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Conversations *with the* **President**



Building an integrated, productive and prosperous Southern Africa

■ By **PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA**

THIS WEEK, South Africa has the honour, as the incoming chair, of hosting the 46th Summit of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in eThekweni.

As it starts its SADC chairship, South Africa's focus is on the practical steps needed to further integrate the economies of SADC and build a dynamic regional market.

This is becoming increasingly important in the context of growing turbulence in the global economy. Conflicts in faraway places are causing great disruption to trade, raising the prices of fuel, grain and fertiliser, and reducing the prospects for growth.

It is precisely at such a moment



that we should be clear about what SADC means for South Africans. Our membership of SADC is not just a matter of foreign policy. It is about the creation of jobs and improving the quality of life of South Africans. It is about the growth of our industries, the development of our infrastructure and the health and well-being of our people.

As a community of 16 countries with a combined population of nearly 400 million people, SADC

has abundant natural resources, a youthful population and the means to produce everything that its people need.

Yet, trade among SADC countries only stands at around 20% of our combined total trade. Collectively, Southern Africa has abundant energy resources, minerals and land. We have skills, technology, industrial capabilities and strong financial institutions. Yet, we still import much of the goods and services we need from beyond our shores.

For example, our region holds much of the world's critical minerals, yet we export the ore and import the battery. We are supplying an industrial revolution taking place elsewhere and

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buying back its products at a price set by others.

That is why we need a dynamic common market in which we trade with each other. No country in this region can, on its own, build an integrated power system, develop cross-border corridors, manage shared water resources or withstand the full force of climate change.

We need to link our economies through corridors of goods, services and industry. We are developing the Maputo, North-South, Trans-Kalahari, Beira and Lobito corridors, but we need to do more so that they become living arteries of commerce, carrying freight, electricity, data and people.

We have the Southern African Power Pool, which means that electricity generated in one country powers businesses and lights homes in another. Our task now is to widen that pool to ensure that all parts of Southern Africa have a reliable supply of affordable energy.

We must similarly develop our shared water resources so that every country has the water it needs to supply its industries and its people in a sustainable manner.

We need to remove the costs that we have imposed on ourselves, from reducing the price of phone calls and money transfers to reducing waiting times at our borders and harmonising customs procedures.

Our ambition must not be limited to more trade with each other. We must produce goods and services together. We must assemble cars in one SADC country from parts manufactured in another, using materials produced in a third.

While we need to invest in infrastructure and industry, our region's most precious asset is our people.

More than half of SADC's population is under the age of 30. To realise this demographic divi-

dend, we must ensure that every young person is given the best foundation for success in life.

As a region, we should work together to ensure that every child has sufficient food and water, that they have quality health care and can access early childhood development. To realise their potential, we need to invest in our schools, universities, technical and vocational colleges and research institutions.

These are some of the actions that this Summit will consider as we work to achieve SADC's Vision 2050 for an integrated, productive and prosperous region.

As South Africa takes up the chairship of SADC, we do so in the knowledge that our own prosperity is bound up with that of our neighbours.

It is now up to all of us to turn this aspiration into a reality, and to turn the enormous potential that our region has into growth, development and jobs.



ANC MANIFESTO IN REVIEW:

A Frank Account of Progress, Shortcomings and the Programme to Rebuild Local Government in Water Provision, Human Settlements and Electricity

THE African National Congress has undertaken a comprehensive assessment and review of the implementation of the commitments contained in its 2021 Local Government Elections Manifesto. This review is an act of political accountability by a movement that derives its mandate, legitimacy, and historic mission from the people of South Africa.

The 2021 Manifesto was adopted at a moment of extraordinary national difficulty. Our country was emerging from the most devastating phases of the COVID-19 pandemic. Municipal finances had been weakened, unemployment and poverty had deepened, infrastructure backlogs had accumulated, and many communities were losing confidence in the capacity of local government to perform its most basic functions. The ANC went to the people conscious of these realities and made a solemn undertaking to rebuild local government and place it firmly in the service of the people.

The Manifesto was therefore not a collection of electoral slogans. It was a covenant with communities and a programme of action flowing from the historic objectives of the National Democratic Revolution: to build a united, non-racial, non-sexist, demo-

cratic and prosperous society; to overcome the spatial, social and economic legacy of colonialism and apartheid; and to improve, in a sustained and measurable manner, the material conditions of the poor and working class.

As a liberation movement and governing party, the ANC has a duty to return to the people and account. Through these Manifesto report back sessions, we account on what has been achieved, what remains incomplete, where implementation has been uneven and where our own weaknesses have frustrated the aspirations of communities. This assessment is there an instrument of renewal, correction, and intensified action.

The Balance Sheet of Democratic Transformation

Any honest assessment must begin from the material reality inherited in 1994. Apartheid local government was designed to serve a racial minority, entrench spatial separation and deny the African majority access to land, housing, infrastructure, and economic opportunity. The democratic state inherited fragmented municipalities, grossly unequal revenue bases and an infrastructure system deliberately concentrated in white communities and commercial centre.

Against this inheritance, the democratic government has undertaken one of the largest



programmes of social provision in our history.

- Household access to electricity increased from 76.7% in 2002 to 90.6% in 2025.
- Access to improved sanitation rose from 61.7% to 84% over the same period.
- By 2024, 87.7% of households had access to piped or tap water on-site or off-site.
- The proportion of people living in formal dwellings increased from 65.1% in 1996 to 88.5% in 2022, while the proportion living in informal dwellings declined from 16.2% to 8.1%.
- Almost five million housing units have been delivered since 1994, benefiting more than 20 million South Africans.

These are not abstract statistics. They represent homes lit for the first time, children growing up with sanitation, families gaining shelter and communities connected to the basic infrastructure of citizenship.

These advances belong first and foremost to the people whose struggles shaped the democratic state, to workers who built public infrastructure, to public servants who discharged their responsibilities with integrity and to communities that organised for development. They confirm that transformation is possible when the state is directed towards the needs of the majority.

However, aggregate progress can conceal deep inequality. A household may be counted as connected to water while enduring repeated interruptions. An electricity connection does not protect a community from load reduction caused by overloaded and poorly maintained networks.



A formal house located far from work, transport and public amenities may reproduce apartheid geography in a new form. Access must therefore be measured together with reliability, quality, affordability, dignity, and spatial justice.

The central conclusion of this review is that the democratic state has expanded the social wage on a historic scale, but the quality and reliability of municipal delivery have not advanced at the same pace. This contradiction must be confronted.

The next phase cannot be limited to adding connections; it must renew infrastructure, professionalize administration, protect poor households, and ensure that every service works.

HUMAN SETTLEMENTS: From Housing Delivery to Spatial Justice

Our Human Settlements programme must be understood not only as a housing-construction programme, but as an important instrument for addressing the spatial inequalities inherited from apartheid. The 2021 Local

Government Manifesto committed the ANC to fast-tracking land reform and rural development through the facilitation of the release of state-owned land, while also committing to the upgrading of informal settlements, countering urban sprawl and ensuring that communities are located on well-situated land.

The scale of the current human settlements programme demonstrates the extent of the investment being made across the country.

The municipal human settlements portfolio contains 1,887 selected projects across all nine provinces and 174 municipalities, representing a recorded investment value of R160.93 billion. These projects are expected to deliver approximately 901,073 units or related outputs and benefit 385,920 households. Of the total recorded project value, approximately R62.34 billion, or 38.7%, has already been spent, while R98.60 billion, or 61.3%, remains to be delivered. This means that a significant portion of the work remains concentrated in projects that are still under implementation and require sustained delivery momentum.

The provincial distribution also demonstrates the scale of activity across the country. KwaZulu-Natal has the largest number of recorded projects at 498, followed by the Western Cape with 383, Mpumalanga with 252, North West with 220, Limpopo with 182, Gauteng with 158, Eastern Cape with 126, Northern Cape with 61 and the Free State with seven.

A critical component of transforming human settlements is ensuring that housing is built on land that enables communities to participate fully in social and economic life. During the period under review, government exceeded its target of investing in 94 Priority Human Settlements Development Areas by declaring 136 Priority Development Areas for human settlements development. These areas are intended to drive spatial transformation, spatial justice, and integrated human settlements. To support this work, 112 Priority Development Area development plans have been completed, providing a basis for guiding investment and development in priority locations. Government has also worked with national sector departments to align infrastructure investment within these areas so that housing development is accompanied by the infrastructure necessary for functioning communities.

Progress has also been made in releasing land for human settlements. 167 parcels of DPWI state land, covering 14,105 hectares, have been approved for release. A further 2,629.8 hectares of state land have been released through the Housing Development Agency, while 16,243 hectares of DLRRD land have been released to municipalities. An additional 2,487.9 hectares of state land have been identified.

In addition, of the land acquired during 2014–2019 within Priority Housing Development Areas, 4,478.1237 hectares, representing 94%, had been successfully rezoned, improving the readiness of the land for development.

The delivery record during the 2019–2024 MTSF period further demonstrates both progress and the remaining work. Government delivered 231,032 serviced sites, representing 77% of the target, while 240,933 housing units were completed, representing 80% of the target.

Within the Community Residential Units programme, 13,885 social housing units were completed against a target of 18,000, while 2,772 Community Residential Units were delivered against a target of 5,000. The First Home Finance programme performed above its target, with 28,484 subsidies approved against a target of 20,000, representing 142% achievement.

The current MTDP period shows continued delivery. As at the bi-annual reporting period ending 31 March 2026, 20,181 housing units had been delivered during the reporting period, bringing cumulative delivery to 76,702 housing units, representing 32% progress against the MTDP target. During the October 2025 to March 2026 reporting period, 19,761 serviced sites were delivered, comprising 14,569 HSDG sites, 3,875 ISUPG sites and 1,317 USDG sites. Cumulative serviced-site delivery stood at 90,907 sites, representing 29% progress.

The programme is also expanding access to housing finance and strengthening tenure security. During the reporting period, 5,916 subsidies were disbursed, including First Home Finance, provincial subsidies, affordable housing bridging finance units and sites, and incremental loans. Cumulative delivery stood at 18,260 subsidies, representing



TITLE DEEDS GIVE FAMILIES SECURITY AND OWNERSHIP

Government has registered 29,832 title deeds cumulatively, including 3,982 during the latest reporting period. In 2026/27, the Human Settlements Development Grant is targeting a further 18,337 title deeds, strengthening tenure security for South African families.

13% progress. On tenure security, 3,982 title deeds were registered during the reporting period, bringing cumulative title-deed registration to 29,832, representing 37% progress.

Informal settlement upgrading remains another essential element of the programme. During the 2019–2024 MTSF period, the programme recorded 290 projects in Phase 1, 998 projects in Phase 2 and 632 projects in Phase 3. Under the 2024–2029 MTDP, the target is to have 4,075 informal settlements in various phases of upgrading, with end-term targets of 2,155 settlements in Phase 2, 1,288 in Phase 3 and 632 settlements completed at Phase 3. During the latest reporting period, metros recorded progress in seven settlements in Phase 1, 29 in Phase 2 and 12 in Phase 3, while provinces recorded 10 settlements in Phase 1, nine in Phase 2 and four in Phase 3.

The transformation of human settlements also requires changes to municipal land-use planning. The department has completed 112 Priority Development Area plans, while business planning reforms and Project Readiness Assessments now take into account land availability and rezoning, bulk infrastructure readiness, and the integration of housing with transport, economic opportunities, and social facilities. This represents a shift away from isolated, project-by-project housing delivery towards pipeline-based and spatially targeted development.

For 2026/27, the Human Settlements Development Grant business plan provides for an allocation of R13.2 billion. The programme is targeting 12,265

served sites, 38,019 housing units, 11,195 solar installations and 18,337 title deeds. These targets reflect the department's continued focus on expanding housing access, providing serviced land, strengthening tenure security, and improving the sustainability of human settlements.

The Informal Settlements Upgrading Partnership Grant has a 2026/27 allocation of R1.925 billion, while the consolidated business plans of the nine provinces provide for 12,921 serviced sites. Importantly, 70% of the provincial annual budget has been allocated to Phase 3 permanent infrastructure, demonstrating a focus on moving informal settlements beyond planning and tenure interventions towards the installation of permanent engineering services.

The evidence therefore points to a human settlements programme that has expanded considerably, but which must continue to address the spatial consequences of apartheid and the pressures

created by urbanization and informal settlement growth. The central challenge is to ensure that housing delivery, land release, informal settlement upgrading, transport, economic opportunities and municipal services are planned together. This is what will turn housing delivery into integrated human settlements and advance the objective of spatial justice.

WATER: The Material Advance of Democratic Transformation

Our assessment of the 2021 Local Government Elections Manifesto is rooted in the material conditions of the people and supported by verifiable evidence of work undertaken. The ANC has never understood transformation as an abstract promise. The National Democratic Revolution must find expression in a tap that delivers safe water, a sanitation system that protects dignity, and a human settlement that gives a family security, social citizenship, and access to opportunity.



Water remains one of the most urgent service-delivery challenges facing the country. By 2025, access to water stood at 91.3% of households nationally, while access to sanitation stood at 85.6%. These figures demonstrate the significant expansion of basic services achieved by the democratic government since 1994. However, access statistics must be considered alongside the lived experience of communities where water supply remains intermittent, infrastructure is aging or deteriorating, and some households continue to experience water insecurity. The task before government is therefore not only to expand access, but to ensure that water and sanitation services are reliable, sustainable, and capable of meeting the needs of a growing population.

The ANC-led government has recognized the seriousness of the water challenge and has acted to place it firmly at the centre of the national agenda. The establishment of the Presidential Water Crisis Committee and the Water Task Team reflects the decision to provide stronger political leadership and coordination in addressing water and sanitation challenges. This work is being undertaken precisely because government understands that the challenge cannot be left to municipalities to resolve on their own where local capacity is inadequate. It requires coordinated action across all spheres of government, stronger institutions, investment in infrastructure and decisive intervention where municipalities are unable or unwilling to fulfill their responsibilities.

The seriousness of this commitment was demonstrated during this year's Mandela Day, when government mobilized at the



highest levels to address water challenges in communities. President Cyril Ramaphosa, supported by Cde Minister Pemmy Majodina, led the intervention in Gauteng, while Deputy President Paul Mashatile, supported by Cde David Mahlobo, led the intervention in KwaZulu-Natal. In the Eastern Cape, Cde Maropene Ramokgopa, the 2nd Deputy Secretary-General, participated in the intervention. This coordinated presence across three provinces was not simply a symbolic Mandela Day activity; it was a demonstration of the seriousness with which the ANC-led government is treating the country's water crisis and its determination to bring government closer to communities experiencing water insecurity.

The scale of the response must also be understood against the longer-term infrastructure programme. During the 2025/26 financial year, 110 projects across all provinces were funded through

the Regional Bulk Infrastructure Grant, while 391 projects were being implemented through the Water Services Infrastructure Grant, with 163 planned for completion during that financial year. These investments include pipelines, reservoirs, boreholes, pump stations, and treatment works intended to move water from source to communities and progressively address historical infrastructure backlogs.

The work is visible through major projects across the country. In the Eastern Cape, the R792 million Ngqamakhwe Regional Bulk Water Supply Scheme is being constructed to supply 78,000 people across 120 rural villages, while the R423 million Ndlambe project had reached 81% completion and is expected to benefit more than 12,000 households in Port Alfred and Alexandria.

In Limpopo, the R4.8 billion Giyani Water Project has completed the bulk pipeline from Nandoni

Dam to Nsami Dam, with 23 villages connected at the time of reporting and reticulation and yard connections forming part of the programme across 55 villages. In KwaZulu-Natal, the R4.9 billion Mandlakazi Bulk Water Supply Scheme is intended to benefit more than 33,000 households.

We however recognise that water security cannot be achieved through infrastructure expansion alone. South Africa's national water balance remains in balance until 2030, but localised deficits already exist, and water availability could deteriorate as demand increases. Economic growth, urbanisation and population growth are placing greater pressure on available resources, while inefficient use, particularly losses in municipal distribution systems, degradation of wetlands, sewage and industrial pollution, and the effects of climate change threaten the sustainability of our water resources.

This requires us to broaden the country's water-resource mix. South Africa is already harnessing approximately 75% of its sustainably utilisable surface-water resources, which means that we cannot rely on conventional surface-water development alone.

We must increase the sustainable use of groundwater, seawater desalination, water reuse through the capture of treated wastewater returns flows, and the reuse of other poor-quality water, including acid mine drainage. At the same time, supply-side interventions must be accompanied by stronger water conservation and water-demand management, particularly in domestic and industrial use and through reducing physical losses in municipal distribution systems.

The ANC reaffirms that access to clean water and safe sanitation is grounded in the Constitution and is fundamental to health, wellbeing, and human dignity. As President Ramaphosa emphasized at the National Water Indaba in 2025, the rights to access sufficient food and water are inter-related and interdependent, with human dignity at their centre. The responsibility of government is therefore to ensure that these constitutional rights are translated into reliable services in the daily lives of communities.

At the same time, we must confront the factors that continue to undermine water and sanitation delivery. These include organized criminality and corruption, attacks on critical infrastructure, weak financial management, poor credit control, inaccurate billing, illegal connections, infrastructure decay and governance instability. Many communities are already experiencing water and sanitation failures, including insecurity of supply, scarcity, intermittent supply, or no supply at all. These challenges are compounded by rapidly rising demand resulting

from population growth, urbanization, industrial requirements, and South Africa's international obligations.

The ANC's response therefore combines immediate intervention with long-term structural reform. This includes reviewing delivery models so that the responsibilities of Water Services Authorities and Water Services Providers are clearly defined; increasing investment and strengthening the financial viability of the water sector; enhancing technical and operational capacity; building partnerships with water-sensitive and resilient communities; and fighting criminality and corruption in the water and sanitation sector.

Where municipalities face acute water crises, national government must use the statutory mechanisms available to intervene. Struggling municipalities must receive intensified technical support and, where necessary, be assisted to appoint alternative capable water-service providers, including water boards or other appropriate providers. Na-



tional infrastructure grants must be prioritized towards bringing water to people's taps, completing long-delayed projects, reducing non-revenue water, and extending services to unserved communities. Additional financing, including blended finance, public-private partnerships, performance-based contracts and management contracts, must be explored to accelerate investment in municipal water infrastructure.

There must also be a decisive fight against criminality in the water sector, including the theft of infrastructure and the activities of the water tanker mafia. Infrastructure protection, stronger financial management, competent technical personnel, and consequence management are essential to ensuring that money allocated for water and sanitation actually results in functioning services.

The ANC is committed to implementing the water action plan as announced by the President which is focused on the following:

A. Review the Delivery/ implementation models - The main cause of the crisis is an inappropriate delivery model. A key reform is to clearly separate the roles of Water Service Authorities (WSAs), constitutionally mandated to local government to ensure that services are provided, from Water Service Providers (WSPs), responsible for the delivery of the function. The Metro Trading Services Reform Programme will ensure that metros ring-fence revenue from the sale of water, reinvest that revenue into water infrastructure, and create single-point accountability for the water function.

- B. Increasing investment through financing options and ensuring the financial viability of the sector. The traditional financing mechanisms from grants, revenue sales will be ringfenced and reinvested to improve reliability; blended finance will be enhanced through project preparations; removing obstacles to attract infrastructure investment, particularly from the private sector and exploring blue and green bonds. Mechanisms to be explored including debt relief to curb escalating water debt to water boards.
- C. Enhancing and strengthening technical and operational capacity and efficiency.
- D. Building partnerships through building water sensitive and resilient communities.
- E. Fighting criminality and corruption in the water and sanitation sector.

Ultimately, water security is inseparable from fixing local government. This is why the ANC's

renewal agenda includes the rebuilding of capable municipalities, strengthening technical capacity, improving financial management and ensuring that councillors and officials are held accountable for the services for which they are responsible.

SANITATION: Restoring Dignity And Rebuilding Municipal Infrastructure

Sanitation is a measure of the humanity of a society and the capacity of the state. Access to improved sanitation increased from 61.7% of households in 2002 to approximately 84% in 2025. Using the stricter international measure; which requires an improved facility, non-sharing, and the safe treatment of waste; 76.3% of South Africans had access to safely managed sanitation in 2024. The distinction is important because a toilet is not a complete service if the sewer collapses, the pump station fails or waste is discharged untreated into rivers and communities.

FIXING WATER AND SANITATION, MUNICIPALITY BY MUNICIPALITY



In Lekwa Local Municipality, Mpumalanga, government instituted 15 water and sanitation projects worth R350 million, with 12 completed at the reporting date. In Emfuleni and Midvaal, a R4.7 billion multi-year intervention includes replacing collapsed sewer pipelines, repairing pump stations and expanding wastewater-treatment capacity.

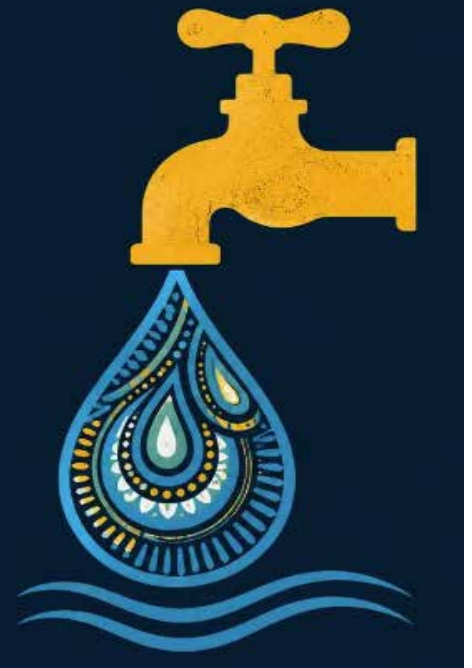
The ANC therefore does not reduce the transformation record to the number of toilets constructed. The full sanitation chain must work; from the household facility and reticulation network to pump stations, wastewater treatment works and the safe disposal or reuse of waste.

Our assessment confirms significant progress in this regard. In Matjhabeng in the Free State, the refurbishment and upgrading of 14 sewer pump stations and 30 kilometres of outfall sewer pipelines were completed, with the Kutloanong and Thabong wastewater treatment works forming part of the continuing intervention. At Lekwa Local Municipality in Mpumalanga, government instituted 15 water and sanitation projects with a combined value of R350 million. Twelve had been completed at the reporting date. The programme includes the refurbishment of the Standerton Water Treatment Works, a five-megalitre clear-water reservoir, repairs to water and sewer infrastructure, the refurbishment of four sewer pump stations, sewer unblocking and water-demand management.

In the Vaal, Rand Water's intervention in Emfuleni and Midvaal includes the unblocking and replacement of collapsed sewer pipelines, the repair of pump stations, the restoration of municipal operation and maintenance functions, and the expansion of wastewater-treatment capacity. The multi-year investment is estimated at R4.7 billion. In North West, R133 million was allocated to the completed refurbishment of the Boitekong Sewer Pump Station and outfall sewer, intended to reduce recurring blockages and improve services in Boitekong, Freedom Park, Meriting and Ser-

**WATER
IS LIFE.**

**SANITATION
IS DIGNITY.**



aleng. Operation Bulela Metsi is supported by R4.6 billion in grant funding over the medium term for water and sanitation projects across North West's ten water-services-authority municipalities.

These interventions demonstrate that government is not standing still. They also demonstrate the exorbitant cost of allowing infrastructure to deteriorate before acting. The ANC is at the center of driving a decisive transition from emergency response to preventative maintenance, properly funded asset management, and the professional operation of treatment facilities.

The ANC has called upon Municipalities to fill critical posts with qualified engineers, process controllers, artisans, and project managers. Councils must ring-fence appropriate revenue for water and sanitation, enforce credible maintenance plans and publish progress against Green Drop and Blue Drop improvement programmes.

We must confront those who

steal cables, vandalize pump stations, manipulate tenders, or deliberately disrupt projects. Such conduct is counter-revolutionary because it attacks the collective assets of the people and diverts resources from the poor. Equally, the ANC will not permit public representatives or officials to invoke vandalism as a blanket excuse for weak management. Political leadership must be visible, officials must be accountable, contractors must perform and communities must receive honest information.

Poor households must receive the free basic water and sanitation support to which they are entitled. Indigent registers must be accurate and protected from factional manipulation. Those who can afford to pay must meet their obligations, while government departments and businesses must settle valid municipal accounts. A sustainable municipal system requires a social compact, but the state must earn cooperation through accurate billing, reliable service, and respectful treatment of residents.

The ANC's political position is clear. We defend the progress made, acknowledge the unfinished task and refuse the normalization of failure. No community should be expected to accept sewage in its streets as an ordinary feature of life. Sanitation is dignity, and dignity is non-negotiable.

ELECTRICITY: From National Crisis to Sustained Recovery

The electricity crisis was among the most severe political, social, and economic challenge during the period under review. Between 2021 and 2023, high stages of load shedding disrupted family life, damaged small enterprises, weakened municipal revenue, constrained investment, and deepened the hardship of the working class and poor. The ANC acknowledges without qualification the anger and loss caused by this period.

The movement drew the correct lesson that the crisis was not inevitable. It reflected accumulated weaknesses in maintenance, delayed investment, governance failures, corruption, and the slow implementation of necessary decisions. It is for this reason that fixing the energy crisis was at the forefront of our renewal agenda going into this term under review.

Our Government subsequently acted with determination. The Energy Action Plan released in July 2022 established a comprehensive programme to improve the availability of Eskom's existing fleet, accelerate new generation, enable investment by businesses and households, procure renewable energy, gas and battery storage, and transform the electricity sector for long-term security. The

National Energy Crisis Committee coordinated implementation, while dedicated executive leadership strengthened the national response.

The results are real and measurable. South Africa has achieved more than 450 consecutive days without load shedding, with continuous supply maintained since mid-May 2025. Unplanned outages declined, energy availability improved and the power system moved from persistent emergency towards greater stability. This is a significant national achievement and a basis upon which economic and social recovery has been advanced.

The ANC does not present this turnaround as a license for complacency. A stable electricity system must be maintained through disciplined engineering, adequate planned maintenance, investment in transmission and distribution, the return of reliable generation capacity and the rapid connection of new energy

projects. Public capacity must be protected and strengthened while the electricity sector evolves.

The recovery also demonstrates a wider political truth. The state is capable of reversing severe crises when there is clear leadership, technical competence, coordination, and consequence management. This standard must now be applied across local government. The ANC insists on the same urgency in water, sanitation, roads, refuse removal and human settlements that was eventually mobilised to address load shedding.

Ending Load Reduction and Advancing a Just Energy Transition

While load shedding has been overcome, load reduction continues to impose hardship on many working-class and poor communities. For a household without electricity, the distinction between load shedding and load reduction offers little comfort. The review



therefore rejects any declaration of complete victory while communities continue to experience repeated local interruptions.

Load reduction is linked to overloaded networks, illegal connections, vandalism, transformer failures, inadequate distribution investment, and the exclusion of many qualifying households from Free Basic Electricity. It is a technical problem, but it is also a social and governance problem. It cannot be solved through disconnections and law enforcement alone, nor can unsafe connections and organized infrastructure crime be tolerated.

The programme to eliminate load reduction is therefore being intensified through the expansion of Free Basic Electricity, the registration of indigent households, accelerated smart-meter installation, transformer and feeder upgrades, network reinforcement, and distributed energy solutions, including microgrids in high-risk areas. Structured engagements with communities are rebuilding trust and establishing shared responsibility for protecting infrastructure.

The ANC reaffirms its commitment to a just energy transition. The transition is necessary to achieve energy security, reduce emissions, improve air quality, and open new paths of industrial development. It must, however, be just in both its outcomes and its methods. Workers and communities whose livelihoods depend on the coal value chain must not carry the burden of change while the benefits flow elsewhere.

Renewable energy procurement has expanded, and legislative reform has enabled municipal-

ities to procure power directly. Yet grid constraints have delayed projects, and municipal participation has been concentrated among better-resourced metros. This unevenness risks reproducing existing spatial and economic inequalities. We have accelerated transmission investment, expanded public generating capacity and poorer municipalities have been enabled to participate in new energy markets.

Our energy transition is connected to re-industrialisation. Solar panels, batteries, meters, cables, and other components are increasingly being manufactured and maintained in South Africa. Our public procurement supports local enterprises, co-operatives, young people, and women. The transition must create decent work and new productive capacity rather than deepen import dependence.

The improvement in the electricity system must also translate into relief for communities that continue to experience load reduction. Government has made significant progress in this regard, with load reduction having ended in seven of the nine provinces. The work is not yet complete. We are accelerating efforts to end load reduction in the two remaining provinces, namely Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal, where communities continue to experience interruptions.

This requires focused investment in overloaded networks, transformer and feeder upgrades, infrastructure maintenance, the expansion of network capacity and measures to address illegal connections, vandalism, and infrastructure crime. The objective is clear: the end of load shedding must ultimately be accompanied

by the end of persistent load reduction, so that all communities can experience a reliable electricity supply.

The Cost of Electricity

The ANC acknowledges that electricity is one of the major drivers of the cost of living and undermines competitiveness of industries. The ANC-led government has already implemented the negotiated prices agreements with some of the major smelters in the country and these initiatives will be extended to other qualifying industry players. At the household level, the ANC commits to increase the free basic electricity to deserving households, an un-bundled and transparent tariff. The ANC commits to empowering municipalities to self-generate electricity and broaden their revenue streams. The ring fencing of electricity revenue will help to expand, refurbish and maintain the ailing municipal distribution and reticulation infrastructure

The ANC will fight for an electricity system that is reliable, affordable, socially owned in its purpose and capable of supporting development.

THE YEAR OF FIXING LOCAL GOVERNMENT: A Militant Programme of Action to Complete the Mandate

The review renews the ANC's determination to build local government that is ethical, capable, developmental, and rooted among the people. The movement enters the next period neither paralysed by its shortcomings nor intoxicated by its achievements. We carry forward the confidence born of democratic transformation and the urgency demanded

by unfinished work.

The immediate programme is clear. Municipalities must secure reliable water and sanitation, reduce losses, rehabilitate wastewater works, and protect infrastructure budgets. They must repair roads, enforce refuse-collection schedules, and build cleaner communities. They must extend Free Basic Electricity, eliminate load reduction, strengthen local networks, and participate in a just energy transition. They must release well-located land, accelerate informal-settlement upgrading, resolve title-deed backlogs and build integrated human settlements.

These priorities must become funded plans with measurable targets, named responsibility and public reporting. ANC caucuses and deployees must treat the Manifesto as a binding mandate. Higher spheres must support municipalities and intervene where they are incapable or unwilling to act. Communities must know what will be done, by whom and by what date.

The ANC calls upon its branches to reconnect with the daily struggles of communities. A branch must know the condition of the local water system, the refuse schedule, the housing projects, the electricity network, and the state of roads. It must mobilise residents around development, defend public assets and hold representatives accountable. Organizational life cannot be separated from the material conditions of the people.

We call upon councillors, officials, workers, business, civil society, and residents to forge a social compact for functional

municipalities. Government must lead and deliver. Those able to pay must pay. All must protect infrastructure and reject corruption, dumping, vandalism and criminal disruption. Accountability for governing remains with those entrusted with public power.

The ANC hears the anger of communities facing dry taps, sewage, uncollected refuse, broken roads, unreliable electricity and long waits for land and housing. That anger is legitimate. We do not ask the people to lower their expectations. The movement and the state must rise to their historic responsibility.

We acknowledge that there have been shortcomings and moments when government and the organisation have not lived up to the expectations of the people. We accept that these shortcomings have contributed to frustration and, in some communities, a loss of confidence. But we also know that the democratic state has transformed the lives of mil-

lions and that the instruments to change what is not working remain in our hands.

The ANC is renewing itself precisely because we recognize our shortcomings. We are correcting our weaknesses, strengthening accountability, rebuilding municipal capacity, and fixing local government so that it once again becomes an institution that works for the people. Our call for a renewed mandate is therefore a call to be judged not only on our historic record, but on the seriousness with which we are confronting our challenges and the work we are doing now to correct them.

We plea with South Africans to continue to work with us as we continue our record of delivery, transformation and work with communities to create local government that delivers water, sanitation, housing, electricity and other basic services with the urgency, competence and dignity that our people deserve.



From 1956 to Opportunity

■ By **DR GWEN RAMOKGOPA, ANC Treasurer General**

"The work of building a nation is too important to be left to men alone."
in the spirit of Charlotte Maxeke



"There is no true social revolution without the liberation of women."

Thomas Sankara



AUGUST 2026 marks 70 years since more than 20,000 women marched to the Union Buildings on 9 August 1956 against the extension of apartheid pass laws to African women. Their message was clear: women would not stand outside the struggle for South Africa's future.

Seventy years later, that principle must continue to guide how we build South Africa, SADC and Africa.

The 46th SADC Summit in Durban is focused on "Resilient, sustainable and inclusive industrialisation through Infrastructure Development, Agricultural and Critical Minerals Transformation in Pursuit of a Just World." Its ambitions, which include economic growth, poverty alleviation, improved quality of life and deeper regional integration, cannot be achieved by men alone.

South Africa's labour market illustrates the challenge. In the

second quarter of 2025, women's unemployment stood at 35.9%, compared with 31.0% for men. In the first quarter of 2026, 39.2% of young women aged 15 - 24 were not in employment, education or training, compared with 36.0% of young men.

These are not simply women's statistics. They are economic statistics. They represent human potential that remains outside the productive economy.

Across Africa, more than 80% of women in sub-Saharan Africa are self-employed, according to the World Bank. From farmers and market traders to technology entrepreneurs, African women are already participating in the economy. The question is whether we will provide capital, technology, markets and infrastructure to move them from survivalist activity to scalable enterprises.

Charlotte Maxeke understood this long before today's statistics. The first Black South African

woman to obtain a bachelor's degree, she returned from Wilberforce University and became an educator, organiser and political activist. She helped organise an anti-pass movement in Bloemfontein in 1913 and founded the Bantu Women's League in 1918.

Her legacy reminds us that women's leadership must extend beyond women's organisations and social welfare into political, economic, intellectual and community leadership.

The women of 1956 understood that South Africa's future could not be divided into "men's issues" and "women's issues". Seventy years later, the question is: What are today's women being called to build?

One answer must be the future of SADC.

South Africa has already taken an important step that could become a continental model: which is government's commitment to

directing 40% of public procurement towards women-owned businesses. This target must be pursued aggressively, intentionally and measurably. Yet government reported that procurement from women-owned businesses was only around 11% across the public sector in 2023.

The gap between 11% and 40% is therefore a challenge we must confront.

If South Africa succeeds, this experience can become a template for SADC and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Imagine women-owned companies in Johannesburg, Lusaka, Harare, Maputo, Gaborone and Windhoek participating in regional supply chains. That would be Pan-Africanism expressed not only through speeches, but through contracts, factories, trade and jobs.

Sankara understood that women's emancipation is inseparable from national transformation. We cannot speak credibly about African industrialisation while women remain disproportionately concentrated in informal and vulnerable economic activity, or about a demographic dividend while young women remain outside education, employment and training. Nor can we build lasting peace and security while women remain under-represented in decisions about conflict and peace.

The African Union's Agenda 2063 already recognises women and youth as central to Africa's development. The challenge is no longer a lack of vision. It is implementation.

At the same time, gender equality must not become a contest between women and men. The



emancipation of women must not come at the expense of the boy child or young men. A functional society requires both women and men to flourish.

Perhaps the best way to honour the women of 1956 is not simply to remember where they marched, but to ask where we are marching now.

They marched towards the Union Buildings demanding recognition. Our generation must march towards opportunity - the opportunity to own, build, trade, lead and govern.

That requires moving beyond celebrating women's potential to deploying it at scale - which will include granting access to finance, affordable childcare, reliable data and greater participation in critical sectors.

In 2026, Cabinet approved the implementation of a Socio-Eco-

nomic Empowerment of Women Index as an annual scorecard to measure progress in women's socio-economic empowerment.

That is the approach we need. We need fewer slogans and more measurement; fewer commitments and more implementation.

The 20,000 women of 1956 did not wait for perfect conditions. Charlotte Maxeke did not wait. Now it is our turn.

Let us make the implementation of South Africa's 40% women-owned procurement target a regional benchmark.

Because the lesson of Charlotte Maxeke, the women of 1956 and Sankara remains clear:

Africa cannot be fully free, prosperous or transformed if its women are not free, prosperous and fully included in building it.



Women's Month: Remembering the Women's March, Defending Freedom of Movement Today

■ By **DR SNUKI ZIKALALA, ANC Veterans League President**

SEVENTY years ago, thousands of women marched against the apartheid government's pass laws, demanding the right to move freely in their own country. That historic stand in 1956 was about dignity, women's rights, and the freedom to walk without fear.

Today, as South Africa commemorates Women's Month, the issue of freedom of movement is once again under threat – not from pass laws, but from rising anti-immigrant campaigns that restrict the lives of women, children, and families who are here legally, with documents, yet live in fear of intimidation and violence.

The ANC Veterans League warns that this moment calls for princi-

pled leadership. While legitimate concerns about unemployment, crime, and immigration management must be addressed, vigilantism and collective blame have no place in a constitutional democracy.

There are many current migrant challenges, including problems of undocumented migrants, poor law enforcement, corrupt officials, unscrupulous employers and competition for scarce resources, especially in poor communities.

On the other hand, migrants have been and continue to be an integral part of our society and support our economy. There is no one kind of migrant – some are asylum seekers, others econom-

ic refugees, others attracted by our lifestyle and climate and others by the ease with which they can conduct illegal activity.

The government responded to the 30th June deadline with a comprehensive plan that is now being implemented. They have also been proactive in responding to repatriation requests and supporting deportations, including Home Affairs setting up a temporary site at the Musina border post.

However, the crisis is far from over for many migrants. Increasing numbers of legal migrants or migrants who are illegal or undocumented due to the inefficiency or corruption of Home Affairs are living in fear, don't venture from

their homes, are forced out of their rental accommodation, and their livelihoods are destroyed. Even legal children have been forced out of school or have had their school disrupted.

There are widespread reports of police standing by while non-South Africans are attacked by March and March and other similar vigilante groups. These groups get widespread publicity in most national media, which advocates simplistic explanations, populist messages, and dangerous scapegoating.

Research shows that coordinated disinformation campaigns on social media are fueling xenophobia, amplifying frustrations about jobs and crime, and undermining trust in state institutions. For example, a recent analysis by *"Tales of Turning"* has shown how, through social media, these organisations leverage real-world grievances to amplify anti-foreign national sentiment and undermine trust in state institutions and the media. The analysis shows a critical threat level with a high probability of real-world violence, civil unrest, and operational disruption to law enforcement.

An analysis of X or Twitter's content related to the *"March and March"* movement, xenophobia and the calls for the removal of illegal foreigners from South Africa, provides evidence that 27% of the anti-foreign national narrative on public social media is part of a coordinated disinformation network.

The consequences are stark: poor communities lose access to affordable goods and services, farmers face labour shortages, and South Africa's reputation



abroad suffers, threatening trade and investment.

Poor communities that rely on goods and services such as spaza shops, taxis etc have been inconvenienced and are being forced to purchase products from large stores such as Checkers at higher prices. Reports indicate that sugar farmers have been unable to harvest cane due to a shortage of workers.

At the same time, those who enter the country unlawfully must be dealt with through due process. Those who commit crimes must be held accountable, irrespective of nationality. Officials who facilitate corruption, human trafficking, fraudulent documentation or illegal immigration must face the full force of the law, while Home Affairs must expedite the modernisation and digitalisation of their systems.

But our focus should not be on deportations, as Cde Mavuso Msimang, Deputy President of the Veterans League, has urged; rather, we should focus on regional development. He argues that scapegoating migrants is *"economic self sabotage,"* echoing warnings from business leaders like MTN's Mcebisi Jonas and Standard Bank's Sim Tshabalala.

Cde Msimang calls for a Southern African development plan – a vision of regional cooperation that mirrors the European Union's free movement of workers. In this context, we must welcome the outcome of the 46th Ordinary Summit of SADC Heads of State and Government in eThekweni earlier this week. Regional leaders pledged to accelerate practical implementation for regional industrialisation, infrastructure development, and the local beneficiation of critical minerals.

The ANC Veterans League believes South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in diversity. Its message is clear:

- Jobs, safety, and dignity will not be secured by blaming migrants.
- Our struggle is against poverty, unemployment, inequality, and crime – not against people because of where they were born.
- Defend the freedom of movement of everyone – women and children should walk safely in our streets, not fearful of any sort of violence.
- Reject collective blame, vigilantism and violence and support fair and effective enforcement of immigration and criminal laws

As we celebrate Women's Month, the Veterans League urges the nation to remember the courage of the women who marched in 1956 – and to apply that same spirit today, especially in respect of women and children. Freedom of movement, dignity, and solidarity are not privileges; they are rights we must defend against division and fear.

Minister Majodina hails iLembe water projects as instruments of social transformation

WATER and Sanitation Minister Pemmy Majodina has hailed the expansion of water services in iLembe District as a practical expression of the democratic government's commitment to overcoming the spatial and social inequalities inherited from apartheid and ensuring that the fruits of democracy reach communities that were historically marginalised and excluded.

Speaking in Mandeni on Saturday, 15 August 2026, Minister Majodina officially unveiled two Water Supply Schemes in the rural villages of Ndulinde and Macambini, extending access to clean and reliable water to more than 2 400 households. The projects, implemented by iLembe District Municipality, comprise new reticulation networks, reservoirs, yard connections, water meters and standpipes. They represent more than physical infrastructure: they are part of the broader transformation of rural communities and the continuing struggle to dismantle inequalities that continue to shape the lives of millions of South Africans.

Minister Majodina was joined by iLembe District Municipality Executive Mayor Cllr Thobani Shandu, Speaker Cllr Dolly Shandu and Mandeni Local Municipality Speaker Cllr Phindile Sishi. For the democratic government, Majodina said, expanding basic services to previously unserved communities is inseparable from the historic mission of the 1994 democratic breakthrough.

The provision of water must therefore be understood not simply as service delivery, but as an instrument of social transformation and a material expression of the Constitution's commitment to dignity, equality and a better life for all. *"This government has proven that water is a basic right deserved by every individual, irrespective of where they live, whether in rural or urban areas,"* said Majodina.

"I am pleased that iLembe District Municipality has made it possible for rural communities to access clean drinking water, including through taps in their yards. This is what it means to reach previously unserved communities with reliable water services."

The intervention is particularly significant during Women's Month, as the struggle for gender equality also requires confronting

the material conditions that reproduce inequality.

Across many rural communities, inadequate access to water and sanitation places a disproportionate burden on women and girls, who often carry responsibility for collecting, storing and managing water for households. This takes away time and opportunities that could otherwise be devoted to education, employment, entrepreneurship and participation in community life.

Majodina said bringing water directly to households therefore had a much deeper significance than infrastructure delivery. *"Every water supply project that we deliver is therefore also an investment in the lives, dignity and opportunities of women and girls. When we bring water closer to households, when a woman can turn on a tap in her own yard instead of*



walking long distances to collect water, we are not simply delivering infrastructure,” she said.

“We are freeing time, restoring dignity, improving safety and creating opportunities for women to participate more fully in the economy and in community life.” The Ndulinde Water Supply Scheme illustrates this transformation.

Majodina unveiled the project at a 300-kilolitre concrete reservoir forming part of Phase 4D. The project has extended access to clean drinking water to 488 households in Ndulinde Ward 6, as well as communities in Zone 5, including Mfuze, St Cyprian, Mathunzi and Matshamhlophe.

Before the intervention, residents depended on communal standpipes that were insufficient to meet community needs. Households can now access water through taps in their own yards, supported by domestic water meters that will assist with detecting leaks, improving water-use management and reducing physical water losses.

Ndulinde has an estimated population of about 12 474 people across more than 3 000 households, highlighting the scale of the developmental challenge confronting rural communities and the importance of sustained investment in water infrastructure. Majodina subsequently proceeded to Macambini Village to unveil the Macambini Water Supply Scheme, part of a long-term intervention that began around 2004 to bring reliable water services to communities in the area.

Macambini has an estimated population of approximately 33 000 people across more than 6 000 households. Phases 4



and 5 included the installation of more than 2 000 standpipes supplying clean drinking water to households in eNdondakusuka, eMangethe and eMangeza. Phase 6 will further extend this transformation through bulk water supply pipelines, reservoirs and additional reticulation, with approximately 1 000 households in eMhlubulweni, oLambothi, eThuthuka and eNyathini expected to benefit.

The projects reflect an important principle of the democratic developmental state: infrastructure must help overcome historical exclusion and improve the material conditions of working-class and poor communities, particularly in rural areas that were systematically neglected under apartheid.

The expansion of water and sanitation services is consequently part of the ongoing work of social transformation. The achievement of political freedom in 1994 transformed South Africa's constitutional and political order, but the social and economic consequences of colonialism and apartheid require sustained state intervention, public investment, capable municipalities and continued commitment to those communities historically denied development.

Majodina said this was why government's programme to expand water and sanitation services to unserved and underserved communities remained central to its agenda. *“We must continue taking services to those who were historically excluded, including rural communities, because the promise of democracy cannot be fulfilled while families remain without reliable access to water and dignified sanitation,”* she said.

The iLembe projects also demonstrate the importance of cooperative governance, with national and local government working together to translate policy commitments into tangible improvements.

Executive Mayor Shandu welcomed the projects, saying they demonstrated government's commitment to accelerating water service delivery and improving the quality of life of South Africans, particularly rural communities that have historically remained unserved. For government, however, infrastructure delivery is only one part of the task. Majodina emphasised that new investments must be protected through effective maintenance, sound infrastructure management and stronger institutional capacity to ensure reliable services over the long term.

This is increasingly important as the water sector confronts challenges including ageing infrastructure, water losses, vandalism, illegal connections and climate pressures. The measure of progress, Majodina said, cannot simply be found in kilometres of pipelines constructed, reservoirs completed or money invested. Its ultimate measure is whether infrastructure changes people's lives.

"For the women who no longer have to walk long distances to collect water, for children who can grow up with greater dignity and safety, for families who can rely on a tap in their own yard, these projects represent the meaning of service delivery," she said. "This is the promise of our Constitution and the promise of the democratic South Africa we are continuing to build."

The developments in Ndulinde and Macambini demonstrate that the struggle to transform South Africa is also fought through the provision of water, sanitation, housing, electricity, healthcare and education – services that give practical meaning to freedom. For communities that once relied on inadequate communal water points, a household tap represents far more than convenience. It is a tangible manifestation of dignity, citizenship and inclusion.

The work must therefore continue. We must extend services to those still excluded, strengthen institutions responsible for delivery and ensure that every investment by the democratic state produces lasting social value. The transformation of South Africa ultimately finds expression in such concrete interventions. Our responsibility is to progressively translate the promise of 1994 into a better life for all.



Our Long Walk to a Water-Secure Future

■ By **DAVID MAHLOBO**

THE International Conference on Water Challenges and Solutions, convened by the University of Zululand, came at a defining moment for the global water agenda. It is also an opportunity to reflect on what Africa can contribute to the search for solutions.

The University's aspiration to become "*A Node of African Thought*" is significant. Africa must not merely consume knowledge generated elsewhere. We must produce knowledge rooted in our realities and ensure that African experience contributes to solving global challenges. Few challenges demand this approach more urgently than water.

My central proposition is simple: water security is no longer merely a water-sector concern. It is one of the defining development, economic, climate, health, social and geopolitical questions

of the twenty-first century. Countries that secure water will be better positioned to secure food, energy, public health, economic growth and social stability.

The world has made progress. Between 2000 and 2024, approximately 2.2 billion people gained access to safely managed drinking water and 2.8 billion to safely managed sanitation. Yet 2.1 billion people still lack safely managed drinking water, while 3.4 billion lack safely managed sanitation and 1.7 billion lack basic hygiene services at home. The world is therefore not on track to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 6 by 2030.

We must accelerate progress, but this cannot mean simply doing more of the same. We must think differently, finance differently, cooperate differently and implement solutions at the scale demanded by the challenge.

The climate crisis is, in large measure, a water crisis. Climate change is altering rainfall patterns, intensifying floods and droughts, accelerating evaporation and placing freshwater ecosystems and infrastructure under growing pressure. This is particularly important for Africa, which has contributed relatively little to historical greenhouse-gas emissions yet remains highly vulnerable to climate-related water insecurity.

Water must therefore be central to climate adaptation and climate finance. Investment in water is not merely social expenditure. It protects public health, agricultural productivity and industrial output, supports energy security, reduces disaster losses and strengthens resilience. It is productive infrastructure and an investment in the foundations of development.

This brings us to the critical question: who will finance the water future we say we want? Africa faces an estimated US\$30 billion annual water investment gap. South Africa placed this reality at the centre of the global development conversation when we hosted the AU-AIP Africa Water Investment Summit in Cape Town during our G20 Presidency in 2025.

The Summit sought to shift the conversation from how much money Africa needs to how we create conditions in which water investment becomes bankable, sustainable and transformative. This requires stronger project pipelines, better project preparation, capable institutions and innovative financing.

We need grants where social and environmental returns cannot be captured commercially, but also concessional finance, guaran-



tees, blended finance and domestic resource mobilisation. The challenge is not simply to mobilise more capital, but the right capital, at the right scale, on the right terms, for the right projects.

South Africa understands this complexity. We are a water-scarce country in which national averages can conceal serious localised deficits. Water security is about where water is available, whether infrastructure can move it where it is needed, whether it is of acceptable quality, whether institutions can manage it and whether communities can access it reliably.

South Africa has committed more than R156 billion in public funding for water and sanitation infrastructure over the next three years. But public investment alone will not meet our long-term requirements. We need stronger planning, institutional capacity, operations and maintenance and additional sources of capital.

The establishment of the South African National Water Resources Infrastructure Agency is intended to strengthen the planning, financing, development, operation and maintenance of strategic national water-resource infrastructure. A dam is

not successful simply because it has been constructed; success means infrastructure that is properly financed, maintained and operated over decades.

We must also build a diversified water mix. Surface water will remain fundamental, but groundwater, desalination, water reuse, rainwater harvesting, stormwater management, conservation and demand management must increasingly complement conventional sources. Groundwater is already critical to rural communities, agriculture and municipalities. Desalination has a role, particularly for coastal cities and industrial centres. Water reuse is equally important: treated wastewater should increasingly be regarded not simply as waste, but as a potential source of water, nutrients and energy.

Natural ecosystems must also form part of our water infrastructure. Wetlands, rivers, catchments and aquifers store, filter and regulate water. Protecting and restoring them is therefore an investment in water security. Diversification must be accompanied by efficiency. Countries cannot simply build their way out of water insecurity. Non-revenue water remains a major challenge worldwide. Reducing leakage, improving metering, managing pressure and addressing illegal connections can create effective water capacity without constructing entirely new sources.

South Africa's cooperation with Japan has reinforced this lesson. Japan demonstrates that water security is not simply about technology; it is also about institutional discipline, reliable data, preventive maintenance, technical competence and operational excellence.

Water quantity cannot be separated from water quality. The linear model of abstracting, treating, consuming and discharging is increasingly unsustainable. The future must be circular, with better wastewater treatment, water reuse and resource recovery protecting rivers, groundwater, estuaries and oceans while creating economic value.

Water also transcends national borders. The Lesotho Highlands Water Project demonstrates how shared water resources can become instruments of cooperation, regional integration and development rather than sources of conflict. As climate uncertainty increases, water diplomacy will become increasingly important.

None of this can succeed without science. Universities and researchers must help us forecast droughts, understand groundwater, detect pollution, reduce leakage, design climate-resilient infrastructure and harness technologies such as remote sensing and artificial intelligence.

But technology alone cannot solve institutional problems. Digital transformation must go hand in hand with institutional transformation and skills development. Africa must also change how it sees itself. We are not merely a continent of water problems waiting for solutions developed elsewhere. African communities, researchers and governments have generated valuable knowledge about drought, groundwater, ecosystem restoration and transboundary cooperation. This knowledge must be validated, financed and scaled.

The Cape Town Summit demonstrated that African leadership on water can become global lead-

ership. Its call for stronger investment, reform of multilateral financial institutions and greater use of concessional and catalytic finance must continue to inform the international agenda, including the 2026 United Nations Water Conference.

What we need now is a new international compact for water security which brings together political leadership, sustainable finance, climate action, institutional reform, science, technology and international cooperation.

South Africa does not claim to have all the answers. We claim determination, a willingness to learn and a commitment to contribute. Water security will not be achieved through one intervention, institution, source or discipline. It will emerge from the convergence of infrastructure, diversified water sources, capable institutions, science, finance, technology and environmental stewardship.

The world is entering a decisive decade for water. We have less time than we would like, but also more knowledge, technology and international cooperation than ever before. Our responsibility is to convert these advantages into action.

Nelson Mandela spoke of the *"long walk to freedom"* - a journey demanding courage, sacrifice, perseverance and a willingness by each generation to carry forward the unfinished work. The struggle for water security must be understood in the same spirit. Previous generations built institutions, infrastructure and knowledge that brought us this far. This generation has inherited that legacy, but also the responsibility to take its own long walk.

To political leaders, public officials, scientists, engineers, utilities, municipalities, financiers, businesses, civil society and communities: This is our moment to take that long walk! Let it be a walk from vulnerability to resilience, from fragmentation to cooperation, from inefficiency to stewardship and from promises to delivery. Let us build water systems that are climate-resilient, financially sustainable, technologically intelligent, environmentally responsible and socially just.

Our generation must ensure that those who come after us inherit a more water-secure world than the one we inherited.

Together, let us take our long walk to water security.



PLANTING TREES, PLANTING HOPE

Why South Africa's Green Future Belongs to All of Us

■ By **BERNICE SWARTS**

WE officially launched the Presidential Greening Project at SANBI Pretoria National Botanical Garden, Pretoria on behalf of President of the RSA Mr Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa, on 11 May 2026 under the theme ***“My Tree, My Oxygen. Plant Yours Today.”*** The national call is to plant 10 million trees on Heritage Day, 24 September 2026 as part of President Ramaphosa's One Billion Trees Programme.

The Reconstruction of South Africa, three decades on. Thirty years into democracy, the work of reconstructing South Africa must continue without compromise on all fronts. Apartheid and colonialism destroyed the lives of the indigenous people of this country across every sphere. Under apartheid, Black people were denied freedom and basic dignity. The environment they were forced to live in offered very little. Firstly, they were forcibly removed from their fertile ancestral lands and pushed onto mountainous, barren and unproductive areas. This was not just a removal of people, it was a destruction of livelihoods, heritage and the natural environment. Our task today is to reverse that legacy and build a South Africa that restores land, dignity, and opportunity for all.

The destruction of nature and the



environment under Apartheid was directly linked to policies that denied the majority, and Black South Africans in particular, access to basic services. Under Apartheid, infrastructure like electricity, gas, and paraffin was deliberately prioritized for white urban areas and industry. Townships, rural villages, and former “homelands” were systematically under-resourced. Millions of households had no access to the electricity grid. That meant no lights, no stoves, no heaters. With no other affordable option for cooking and heating, families resorted to what was available. De-bushing or deforestation became the language of the day. Collecting firewood from surrounding bush, forests,

and communal land, de-bushing entire areas around villages to make a fire for the day. Dung and other biomass where trees were already gone.

Over decades this put massive pressure on the environment. Areas around dense settlements were stripped bare. Soil erosion, loss of biodiversity, and desertification increased especially in the former homelands like Transkei, Ciskei, Venda, Bophuthatswana, Lebowa, Kangwane, KwaNdebele, Kwazulu Natal, Gwagwa etc. It was structural, not just individual. This wasn't because people *“didn't care about nature.”* It was a direct consequence of Land dispossession, People

were moved to overcrowded, marginal land with few trees too, no electricity, no choice but to burn wood. Even where electricity later arrived, it was often unaffordable to use the electricity and the uninterrupted massacres of trees continued. This continues to expose a huge risk to our tomorrow and afar because, trees are basically the backbone of a healthy, sustainable environment for people, animals, and the planet. As President Mandela said at the 1992 Food & Trees for Africa launch in Alexandra, trees and greening were needed to address “the inequities created by Apartheid’s land and housing policies”.

Why this matters today, this history is exactly why campaigns like the Presidential Greening Project and Milestone of Freedom campaign link environment to justice. Planting trees today is not just about climate. It’s about restoring what was taken, reversing environmental inequality, giving dignity, electricity, clean air, shade, fruit trees to communities that were denied it. In short: Yes. Apartheid’s denial of basic services forced millions into unsustainable use of natural resources. The environmental damage we see in many villages today is part of that legacy. That’s why “Planting Trees, Planting Hope” is also about correcting the past.

It is against this background that the President has directed the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment to implement the National Greening Programme. Through this programme, one billion trees will be planted over a five-year period. As a country, we have a responsibility to confront the growing challenges of climate change, environmental degradation, bio-

diversity loss, and food insecurity. In addition, the programme will contribute to mitigating the harmful effects of climate change. It will also support household food security when trees are integrated into food gardens. and it will help create sustainable human settlements in line with Sustainable Development Goal 11.

Last year, we gathered at the Pretoria National Botanical Garden with excitement, hope, and determination as we launched the One Million Trees Campaign. We set ourselves an ambitious goal, to plant at least 10 million trees over five years. What followed was more than a campaign. It became living proof of what is possible when there is political will, collective leadership, and a shared national purpose. Government, communities, civil society, NGOs, traditional leaders, municipalities, business, and ordinary South Africans came together behind one cause. Together, we did not just meet the target. We surpassed it. In a single day, we planted more than 1.3 million trees. That achievement reminded us of a fundamental truth, when political will is matched by the participation of our people, no goal is too ambitious.

Today, we return with an even greater sense of responsibility. This year, we are not merely repeating what we did before. We are building on that momentum with a far greater national ambition, the Presidential One Billion Trees Programme. The scale of this programme reflects the urgency of our time. Climate change, environmental degradation, biodiversity loss, water insecurity, and poor air quality are no longer distant threats. They are realities our communities face every single day. The Presiden-

tial One Billion Trees Programme is therefore more than the planting of trees. It is a political commitment to building a greener, healthier, and more climate-resilient South Africa. And it is a call to every sector of our society to take ownership of this responsibility.

This is not government’s programme alone. It belongs to the people of South Africa. In the year that has passed, we have seen more clearly why this work matters. We have watched communities devastated by floods. We have seen roads washed away, homes damaged, and livelihoods disrupted. We have seen schools forced to close because communities around them were hit by extreme weather. We have mourned lives lost in Mpumalanga and Limpopo. We have witnessed the impact of severe weather across our country. These are not just numbers in a climate report.

Behind every flood is a family. Behind every damaged home is a lifetime of savings. Behind every school that cannot open is a child whose learning is interrupted. Behind every livelihood lost is a parent wondering how they will provide for their family. This is what climate change looks like when it reaches the ground and that is why our conversation about the environment must become more human. We cannot speak about climate change only in terms of temperatures, emissions, biodiversity statistics, and legislation. Those matter, but behind every statistic is a person. Climate change is about the quality of the air a child breathes. It is about the safety of the home a family lives in. It is about the future we leave for the next generation.

It is about whether a community has access to clean water, farmer can depend on the seasons, a family living next to an industrial area must endure polluted air every day, a community still has a wetland that can absorb water during heavy rainfall or whether that natural protection has been destroyed. Ultimately, it is about whether our children will inherit a country that is healthier, greener, and more resilient than the one we inherited. That is why planting a tree is about much more than putting a seedling in the ground.

It is an act of responsibility, an investment in the future, a statement that our communities deserve clean, safe, and healthy spaces. A tree is connected to the air we breathe. I am often asked this question, what do trees have to do with air quality? The answer is this, trees are not a substitute for strong air-quality regulation, industrial emission controls, or proper monitoring. We must continue to hold polluters accountable and ensure that industry complies with environmental standards. But trees are an important part of the solution. They filter pollutants. They capture carbon. They provide shade. They cool our communities. They help create healthier urban environments.

Hence, on behalf of the President of the Republic of South Africa, and through the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, we call upon all spheres of government, business, civil society, and communities at large to support and participate in our national greening programme. On 24 September 2026, let us plant ten million trees as our contribution toward achieving the Presidential One Billion Trees Programme.

It is also imperative that, as we call for undivided support and active participation, we take this opportunity to extend our sincere appreciation to all provinces, government departments, municipalities, Khoisan and traditional Leadership institution, private sector, civil society organisations, and communities at large. Thank you for your support and active participation in this national effort last year. Together, we planted hundreds of thousands of trees on a single day on 24 September 2025. Following this success, the President has directed the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment to plant 10 million trees across the country on 24 September 2026, as a milestone toward the One Billion Trees target.

This year, we call on all provinces, government departments, municipalities, the private sector, and non-governmental organisations to donate and plant at least one million trees in safe and appropriate spaces. These spaces may include schools, Traditional Council offices, churches, government buildings, cemeteries, and community parks. All planting activities will take place on 24 September 2026.

We further encourage all sectors across the country to mobilise stakeholders to donate and plant trees as their contribution toward the President's One Billion Trees target. We also call upon all public representatives, starting with the President of the Republic, the Deputy President, Ministers, Deputy Ministers, Premiers, MECs, District and Local Executive Mayors, and Councilors as well as all political parties, Khoisan and Traditional Leadership, religious denominations, civil society and communities at large to actively participate in the tree planting on 24 September 2026.

We look forward to a collective and seamless approach in this programme to transform our environment. Let us ensure that our country does not look like a desert in years to come. The tomorrow we seek to protect is not ours; it is borrowed from our children.

Comrade Bernice Swarts *Is Deputy Minister of Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment. She is also an ANCWL NEC and Gauteng ANC PTT-PWC Member.*



From Knowing What Must Be Done to Doing It

■ By **FAIEZ JACOBS**

 N Sunday, the African National Congress will launch its 2026 Local Government Elections Manifesto in Diepsloot. The flags will rise and the songs will remind us who we are. Our President will set out the movement's commitments. Across the country, members and supporters will listen with hope.

But outside the stadium, South Africans will ask a harder question. What will be different on Monday morning?

That question is not hostile. It is honest. It comes from the mother who reported a blocked drain three times. It comes from the pensioner whose water bill makes no sense. It comes from the young graduate sitting at home without work. It comes from the family walking past uncollected rubbish, broken streetlights and a park surrendered to criminals.

These people are not statistics. They are our people. Many still love the ANC, but love cannot survive forever without trust. Some will vote for us again. Some will vote against us. The greatest danger is the person who no longer believes that voting matters.

The ANC understands the crisis. We have reviewed the 2021 manifesto. We have acknowledged progress and shortcomings in housing, water and electricity. We have adopted the Local Government Action Plan. We have changed the mayoral selection



process. We have declared 2026 the Year of Decisive Action to Fix Local Government and Transform the Economy.

We know what must be done. Why, then, do we so often fail to do it?

This is the question renewal must answer.

Often it is political will, weak execution and the failure to act against our own wrongdoing. We pass resolutions, receive reports and establish task teams, but the broken pump remains broken. We announce interventions, but nobody can tell the community who is responsible, what the deadline is or what happens when the deadline is missed.

Sometimes we protect internal peace at the cost of public trust.

We allow factional loyalties to outrank community needs. We confuse a long record in the organisation with a right to public office. Then we ask voters to separate the ANC from the conduct of people deployed in its name.

The voters will not make that separation. Nor should they.

Every councillor, mayor and official carrying an ANC mandate represents the movement at the tap, the billing office, the refuse truck and the council meeting. When that person serves with honesty and urgency, the ANC is strengthened. When that person is absent, arrogant or corrupt, the ANC pays the price at the ballot box.

The 2026 manifesto must therefore be different in one decisive respect. It must be built for implementation.

Every promise must have a name next to it. Who is responsible? What must be delivered? By what date? How much will it cost? How will residents track progress? What will happen if nothing moves?

Within one hundred days of taking office, every ANC led municipality should publish a plain language local delivery contract. It should identify the ten failures causing the greatest pain in that municipality and state what will be fixed first. Not fifty priorities. Ten. Water interruptions. Sewage spills. Refuse backlogs. Dangerous roads. Faulty streetlights. Billing disputes. Housing delays. Corrupt procurement. Unfinished projects. Youth unemployment.

Each ward should have a public problem register. Every complaint should receive a reference number, an owner and a response date. Councillors should hold monthly report back meetings where residents hear what was resolved, what remains blocked and why. Municipal leaders should publish a dashboard.

This is not administration alone. It is political organisation.

A branch must know its streets, schools, clinics, businesses, faith

organisations, sports clubs and community leaders. It must know where the elderly live, where young people gather, where drugs are sold and where families go hungry. A branch that only meets to discuss positions is not rooted among the people. A councillor who appears only before an election is not leading.

Our campaign must begin with listening, but it cannot end there. When we knock on a door, we must return with an answer. When we record a problem, we must track it. When government cannot solve it immediately, we must explain the blockage truthfully. Respect begins with showing up. Trust grows when we come back.

Candidate selection is therefore part of service delivery. We need candidates who can organise, communicate, read a municipal budget, understand an Integrated Development Plan, monitor contractors and stand firm against corruption.

We need people who can bring residents together across race, class, language and generation.

We must also stop treating consequence management as betrayal. The real betrayal is al-

lowing one person's misconduct to damage the movement built through the sacrifice of millions. Renewal means protecting honest cadres, correcting those who can be corrected and removing those who refuse to change.

The ANC enters this election with a proud record. Democratic local government has brought water, electricity, sanitation, housing and social infrastructure to millions. Apartheid municipalities were designed to exclude the majority. We transformed that system.

But history is not a receipt we can present forever. Our people compare our promises with what they experience today. They are entitled to do so. Gratitude cannot fill a pothole. A liberation song cannot repair a leaking pipe. A manifesto cannot restore trust unless disciplined people turn its words into work.

Sunday must therefore be more than a launch. It must be a line in the sand.

From Monday, every structure should ask one question each week: what changed for the people because the ANC acted?

Not what meeting did we hold. Not what statement did we issue. Not who sat on the platform. What changed?

The election will not be won by posters alone. It will be won when people see humility at their doors, competence in their councils, courage in our decisions and improvement in their streets.

The ANC knows what must be done. We must prove that we have the will, discipline and courage to do it.



A NEW ERA OF STATE CAPTURE?

Connect the dots...

■ By **RAVIN SINGH**

THE capture of the public good does not always require a crime. Sometimes it requires only good manners.

A crime, after all, needs a criminal, and criminals are so terribly inconvenient. Capture, properly arranged, needs nothing more than a consultant, a mandate and an excellent lunch.

The vulgar steal. The sophisticated arrange to be given.

There will be no smoking gun, because nobody will have been so gauche as to fire anything. There will be contracts. There will be disclosures. There will be a compliance file, correctly indexed, which is the modern form of an alibi.

One should never break a law that one can simply retain.

And at the end of it, the public will own rather less, somebody else will own rather more, and not a single person will have done anything so unfashionable as wrong.

Which is why the DA's role in the Government of National Unity, and its growing interest in the institutions that control public money and public assets, deserves much closer scrutiny.

Follow the money.

Start with the Public Investment Corporation.

The PIC manages around R3.7 trillion, much of it the retirement savings of teachers, nurses, po-

lice officers and other public servants.

Mark Burke, the DA's Federal Finance Chairperson and finance spokesperson, has positioned himself at the forefront of the attack on the PIC.

The DA says the politicians must go.

It has introduced legislation aimed at removing politicians from the PIC board and preventing people who recently held political office from serving on it.

Fine.

But remove the politicians and hand R3.7 trillion to whom?

Because while Burke has been positioning himself as a guardian of public servants' money, the company he founded, Kastelo, has been fighting extraordinarily serious allegations by the South African Reserve Bank involving approximately R4 billion in off-shore transactions.

Kastelo denies wrongdoing.

The DA's defence is that Burke is no longer Kastelo's chairperson, is not involved in its day to day operations and that the allegations have not been made against him personally.

That must be recorded. But so must this.



On 28 July, the Johannesburg High Court dismissed Kastelo's application challenging the Reserve Bank action, with costs on an attorney and client scale.

None of this establishes personal wrongdoing by Burke.

But it does make the sermons about who can and cannot be trusted around other people's money considerably more interesting.

Because this debate cannot be reduced to one convenient proposition:

Politicians bad. Private financial interests good.

If politicians must be removed from the PIC because political proximity creates risks around R3.7 trillion in public servants' money, then surely we should be equally interested in the financial histories, business interests and regulatory records of the private people who might replace them.

A suit is not an integrity certificate.

A balance sheet is not an integrity certificate.

Private capital does not acquire moral superiority simply by walking through the door marked "reform".

Then comes the contradiction.

The DA says politicians should not chair the PIC.

Yet it wanted its own Deputy Minister of Finance, Ashor Sarupen, to chair it.

Sarupen is not some politically detached technocrat who hap-



pens to be a Deputy Minister.

He is the Chairperson of the DA's Federal Council.

President Ramaphosa ultimately appointed Deputy Minister Seiso Mohai instead.

The DA objected and publicly argued that Sarupen would have been the better choice.

So what exactly is the principle?

No politicians at the PIC?

Or no politicians except our politician?

It begins to look considerably less like a principled campaign to depoliticise the PIC and considerably more like a battle over whose hands get closer to the purse.

And it is one hell of a purse.

R3.7 trillion.

Then there is Ryan Coetzee, the DA's overrated political strategist.

And the chronology here matters.

Coetzee was already Chief Ex-

ecutive of Consulum, an international political and corporate advisory company founded by former Bell Pottinger executives, when he helped negotiate the DA's entry into the GNU in 2024.

Three months later, the DA contracted Consulum itself.

Under a confidential agreement reportedly worth approximately R7.8 million for six months, Consulum was contracted to assist the DA with its operation inside the GNU, including strategy for ministers and deputy ministers, communications, political staff training and meetings of the DA's GNU caucus.

Then Coetzee personally reappeared in back channel negotiations between the DA and the ANC during the battle over South Africa's national budget.

Read that sequence again.

He helps negotiate the DA into government while heading a private international political consultancy.

The DA subsequently hires that consultancy to help manage its operation inside government.

Then he appears in negotiations concerning our national budget.

Our taxes. Our expenditure.

Our national priorities. Our purse.

There has been no finding of wrongdoing against Coetzee or Consulum.

The issue is the extraordinary proximity between private political consultancy, political parties and decisions affecting the state.

And South Africans should be particularly interested in Consulum's pedigree.

It was founded by former Bell Pottinger executives.

South Africans remember Bell Pottinger.

We remember the Guptas.

We remember the manipulation of racial tensions.

We remember the manufacture of political narratives.

We remember what happens when sophisticated communications machinery, enormous private interests and political power find one another.

The DA remembers too.

It helped pursue Bell Pottinger internationally for what it did in South Africa.

Then there is Resolve Communications, chaired and owned by former DA leader Tony Leon and run by Paul Boughey, a former Chief Executive of the DA.

That revolving door deserves attention in its own right.



Two people who occupied senior positions inside the DA now operate a company representing paying private clients seeking access to people exercising public power.

Questions have been raised about Resolve's lobbying, its approaches to ministers and the interests it represents.

Resolve denies wrongdoing and Tony Leon says there is nothing improper about its lobbying activities.

Fine.

But the question is not only whether somebody has broken a law.

Who gets into the room?

Who gets the minister's ear?

Who arranged the meeting?

Who is paying for that access?

Whose interests are being advanced?

And how much is political access worth when the people selling lobbying services spent years building relationships at the highest levels of the party now sitting inside government?

Influence over the state does not always arrive carrying a brown envelope.

Sometimes it arrives carrying an old contact list and a diary appointment.

And then we come to local government.

This is where the argument becomes even more important.

The DA tells us municipalities are broken.

Many are.

Water systems fail. Electricity

infrastructure deteriorates. Refuse piles up. Roads collapse. Corruption, incompetence and political interference have done enormous damage.

And then comes the proposed cure.

More private capital.

More private participation in municipal services.

More private involvement in infrastructure.

More private provision.

More opportunities for public assets to be "unlocked".

The DA's local government programme envisages a substantially greater role for the private sector in municipalities.

And this is where we need to become very careful.

The failure of public administration does not establish the failure of public ownership.

If Johannesburg Water is dysfunctional, fix Johannesburg Water.

If City Power is failing, fix City Power.

If municipal managers are incompetent, remove them.

If politicians interfere, expose them.

If officials steal, prosecute them.

If institutions have been hollowed out, rebuild them.

Do not use the destruction of the public institution as the sales pitch for disposing of the public good.

Because there is a remarkably convenient road from public failure to private profit.

Allow the institution to deteriorate. Point at the deterioration.

Declare the state incapable. Bring in private capital.

Transfer the service. Transfer the revenue stream.

Transfer the infrastructure.

Eventually transfer the asset.

Then tell the public there was no alternative.

By then something fundamental has happened.

The citizen has become a customer.

The public service has become a product.

The public asset has become an investment.

And something generations of South Africans financed through taxes, rates and service charges becomes something from which somebody else extracts a return.

Water is not simply a market.

Electricity is not simply a revenue stream.

Municipal land is not simply an asset waiting to be unlocked.

The pipes beneath our streets are not simply an investment opportunity.

They constitute the public good.

And once the public good has been transferred permanently into private hands, getting it back will be considerably more difficult than fixing the municipality that failed to manage it.

Now put the pieces together.

The PIC. R3.7 trillion.

The national budget. The allocation of the country's resources.

The lobbying firms. Access to ministers and public decision makers.

The political consultants. Moving between private international consultancies, political parties and negotiations affecting government.



Local government. Water, electricity, municipal land, infrastructure and essential services increasingly opened to private capital.

At what point do we stop examining every one of these things as though they exist in separate universes?

South Africans know what state capture looked like the last time.

The Guptas. Saxonwold.

Ministerial appointments.

Tender manipulation.

Political fixers.

Suitcases of cash. Brazen looting.

We have become conditioned to looking for another Gupta family.

That may be a serious mistake.

The next era of state capture may look nothing like the first.

It may be entirely respectable.

Everyone may wear suits.

There may be lawyers.

Consultants.

Investment advisers.

Lobbyists. Overrated political strategists.

PowerPoint presentations.

And an impressive vocabulary.

Efficiency.

Reform.

Professionalisation.

Public private partnerships.

Unlocking value.

Market confidence.

The next people interested in the public asset may not need to steal it.

They may simply persuade government to sell it.

They may not need to raid the public purse.

They may seek influence over who manages the purse and where it is spent.

They may not need to capture a minister in Saxonwold.

They may have a professional lobbyist arrange the meeting.

They may not need to steal the municipal water system.

They may simply turn it into an investment opportunity.

And nobody will call it capture.

They will call it reform.

That is why we should ask the questions now.

Who manages the money?

Who negotiates the budget?

Who gets access to ministers?

Who advises government?

Who gets the municipal contracts?

Who operates the infrastructure?

Who buys the public assets?

Who earns the fees?

Who gets the return?

And eventually:

Who owns what once belonged to all of us?

I am not saying the DA is engaged in state capture.

I am saying South Africa would be extraordinarily foolish to wait for another commission of inquiry ten years from now before asking who has their hands on the purse today.

Because the next people who come for the state may not arrive carrying bags of cash.

They may arrive carrying a prospectus.



A tribute to Mama Noruru Payi

■ By **THABANG MASEKO**



DURING the celebrations of Women's Month, the community of Zone 7 was cast beneath a dark cloud of grief.

A great tree has fallen. We witnessed the final breath of Cde Noruru Payi, affectionately known to comrades and community members as Sisi Ruru.

Her passing leaves a profound void in NU7, a community whose political history and collective memory are inseparable from the contribution she made over many years.

Sisi Ruru was more than a political activist; she was a steadfast organiser, a courageous revolutionary and a servant of her community whose quiet determination helped shape the political character of Zone 7.

Her departure marks the end of an important chapter in the history of the area and leaves generations of activists with a formidable legacy to uphold.

Sisi Ruru played a significant role in shaping the politics of NU7, leading the ANC branch under Cde Mzukisi Skweyiya then, currently ANC Yure Mdyogolo branch.

Following the unbanning of political organisations and the release of political prisoners, Payi made a tremendous contribution as an underground MK operative in the Malinoge Detachment.

In the early 1990s, she demonstrated exceptional organisational ability as branch secretary, embodying what Mao Zedong described as the “foot soldier” – disciplined, committed and always close to the people. I remember her moving tirelessly from house to house across Zone 7, carrying her unmistakable black A4 notebook containing the names of ANC members in good standing and reminding comrades when their membership was due for renewal.

It was humble work, but it was the essential work of building and sustaining an organisation from the ground up.

Working alongside comrades including Zolani Stonkie Nkoseni, Nyaniso Cetywayo, Fezeka Gola, Ntombekhaya Bukubukwana, Cde ‘Seven Manqina, Mlandeli “Tshotsho” Ngafunwa, late Otto Feleza, late Mandla Zazi, late Phillip “Phil” Jones, Ntsikelelo (Ncamazana) Simani, late Mkhululi Bukubukwana and then branch chairperson Mlandeli Vazi, Sisi Ruru was instrumental in welcoming returning exiles and political prisoners, among them ANC historian Dr Francis Meli, who set foot in the community after years in exile.

Philani Primary School became an important meeting place for political formations and a gathering point during this extraordinary period of transition. I regarded Sisi Ruru as a brave revolutionary in the mould of Rosa Luxemburg.

Her voice was soft, but her political conviction was firm; she articulated the position of the Con-



gress movement with clarity and determination.

Those were turbulent times. Following the return of exiles and political prisoners, violence erupted between two staunch youth formations – the East London Youth Congress (ELYCO), whose stronghold was this community, and the Mdantsane Youth Congress (MDAYCO).

Armed with pangas and other dangerous weapons, young people who belonged to the same broad ANC Congress movement found themselves confronting one another. As the leader at the time, Sisi Ruru understood that the violence had to end.

I will always remember the peace-talk meeting she and her leadership convened at Philani Primary School with the angry and divided youth. Rev. Seuntjie Dayimane chaired the meeting, and through dialogue, political maturity and courageous intervention, the gathering produced positive results and helped bring the violence to an immediate end.

That episode captures the essence of Sisi Ruru’s leadership: she understood that political

leadership was not about occupying a position, but about protecting people, resolving conflict and building unity.

I salute her, too, for nurturing me in politics and for the lessons she imparted through her example. Sisi Ruru was a humble leader who never sought deployment into government or pursued political office for personal advancement. Instead, she supported the first councillor of the democratic era, Tata George Msimang,

who served two terms, working under the ANC branch leadership of Tata Dyobiso for many years.

She was a cadre who believed in the cause rather than the rewards that might come from it.

Sisi Ruru may now go to sleep, but her political spirit will live forever. Her contribution to the political history of NU7, Mdantsane and the wider Border region cannot be erased by time.

It lives in the people she organised, the comrades she nurtured, the conflicts she helped resolve and the democratic society she worked tirelessly to build.

Her was a life of quiet courage, disciplined service and unwavering commitment to her people.

We salute a daughter of the revolution, a community builder and a true foot soldier whose footprints remain deeply embedded in the history of the Border region.

Hamba kahle, Mam’ Nkabane. Uggatso ulifezile.

Lala ngoxolo. Umsebenzi wakho awuyi kulityalwa.

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

22–27 August 2026

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

22 August 1788

Sierra Leone created for freed slaves

The colony of Sierra Leone was conceived by British philanthropists and abolitionists as a home for African slaves freed in England. A Temne king sold a strip of land on the north shore of the Sierra Leone Peninsula to the Sierra Leone Company for the “free community of settlers, their heirs and successors.” A few years later the settlers were also joined by settlers of African origin from other parts of the empire. Sierra Leone became a British crown colony in 1808. Throughout the 19th century, the colony steadily grew through various “treaties of friendship” and cessions from the local chiefs. Sierra Leone achieved its independence on 27 April 1961.

22 August 1856

Djidjelli earthquake causes Tsunami around Mediterranean

An earthquake which destroyed the Algerian city of Djidjelli also caused a tsunami that floods Mediterranean islands and the coastal towns of North Africa and Europe.

22 August 1894

Natal Indian Congress formed

The Natal Indian Congress (NIC) is formed by Mahatma Gandhi in order to fight discrimination against Indian traders in Natal. It became the first permanent political organisation to strive to

maintain and protect the rights of Indians in South Africa. The NIC, Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC) and the Cape Indian Congress later went on to form the South African Indian Congress (SAIC). Thereafter, many joint activities between the SAIC and African National Congress (ANC) were organised.

22 August 1925

Sculptor Nelson Mukhuba born

Nelson Mukhuba, a versatile and talented South African artist, was born in Tshakhuma village, Venda. He worked as a carpenter, welder, gardener and house painter until he chose to promote his own Vhavhenda culture through his music and woodcarving skills. Mukhuba used mainly Marula and Jacaranda trees to produce his craftwork. During the 1960s, as a migrant worker in Johannesburg, he formed various Marabi dance bands and made recordings. Mukhuba committed suicide in 1987; he set his storeroom alight and many of the works that survived bear the scars of this tragic event.

22–26 August 1977

World Conference against Apartheid in Lagos

World Conference for Action against Apartheid, Lagos, organised by the United Nations in cooperation with the Organisation of African Unity and the Federal Republic of Nigeria took place on this day.

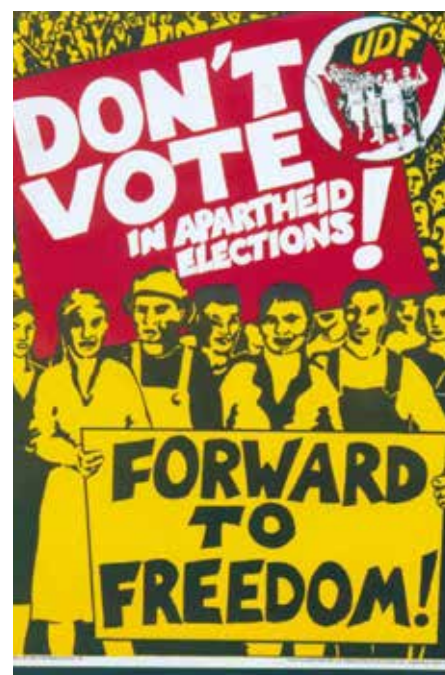
22 August 1977

Pretoria Show opens to all races

The Pretoria show is an annual event that began in 1939 as a whites only, agricultural show and grew to include arts, entertainment, education and exhibitions over the years. However, on 22 August 1977 the show was officially opened to all races. The show is the largest springtime show in South Africa, now called The Spring Show taking place every year between late August and early September at the Tshwane Events Center (previously Pretoria Show Grounds).

22 August 1984

UDF organises boycott of Tricameral parliament elections



THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

On 22 August 1984 the United Democratic Front organised highly successful boycotts of the Coloured and Indian elections to parliament in 1984. The UDF was against the exclusion of African people from the Tricameral parliament and saw this as part of the racist divide and rule segregationist rule of apartheid. In early 1984, the UDF claimed a membership of more than 600 organizations and 3 million individuals and in that years mass action had rendered SA ungovernable. This led to a state of emergency being declared by PW Botha in 1985.

22 August 2010

Iconic Athlone towers demolished

The iconic Athlone cooling towers also known by locals as “*The two ladies of Athlone*” were demolished in just eight seconds during a “surprise” implosion on 22 August 2010 by the City of Cape Town.

23 August 1862

First Rugby match played in SA

On 23 August 1862, the first rugby match heralded the start of what would become a hugely popular sport among White people in South Africa. The match took place in Green Point, Cape Town between one team made up of civilians and one made up of military members. The first rugby club, Hamilton, was formed in 1875 and was soon followed by the Villagers Club. As the popularity of the sport grew, the Rugby Union Board was formed. After SA was banned from international sporting arena, it meant that it could no longer participate in international rugby matches. SA was only allowed to return to playing international rugby in 1992, following changes in the

country's political environment and the integration of rugby. The national team, the Springboks, has since the dawn of democracy won the Rugby World Cup three times, in 1995, 2007 and most recently in 2019.

23 August 1894

James La Guma born



Political activist and trade unionist James Arnold (Jimmy) La Guma, member of the South African Communist Party (SACP) and president of the South African Coloured People's Organisation (SACPO) from 1957–1959 was born in Bloemfontein. He joined the Communist Party in 1925 and visited the Soviet Union (USSR) more than once. La Guma was an ardent Africanist and believed that the empowerment of Black political leadership was necessary for the success of communism in South Africa. He is the father of Alex La Guma, one of the 156 Treason Trial plaintiffs in 1956.

23 August 1942

Music icon Letta Mbulu born

Letta Mbulu was born in Soweto on 23 August 1942. As a teenager she joined the cast of the play *King Kong* and toured the US with other artists like Miriam Makeba and Hugh Masekela.



At the end of the tour Mbulu returned to South Africa, but did not stay long because of the apartheid government policies. She returned to the US where she quickly became part of the exiled artists' circles that included Caiaphus Semenya. Mbulu released several albums in the US and slowly made a name for herself as a singer, songwriter and actor. In 1992 Mbulu and Semenya returned to South Africa; soon after working together on the album *Not yet Uhuru*, which introduced them to the South African audience. Mbulu was honoured with a Lifetime Achievement Award by the South African Music Awards in 2001.

23 August 1960

Largest frog found in Equatorial Guinea

The largest species of frog, this one weighing 3.3 kg is found in Equatorial Guinea, named the Goliath bullfrog, only found in Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon. It is endangered due to habitat loss and being hunted for the exotic pet trade.

23 August 1976

Botswana adopts Pula currency

Botswana introduces its own currency, the Pula (meaning rain), replacing the South African Rand in use since the 1960s.

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

23 August 2006

Report on Rape in Khayelitsha

The Simelela Rape Survivors Centre in Cape Town reported that almost half of the rapes in Cape Town's Khayelitsha township involved girls under fourteen, with the youngest survivor aged one and the oldest a grandmother aged seventy-six. From August 2005 to July 2006 the Centre treated 743 rape cases, an average of two to three a day. The Simelela Rape Survivors Centre was a response to the high degree of sexual violence against women and children in South African townships. Khayelitsha has one of the highest rates of rape cases in South Africa.

23 August 2011

AKA releases debut album

South African rapper Kiernan Jarryd Forbes, known as AKA, releases his debut album, *Alter-Ego*, quickly reaching gold status and earning him the Male Artist of the Year SAMA in 2012.

23 August 2022

South Africa largest exporter of Macadamia nuts

Native to Australia, South Africa has become the largest exporter of this rare slow-growing nuts this year, representing 34% of global exports, followed by Australia (26.7%) and Kenya (12.3%). China accounts for 33% of global imports of nuts, followed by the US at 23.9%, according to WorldTop-Exports.com

24 August 1928

Angie Brooks born

Liberian jurist and diplomat, the first woman to be elected President of the UN General Assembly, Angie Brooks was born on this day in Virginia, Liberia. She served as Liberia's Assistant



Secretary of State, a Supreme Court Justice and Liberia's Ambassador to the United Nations.

24 August 1960.

Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi born



Geraldine Fraser was born on 24 August 1960, in Lansdowne, Cape Town, the daughter of a teacher and factory worker. She became politically active at Livingstone High School where she was elected to the Student Representative Council. A year after she enrolled for a Teachers Diploma at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), she left South Africa to join the ANC in exile, where she worked for Joe Gqabi, ANC Chief Representative in Zimbabwe. A member of Umkhonto we Sizwe, Fraser-Moleketi received her military training in Angola, the former USSR and Cuba. She also became a member of the

SACP and served in the regional leadership of the SACP, based in Zimbabwe, and upon her return to South Africa, Fraser-Moleketi worked at the SACP headquarters and became a member of the Politburo and also the ANC NEC. She was an ANC MP from 1994-2008, serving as Minister for Welfare and Population Development until 1999, and as Minister of Public Service and Administration until 2008. She has since worked for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as well as the African Development Bank (AfDB). Cde Fraser Moleketi recently completed a Masters degree with the University of Pretoria.

24 August 1962

African countries call for Release of Nelson Mandela



African delegations requested Secretary-General U Thant to help obtain the release of Nelson Mandela. In a statement, they condemned the arrest on 5 August and noted that he was held under the Sabotage Act, which carries a possible death penalty.

25 August 1949

Zena Bacar born

Zena Bacar, Mozambican singer, one of her country's first popular music star was born in Nampula. She recorded her first song in 1980 and toured internationally with her band Eyuphuro.

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

25 August 1949

Salif Keita born

Considered Mali's greatest singer, Keita was born in Djobila on this day. The most famous entertainer who has albinism, is known as *"the Golden Voice of Africa."*

25 August 1993

Amy Biehl killed in Cape Town

An American Fulbright post-graduate, Amy Elizabeth Biehl (26), was dragged from her car by a 100-strong mob of youths in Gugulethu, and stabbed to death. Biehl was driving three co-workers to their homes in the township, when some young men started throwing stones at her car and eventually surrounded the vehicle, shouting the Pan African Congress (PAC) militant slogan *"One settler, one bullet!"* Some of the perpetrators served sentences for the murder, and the US based Biehl family later reconciled with some of those responsible for their daughter's death, through the foundation named after her.

26 August 1966

PLAN launches armed struggle against South Africa

On 26 August 1966, the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), the armed wing of SWAPO, fought in a battle against South African occupying forces at Omugulugwombashe in northern Namibia. In 1973 a resolution passed by the United Nations General Assembly declared 26 August, 'Namibia Day' to commemorate the gallant struggle of the Namibian people against South African occupation. On this date is also commemorated the anti-colonial war against Germany in the figure of Chief Samuel Maharero. This day is officially known as **National Heroes Day** in Namibia.

26 August 1975

Footballer Mercy Akide born



Pioneering African women's football player was born in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. In 2001 she became the first recipient of CAF's African Woman Footballer of the year award.

26 August 1978

High jump champion born



Hestrie Cloete was born in Germiston, East of Johannesburg on 26 August 1978. She began participating in sports at an early age. Her long-time coach, Martin Marx, discovered her at the age of 13. Hestrie won a gold medal at the world championships in Paris in 2003, and two silver medals at the Olympic Games, the following year. Hestrie Cloete was famous for her mental focus ritual of spinning her index fingers around each other and leaning sideways before every jump.

26 August 1985

Zola Budd Breaks World Record



In a low key event in Crystal Palace, England, South African born athlete Zola Budd broke the 5 000 metres world record set by Ingrid Kristiansens of Norway by more than ten seconds. Budd also stunned the sporting fraternity by running bare-footed on her way to claim this magnificent achievement. Kristiansens's record stood for 15 years before Budd broke it.

26 August 1996.

Eugene de Kock convicted of six murders

The Supreme Court convicted former Police Colonel Eugene de Kock (dubbed 'Prime Evil') of six murders of Black anti-apartheid activists during his service as commander of a police unit, C10 based at Vlakplaas, a farm outside Pretoria. He was also convicted of scores of lesser crimes, from conspiracy to murder to fraud. Amongst those that were killed were ANC lawyer, Bheki Mlangeni, and former Vlakplaas colleague and Askari, Brian Ngqulunga.

26 August 1996

Johnnic Empowerment deal

In South Africa's then largest empowerment deal, the National Empowerment Consortium made

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

a deal with Anglo-American Corporation to buy 48% of shares in Johnnic Industrial Corporation (an investment holding company with interests in entertainment, media, casino, exhibitions and property).

26 August 2006 Peace accord with Lord's Resistance Army

The Ugandan government signed a peace agreement with Lord's Resistance Army of Joseph Kony, with an agreement to leave Uganda for camps in the DRC. The LRA in 2010 resumed its activities, with killings, abductions leading to over 400,000 refugees in DRC, CAR and South Sudan.

26 August 2019 Rhino eggs harvested

Kenyan scientists successfully harvest white rhino eggs from the last two remaining white rhino females. The sperm of the last male was taken before his death and is used to inseminate the eggs and create rhino embryos, in order to prevent extinction of this species.

27 August 1943 Renowned author Sindiwe Magona born



Sindiwe Magona, author of a large number of books, including children's books, was born on

this day in the village of Gungulu, Transkei. A social worker and teacher as well, she writes about the experiences of women, her own experiences and tells South African stories. She has also produced plays and her internationally acclaimed books include *Beauty's Gift*; *Living, Loving, and Lying Awake at Night*; *To My Children's Children*; *Teach Yourself Xhosa*; and *Push-Push and Other Stories*. Her plays include *I Promised Myself*, *A Fabulous Middle-Age* and *Vukani!* She will be 80 this year.

27 August 1962 Johannesburg Civic Theatre opens

The modernist building was opened as a showcase for the performing arts, with more than 200,000 opera, theatre and ballet lovers attending the theatre in its first year. By law, black South Africans could not attend.

27 August 1963 WEB du Bois passed on

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, a giant amongst Pan African activists, was a founder of the NAACP, the largest and oldest civil rights organization in the United States, and from 1910 to 1934 served it as director of publicity and research, a member of the board of directors, and editor of the *Crisis*, its magazine. During this period, NAACP advocacy was instrumental in securing anti-lynching legislation. WEB Du Bois was also active in the global Pan African movement, initiating the second and third Pan African Congresses. Du Bois published numerous important works on race. By the time of his death in 1963 he had written 17 books and edited four journals, and greatly influenced public discourse on race.

27 August 1975 Emperor Haile Selassie passed on



Haile Selassie was born Lij Tafari Makonnen, in the village of Ejersa Gor, in the Harar Province of Ethiopia. Heir to a 13th century dynasty, he ascended to the throne of Ethiopia in 1930, proclaiming himself 'Haile Selassie', which means '*Might of the Trinity*'. In 1936, Emperor Selassie led the resistance against Italy's invasion of Ethiopia and also spoke out against the use of chemical weapons at the League of Nations. Exiled in 1936, he was restored to power in 1941. However, by the 1970s, Emperor Selassie's apparent indifference to a major famine in the country resulted in the loss of popular support. In 1974, he was de-throned in a military coup by his successor, Mengistu Haile Mariam. It was reported that Emperor Selassie had died on 27 August 1975, but the cause of his death remained a mystery.

27 August 2019 Rwanda efforts to protect cranes success

The number of endangered grey-crowned cranes nearly doubled from 459 in 2017 to 748 in 2019, after concerted efforts by Rwanda to protect the birds and crack down on their illegal trade.

INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL DAYS

22–27 August 2026

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



22 August International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence based on Religion or Belief

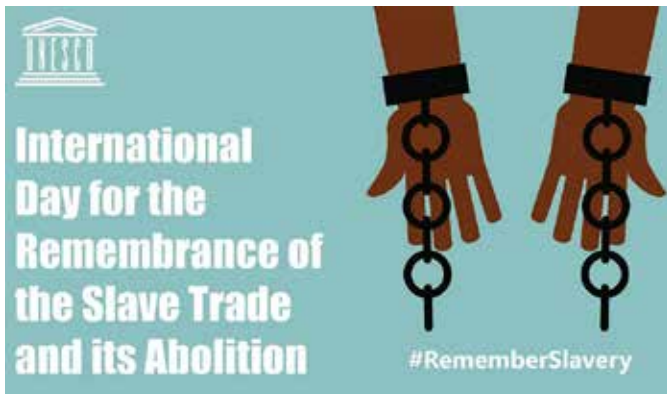
Freedom of religion or belief, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to peaceful assembly and the right to freedom of association are interdependent, interrelated and mutually reinforcing. They are enshrined in articles 18, 19 and 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is also enshrined

in the South African Constitution and Bill of Rights. Upholding these rights plays an important role in the fight against all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief. The open, constructive and respectful debate of ideas, as well as interreligious, interfaith and intercultural dialogue, at the local, national, regional and international levels, can play a positive role in combating religious hatred, incitement and violence. Furthermore, the exercise of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and full respect for the freedom to seek, receive and impart information can play a positive role in strengthening democracy and combating religious intolerance.



23 August International Day of Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition

The night of 22 to 23 August 1791, in Santo Domingo (today Haiti and the Dominican Republic) saw the beginning of the uprising that would play a crucial role in the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade. In remembrance, the International Day for

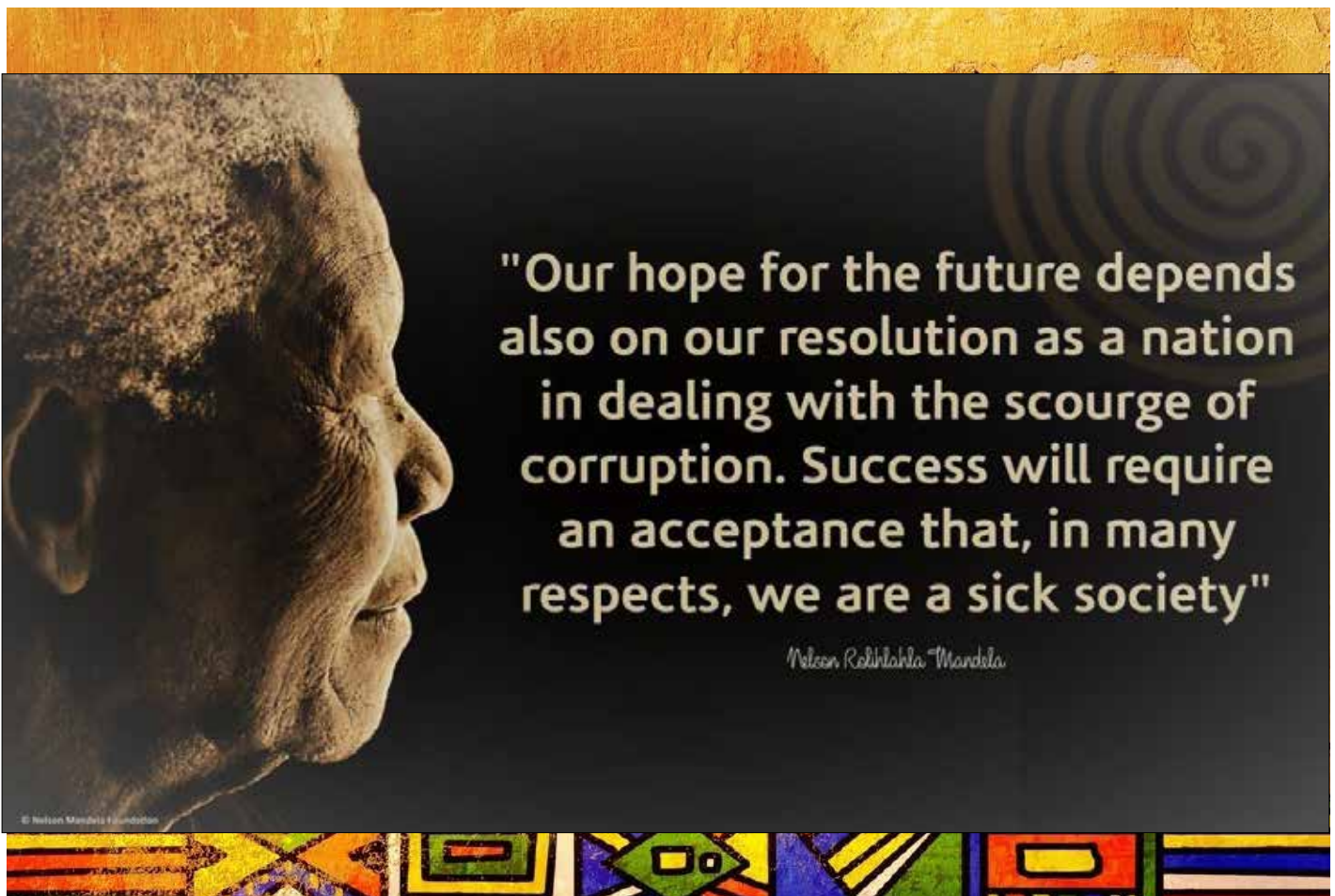
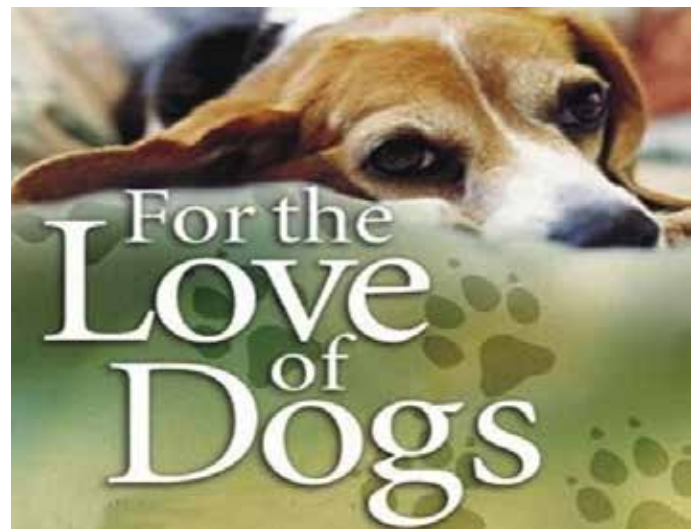


the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition is commemorated on 23 August each year. The first slave from then Indonesia, Abraham van Batavia, was imported in 1653, shortly after the Dutch colonised South Africa, with an active slave trade starting by the Dutch East Company, hence the Malay heritage of Cape Town. Other slaves were trafficked from Angola, Mauritius, and Madagascar. Slavery in British colonies, including South Africa, was abolished with the Abolition of Slavery Act of 1833 and came into effect in 1834; amongst the reasons for the Great Trek by Dutch settlers into the hinterland.

26 August

International Dog Day

Dogs have been domesticated as humans' best friend over 40 000 years. They are part of the wolf-like canids. The World Canine Organisation recognises over 340 breeds of dogs. Organisations like the SPCA and others look after the well-being of dogs and other pets, but it's all our responsibility to care for our best friends.



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