

# ANC Policy Conference Sets Course for Ruling Party in South Africa

Tripartite alliance, the status of women and the National Democratic Revolution assessed

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*A six-day long national policy conference was held from June 30-July 5 by the ruling African National Congress (ANC) in the Republic of South Africa designed to answer questions and plan the future of the continent's most industrialized state. This conference was attended by 3,500 delegates from all provinces and regions of the country.*

South African and ANC President Jacob Zuma in his opening address remarked on the nature of the conference saying there may never be another gathering of this length. The amount of time designated for the event is related to the internal and external challenges being faced by the ruling party which has maintained control of the national government since the end of apartheid-colonialism in May 1994.



ANC President Jacob Zuma (Source: [Africa-Online](#))

At present the economy of the country has fallen into recession with rising unemployment and a declining currency exchange-rate. South Africa is by no means the only African and Southern Hemispheric nation facing these difficulties.

With the decline in commodity prices for raw materials and energy resources produced in emerging states, governments across Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and Latin America are in crisis. The so-called Great Recession of 2007-2010, which began on Wall Street in the United States and spread internationally created structural problems for the sustainability of genuine growth and development along with worsening poverty among the working class and poor globally.

South Africa gained its national independence through a combination of mass, armed and labor struggles which spanned decades. Between 1976, when the national student uprising erupted and 1994, the year of Freedom, thousands of people lost their lives, tens of thousands were imprisoned and millions more were displaced throughout the region of the sub-continent.

Zuma severely criticized the role of the corporate media in regard to fostering a sense of uneasiness and uncertainty about the future of the ruling party, the state and South African society as a whole by focusing on the economic crises amid allegations of factionalism and

corruption at the highest levels of government. The president jokingly told the delegates that the press often claims to know more about the internal workings of the party than the membership itself.

Placing the emphasis for party renewal on the branches of the organization at the grassroots level, Zuma stressed:

“The delegates here come from the branches of the ANC. You know best the conditions in which the people live. You know better than anyone else if the most pressing need is for a clinic or a school. That is why branches determine the policy of the ANC. Amandla asemasebeni. What we are here for is ultimately to find a common understanding on how best to address those needs in the shortest and most satisfactory manner.”

The president, who is in his final term as the head of the ANC and government, drew upon the legacy of the former leader Oliver R. Tambo. This year represents the centenary of Tambo’s birth and Zuma quoted him in relationship to the task at hand for the ruling party as the custodians of the state.

Tambo, according to Zuma, made prophetic statements when he implored to the national liberation movement during the guerrilla and mass struggle phase, saying:

“Comrades, you might think it is very difficult to wage a liberation struggle. Wait until you are in power. I might be dead by then. At that stage you will realize that it is actually more difficult to keep the power than to wage a liberation war. People will be expecting a lot of services from you. You will have to satisfy the various demands of the masses of our people”.

#### Challenges in the Alliance, the Status of Women and the National Democratic Revolution Assessed

In recent months differences over how to proceed within the context of policy and governance have become pronounced in open polemics by elements within the ANC, the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). The leadership of the SACP along with some officers in COSATU has called upon Zuma to resign his position as president.

However, several attempts by opposition parties within the South African Parliament to seek a vote of no-confidence against Zuma have all failed. The rationale behind such efforts led by the right-wing Democratic Alliance (DA) and the putative ultra-left wing Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) range from possible violations of the constitution by Zuma, allegations of corruption by leading party and governmental officials and most-recently the notion of “state capture.” The “state capture” lexicon centers on the supposed influence of the Gupta family’s business interests in determining official appointments and overall economic policy.



ANC Policy Conference (June-July 2017) (Source: Abayomi Azikiwe)

Zuma and other leaders denied the charges of corruption and called for a commission of inquiry into the matters. The president reiterated the primacy of the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) as the guiding objective of the ANC in the present period.

The president said during his opening address, that:

“The ANC is guided by the objectives of the National Democratic Revolution. As outlined in our Strategy and Tactics document, the main content of the NDR remains the liberation of Africans in particular and Blacks in general from political and socio-economic bondage. It means uplifting the quality of life of all South Africans, especially the poor, the majority of whom are African and female.”

He continued by noting:

“The NDR seeks to resolve the main and interrelated contradictions of national oppression based on race, class especially the exploitation of black workers, and the triple oppression of women. The ANC also remains committed to the objective of the NDR of uniting South Africans in building a united, non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and prosperous South Africa.”

Zuma remarks on the status of women drew applause in light of the worsening phenomenon of gender-based violence inside the country. Although the National Policy Conference is not designed to elect the future leaders of the party, it appears that Zuma is siding with the ANC Women’s League (ANCWL) which is saying that it is time to elect a woman as the leader of the party and government. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, the former wife of the president, has expressed her desire to led the party and stand as its candidate for president in 2019 when Jacob Zuma is scheduled to leave office.

The other major candidate for leadership is Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa, the former Secretary General of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), a major affiliate of COSATU, who was a chief negotiator in the transition from apartheid to current political dispensation. Ramaphosa seems to be the favorite candidate of COSATU and the SACP as well. The deputy

president was a featured speaker at the SACP Gala Dinner held on the eve of the National Policy Conference. The elections for the new leadership of the party will be made later in December of this year at the ANC National Conference.

Dlamini-Zuma, the former African Union Commission Chairperson and South African cabinet member, has called for the expropriation of white-controlled farm land without compensation supporting those within the ANC demanding a radical economic transformation of the state. The character of the enemy was debated over whether to utilize the term “white monopoly capital” as opposed to “monopoly capital.”

It appears as if the concept of “monopoly capital” won out during the conference. Either formulation is bound to send shockwaves through the largely European-owned mining, manufacturing and agricultural interests which are firmly encapsulated within the overall system of international finance capital based in the U.S. and Western Europe. The South African capitalist class has systematically disinvested from the country since the early days of ANC rule in the 1990s.

In a proposal to counteract the burgeoning factionalism in the ANC, Zuma has called for the encompassing of contestants within the leadership structures. Having deputy presidents and other joint leadership bodies could broaden the scope of administration and decision making.

“Let us not get rid of one who did not win, let us need the one who became number two or who did not win to be a deputy of the one who won,” Zuma said. “Comrades have proposed that we find a matured and sound way of politically managing possible contestation of leadership.”

## 2019 Elections Will Be Crucial in Determining the Future of South Africa

Speakers from various structures of the ANC noted the loss of electoral support in the 2016 local governmental elections. Although the ruling party won a 54 percent majority of the votes cast, this represented a more than ten percent decline as compared to the national elections held in 2009 and 2014.

Several of the largest municipalities in South Africa such as Johannesburg, Tshwane (Pretoria) and Nelson Mandela Bay (Port Elizabeth) have fallen to DA leadership as a by-product of its alliance with the EFF on a local level. The ANC party leadership recognizes that people in South Africa want jobs, land, housing, education and quality service delivery above all else.

In an article published by ANC Today entitled “Radical Social Transformation to End Poverty”, a staff reporter wrote:

“If we are to realize a more egalitarian society as envisioned in the Constitution- society has to be radically transformed. This is particularly with regards to advancing social cohesion and building a common national identity for our people. The Social Transformation commission, chaired by Comrade Lindiwe Sisulu- has been sitting at the organization’s National Policy Conference (NPC) in Nasrec, Soweto.”

Continuing this line of thinking the report continued saying:

“A bed rock of so-called first generation rights, social transformation is key to the ANC’s electoral mandate and to realizing a Better Life for All. Delegates discussed a wide range of proposed interventions to advance social transformation amidst a climate where there has been a resurgence of social ills such as racism and patriarchy. In a society fractured along race and class lines: the ANC as the leader of society must be at the forefront of pushing for societal transformation.” (July 4)

The existing alternatives to the ANC in parliament have no real vision for the country. Both the DA and EFF utilize disruptive tactics absent of a coherent social theory related to the realities of South Africa within the context of the continent and the international situation.

On numerous occasions the DA has been exposed for its racism and pro-imperialist stances involving events such as the interference in African affairs by the International Criminal Court (ICC), the ANC posture towards the Palestinian struggle for self-determination and independence, and the role of the state in economic transformation. The EFF, despite its militant rhetoric, has objectively aligned itself with the conservatives whose de facto leader Helen Zille’s public nostalgic praise for the days of colonialism in Africa forced the existing DA officials to rebuke her comments.

Some branches of the SACP have called upon the national leadership to run candidates on its own and not within the framework of the ANC. Nonetheless, the time to have tested such an initiative would have been during the 2016 local elections. The atmosphere in 2019 could be quite toxic politically if the economy continues to stagnate or decline.

The general policy thrust of the imperialist states with the U.S. in the lead aims at the reversal of all progressive and revolutionary advances in the former colonial territories since the post-World War II period. Consequently, the necessity of a broad based united front of anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist, pro-liberation and socialist-oriented political forces is imperative for South Africa, Africa as a whole and indeed the international community in general going into the concluding years of the decade.

Zuma in his opening address to the conference re-emphasized that:

“Our revolution is an integral part of the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist movement for a new world order. Africa is part of us as we are part of Africa first and foremost. Our struggle is inextricably linked with the struggle against neo-colonialism and imperialism on our continent. Our pan-African and internationalist position informs our support for the struggles of the people of Western Sahara and Palestine for self-determination. It informs our solidarity with the people of Cuba and against the economic embargo on this revolutionary nation by the U.S., and our demands for institutional reform of the United Nations. We remain steadfast in our demand for the representation of Africa among the permanent members of the UN Security Council.”

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