

**Remarks by the ANC Chief Whip, Mdumiseni Ntuli, on the occasion  
of the debate of the President's Opening of Parliament: National  
Assembly, 19 July 2024**

Madam Speaker,  
Chairperson of NCOP,  
His Excellency, President Cyril Ramaphosa,  
Deputy President, Paul Mashatile  
Esteemed Members of Parliament

Madam Speaker, In his masterful book titled, "*The Frontiers: The Epic of South Africa's Creation and the Tragedy of the Xhosa People*," historian Noel Mostert recounts a tale from the 19<sup>th</sup> century where a Boer General extended an offer of alliance to King Hintsa of AmaXhosa, to resist the encroaching British forces.

The offer was ultimately rejected by King Hintsa, likely informed by a deep-seated mistrust of both the Boers and the British.

In 1902, the Treaty of Vereeniging was signed between the British and the Boers, ending the South African War and establishing self-government under British rule in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. Yet, the Africans who valiantly fought in that war were excluded from the negotiating table. Among the Boer Generals, it is said, were those who championed the inclusion of Africans to address the "*Native Question*", but their voices were ignored.

We can only speculate on the trajectory our country would have taken had King Hintsa accepted the alliance that was offered to him, nor will we ever know where our country would be today.

Madam Speaker, We also know that Zululand had been broken up into thirteen smaller territories by the British government later realised the futility of breaking up Zululand and restored King Cetshwayo as the paramount leader. However, they left uZibhebhu kaMaphitha with his lands intact. When King Dinuzulu succeeded his father, King Cetshwayo kaSenzangakhona, he contested succession with Zibhebhu. In that contest, King Dinuzulu appealed to the British for support, but received no response. He then offered rewards of land to Boer farmers from Utrecht and Vryheid to join sides with him and helped restore order and to unite Zululand and the Zulu kingdom.

Madam Speaker, these episodes, are a microcosm of our nation's fraught journey. They serve as a poignant reminder of the intricate dynamics that have shaped our past. They highlight the profound significance of alliances and consequences of our choices. When people are faced with the threat of annihilation they come together and/or seek one another to overcome their threat for their continued existence and to thrive.

Our democratic breakthrough is under threat and it is business unusual. As the ANC, we invite all our people to join in a reasoned and robust debate towards reconstruction and development of our country rather than depending on charismatic populism, which often defines the national discourse.

The processes which started with the arrival at the Cape of the Dutch settlers resulted in the transformation of our country into a settler-colonial state, what we characterized "colonialism of a special type".

As a settler-colonial state, ours did not differ from how similar settler-colonial states, such as the US, Australia and Israel, behaved towards the indigenous populations – they dispossessed the indigenous population of its country, handed it over as property of the settlers and treated indigenous population as subordinate sub-humans.

The difference between us and the US is that our indigenous population, united in spite of their language and tribal divides, remained by far the overwhelming majority relative to the settlers.

Madam Speaker, that is what made it possible for this majority in 1912, to unite under the banner of the African National Congress to rise up to end settler-colonialism state and to proclaim that "South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white." A united South Africa later declared in the Constitution that "South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity".

The African National Congress is unwavering in its objective to create a united, democratic, non-racial, non-sexiest and prosperous South Africa in a peaceful world. We are the first to admit that despite the progress we have made together over the last 30 years, more still needs to be done:

- to create a South Africa that is truly united and prosperous;
- to build non-racial society;
- to create development opportunities for all South Africans; and
- to improve the quality of life of all citizens.

A towering figure in our struggle for freedom, Inkosi Albert Luthuli, in his message to the Congress of the People gathered in Kliptown in 1955, 69 years ago, said the

*“The task of gaining freedom in our multi-racial society is of considerable magnitude, and will tax severely the determination and courage of the best of us. But the need and urgency of the task and the justice of the cause, demand us to be willing to pay the supreme sacrifice for the noble cause.”*

His words, steeped in profound wisdom and courage, resonate through the corridors of time, and remind us of the immense responsibility we carry today – building a better life for all citizens.

The outcomes of the 2024 general elections have sent shock waves throughout the national democratic movement, the continent and the world. The ANC vote dropped to 40.18% and therefore not getting 50% +1 for first time since 1994. Until 2008, it was not difficult to identify the reason for the increasing support during these years. The socioeconomic situation in our country was changing for the better, directly benefiting the masses of the people.

- GDP grew at an average rate of 3.6%;
- The number of people with jobs increased from 8 million to 14 million;
- The average GDP per capita increased by almost 40%, going from R55 000 per year to R76 000, after adjusting for inflation.
- Access to basic services such as (housing, education, health, water, energy, social security) and infrastructure was expanded.
- Kickstarted economic transformation through employment equity and broad-based black economic empowerment.

However, the period between 2008 to 2022 saw a major reversal of some of these strategic gains. That constituted a major set-back on the advancement of the National Democratic Revolution. The outcomes of the May 2024 National and Provincial Elections confirm that reality. Despite all of that, the resolve of the ANC to forge unity amongst South Africans across race, religion, or creed is unwavering. All our policies are based on creating a prosperous South Africa that truly belongs to all who live in it, united in diversity.

The words of Comrade Oliver Reginald Tambo that **“Without unity we are weak. Without action we’ll remain oppressed. To move forward we have to act in unity and unite in action”**.

We truly have to act in unity and to unite in action. The gains of our freedom and democracy must be defended, consolidated and advanced to realise socioeconomic rights as demanded by the Constitution. We proceed from the understanding that our Constitution represents the genuine will of our people and their desire to build a better life for all, as their democratically elected representatives, this a task we can neither delegate nor abdicate to anyone.

The 2024 election results have imposed on the ANC a new but strategic task – to defend the National Democratic Revolution and its leader. As the ANC in this parliament we have to ensure government turns the page and actually delivers the goods and services expected of it.

Collaborative governance and a united determination for our nation’s future cannot be overstated. As Parliament and Parliamentarians, we must respond positively and urgently to the call made by former President Thabo Mbeki and President Ramaphosa for the National Dialogue.

We need to continue to engage within and outside these chambers to ensure that our society unites, thrives and act in unity.

The ANC, which remains by far the largest party, has pulled together other parties to ensure we continue the journey started in 1912 and consolidated in successive governments since 1994, to bring about national cohesion and stability to the democratic state and the continued advance of a better life for all.

This unprecedented experience is not a deviation from the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) but rather a fulfillment of its objectives, aimed at building a united and non-racial society.

Madam speaker, over the past 30 years, our policies have driven social and economic transformation, and we intend to accelerate this trajectory. Thus the vision of the Government of National Unity to address comprehensive needs of the masses of our people, unlike coalitions that narrow their focus to political power management.

Madam Speaker, the Statement of Intent has as its underlying pillar **rapid, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth** driven by a commitment to industrialisation and high rates of investment towards job creation and social change.

President Cyril Ramaphosa through his Opening of Parliament Address, has outlined the program of the Executive for the year ahead. As the ANC Parliamentary Caucus we stand ready to support the 7<sup>th</sup> Administration to ensure stability and prosperity of our country and the continent, while ensuring strict fidelity, accountability and transparency.

We must renew our commitment to bridge the gap between the people, their parliament, and their government. In this regard, we pledge to work collaboratively with all political parties represented in this august house, recognising of course, that each party carries the legitimate voices and aspirations of its constituents.

Our political differences should not make us enemies, nor should they invalidate anybody's rights as enshrined in the Constitution or call to question our patriotism.

This is the spirit with which the ANC Parliamentary Caucus commits to conduct itself!

Madam Speaker, our commitment to the principles of the National Democratic Revolution remains unwavering. We believe that the path to a united and prosperous South Africa, presented to us by the current context, lies in our ability to pull together across party lines. This is not merely a political strategy but a moral imperative, rooted in our shared history and our collective future.

Thank you.