leadership, too often lionised, has frequently failed in its obligations to labour rights, fair investment, honest dealings with the state, and basic ethical standards.
190. A genuinely people-centred developmental path requires a broad, democratic ecosystem of leadership across all sectors. The ANC, as the historical custodian of the liberation project, must lead by example. But it must also challenge society to raise its own leadership standards, so that service, sacrifice, and solidarity take precedence over status, greed, and spectacle.
191. In this phase of the NDR, progress will not be driven by slogans, individual charisma, or institutional legacy alone. It will be driven by leaders who inspire trust, build unity, implement transformative programmes, and lead with integrity in every sphere of public life.

Renewal to Restore the ANC as the Leading Agent of Change

192. Without a revitalised ANC, the implementation of any programme will falter. We have to fix the engine that drives transformation. Organisational and ideological renewal of the ANC is therefore perhaps the most critical and urgent task of all – because it enables all other changes.

Key focus areas for ANC renewal (building on the earlier discussion in this document) include:

- 193. Eradicate factionalism and patronage:** Post-conference unity efforts must intensify. The NEC should act decisively against any grouping that functions as a faction (e.g. holding parallel meetings or defying organisational decisions). Deployment of comrades to positions should be based on merit, not factional loyalty, a reformed Deployment Committee with clear criteria and even external vetting could help. And wherever comrades are found to be involved in patronage networks, they must be removed from positions of authority.
- 194. Reassert political discipline and cadre accountability:** The ANC Constitution and Code of Conduct provide for disciplinary action against unbecoming behaviour – use these instruments. We must also instil a culture in which being an ANC member or leader is seen as a privilege tied to performance. Those elected to positions must deliver for the community or in government, or else risk being recalled. For

example, the ANC could conduct regular performance reviews of its deployees in government (similar to how the CPC evaluates officials) to hold cadres to account.

- 195. Modernise internal processes:** Embrace technology for ANC management. We can (and in some instances do) use secure digital platforms for membership administration, meetings, and even internal voting (where appropriate) to reduce manipulation and improve efficiency. This would appeal to younger members and increase transparency (for instance, allowing real-time verification of branch membership numbers). The recent improvements in the membership audit process are a good start — we should build on that momentum.
- 196. Strengthen ideological training and leadership skills:** As noted earlier, political education must be intensified. Going forward, every member of the ANC should undergo compulsory political training on the Foundational Course. We should expand the OR Tambo School's reach with certified courses and require completion of certain courses as a prerequisite for holding leadership positions. Additionally, revive the culture of study groups in branches, where members collectively read and discuss ANC documents, contemporary issues or classics of revolutionary thought. (Recall that in exile and prison, cadres stayed sharp through collective study we need to bring that ethos back.)
- 197. Leadership renewal and inclusion:** Leadership succession should be more rigorous, both in terms of identifying quality cadreship and obviating debilitating contestations and factionalism. The ANC should cultivate a healthy mix of seasoned leaders and new blood. **We might set informal term limits or encourage rotation in certain roles**, especially at local levels, to prevent gatekeeping and stagnation. We also need to empower more women and young people in meaningful leadership roles — for example, set a target that by the next national conference, at least a certain percentage of top positions are occupied by people under 50, and similarly increase the share of women in key roles.
- 198. Enhance the integrity of candidate lists:** As we prepare for local government elections, the ANC's process for selecting candidates must be transparent and merit-based. Community input should be genuinely considered. One idea is to use independent panels to interview and vet aspiring candidates for public office, filtering out those who are clearly incompetent or ethically compromised. This would help ensure we put forward credible, capable candidates who can earn back public confidence through their performance.
- 199. Reinvigorate the Alliance interface:** For Alliance renewal, create a joint political education and policy forum where ANC, SACP, SANCO and COSATU

cadres regularly meet to discuss ideology and strategy. This can keep the Alliance aligned and allow differences to be worked out internally rather than through public spats. Also coordinate mass campaigns better — for instance, if COSATU plans a strike on a social issue, discuss it within the Alliance so the ANC can address the matter politically before it escalates.

200. **Grassroots mass work:** Recommit to the classic practices of mass mobilisation, such as regular door-to-door engagement, people’s forums, and Izimbizo - not just before elections but continuously. The President and ministers should report back to communities in public meetings on a regular schedule. At the branch level, ANC structures should actively champion local community issues (for example, fight for a new clinic or the repair of a school) to show that we are still **tribunes of the people, not merely focused on internal meetings and conferences.**
201. **Renewed values and political culture:** Introduce symbolic but meaningful initiatives to shift organisational culture. For instance, designate an annual **“ANC Day of Community Service”** (recalling the *Thuma Mina* and *Letšema* Volunteer spirit) where members from the President down to the branch level spend a day volunteering in communities cleaning, fixing schools, assisting the vulnerable, etc. This would send a message that we are servants of the people, not an elite above them, and it would reconnect leaders with grassroots realities. Likewise, encourage a culture of modesty and humility in leadership - perhaps revive an internal code of conduct discouraging flashy lifestyles that alienate leaders from the masses.
202. **Monitor and evaluate renewal progress:** Just as government tracks its performance, the ANC should rigorously monitor its renewal efforts. The recently established Renewal Task Team can regularly report on concrete indicators of progress - for example, the number of active branches, cadres trained, disciplinary cases resolved, community projects initiated by ANC branches, and so on — and share these reports with the NEC and branches. Keeping renewal tangible (and showing results) will prevent “renewal” from becoming an empty slogan. The ANC Branch Functionality Barometer is a critical tool in this regard, as well as more generally, the ANC Accountability Framework.
203. If the ANC can demonstrably renew itself — for example, by the next election presenting **a slate of credible, honest candidates, taking visible action against corrupt elements, and highlighting real improvements in communities driven by ANC activism** — then public attitudes toward the movement could shift from cynicism to cautious optimism. We have to earn that trust through actions, not words.

204. The prize is immense: a renewed ANC would be able to galvanise the whole of society behind tough decisions and ambitious programmes, because trust and credibility would be restored. It is no exaggeration to say that the fate of the NDR hinges on the ANC's renewal.

Navigating a Complex Global Situation

205. Finally, our strategy must include adept navigation of the international environment to create space for domestic progress. In other words, our international relations should directly support our national democratic goals. Key actions in this regard include:

206. Economic diplomacy for investment and trade: Proactively secure investment and trade commitments from various international partners. For instance, invite mutually-aligned BRICS, Asian, Latin American, Middle Eastern and EU countries to invest in our infrastructure or key industries (perhaps through mutually beneficial arrangements, such as granting mining concessions in exchange for building local beneficiation plants). At the same time, maintain relations with the US to preserve market access, by diplomatically addressing concerns that arise.

207. Diversify energy and food security partnerships: The Russia–Ukraine war underscored our vulnerability to global supply shocks. We should partner with countries like China on renewable energy technology (gaining both investment and skill transfer), with Gulf states on securing fuel supplies or building refining capacity, and with our African neighbours to develop regional agricultural trade. The goal is to be less import-dependent on distant suppliers for critical food and energy needs.

208. Assert African common positions: Work through the African Union to adopt common stances so that African countries negotiate from a position of unity rather than being picked off one by one. For example, in global climate negotiations, Africa should demand adequate funding and technology transfer as a bloc. On peace and security issues, push for African-led solutions rather than foreign military interventions, which often have ulterior motives.

209. Strengthen Global South institutions: As mentioned earlier, fully utilise our G20 presidency to institutionalise the African Union's role in global economic governance and to champion reforms benefiting the Global South. In institutions like the IMF and World Bank, continue lobbying for a stronger voice for developing countries. Expand cooperation with progressive countries in Latin America (through forums like the G77 or coordinated votes in the UN) there is strength in unity among nations of the Global South.

- 210. Defend multilateralism:** Support the United Nations as the primary forum for resolving international issues and uphold international law principles. We should resist global power plays that undermine multilateral norms, such as unilateral sanctions that hurt our interests. (For instance, sanctions on Zimbabwe also harm South Africa; we should lead calls to lift or mitigate those measures.)
- 211. Diaspora and immigration management:** Domestically, improve our management of immigration curbing illegal immigration that fuels xenophobia, while making legal migration easier where it brings in needed skills. Regionally, lead a dialogue within SADC and the AU on coordinated approaches to migration and development, so that push factors (conflict, lack of jobs in home countries, etc.) are jointly addressed. This will help prevent xenophobic flare-ups at home and show that we handle the human aspects of globalisation in a humane and thoughtful way.
- 212. Balance international solidarity with pragmatism:** Continue to stand in solidarity with just causes worldwide but also be pragmatic about South Africa's core interests. For example, on the Russia–Ukraine conflict, maintain our non-aligned stance but focus on urging and facilitating peace talks (even offering to host negotiations). On the Israel–Palestine issue, support a two-state solution and provide humanitarian aid to Gaza, while engaging all sides diplomatically. We should strive to be seen as a voice of reason and humanity, rather than being perceived as uncritically aligned with any particular bloc.
- 213. Strengthen “Brand South Africa”:** Actively market South Africa to the world as open for tourism, investment, and cultural exchange. The more **people-to-people** contacts and business ties we foster globally, the more resilient we become against negative campaigns or misperceptions. We should invite the world to witness our renewal, perhaps by hosting major international sporting events or conferences to showcase improvements and rebuild goodwill.
- 214. Continuous scenario planning:** Given the volatility of today's world, our government needs a strong capacity to scan for emerging global risks (pandemics, financial crises, geopolitical conflicts, etc.) and to prepare contingency plans (such as maintaining strategic reserves of essential goods, strengthening cybersecurity defences, and other safeguards). This kind of foresight and preparedness will help buffer our population from external shocks as much as possible.
215. In summary, South Africa needs a principled yet flexible approach on the international front one that maximises opportunities (resources, support, markets) while minimising threats (isolation, conflict spillovers) in service of our domestic transformation.

CONCLUSION: ANOTHER HILL. ANOTHER PHASE OF THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION

216. By executing on these four fronts – *a revamped developmental strategy, revitalised nation-building, a renewed ANC, and a focused foreign policy* – we can steer South Africa out of the current storm. The tasks are enormous, but not insurmountable.
217. The **motive forces** of change – the workers, the poor, women, youth, patriotic black bourgeoisie and middle classes – remain resilient and aspirational. If provided meaningful leadership and a credible plan, they will rally behind the ANC and the NDR. The people have not given up on the ideals of freedom, equality and a better life; they are yearning for the movement to correct its course and lead with integrity and vision.
218. The timeless wisdom of our forebears bears relevance in this regard: *“After climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb,”* said Nelson Mandela. We may have thought 1994 was the summit, but it was just the first great hill. Now we face new hills – eliminating poverty and inequality, renewing our organisation, uniting our people, and defending our democracy. With dedication, self-correction, and solidarity, we can climb these hills. The National Democratic Revolution lives on in the hearts of ordinary South Africans; it is our duty to give it fresh momentum through organisational and ideological renewal and decisive action.
219. The NGC should focus on identifying concrete steps on forging a renewed ANC and Alliance. It must also come out clearly about the action that will be taken to build the calibre of leadership across different sectors of society and mobilise the activism and agency of citizens in order to advance national renewal and rejuvenation. Let future generations look back and say this NGC was able to intensify the process of reversing the losses and setbacks we have been suffering. Let South Africa’s liberation movement regain its ideological clarity and reassert moral and intellectual leadership in society. Let us begin a new ascent towards the summit of a truly united, non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and prosperous nation.

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