



ANC TODAY

VOICE OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

3–9 April 2026

Conversations *with the* **President**



SA's Investment prospects buoyed by economic recovery

■ By **PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA**

THIS week we welcomed delegates from more than 50 countries to the sixth South Africa Investment Conference (SAIC) in Sandton, Gauteng.

Since its inception in 2018, the SAIC has grown to become a premier global forum for showcasing the attractiveness of investment opportunities in our country to domestic and international investors.

Investment conferences play a key role in attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) as high profile platforms that connect international investors with local opportunities.

They also facilitate strong partnerships by bringing together

governments, business, banks and development finance institutions.

As investors look to destinations that have demonstrated resilience in the face of increasing volatile global financial conditions, South Africa presents a favourable proposition.

We are Africa's largest economy with a diversified industrial base. Since we began our first R1,2 trillion investment mobilization drive in 2018, we have secured investment pledges in mining, health-care, automotive, food and beverage and others, reflecting the sophistication of our economy.

South Africa is also the leading destination for renewable energy investment on the continent, with

these investments making up a considerable share of the total pledges made at previous conferences.

We have a sound policy and regulatory environment, offering certainty to investors at a time when we are just one of many emerging markets across the globe vying for capital.

We are also a gateway for businesses looking to set up or expand their operations in Africa.

Through this conference, as well as the five preceding ones, we will be seeking to build even greater confidence in our country as an investment destination, and to demonstrate our commitment to structural reform, policy certainty and policy execution.

The green shoots of economic recovery we are experiencing further bolster our position.

The macroeconomic outlook has improved. We experienced four consecutive quarters of growth by the end of 2025, national debt has stabilized and more jobs are being created. Last year, our sovereign rating was upgraded for the first time in 17 years, and we were removed from the Financial Action Task Force grey list.

The structural reform agenda being driven through Operation Vulindlela has unlocked progress in electricity, freight logistics, water, telecommunications, and the visa system.

We have brought load-shedding to an end and are creating a new, competitive electricity market that will ensure energy security and attract investment.

The country's logistics sector is being rapidly modernised, and we are enabling private investment in port and rail operations.

Among the projects for which we have initiated a Private Sector Participation (PSP) process are the Ngqura Manganese Export Corridor in the Eastern Cape and the Richard's Bay Dry Bulk Terminal in KwaZulu-Natal.

Last year we also signed a 25-year concession for the Durban Container Terminal Pier 2, representing R11 billion in private investment.

A system for third-party access to the freight rail network is in place and 41 freight rail slots have been allocated to private companies.

We have implemented reforms



to the visa regime to attract new skills and promote tourism.

These include operationalising the Remote Work Visa, introducing a Trusted Employer Scheme to support major investors, and piloting an Electronic Travel Authorisation system.

By showcasing the progress and durability of the reform agenda, our goal is to grow the pool of inward investment from businesses and countries that will ultimately be a bridge to new markets, technologies and networks for South Africa. This year's conference has to date attracted more than 1 000 delegates from more than 50 countries.

At the end of our first five-year investment mobilization drive in 2024 we exceeded our target by 26 per cent, securing pledges valued at R1,57 trillion. Over 300 projects were initiated and to date, 161 of these have been finalized or are under construction.

The pledges have not been merely vague commitments and promises, but have materialized

as tangible, brick-and-mortar projects that are creating jobs for our people.

Last year I opened the Platreef Mine in Mokopane in Limpopo that is positioned to play a leading role in the production of sought-after critical minerals for the energy transition.

This facility that employs more than 2 000 workers from the local community and is partly owned by a community trust, emanated from a R2,8 billion investment pledge by Ivanhoe Mines at the South Africa Investment Conference in 2022.

Last year I also visited the BMW plant in Rosslyn in Tshwane where the automotive giant has invested R4,2 billion for electrification of its only plant on the continent that will be producing the BMW X3 Plug-in Hybrid electric vehicle. This was also an investment pledged at the SAIC.

By showcasing our unique and favourable proposition as an investment destination of choice, we have set ourselves the goal of mobilizing R2 trillion in new investments by 2028.

As we strive to achieve growth that creates jobs for our people, this next phase will move from pledges towards implementation. This year's investment conference stands at the crossroads of opportunity and ambition.

The clear message we will be delivering is that we remain committed to staying the course on fiscal discipline, to accelerating the momentum of the reform agenda – and to leveraging investment to build an economy that is inclusive, transformed and that benefits all. ■



CLOSING REMARKS BY PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA AT THE 2026 SOUTH AFRICA INVESTMENT CONFERENCE

SANDTON INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE

31 MARCH 2026

THIS conference has demonstrated that our economy is entering a new phase of growth.

Having witnessed and heard the announcement of commitments of investment that will be made in our country, I can confidently say there is a strong case for investment in South Africa today.

Through the structural reform agenda, we have brought about a new era of hope and promise for South Africa, and positioned our economy as one of the leading destinations for investment in emerging markets.

The pledges made today have highlighted many of our unique advantages – a sophisticated financial sector, deep capital markets, unparalleled wind and solar

energy resources, cutting-edge digital infrastructure, and above all a young and growing population.

But more importantly, South Africa is a constitutional democracy whose supreme law is the Constitution. The rule of law is central to South Africa's constitutional democracy. It underpins legal certainty, rights protection and accountable government; and is essential for social justice and economic development.

The cumulative value of the pledges made at this conference are the highest we have achieved since the first South Africa Investment Conference. It is also the highest number of projects.

Much of this is domestic capital – demonstrating the strong and

growing confidence of South African investors in our own economy.

Investors from offshore-based companies have also increased phenomenally, adding to our foreign direct investment (FDI) flows.

We have also seen significant participation from development finance institutions.

These investments span across all nine provinces, affirming their potential as engine rooms of growth.

In KwaZulu-Natal, Toyota will be investing R10,4 billion in preparing for the energy transition in the automotive sector.

In Mpumalanga and the Free

6TH SOUTH AFRICA INVESTMENT CONFERENCE (SAIC)
INVEST. PARTNER. PROSPER

**INVESTMENT MOBILISATION
DRIVE 2018-2023**
Investment Commitments
**Committed Investment:
R1.5 trillion**

- **Total Projects: 317**
- **Flowed: R634 billion**

State, Sasol has committed R60 billion to upgrade their plants and to deploy the latest technologies.

In Limpopo, Valterra Platinum is investing in new mining shafts, a smelter and other operations, providing key inputs for the products of the future.

In the Northern Cape as well as the Hillside smelter in KwaZulu-Natal, South32 is investing R3,9 billion in rail infrastructure upgrades at their manganese mines.

In Gauteng and the Western Cape, Actom, a black owned electrotechnical manufacturing company, is investing R250 million in equipment to support grid expansion, including transformers, high voltage equipment and batteries for energy storage.

In the Eastern and Western Cape, Teleperformance is investing R145 million in global business services, an investment that will create 2 600 jobs.

In North West, Mulilo is investing R14,8 billion in a total of four re-

newable energy projects in the province as well as in the Free State and the Western Cape.

As government we are more than coming to the party, matching our commitment to sustained reform with capital with the largest infrastructure investment intervention in our country's history.

The task before us is to double fixed investment that is currently at 15 per cent for a sustained period of time.

The reality is that even as we have progress to celebrate, we are still a long way off from meeting our growth targets.

South Africa's investment case is not in doubt, and the reform agenda has proven to be consistent and measurable.

But there is a gap between improved sentiment on one hand, and greater capital deployment that translates to strong growth and jobs on the other.

The structural reform agenda is irreversible, and firmly embedded within the state. It is supported by strong and robust regulatory architecture that act as guard-rails and ensure predictability for investors.

We have anchored the reform

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**INVESTMENT MOBILISATION
DRIVE 2018-2023**
**Massive Investment Plan for
the next 3 years**
Key allocation:
R1 trillion +

- **Roads: R300 – R400 billion**
- **Rail & Logistics: R420 billion**
- **Ports modernization: R250 billion**
- **Energy: R6.5 billion**
- **Water projects pipeline: R50 billion**

agenda to ensure lasting, measurable change.

We must now leverage its momentum to close the gaps, together.

I wish to acknowledge the leadership and decisive contribution of business to South Africa's economic recovery. This contribution has not been peripheral, but instrumental.

When the sixth administration took office in 2019, we were determined to build a government that was open to collaboration and to finding shared solutions to common problems.

We extended the hand of partnership to the private sector. This was met by a willingness to engage, to take us at our word, and to support the reform agenda.

When we launched the first national investment drive with a target of R1.2 trillion, the private sector responded with billions of rands in investment pledges to support growth, job creation and industrial expansion.

In 2020, we worked together across society to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, to stabilise the economy and to protect jobs.

When we announced the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (ERRP), business rallied alongside us to design initiatives to support businesses to recover and grow.

The private sector has supported our efforts to expand employment and skills development, and has to date created more than 200,000 work opportunities for young people through the Youth Employment Service.

Collaboration with the private sector and other social partners helped shape the Just Energy Transition Investment Plan that has enabled us to mobilise climate finance while safeguarding jobs in affected industries.

Today, through the Government Business Partnership that is currently in its third phase, we are working together to improve the performance of our logistics system, to achieve long-term energy security, and to deal decisively with crime and corruption.

This collaboration reflects a deep and maturing partnership, and a uniquely South African approach to mobilising the skills, energy and talent that we have in abundance.

We are determined to sustain the

momentum we have built, with a single-minded focus on achieving more rapid and inclusive growth.

That includes reforming our criminal justice system and tackling crime and corruption, so that businesses can invest and operate without fear.

We are deploying multidisciplinary teams to dismantle organised crime networks and root out police who are complicit in working with criminals – while strengthening the independence and capability of agencies such as the Special Investigating Unit, the National Prosecuting Authority and the Hawks to investigate and prosecute corruption.

Soon we will be establishing a new criminal justice reform initiative modelled on the success of



Operation Vulindlela in advancing economic reform. It will focus on organised crime, corruption, the illicit economy, and illegal firearms.

By the middle of this year we will also be finalising the new Public Procurement Act regulations that will enable us to root out corruption in public procurement.

We have come a long way in a short space of time.

Ten years ago, we were in the throes of state capture. Our economy was stagnating, and policy uncertainty was higher than ever before.

Today, the green shoots of renewal are emerging. We have turned a corner. And confidence in our economic trajectory is rising.

Our task now is to build on this progress, to create a dynamic and thriving economy and a more inclusive society.

We will not rest until it is complete, and until every South African benefits from the fruit of economic progress.

We invite you to continue walking this journey with us, not only as investors, but as long-term partners in South Africa's development.

You are not merely investing in an economy, you are investing in a nation determined to grow, transform, and succeed.

I would like to thank our generous sponsors for stepping up to support this conference.

I would like to also thank the Department of Trade and Industry led by Minister Tau, the leader-

ship of InvestSA, Infrastructure South Africa, the Industrial Development Corporation, Brand SA, Transnet, and all our partners for their hard work.

We are pleased that labour participate in today's deliberations. They are an essential part of the government/business labour partnership.

This has been an exemplary conference. The feedback I have been getting from you in this room that it has really been the best-organised, with productive, targeted, outcomes-based sessions and an extremely high quality of speakers. Well, as a speaker, I agree!

Just as was evidenced by our hosting of the G20 Summit and B20 Summit last year, South Af-

rica is up there with the best in the world when it comes to organising international events of this nature. We thank you for this valuable feedback.

As we leave this conference, let us carry forward the momentum.

This is just the start, we still have much farther to go. Let us turn commitments into projects on the ground and translate plans to progress.

South Africa is rising.

Those who see our economy's potential and invest now will be rewarded in years to come.

We look forward to walking this journey of growth and change with you until the next investment conference. ■



6TH SOUTH AFRICA INVESTMENT CONFERENCE (SAIC)

INVEST. PARTNER. PROSPER

NEXT INVESTMENT CYCLE 2026-2031

South Africa is Attractable to Investment

Target: R3 trillion

- **Already secured: R900 billion**
- **Projects: 81**
- **Jobs: 230 000**

2026: The Year of Decisive Action to Fix Local Government and Transform the Economy

Issued by the ANC, Chief Albert Luthuli House, HQ



Why the Sunday Times' SABC Story Fails the Test of Ethics, Fairness and the Press Code

A free and independent media is indispensable to democracy. It is one of the hard-won gains of our constitutional order. But press freedom is not a licence for recklessness, nor a shield for innuendo. It does not exempt journalists from the obligations of accuracy, fairness, verification and balance.

That is why the Sunday Times story of 22 March 2026, alleging that the ANC “muscled” the SABC into axing Face the Nation, is deeply troubling. It is not merely poor reporting. It is an example of what happens when a major publication abandons journalistic discipline in favour of sensationalism, conjecture, and politically

convenient narrative.

At the centre of the article is a grave accusation that the ANC and senior government leaders interfered in the editorial and programming decisions of the public broadcaster to punish a journalist for being “too harsh.” This allegation strikes at the heart of constitutional democracy, editorial independence and the abuse of political power. Such an allegation demands hard evidence, rigorous verification and scrupulous adherence to the Press Code. The Sunday Times appears to have offered none of these.

Another glaring failure is that the ANC, explicitly accused in the headline and throughout the ar-

ticle, was never afforded an opportunity to comment before publication. The Press Code of the Press Council of South Africa is unambiguous. The media must seek the views of the subject of critical reportage in advance. That is not an optional courtesy. It is a fundamental rule of fair journalism. You cannot publish a front-page allegation that the ANC “muscled” the SABC while relying on vague whispers from unnamed insiders and bypassing the primary accused party. That is rumour dressed up as investigative journalism. A story of this magnitude cannot be built on omission, insinuation and unattributed claims.

That weakness becomes fatal





when examined against the facts. The article insinuates that the “final straw” was Clement Manyathela’s January interview with Vincent Magwenya. But in December 2025, all SABC News contractors, including the Face the Nation team, were formally notified that their contracts would end on 31 March 2026. If contractors were notified in December, the theory that a January interview triggered political retaliation and led to the show’s cancellation collapses.

Yet instead of interrogating the timeline, the Sunday Times rushed toward a sensational headline: “ANC muscles SABC to axe ‘harsh’ show.” This statement is presented as fact, yet the article itself does not establish it. Even those quoted do not substantiate it. Manyathela himself does not claim to possess evidence of political interference. He merely says he “wouldn’t be surprised” if there had been pressure. Suspicion is not proof.

That raises a serious Press Code

problem. Headlines must fairly reflect the substance of the story and not mislead the public. A newspaper cannot take anonymous claims, contradicted by timelines and unsupported by direct evidence and elevate them into a declarative headline.

The article’s heavy reliance on anonymous sources compounds the problem. Confidential sourcing can be legitimate and even necessary. But anonymity is not a substitute for evidence.

Anonymous claims must be independently corroborated, tested against available facts and treated with exceptional caution. Here, however, the story is saturated with phrases such as “is said to have,” “sources said,” “appears to have been,” “allegedly,” and “another insider.” That is not the language of verified fact. It is the language of speculation masquerading as reporting.

More troubling is the apparent disregard for facts that under-

mined the preferred narrative.

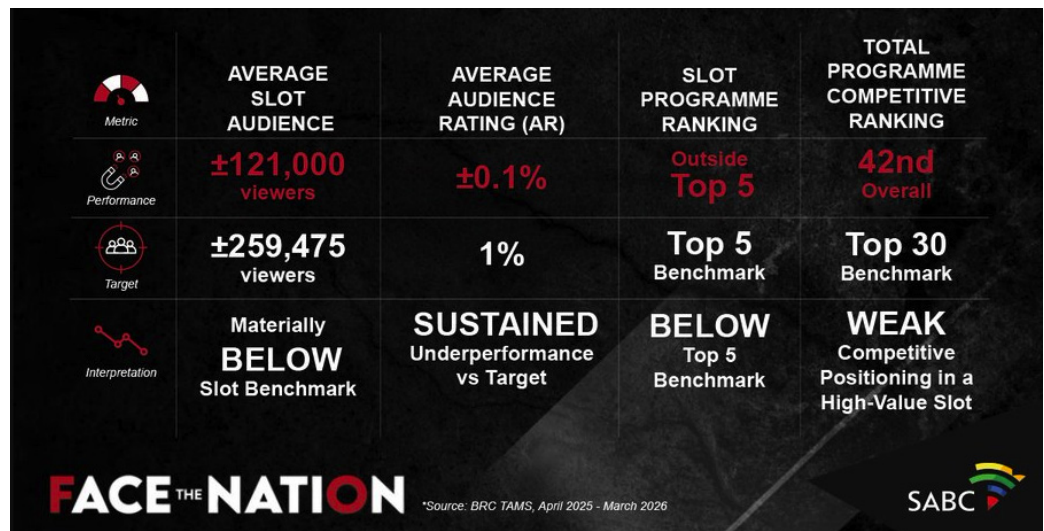
The SABC’s explanation for the non-renewal of *Face the Nation* is detailed and operationally plausible: standard end-of-cycle contract notices issued in December; repeated pre-emption due to extended live coverage of nationally significant proceedings; production costs incurred when the programme did not air; a high-cost structure, including a premium presenter fee and a dedicated producer; underperformance relative to its slot; failure to meet market-leading targets; and a broader strategic shift affecting other programmes, including On Point. These are institutional facts any serious journalist is duty-bound to interrogate before alleging political censorship. One may question them, probe them, even dispute them. But one cannot ignore them because they complicate a more dramatic story.

This episode reflects a familiar tendency in sections of South African media where a presenter

becomes a heroic symbol of accountability. Any programming change that affects him negatively becomes political persecution. But no presenter must be above institutional review. No programme is immune from commercial, strategic or scheduling decisions. Every newsroom, including the Sunday Times, routinely reviews, reformats or discontinues content. To deny the SABC that same discretion, without proof of improper interference, is intellectually dishonest.

None of this suggests the SABC should be beyond scrutiny. As the public broadcaster, it carries a heightened obligation to act transparently and independently. Major programming decisions should be communicated clearly, especially where public confidence and perceptions of political pressure are involved.

But demanding transparency from the SABC does not absolve the Sunday Times of its own obligations.



Media cannot insist on accountability for others while exempting itself from the same standards.

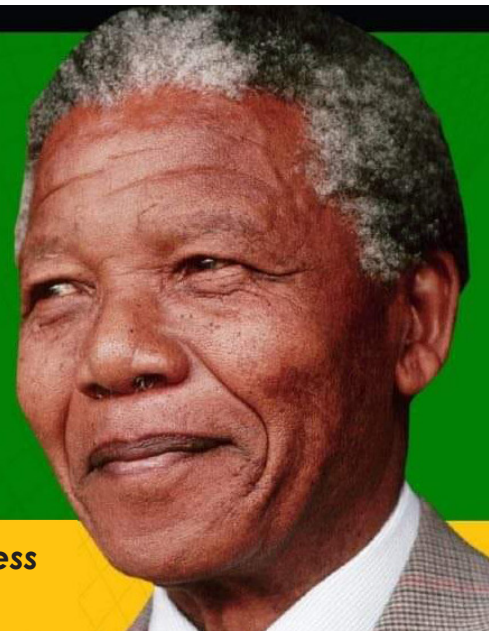
A newspaper with its reach and influence can inflict serious reputational damage on institutions and individuals. That power demands that the media should verify before accusing, distinguish fact from conjecture and ensure headlines do not outrun evidence. On these measures, this story fails. When a publication cannot substantiate a politically explosive claim yet publishes it as fact, it does not strengthen democracy. It weakens trust in journalism itself.

South Africa needs a fearless, free, independent and critical media. The ANC has historically defended that principle, not because it is comfortable, but because it is essential. But fearlessness is not carelessness. Independence is not immunity from ethics. Credibility cannot be built on conjecture. If the Sunday Times wishes to hold others accountable, it must first submit itself to the same standard.

A free press is vital. But a free press that abandons evidence for innuendo discredits itself and weakens the democracy it claims to defend. ■

Truth does indeed have immense power; yet it remains extremely elusive. No single person, no body of opinion, no political or religious doctrine, no political party or government can claim to have a monopoly on truth.

Nelson Mandela to the International Press Institute Congress
14 February 1994



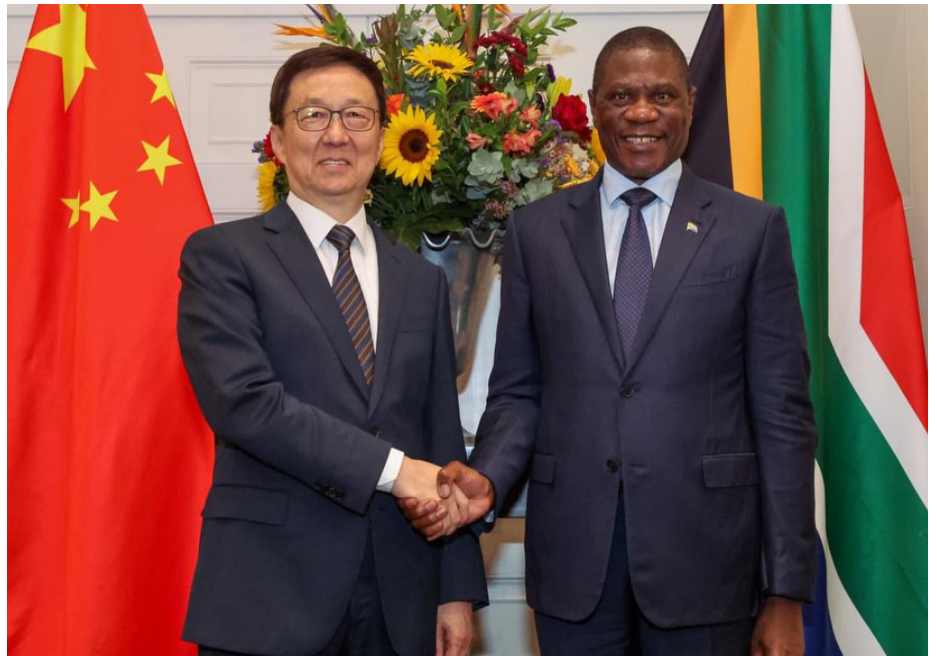
From Diplomacy to Development:

What the 9th SA–China Bi-National Commission Must Mean for South Africa

■ By **FAIEZ JACOBS**

THE 9th South Africa–China Bi-National Commission, co-chaired in Cape Town by Deputy President Paul Mashatile and China’s Vice President Han Zheng on 26 March 2026, arrives at a decisive moment in world history. The international order is shifting. Economic gravity is moving. Trade routes are being rethought. Technology, infrastructure, industrial capacity and sovereign control over strategic minerals are now central questions of power. In this environment, South Africa cannot engage the world as a passive observer, nor as a junior partner grateful for attention. We must engage as a country seeking to convert diplomatic relationships into productive capacity, employment, industrial deepening and national renewal. The stated theme of the Commission **“South Africa–China Relations in an Era of Global Transformation: Advancing Shared Modernisation”** is therefore not a ceremonial slogan. It is, or ought to be, a developmental challenge to the South African state and the broader liberation movement.

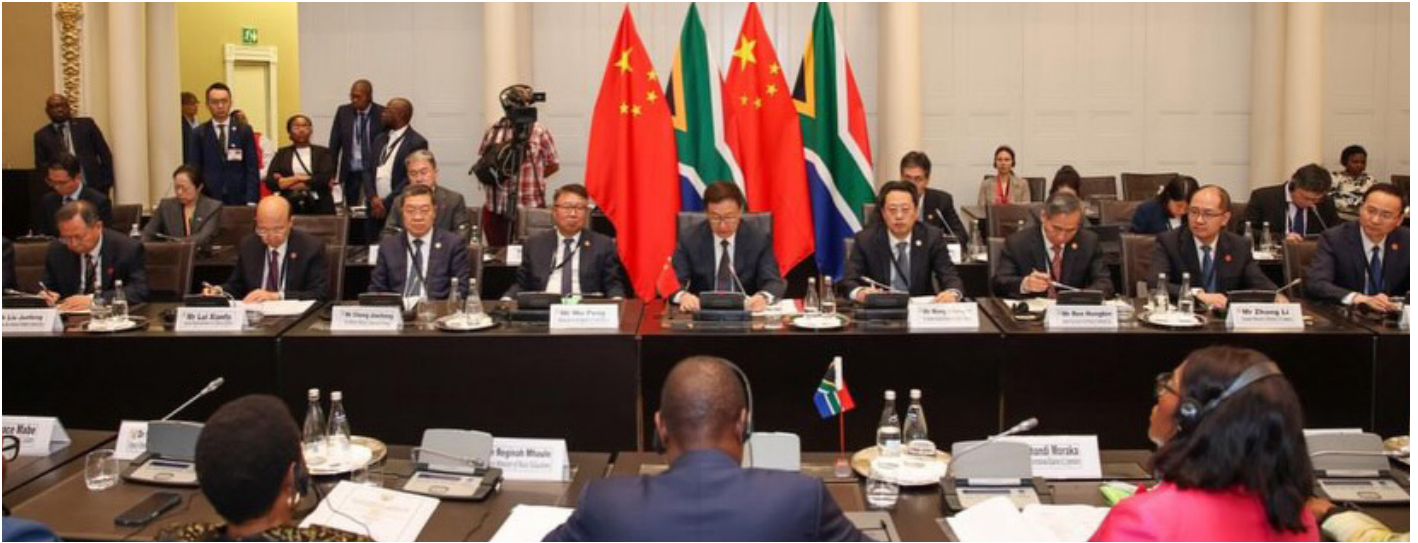
The Bi-National Commission matters because it is not just another bilateral meeting. It is the apex structured mechanism guiding relations between South Africa and China. That means it must



be judged not by the warmth of speeches or the elegance of communiqués, but by whether it produces measurable movement in trade structure, infrastructure delivery, technology transfer, industrial upgrading, skills formation, logistics reform and long-term state capability. Deputy President Mashatile’s opening and closing remarks were correct to emphasise the enduring strategic partnership between our two countries and to reaffirm the importance of the BNC as a platform for long-term cooperation. But the deeper question for South Africans is far more concrete: how do we ensure that this relationship helps us build the

productive foundations of a more equal, more capable and more sovereign economy?

This is where honesty is required. South Africa’s relationship with China has long been framed in broad, positive and sometimes abstract language: solidarity, friendship, partnership, South–South cooperation, mutual respect. All of that has its place. But countries do not rise on sentiment alone. Nations develop when political relationships are translated into infrastructure, factories, energy security, innovation systems, skilled labour, market access and institutional discipline. If the 9th BNC means



anything of consequence, it must mark a move from diplomatic symbolism to developmental execution.

The official messaging around this week's engagements points in the right direction. Ahead of the meeting, the Presidency highlighted infrastructure development, trade and broader cooperation as major themes. At the Economic and Trade Forum on 27 March, the Deputy President was more explicit: bilateral trade increased from USD 34.2 billion in 2024 to USD 36.4 billion in 2025, a rise of 6.4%; Chinese investment in South Africa has reportedly reached USD 8.11 billion across 103 foreign direct investment projects, creating 5 694 jobs; and South African firms have also invested in China in sectors ranging from ICT to health and manufacturing. These are important indicators of depth and momentum. But we must resist the temptation to confuse volume with transformation. Trade growth is not the same as industrialisation. Investment inflows are not the same as structural change. Job numbers, while welcome, do not automatically tell us whether an economy is climbing the value chain or remaining trapped at the bottom of it.

This is the heart of the matter. South Africa's strategic task is not simply to trade more with China. It is to trade better. It is to reshape the composition of that trade in a way that breaks our historical pattern of exporting raw and semi-processed materials while importing higher-value manufactured goods. That old pattern may generate customs statistics, but it does not build a developmental state. It does not create broad-based productive jobs at scale. It does not deepen domestic technological capability. It does not rescue us from the colonial logic of extraction. In fact, unless consciously corrected, it can reproduce that logic under modern conditions.

To his credit, Deputy President Mashatile appears to understand this danger. In his remarks to the Trade Forum, he stated plainly that there is still much work to be done to diversify South Africa's exports away from raw commodities. He linked the future of the relationship to mineral beneficiation, electric vehicle and battery manufacturing, clean energy, infrastructure, textiles, leather, ICT, agriculture, agro-processing and special economic zones. This is exactly the language South Africa should be using – not because

slogans about beneficiation are new, but because the material conditions now make them unavoidable. The world is reordering around green industrialisation, resilient supply chains, strategic mineral access and regional production hubs. South Africa has critical minerals, industrial heritage, financial sophistication, a continental market horizon and a relatively advanced logistics position. What we have lacked is not possibility, but disciplined execution.

That is why the SA–China relationship must now be understood through a sharper strategic lens. China is not simply a big market or a source of cheap imports. Nor is it merely a geopolitical counterweight to the West. It is a state with long planning horizons, institutional discipline, manufacturing depth, infrastructure execution capability and a clear understanding of how economic instruments serve national power. South Africa should learn from that seriousness without copying mechanically. Our task is not imitation. It is adaptation. We must ask: what elements of strategic planning, infrastructure coordination, industrial sequencing, project monitoring and state-market alignment can we internalise in

a democratic South African context? That is the real value of the relationship.

There are at least five areas where the 9th BNC should force sharper national thinking.

First, **infrastructure**. South Africa's logistics bottlenecks are no longer a technical irritation; they are a strategic brake on growth. Rail weakness, port congestion, freight inefficiency and uneven energy reliability raise the cost of doing business, suppress exports, weaken industrial competitiveness and feed public frustration. If deeper cooperation with China can help accelerate infrastructure delivery, modernise transport systems, improve logistics coordination and unlock project finance tied to actual execution, then the relationship can have economy-wide multiplier effects. But those projects must be negotiated in a way that grows South African capacity rather than entrenching dependency. We cannot become consumers of turnkey solutions alone. We must build local engineering, project management, technical training and supplier ecosystems around every major intervention.

Second, **industrial policy**. South Africa must stop speaking of industrialisation as a moral aspiration and start governing it as a practical system. That means aligning mineral policy, energy availability, logistics, incentives, finance, technical education, standards, localisation rules and export strategy. In this regard, cooperation with China should be judged against a single question: does it help us move from extraction to value addition? If we export manganese, platinum-group metals, vanadium, chrome and rare inputs, what

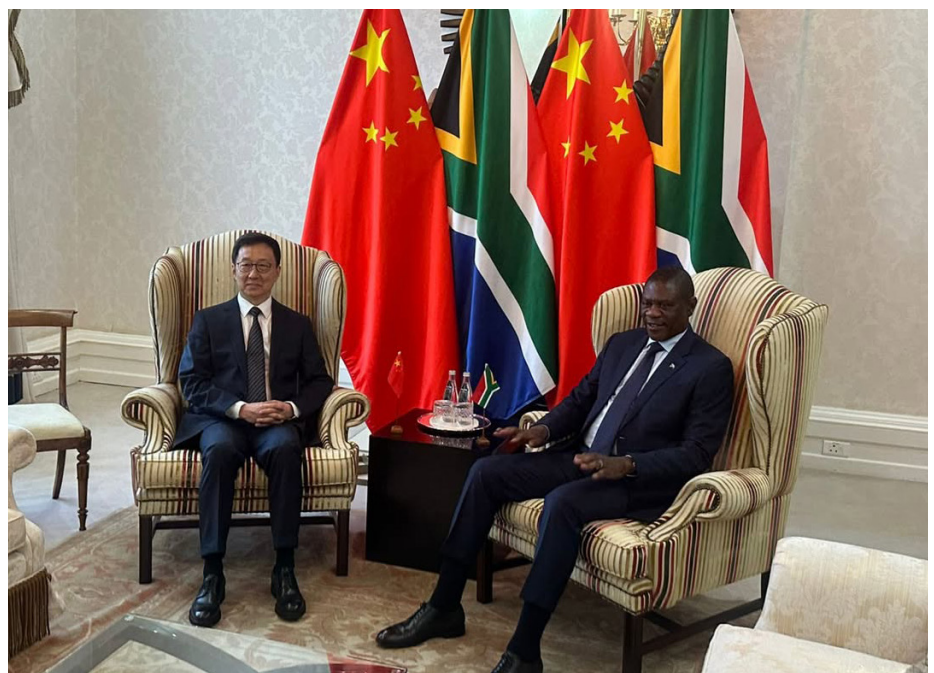
downstream manufacturing are we building here? If electric vehicles and battery systems are part of the global future, where is South Africa locating itself in those chains? If special economic zones are to matter, are they becoming platforms for domestic capability, or just enclaves of isolated activity? These are the questions that determine whether a bilateral relationship is developmental or merely transactional.

Third, **technology and skills**. Shared modernisation cannot mean importing finished technology while our people remain consumers, assemblers or bystanders. It must include a serious programme of skills transfer, research collaboration, technical education, digital capability and opportunities for South African youth in sectors that will shape the next economy. This means TVET reform, university-industry partnerships, artisan pipelines, applied AI, advanced manufacturing competencies, and practical workplace learning linked to real industrial projects. A strategic relationship with China should be opening those doors much wider.

If it does not, then "modernisation" remains rhetorical.

Fourth, **trade structure**. The rise in bilateral trade is important, but South Africa must push harder for export diversification, better market access for value-added South African goods, and more coherent support for domestic producers seeking to enter Chinese and wider Asian value chains. Trade policy must serve production. Production must serve jobs. Jobs must serve social stability and dignity. Without that sequence, numbers on a trade dashboard mean very little to a household without income, to a graduate without a pathway, or to a township entrepreneur facing a flood of imports without local support.

Fifth, **state capacity**. This may be the most important of all. No bilateral relationship, however promising, can substitute for a capable domestic state. South Africa's recurring weakness is not the absence of policy language but the inability to sustain implementation discipline. We often identify the right sectors, the right partnerships and the right rheto-





ric. But we fail on coordination, sequencing, monitoring, accountability and institutional stamina. That is why so many strategic opportunities pass through our hands without leaving durable economic architecture behind. The real challenge posed by the 9th BNC is therefore also an internal one: can South Africa build the statecraft required to convert external partnerships into internal transformation?

For the ANC, this moment should carry a deeper political lesson. The movement was never meant to be a custodian of managed decline. It was meant to be the political instrument through which democratic power is turned into social justice, material progress and the expansion of human possibility. That requires a return to developmental seriousness. Not nostalgia. Not empty anti-imperial posturing. Not unthinking celebration of any foreign power. But sober, strategic engagement rooted in national interest, Pan-African perspective and the concrete upliftment of our people.

We must therefore reject two equally shallow positions. The first is the reflexive suspicion that every deepening of relations with China is inherently dangerous. That view is often shaped by old geopolitical habits, selective moralism and an unwillingness to accept that the world is no longer unipolar. The second is an uncritical romanticism that treats all South–South cooperation as automatically progressive. It is not. Partnerships become progressive only when they alter material conditions in favour of the people. The correct position is strategic clarity: South Africa must engage China confidently, pragmatically and with discipline, extracting value where interests align, guarding sovereignty where necessary, and insisting on outcomes that advance our developmental agenda.

That is why the phrase “*shared modernisation*” must now be translated into a South African programme of action. It must mean faster infrastructure execution. It must mean beneficent

linked to industrial policy. It must mean energy transition opportunities owned not only by global capital, but by South African labour, firms and communities. It must mean youth skills connected to actual production systems. It must mean ports that work, rail that moves, projects that finish, factories that expand and exports that carry more South African intelligence and labour within them.

If the 9th BNC becomes part of that story, it will deserve to be remembered as a serious turning point. If it remains only a high-level diplomatic ritual, it will join the long list of missed opportunities that have haunted South Africa’s democratic era.

The challenge, then, is simple to state, even if difficult to achieve: we must move from diplomacy to development, from protocol to production, from relationship to results. That is the real test of the moment. And that is the standard by which South Africans should judge the 9th South Africa–China Bi-National Commission. ■

Forging UN Multilateral Compact Governance in the Era of Lethal Autonomous Weapons: Restricting AI Military Decision-Making

■ By **TSHILIDZI MUNYAI**

AS nation-states accelerate the development of AI-enabled autonomous weapons systems (AWS) in pursuit of strategic sovereignty, the existential risks posed by algorithmic decision-making in lethal force transcend national borders. The international community must move beyond fragmented ethical guidelines and voluntary national policies to forge a binding multilateral compact. This compact must enshrine human primacy – not as a mere operational preference but as an inviolable legal and ethical boundary governing the command and control of lethal force on the battlefield.

The Paradigm Shift in Military Affairs

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence is catalyzing a fundamental transformation in warfare. Military operations are evolving from automated systems to lethal autonomous weapons systems capable of independently selecting and engaging targets without human intervention. While these technologies promise tactical advantages such as speed and precision, their unchecked proliferation presents an alarming threat. Nation-states must not relinquish ultimate authority over life and death to al-



gorithms. The principle that decisions of war remain anchored in human judgment, accountability, and conscience is the foundation upon which any meaningful governance framework must be built. Such a framework should be grounded in constitutional supremacy and human rights protections, principles upheld by South Africa's constitutional democracy, which affirms equality and human dignity.

The Insufficiency of Voluntary and Fragmented Policies

Current voluntary and fragmented national policies are inadequate to mitigate the existential risks stemming from strategic instability, algorithmic failure, and erosion of human accountabili-

ty. Instead, a multilateral governance framework centered on the binding principle of Meaningful Human Control (MHC) is essential. By establishing verifiable standards, robust verification mechanisms, and a dedicated diplomatic forum, states can collectively govern AI in the military domain, preserving the core tenets of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and ensuring that decisions over life and death remain in accountable human hands.

Understanding Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS)

Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems – such as drones and autonomous missiles are no longer futuristic concepts but

rapidly approaching operational deployment in recent conflicts. Defensive autonomous systems, including anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines, already operate independently once triggered. Fundamentally, LAWS are weapon systems capable of selecting and engaging targets without human intervention, marking a profound evolution from manual to automated and now autonomous military technologies.

Unlike prior innovations designed solely to enhance range, speed, and precision, LAWS shift critical decision-making target selection and engagement from humans to machines. This shift reflects both technological advances and a fundamental reassignment of authority to use lethal force. However, key terms such as “*human control*,” “*intervention*,” and “*lethality*” remain ambiguously defined, creating uncertainty in governance efforts. The absence of a universal framework is largely due to divergent national positions: some states assert that existing international law suffices; others demand outright prohibition on moral and humanitarian grounds; while many advocate a middle ground, banning certain applications and regulating others. These divisions underscore the urgent need for consistent international standards.

Ethical and Legal Debates Surrounding Autonomous Weapons

The deployment of autonomous weapons has sparked intense debate among military strategists, roboticists, and ethicists, particularly regarding compliance with humanitarian and legal norms, notably the Geneva Conventions. Delegating life-and-death decisions to machines risks un-

dermining core principles of responsibility, proportionality, and distinction. This raises urgent questions about whether such systems can meet the standards expected of human combatants.

A critical distinction lies between automation and autonomy. Automation involves predictable, fixed execution of pre-programmed instructions without behavioral adaptation – like landmines, which detonate upon pressure without distinguishing civilians from combatants. Autonomy, by contrast, implies a system’s capacity to perceive, decide, and act within context with minimal human input, often via AI or machine learning.

This difference is pivotal to legal and ethical debates, influencing proportionality, accountability, and IHL compliance. The degree of human control whether active, supervisory, or absent further differentiates these systems.

Human involvement spans a spectrum from “*in-the-loop*,” where humans approve targeting decisions; to “*on-the-loop*,” where humans supervise and

intervene if necessary; to “*out-of-the-loop*,” where systems operate independently post-activation. As autonomy increases, algorithmic decision-making becomes opaque, complicating prediction, control, and accountability.

Arguments For and Against Autonomous Weapons

Proponents argue that autonomous weapons offer military advantages: force multiplication, extended operational reach, endurance beyond human limits, and emotion-free, data-driven decision-making that may reduce violations of IHL. Autonomous systems may also reliably report unethical conduct, unlike humans who may conceal violations.

Conversely, critics warn that LAWS threaten fundamental IHL principles – distinction, proportionality, and accountability. Algorithms may fail to reliably differentiate civilians from combatants, increasing collateral damage risks. The United Nations has echoed this concern, urging a moratorium pending international regulation.



The Imperative of Accountability

Accountability remains paramount. IHL requires individuals be held responsible for unlawful acts; autonomous systems create an accountability void, complicating attribution of war crimes. Moreover, autonomous weapons could destabilize global security by lowering conflict thresholds and triggering arms races.

In December 2024, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution with overwhelming support endorsing a two-tiered governance system combining regulation and prohibition. This signals growing consensus on the urgency of LAWS governance.

Current Governance Efforts and Challenges

Efforts to regulate LAWS primarily occur via the UN Group of Governmental Experts under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), but progress is slow due to geopolitical disagreements. Complementary soft law instruments – ethical declarations, codes of conduct, and national AI principles – reflect a global trend toward principled governance rather than outright prohibition.

Key priorities include establishing clear, universally accepted definitions of LAWS and “*meaningful human control*” to enable consistent regulation. Multilateral compacts should codify MHC into binding military doctrines and procurement policies. Cross-domain coordination is essential, integrating ethical, legal, technical, and military expertise in intergovernmental task forces. National agencies dedicated to ethical oversight of military AI can bridge gaps between inno-



vation and accountability. A permanent international governance body, such as a standing committee under the CCW or the UN, should continuously update standards, investigate violations, and promote transparency through mechanisms like voluntary LAWS registries.

Critical Concerns in the Proliferation of Military AI

The proliferation of AI in military contexts poses profound challenges. Unrestricted deployment risks eroding human oversight and ethical constraints fundamental to international stability. Four critical concerns demand urgent attention:

- I. Removal of essential human decision checkpoints;
- II. Technological interventionism violating sovereignty;
- III. Undermining commanders’ authority by algorithmic recommendations;
- IV. Delegation of life-and-death decisions to algorithms, breaking accountability norms.

A human-centered approach demands unwavering human primacy, transparency, and control mechanisms. Human judgment – rooted in experience, accountability, and ethics cannot be supplanted by algorithmic optimization.

Strategic maturity requires rejecting technological supremacy as a path to security, emphasizing mutual respect and stability.

The Way Forward: Binding Multilateral Governance

The international community must establish clear red lines, prohibit fully autonomous lethal weapons, and mandate human control. Multilateral governance frameworks with institutional authority and enforcement are essential. The United Nations must coordinate binding agreements, verification protocols, and inclusive governance, ensuring equitable representation.

The future of military AI will determine whether technology fosters stability or precipitates automated conflict. This choice is ours to make now. In final analysis, I argue that we can protect our national sovereignty through a United Nations multilateral platform based on binding text based negotiation and coordination rather than making hollow speeches without progress. ■

Tshilidzi Munyai is an ANC Member of Parliament & Whip on Defence & Military Veterans Portfolio Committee (NA). He writes in his personal capacity.

FREEDOM OR DEATH!

Celebrating the 39th Anniversary of the South African Youth Congress

■ By **GEORGE MAGOMA**

SOUTH Africa commemorates the 39th anniversary of one of the organisations that changed the course of history, openly defying the heavy hand of the State of Emergency which stifled political activity, dared a system that killed its opponents with impunity, including the youth who in the face of a brute force openly declared: **Freedom or Death – Victory Is Certain!** This became a lodestar which guided the young lions, a reference to the brave youth at the time, a period that became a *fait accompli*, a declaration of war and open defiance of the heinous regime.

The apartheid security apparatus ignored the blind spots of the time. Many youth organisations sprung across the country at a time when in 1985 the African National Congress (ANC) declared it “**The Year of the Youth**” and a clarion call to “*Render South Africa Ungovernable and Apartheid Unworkable*”, plunging the state into total chaos, shaking its foundations to the levels of panic, resorting to extra-judicial killings, kidnappings, detentions without trial and political bannings as a counter-offensive against the liberation movement.

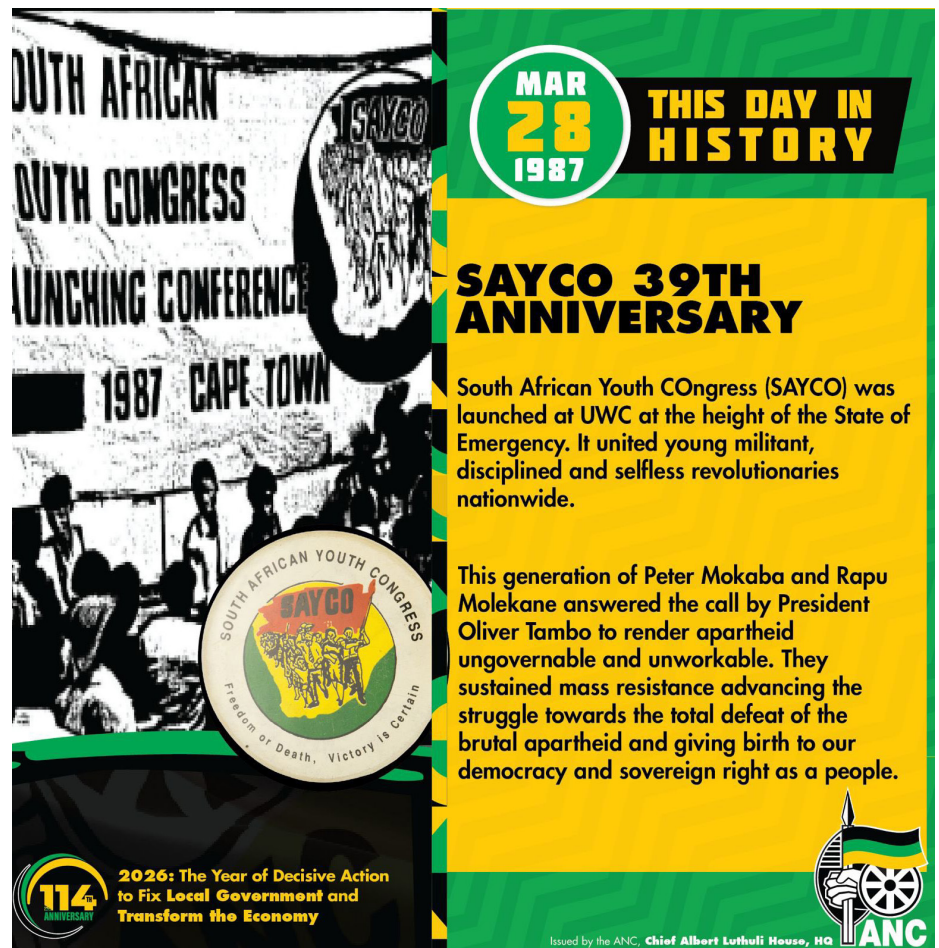
In 1987 a giant was born, replicating itself in all corners of the

country, from the village to the township youth. At the time, young people had no voice, the Congress of the South African Students (COSAS) and African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) were banned so were tertiary education student movement. Virtually, there were no political activity in the country.

The State of Emergency was

grinding fiercely but due to meticulous underground planning, the formation of SAYCO on the 28 March escaped the apartheid radar.

SAYCO was formed at the critical period of the country’s history, and the liberation movement’s onslaught against a heavily armed regime. The period before the formation of SAYCO, the



MAR 28 1987 THIS DAY IN HISTORY


SAYCO 39TH ANNIVERSARY

South African Youth COngress (SAYCO) was launched at UWC at the height of the State of Emergency. It united young militant, disciplined and selfless revolutionaries nationwide.

This generation of Peter Mokaba and Rapu Molekane answered the call by President Oliver Tambo to render apartheid ungovernable and unworkable. They sustained mass resistance advancing the struggle towards the total defeat of the brutal apartheid and giving birth to our democracy and sovereign right as a people.

2026: The Year of Decisive Action to Fix Local Government and Transform the Economy

Issued by the ANC, Chief Albert Luthuli House, HQ



civic movement mobilised communities, rejecting the Bantu Administrations as tentacles of the government of the day and the United Democratic Front in 1983 and the formation of the Congress of the South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in 1985.

At the time, the country was in turmoil, progressive forces united under the banner of the UDF as a political sanctuary, becoming united force for the voiceless. In response to the education crisis that enveloped the country at the time, the schools boycott the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) was formed, uniting students, parents and teachers to combat Bantu education. The NECC advocated for **“People’s Education for People’s Power”** and redirected school boycotts into structured resistance. At the time, students were rallied under the mantra Liberation Now-Education Later! This was destructive and virulent to the education of the black child, hence the formation of the NECC to address crisis.

“Liberation now – Education Later” was a pivotal South African slogan during the 1980s anti-apartheid struggle, prioritizing immediate political freedom over Bantu education. This movement, led by student organizations like COSAS, deemed schools ungovernable, though it sparked long-term educational crises. Post-1994, this shifted to balancing freedom with educational quality.

In 1985, on the occasion of the 73rd anniversary of the ANC, President Oliver Tambo issued a call that the **“Youth Must Make This Year Their Own.”** by this call, the fight was waged from all angles.



“South Africa is littered with the graves of young patriots who were massacred by the apartheid regime in 1976 and in the subsequent years. This self-same regime, which bears responsibility for these crimes, has, with great impudence, decided to observe the International Year of the Youth, whose motto is: Participation, Development and Peace!

We call upon the youth to take this year as their own and to use it as a means to advance our own perspectives of youth participation in society, in development and in the struggle for peace. The gains we have scored in youth mobilisation and organisation provide a basis for greater progress toward the emergence of a society which will defend and promote the genuine interests of our youth.” (ANC January 8 Statement 1985).

The statement takes us on the painful journey, a period which the country proudly commemorates the epic struggles of the generation of 1976, marking the 50th anniversary of June 16 Uprising

when students rejected Afrikaans as the medium of instruction. We celebrate a democratic Constitution entrenched in the culture of human rights, giving effect to the injunction that **“The Doors of Learning Shall Be Opened”** the diversity and equality of all languages and universal access advanced through the Basic Education Laws Amendment Act (BELA) as opposed to an education system that imposed Afrikaans to the black majority. The Constitution, the BELA Act.

This is a victory for the militant generation of 1976 but the scars of the apartheid killings are still palpable, with the democratic state still grappling with the unresolved massacres which President Oliver Tambo referred to in 1985.

The history of this country is written in blood, but hope. Hope imbued by a valiant generation that vowed to forgo education, its adolescence and youth life and the niceties irrelevant to their future and the freedom of the oppressed.

In 1983, apartheid killed students at the University of Zululand (On-goye) and the invasion of the University of Limpopo (Turfloop) by soldiers on June 11, 1986, to clamp down on intense student resistance, particularly following the formation of the South African National Students' Congress (SANSCO).

In response, some of the youth leaders fled into exile to join the military wing of the ANC, others were arrested and subjected to the inhumane conditions whilst other became child soldiers, joining the Self Defence Units (SDUs) to protect society against the apartheid engineered black on black violence.

It is this hope that today South Africa had achieved much to change the face of society, pushed back the frontiers of apartheid education exclusion by promotion a system of participation, develop-

ment and peace. This is elusive, but advanced through the pillars of **"A Better Africa and A Better World"** devoid of war and human suffering.

In its killing spree members of the COSAS 4 (Kagiso Four), Eustice Madikela, Peter Matabane, Fanyana Nhlapo, and Zandisile Musi were lured by police to an explosive-rigged pump house near Krugersdorp on February 15, 1982. Three died in the blast, while Musi survived, highlighting brutal apartheid-era security tactics against student activists. In its deadly path in 1987 the apartheid security forces killed Caiphus Nyoka, a member of COSAS. South Africa was in state of war, with the arrest of Gcina Malindi, a leader of COSAS in the Vaal, was charged with Treason in the aftermath of the Vaal Uprising of the 3rd September 1984.

We pay tribute to the first Pres-

ident of SAYCO, Peter Mokaba and General Secretary Rapu Molekane, Ephraim Nkwe, Simon Ntombela, Mzimasi Mancotywa, Fawcett Mathebe, Andy Sefothlelo, and Dipou Peters and the generation of 1987 who prosecuted the struggle with dignity and in manner consonant with the values of the ANC.

This generation led by example, embracing the spirit of the unity, pursuing the objectives of the NECC and advancing the work of the banned ANCYL. COSAS, which operated under the slogan **"EACH ONE TEACH ONE"** played a significant role in the liberation struggle, using political education as a tool to build and shape future leaders, empowering them with the ideological tools.

Apartheid committed a cardinal sin, culminating to its demise. When Oliver Tambo famously said *"A country, a movement, a*



person that does not value its youth & children doesn't deserve its future" the ANC was building a citadel as complimentary force to pulverise apartheid. In addition to these profound words by President OR Tambo, the importance of youth in every nation and to invest in its future was echoed by Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the United Nations when he said *"A society that cuts itself off from its youth severs its lifeline; it is condemned to bleed to death"*.

In reversing the ugly legacy of apartheid the ANC government, adopting a people-centred and people-driven model of development established the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) to streamline youth development, Sectoral Education Development Agencies (SETAs) for skills development, a curriculum aligned to personal development, a people's education dialectically linked to the needs of society, the improvement of the quality of life of every all citizens and free the potential of every person as enjoined by the Constitution.

Other measures includes the National Students Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) for universal access, repairing the damage of financial and academic exclusions which were the hall marks of the apartheid education system which was designed to condemn black youth to the doldrums of inferiority and a system that is not commensurate with the priorities of development and the future of the country as advocated by President Oliver Tambo.



SAYCO challenged the government of the day, defying death, vowing to lay down their lives for the freedom we enjoy today. In their true honour and in recognition of their role in the fall of a degrading system the ANC commits itself to its vision of a united non-sexist democratic South Africa based on equality and justice.

The unity of the youth and students is necessary for the battles ahead. These mammoth battles include building a patriotic regiment of revolutionaries empowered with the intellectual, theoretical and ideological tools to advance our freedom and to defend to democracy, and most importantly, to prosecute the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) and to build a just society devoid of the injustices of the past, gutter education and the mortifications of unemployment.

The anti-transformation agenda

is in full swing, deliberately aimed at reversing the goals of the 30 years of our hard-won democracy. It is for this reason that the struggle is not over, guided by Vladimir Lenin's erudite teachings that *"No revolution is worth anything unless it can defend itself"* and that *"The Revolution Will Not Be Televised"* which argues that real social change and political awakening happen through lived experience, not through media representation which has joined the bandwagon of ANC bashing and falsehoods of a failed state.

The youth of the country should rise against a new form of imperialism and a systemic agenda designed to undermine the country's sovereignty and the reversal of the democratic gains.

Our inability to build a vanguard of new leaders to thwart attempts to emasculate our efforts will reverse the rich legacy of the generation of SAYCO and do exactly what Tambo, Annan and Lenin warn against.

The story, role and life of SAYCO, the valour of its leaders are immortalised by the epitaph etched indelibly on the grave of Peter Mokaba's grave which adorns the cemetery of Mankweng in Limpopo, which reads *"Rather Die A Man, Than Let The Enemy Pass"* reflecting the zeitgeist of the 28 March 1987, and beyond when SAYCO closed shop in 1990 after the unbanning of political organisations. This is the history written in blood and hope.

***The struggle continues!* ■**



An hour to take a Coalface Vehicle of Service Delivery serious, **is now or never**

■ By **SELLO SHAI-MORULE**

THE African National Congress's National Executive Committee declared 2026 a year of decisive action to fix Local Government and transform the economy, as stated in the January 8th Statement marking the 114th Anniversary of the ANC. This declaration is politically progressive, relevant, and acknowledges the current realities facing the Congress Movement in this challenging political epoch as a liberation movement, since the inception of democracy and the enacting of the nation's birth certificate three decades ago in 1996.

The outcome of the 2026 Local Government Elections in South Africa will be a yardstick to mea-

sure our performance as the ANC, which will be a crystal-clear mirror for the outcome of 2029 General Elections. It'll indicate whether we'll bid farewell to the Government of South Africa or remain relevant to the people and voters. There's a high level of apathy towards the ANC-led government, driven by issues including poor service delivery, particularly on the coalface of service delivery, at Local Government level, widespread corruption, crime, compromised law enforcement institutions, favoritism and nepotism in both private and public sector respectively, weak immigration laws, local and global forces pushing for regime change in South Africa and

lastly biased media coverage by left-leaning media houses.

The elections will show if these concerns have impacted the ANC's standing with voters and it is up to the ANC to become unpopular, confront and crush this sorry state of affair. The communique from the Office of the ANC Secretary General, Cde Fikile Mbalula, announcing the start of Branch General Meetings for the 2026 candidate selection process on April 1, 2026, effectively launches the ANC's 2026 Municipal Election Calendar. The directive requires all Branch General Meetings for the 2026 Local Government Elections candidate selection process to commence

on April 1, 2026, and conclude by June 20, 2026. Additionally, all ANC elective conferences at regional and provincial levels are put on hold from April 1, 2026, until after the 2026 Local Government Elections, pending announcement by the IEC.

This approach makes sense, given that municipal elections are fought in provinces at regional and local levels. It's arguable that the 2026 political year should have been declared a municipal election year, with provincial and regional elective conferences postponed accordingly if we are serious about this sphere of government which is the coalface of service delivery, because these elections are fought here locally not nationally.

As South Africa approaches local government elections, it's time to take stock of the progress made and challenges faced by our municipalities over the past three decades. Many of our municipalities, particularly in rural areas, remain indigent, relying heavily on government grants due to limited revenue collection. Despite this, these municipalities play a vital role in service delivery and development. The time for empty promises is over. Our people deserve



tangible improvements in their daily lives: clean water, reliable electricity, safe roads, quality education, and effective governance. The local elections must produce leaders who can turn the tide. We need individuals with skills, experience, and vision to manage our municipalities effectively.

Local government is not just a sphere of government; it's about people's lives. It's time to treat it as an essential service, with leaders who prioritize accountability, transparency, and the needs of their communities. Let's demand a new era of leadership, one that puts the people first and delivers on their promises. The future of our country depends on it. The time to harness the potential of

regional and local economic development must be our economic turnaround strategy under the GNU. The African National Congress's (ANC) declaration of 2026 as a year of decisive action to fix Local Government and transform the economy is a step in the right direction. As South Africa approaches the 2026 local government elections, it's crucial that the ANC's economic turnaround strategy, outlined in the Government of National Unity's (GNU) plan and the ANC's Economic 10 Point Action Plan (2025-2029), is implemented effectively.

The past year, 2025, saw significant economic challenges and debates, including the withdrawal of the national budget and discussions on Black Economic Empowerment (BEE). Despite this, there were signs of economic turnaround, with growth, reduced unemployment, and a strengthened rand. However, regional and local economic development remain critical. Many regions and localities continue to struggle with poor growth, high unemployment, and poverty, exacerbated by spatial exclusion and inequality. The ANC's Economic 10 Point Action Plan acknowledges these challenges and prioritizes regional and local economic development.



It is my conviction that key interventions must include driving local economic development and investment in local infrastructure, enabling growth of provincial economies outside main economic centers, revitalizing industrial parks and special economic zones, focusing on labor-absorptive sectors like agro-processing and manufacturing. The time to take institutions on the coalface of service delivery seriously is indeed now or never. Local governments in South Africa are struggling to provide basic services like water, sanitation, and electricity due to poor governance, corruption, and lack of accountability.

These challenges have led to widespread service delivery protests, with citizens demanding better services and accountability from their municipalities. The situation is dire, with 87 municipalities deemed dysfunctional or distressed, and only 41 out of 257 receiving clean audits in the 2020/2021 fiscal year. To turn things around, municipalities need to prioritize transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement. This can be achieved through initiatives like Citizen-Based Monitoring (CBM), which empowers residents to evaluate municipal performance and provide feedback.

The African National Congress must prioritize strengthening Governance by implementing robust governance structures and ensuring accountability. Must also make sure that the issue of technology integration is realized so that municipalities leverage on technology to streamline services and improve efficiency. Dealing with the issue of capacity building and amongst other things fill vacant posts with skilled employees and provide training, initiate

the Citizen engagement program where they are encouraged to participation in decision-making and feedback processes must be number on the list of our priorities.

To succeed, the ANC must address governance issues, build economic capacity, allocate resources effectively, and collaborate with regions and localities. By doing so, the party can create jobs, reduce inequality, and foster vibrant economies where people live. The road ahead requires a

nuanced approach, recognizing the unique needs and endowments of each region and locality. By prioritizing regional and local economic development, the ANC can fulfill its moral imperative and create a more equitable society. ■

Sello Shai-Morule is an ANC Branch Chairperson of WARD 17 Branch in Mbombela Sub-Region, Ehlanzeni Region in Mpumalanga Province and a social activist. He writes in his personal capacity.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACTION PLAN (LGAP)

PILLAR 1: Act on core service delivery commitments to citizens: water, sanitation, refuse removal, potholes, water leaks, electricity, indigent registers, housing and title deeds and so forth.

PILLAR 2: Effective and sustainable infrastructure which is fit for purpose: planning, effective maintenance incl. budget allocated and spent, prevent vandalism and theft, employ and develop adequate skills, new infrastructure development, water and energy storage capacity, climate-smart infrastructure.

PILLAR 3: Capable local government and institutional capacity: financial management and viability, revenue collection, debt relief, funded budgets, billing systems, bylaw enforcement, governance and leadership issues, incentivize innovation, employ capable people and fill critical vacancies, wage war on corruption.

PILLAR 4: Reconnect with the people and restore trust: Ward Councilor and branch community and public meetings, active and inclusive Ward Committees, door to door work to report on responses to service delivery issues. Problem solving and community campaigns (incl. ANC Day of Community Service), work with community-based formations, two-way communication, engagement, feedback.

PILLAR 5: Inclusive local economic development, job creation and industrialisation: Strengthen investment in local industries, industrial parks, agro-processing hubs for job creation; support SMMEs, township, village enterprises and informal traders, including women and youth-owned; expand public and private employment etc.

PILLAR 6: Communications and Developmental Battle of ideas: regular media briefings and podcasts on progress in implementing Action Plan and challenges, action taken against corruption and money recovered, status of local government and interventions, policy and research and policy briefs and infographics, etc.

Keynote address to the Greater Johannesburg ANCVL Conference, 30 March 2026

■ By **MIKKI XAYIYA**

WE meet here today not in a moment of comfort, but in a moment that demands courage, clarity, and consequence. This Gauteng Johannesburg ANC Veterans League Conference is not merely another organisational gathering. It is a strategic and moral intervention at a time when our movement, particularly in Johannesburg and Gauteng, faces one of its deepest crises since the advent of democracy.

Let us be honest with one another. The crisis in the ANC is not abstract. It is lived daily by our people. In broken infrastructure, in unreliable services, in communities that feel abandoned, and in

an electorate that has begun to doubt whether we still represent their aspirations. Johannesburg, the economic heart of our country, has become a symbol of both possibility and decline. And the decline is not inevitable—it is political, it is organisational, and it is within our power to reverse.

As the Veterans League, we carry not just historical memory, but moral authority. If the centre weakens, it is the veterans who must steady the movement's compass. Thus we must recognise that Johannesburg cannot be rebuilt without first rebuilding the credibility, discipline, and purpose of the ANC itself.

At the heart of our renewal must

be the imperative to rebuild our covenant with the electorate and with our communities. A covenant is not a slogan. It is a relationship of trust, built over time, sustained through delivery, and destroyed through neglect or arrogance.

The people of Johannesburg once trusted the ANC not only because of our history, but because of our presence in their lives, because we listened, because we organised, because we delivered. Today, that covenant is fractured.

Rebuilding it requires more than rhetoric. It requires a fundamental shift in how we operate.

Firstly, we must return to being



**TOP 3 ELECTED OFFICIALS OF THE ANC VETERANS LEAGUE JOBURG REGION:
Chairperson: Meisie Maluleke; Secretary: Jabu Kumalo; Treasurer: Thandi Marah**



a movement embedded in communities, not a structure that appears only during elections. Branches must become centres of social mobilisation, not merely administrative units and instruments of ambition.

Secondly, we must demonstrate competence in governance. The electorate does not reward struggle credentials alone, they demand results. Thirdly, we must communicate honestly. Where we have failed, we must say so. Where we are correcting course, we must show it.

Rebuilding trust is slow work. But it begins with a clear signal: that we understand the depth of the crisis and are prepared to act decisively.

This brings me to the question of renewal and ethical leadership. What do they mean in practice?

Renewal means disruption of the status quo. It means breaking with networks of patronage, confronting internal decay, and prioritising the movement over individuals. Ethical leadership means that those who lead must

be beyond reproach – not perfect, but demonstrably committed to integrity, accountability, and service.

The hard truth is that renewal requires difficult decisions. We cannot rebuild public trust while defending the indefensible. We cannot campaign effectively behind leaders whose credibility is compromised. And we cannot speak of ethical leadership while tolerating conduct that undermines it.

So what must be done?

We must establish clear, non-negotiable criteria for leadership. Leaders must have a proven track record of service, not merely ambition. They must be rooted in communities, not detached from them. They must demonstrate competence, discipline, and the ability to unite rather than divide. And importantly, they must be individuals around whom a credible campaign can be built – leaders who inspire confidence not only within the ANC, but among the broader electorate.

And we must recognise that the

question of Johannesburg is not just organisational, it is developmental. We must reclaim Johannesburg, because Johannesburg is not just a city; it is an engine of economic activity that shapes the prospects of millions. When Johannesburg works, it creates opportunities for the poor, the youth, small businesses, and workers. When it fails, inequality deepens, unemployment rises, and social instability grows.

Today, too many of our people experience Johannesburg not as a city of opportunity, but as a city of frustration. Service delivery failures, infrastructure collapse, crime, and urban decay have eroded the quality of life and undermined economic potential.

Reclaiming Johannesburg is therefore not about political prestige – it is about restoring the conditions for social and economic development. It is about ensuring that the city once again becomes a platform for inclusion, mobility, and dignity.

And if we cannot govern Johannesburg effectively, our broader national project is weakened.

This leads us to the critical old age question: what must be done immediately, and over the next two to three years, to rebuild our covenant with the electorate and improve service delivery?

I propose five urgent priorities:

First, stabilise and professionalise local governance: We must insulate administration from factional battles and political interference. Appointments must be based on competence, not loyalty. Municipal systems must function predictably and efficiently.

Second, fix basic service delivery: Water, electricity, waste management, roads are not luxuries. They are the foundation of public trust. We must prioritise maintenance, rapid response systems, and visible improvements in key areas.

Third, confront corruption decisively: Corruption is not only a moral issue; it is a developmental crisis. It diverts resources, weakens institutions, and destroys credibility. Consequences must be swift and visible.

Fourth, drive inclusive economic development: We must focus on job creation, support for small enterprises, and targeted interventions for youth. Economic policy must translate into tangible opportunities at the local level.

Fifth, rebuild community engagement: We must listen again. Ward structures, community forums, and civic partnerships must be revitalised. Governance must be participatory, not distant.

These are not theoretical priorities. They are practical steps that can – and must – be implemented with urgency.

Lastly, what must be the role of the Gauteng Johannesburg ANC Veterans League?

We cannot be an “armchair” structure. We cannot limit ourselves to commentary, whether in meetings or on WhatsApp groups.

The Veterans League must become an active force for renewal.

Firstly, it must serve as a moral compass – speaking truth, even when it is uncomfortable.

Secondly, it must provide mentorship and guidance to emerging leaders, ensuring continuity of

values and discipline.

Thirdly, it must act as a stabilising force within the organisation, promoting unity without sacrificing principle.

And fourthly, it must engage directly with communities to help rebuild trust in the ANC.

The authority of veterans does not come from position; it comes from example. If we are to call for renewal, we must embody it. History will not judge us by the resolutions we pass, but by the actions we take.

Let us act, renew and rebuild! ■

Congratulations to the leadership elected at the First Inaugural Regional Conference of the ANC Veterans League Johannesburg Region.

1. *Regional Chairperson: Comrade Meisie Maluleke*
2. *Regional Secretary: Comrade Jabu Kumalo*
3. *Regional Treasurer: Comrade Thandi Marah*

Additional Members

1. *Comrade Annette Griesel*
2. *Comrade Sandile Dlungwane*
3. *Comrade David Mantambo*



THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

4–10 April 2026

Source: *SA History Online, O'Malley Archives, Africa Today/Yesterday, The Africa Factbook and Amazwi SA Museum of Literature*

4 April 1939 Hugh Masekela born



On 4 April 1939 Hugh Ramopolo Masekela, South African musician, was born in Witbank, South Africa. Masekela grew up playing the piano and at a young age was introduced to the trumpet by Father Trevor Huddleston. Masekela mastered the trumpet and went on to play in South Africa's first youth orchestra, the Huddleston Jazz Band. Masekela later collaborated with many famous artists and played in the orchestra for the successful South African Broadway style hit, *King Kong*. In 1961 Masekela went into exile after the political unrest surrounding the 1960 Sharpeville Massacre. His music career in exile went from strength to strength, as he also spread the word about the injustices of apartheid and colonialism. Masekela returned to South Africa in the early 1990s and continued to produce music and perform extensive tours around the world. Masekela remains one of South Africa's most

celebrated musicians, producing over 40 albums in a career that spanned several decades. He passed away on 23 January 2018.

4 April 1965 Josie Wood, Founder of SA Library for the Blind passed on

Josephine Ethel (Josie) Wood, teacher and founder of the South African Library for the Blind, dies in Grahamstown.

5 April 1953 Kenyatta sentenced to seven years in prison

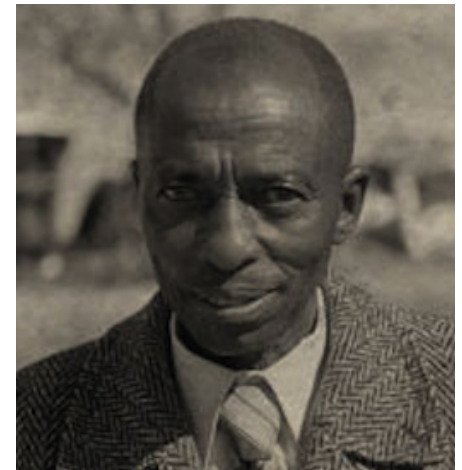
Jomo Kenyatta, Kenyan freedom fighter was sentenced to seven years in prison on the allegation that he was leader of the Mau Mau anti colonial movement in Kenya. In 1964 he became the first President of a liberated Kenya until his death in 1978.

6 April 1652 Van Riebeeck lands at the Cape

Jan van Riebeeck landed at the Cape of Good Hope with three ships (Reijer, Dromedaris, Goede Hoop) on instruction from the Dutch East India Company (VOC) to establish a half way station. He remained head of the settlement until 1662. When he left, the white settlement numbered 134 officials, 35 free burghers, 15 women, 22 children,

and 180 slaves from Malaysia, Madagascar and Angola. This set the scene for over 300 years of apartheid and colonialism and apartheid in South Africa, first by the Dutch and then by the British.

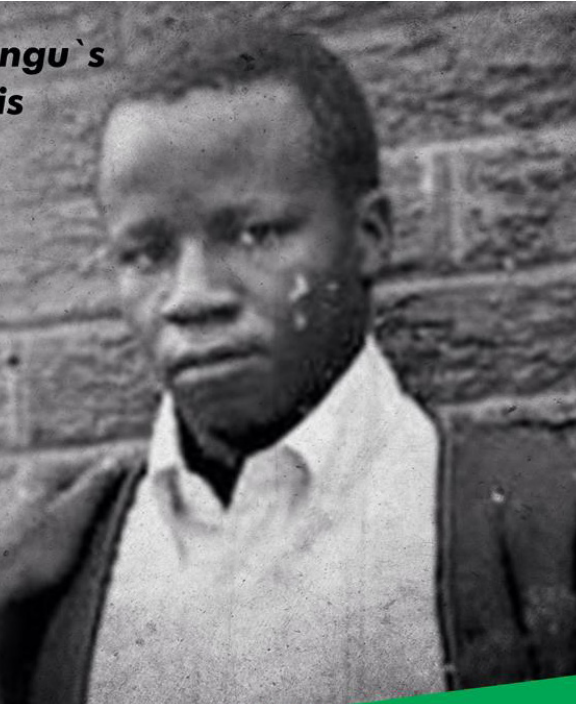
6 April 1916 Activist and lawyer AP Mda born



Political activist, teacher and lawyer, co-founder of the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) and its president in 1947, Ashby Peter (A.P.) Solomzi Mda, was born in Herschel, Eastern Cape. Under Mda's leadership the Youth League presented the Programme of Action at the ANC's Cape Provincial Conference held in Port Elizabeth in June 1949. He was also part of the breakaway group from the African National Congress (ANC) that formed the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). Mda made his debut in politics when he attended the All-African Convention in Bloemfontein in mid-1936.

“Solomon Mahlangu`s only crime was his deep love for his people, his commitment and dedication to the noble ideal of freedom, human dignity and happiness of the people”

- ANC statement in 1979



6 April 1979 **Solomon Mahlangu executed**

Solomon Kalushi Mahlangu was executed by the apartheid government at Pretoria Prison, at age 22 years, the youngest South African facing the death penalty. He joined Umkhonto we Sizwe, after leaving the country in 1976, and trained in Mozambique and Angola. He was arrested, convicted and sentenced to death. On 6 April 1979, Kalushi refused to be hand-cuffed, wanted to make the final sacrifice as a soldier. His last words were: *“My blood will nourish the tree that will bear the fruits of freedom. Tell my people that I love them. They must continue the struggle.”* The 2016 film *‘Kalushi’* tells the story of his life.

6 April 1991 **Reburial of Flora, a slave from Vergelegen**

On 6 April 1991, the reburial of a slave named Flora took place at Vergelegen Wine Estate, Somerset West. This came about after the discovery of her remains in October 1990, when Universi-

ty of Cape Town archaeologists unearthed the site of the Slave Lodge at Vergelegen. The remains were unearthed from a wooden box, and archaeologists discovered fine pieces of bone in the box and through scientific testing were able to conclude that the remains found were that of a female aged between 50-59 years old, and that she was from a tropical area therefore indicating that she came to Vergelegen as a slave.

6 April 1994 **Assassination of Burundi and Rwanda presidents in plane crash**

On 6 April 1994, an extraordinary

event in the history of the African continent took place in Kigali, Rwanda when two presidents from two countries were assassinated. Juvenal Habyarimana of Rwanda and his Burundian counterpart Cyprian Ntayamira were among 10 people in an aircraft many people believe was brought down by rocket fire. Habyarimana and Ntayamira were returning from a meeting of east and central African leaders in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, at which they discussed ways to end the ethnic violence in Burundi and Rwanda. The event saw Hutu extremists blaming the Rwanda Patriotic Front, and started the genocide, which over the next 100 days saw the killings of over 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

7 April 1871 **Charlotte Mannya Maxeke born**

Charlotte Mannya-Maxeke was born in Fort Beaufort. She was the first black woman to receive a science degree, and the only female delegate at the ANC founding congress on 8 January 1912. Since the ANC did not allow full membership to women until 1944, Maxeke formed the Bantu Women’s League in 1918, which advocated for the plight of African women, farm workers and challenged the apartheid government. The Bantu Women’s



*Mam Charlotte
Mannya
Maxeke*

7 April 1871 – 16 October 1939

League is seen as the forerunner of the ANC Women's League.

7 April 1886 Juta, father of SA publishing passed on

Jan Carel Juta was a South African business man born in Holland in 1824. He sailed to the Cape in South Africa in 1853 where he soon established the company that has come to be known as the father of all publishing companies – JC Juta & Co. The Juta Company won the right to supply reference books to the University of the Cape of Good Hope in the 1850's. The company is still a leader in the publication of education materials and textbooks to this day. Juta died on 7 (some sources claim 8) April 1886 in Chiswick, London. He was married to Louise Marx (Karl Marx was her brother) and they had seven children.

7 April 1948 World Health Organisation formed

The UN established a specialized agency for health, the World Health Organisation (WHO), dedicated to fighting global disease and improving public health. In 2017, former Ethiopian minister of health and foreign affairs, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus was elected as first African head of WHO. The WHO played a major role in the 2020 Global COVID-19 pandemic and other health matters.

7 April 1960 Unlawful Organisations Act sees banning of ANC and PAC

The Unlawful Organisations Act No 34, provided for organisations threatening public order

or the safety of the public to be declared unlawful. The ANC and the PAC were immediately declared unlawful. Justice Minister Erasmus announced the banning of ANC and PAC for a minimum of one year and stated that there could be no political organisation among urbanised Africans.

7 April 1988 Albie Sachs lost arm in bomb attack in Maputo



A car bomb planted by the apartheid government in Maputo caused Judge Albie Sachs, who was active in the ANC and in exile in Mozambique, to lose his left arm and blinded in one eye. As one of the drafters of the Constitution of 1996, he went on to become a Constitutional Court Judge and author of *The Soft Vengeance of a Freedom Fighter*.

7 April 1994 Start of the Rwanda Genocide

Rwandan Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana, a moderate Hutu, was assassinated by Hutu soldiers – a day after the deaths of Juvénal Habyarimana, president of Rwanda, and Cyprien Ntaryamira, president of Burundi in a mysterious plane crash. Anarchy and violence broke out, signaling the start of what became known as the Rwandan Genocide,

with over a million Tutsi civilians and moderate Hutu killed over a period of three months or 100 days, whilst the world did nothing.

8 April 1905 Helen Joseph born

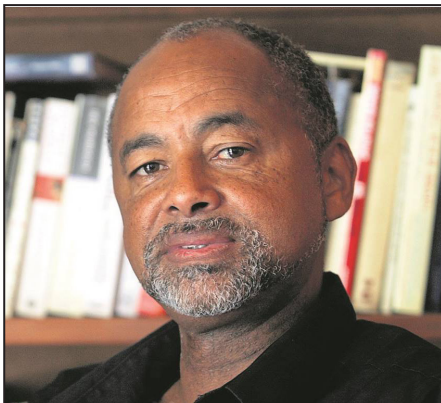


Helen Beatrice May Fennell Joseph was born on this day in the United Kingdom, where she also completed her teaching degree and went on to teach for three years in India, at Mahbubia School, a school for girls in Hyderabad. She came to live in Durban, South Africa, where she met and married dentist Billie Joseph. A teacher, social worker, political activist, political prisoner, banned person, trade unionist, founder member of the Congress of Democrats, a leader of FEDSAW and the 1956 9th of August Women's March. Helen Joseph



is recipient of the ANC's highest award, the Isitwalandwe/Seaparankoe Medal for her devotion to the South African liberation struggle. She passed on in 1992, and is buried in Avalon Cemetery Soweto, next to her lifelong friend and comrade, Lilian Ngoyi.

8 April 1954 Poet Vincent Oliphant born



Vincent Oliphant was born on this day in Alicedale, Gqeberha (formerly Port Elizabeth). He matriculated from Patterson High, became a mathematics lecturer at Dower Teachers Training college in the city, and is currently a curriculum advisor in the Department of Basic Education. He published his first collection of poetry *Bloed vloei in stilte* (Tafelberg), followed by the *Die sagte vlees* (Tafelberg, 1988).

8 April 1998 Trans Kalahari road opens

The Trans-Kalahari road opened on this day, the first road in Africa south of the Sahara to connect the Atlantic and Indian Ocean. The Trans-Kalahari links Maputo in Mozambique to Walvis Bay in Namibia, and passes through South Africa and Botswana.

8 April 2021 Ethiopian Airlines turns 75

Ethiopian Airlines, one of the

most successful aviation companies in the world celebrates its 75th anniversary, with a fleet that grew from 5 when formed in 1946 to over 120. It is the 4th largest airline in the world in terms of routes and destinations.

9 April 1917 Agricultural scientist Victor Adenuga Oyenuga (PhD) born

Nigerian agricultural scientist and academic was born in Ijube Ode, Ogun state. Oyenuga, at the time of Nigerian independence contributed to the modernization of agriculture in the country, through his work at the University of Ibadan and Obafemi Awolowo University. He served as first president of the Nigerian Academy of Sciences.

9 April 1988 GLOW formed

The Gay and Lesbian Organisation of the Witwatersrand (GLOW) was formed in Johannesburg by activists Simon Nkoli, Beverley Palesa Ditsie and Linda Ngcobo, amongst others. Glow was one of the continent's first gay rights groups formed by black and working class activists, and started the Johannesburg Gay Pride marches. Nkoli and others were also members of the ANC, and GLOW played an important role in advocating for queer rights in the ANC and the Constitution.

9 April 1994 Chess champion Mona Khaled born

Egyptian chess champion was born in Alexandria. As a chess child prodigy, she was the first girl to win the Egyptian Chess Championship at the age of 9. She represented Egypt in the Women's



Chess Olympiad from age 14 to present. She has won a number of international women's chess titles and was the first African and Egyptian chess player to win the Women's Grandmaster title in 2007.

9 April 2015 Statue of Cecil John Rhodes removed



After months of protests by the #RhodesMustFall movement against colonial and apartheid oppressive symbols on campus, the statue of Cecil John Roads was removed from the UCT campus pedestal, where it stood since the 1960's.

9 April 2019 X-Trapolis Mega trains

The first X-Trapolis Mega electric passenger trains assembled in South Africa were displayed to the public, to be used in the South African railway system. The Brazilian designed and patented trains by company Alstoms were

adapted for South African conditions, in partnership with local company Gibela. A total of 600 such trains are due to be built for PRASA. In July 2022, the agency celebrated the 100th X-Trapolis Mega train manufactured at the Gibela Rail Consortium Dunnotar factory in Ekurhuleni.

10 April 1954

Artist Thomas Kgope born



Thomas Kgope, talented SA artist, was born in Rustenburg, now Northwest province. After Kgope showed interest in art, artist Norman Catherine, for whom he worked as electrician, gave him some material and demonstrated basic art techniques to him. Up to then he did work as a freelance photographer, before establishing himself as an electri-

cian. He held his first exhibition in 1987, and has become one of South Africa's major artistic voices. Described as a postwar contemporary artist, his is influenced by Ndebele tradition as well as everyday life. His works are described as playful and whimsical, and are part of art collections across the country.

10 April 1957

Aliko Dangote born

Nigerian entrepreneur and business magnet is born in Kano. Dangote is the CEO and founder of the industrial conglomerate Dangote Group, largest in West Africa, with businesses in agro-processing, oil, cement, sugar, fertilizer and a range of other industries. A graduate of Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt, Dangote began his business career in 1978, trading in rice, sugar and cement, before he ventured into full-scale manufacturing. Dangote has been listed as the wealthiest person in Africa.

10 April 1965

Architect Diebedo Francis Kéré born

Burkina Faso architect was born in Gango, Upper Volta, and the

first African to receive the Pritzker Architecture Prize in 2022 for his buildings in Africa and other parts of the world. Kéré uses local materials and indigenous designs, incorporating education and environment in his buildings. *"Good architecture in Burkina Faso is a classroom where you can sit, have light that is filtered, entering the way that you want to use it, across a blackboard or on a desk. How can we take away the heat coming from the sun, but use the light to our benefit? Creating climate conditions to give basic comfort allows for true teaching, learning and excitement."* His iconic Gando Primary School building is a supreme example of his architectural philosophy.

10 April 1993

Chris Hani assassinated

SACP Secretary General Chris Hani gunned down in his home driveway by Janus Walusc. Hani was also chief of staff of Umkhonto we Sizwe and a member of the ANC NEC. His assassination led to widespread protest, nearly ending of negotiations and may have led to a full-out civil war, but through ANC leadership this was averted.



INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL DAYS

4–10 April 2026

Source: www.un.org, www.au.int, *The Africa Fact Book (2020)*, www.daysoftheyear.com



4 April International Day of Mine awareness and Assistance in Mine Action

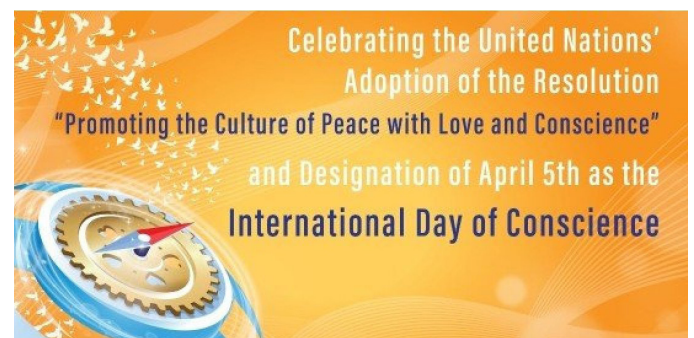


The day raises awareness of the dangers posed by landmines, and recommit towards a mine-free world. The Convention on the Prohibition on the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and Their Destruction, of 1977, has been signed by over 164 countries. It is estimated that in over 64 countries across the world, there are at least 110 million active landmines still hidden in the ground, killing and maiming children, civilians, life stock and animals in these countries.

Countries most affected by landmines are Afghanistan, Angola and Cambodia.

5 April International Day of Conscience

The day draws attention to the founding principles of the Universal Declaration on Human rights – freedom, justice and democracy, all human rights, tolerance and solidarity, dignity, rejection of violence and prevention of conflicts by tackling root causes, solving problems through dialogue and negotiation, and the full exercise of all rights.



THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

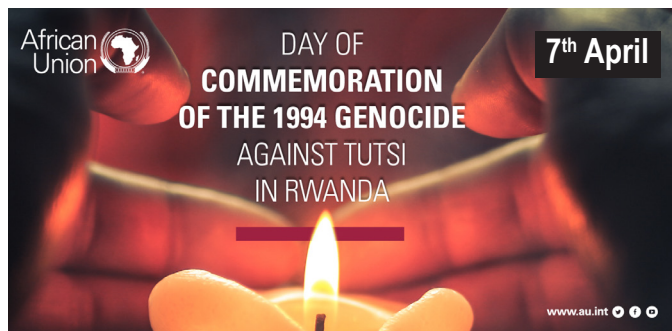
6 April

International Day for Sport and Development and Peace

This is an annual celebration of the power of sport to drive social change, community development and to foster peace and understanding.

7 April

International Day of Reflections on the Rwanda Genocide



On 7 April 1994, a day after the killing of the Presidents of Rwanda and Burundi in a plane crash, an orchestrated campaign of mass killings started by government directed against the civilian Tutsi population and moderate Hutus of Rwanda. Over a period of roughly 100 days, close to a million people were massacred. The Genocide was the culmination of a process which started early 1990, when the Hutu dominated government trained the Interahamwe, engaged on virulent propaganda and hatred against the Tutsi minority, various massacres and arming the Hutu population with guns and machetes. Although the UN mission stationed in Rwanda already in January 1994 warned of the

massacres and escalating violence, neither the OAU nor the UN acted in time. The Rwanda Genocide prompted a shift when the African Union was launched, from 'non-interference' of the OAU to the principle of 'non-indifference'. This year marks the 32nd commemoration of the Genocide, also called *Kwibuka* (To Remember).

7 April

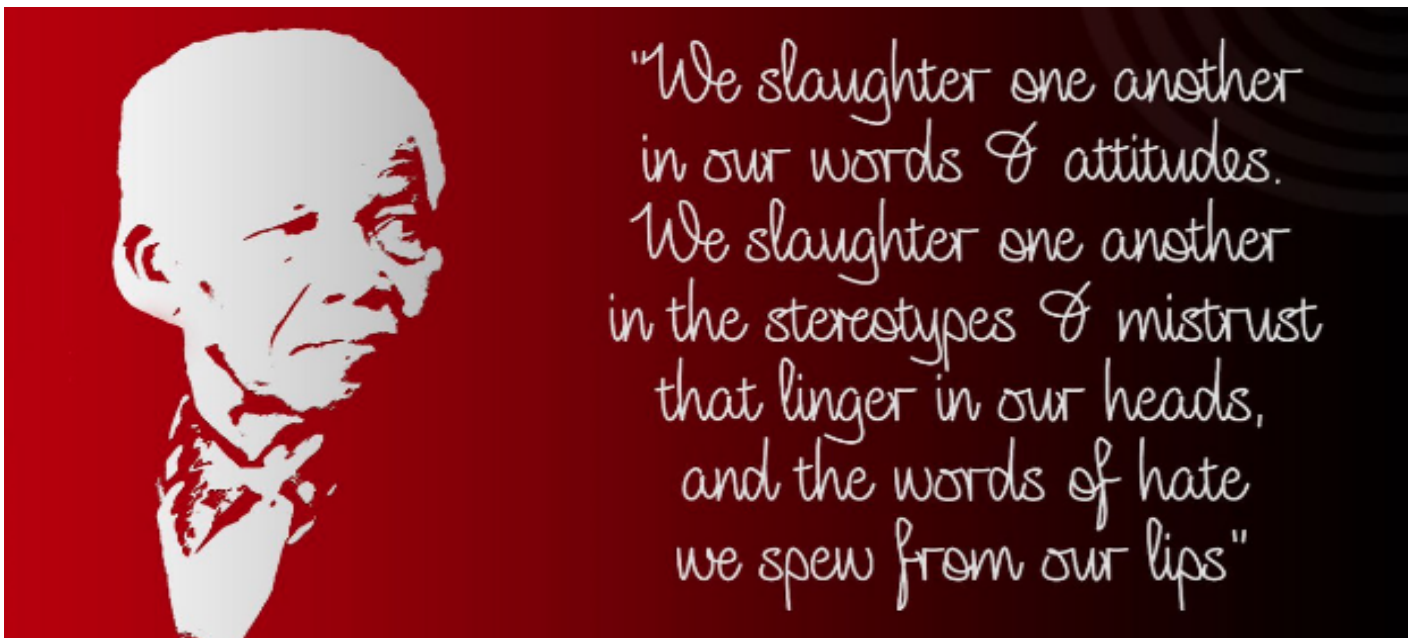
World Health Day

World Health Day 2026 calls on people everywhere to stand with science. Under the theme "***Together for health. Stand with science***", this year's observance launches a year-long campaign celebrating the power of scientific collaboration to protect the health of people, animals, plants, and the planet. The campaign spotlights both scientific achievements and the multilateral cooperation needed to turn evidence into action – through a strong focus on the One Health approach.

10 April 2023

International Safety Pin Day

Safety pins are strong and sharp, yet safe enough to be used on clothing, safety pins are a simple yet ingenious invention, which practically everyone has used at some point. The day celebrates simplicity and usefulness of designs, as well as innovation. The pin is said to have been invented by a Walter Hunt, a mechanic. Although Hunt patented the safety pin, the invention does go back many hundreds of years, with such devices used in different cultures, made of bone, ivory or wood.





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