



“RECLAIMING OUR COUNTRY, OUR GOVERNMENT AND THE ANC - FOR THE SAKE OF SOUTH AFRICA’S FUTURE”

Frank Chikane 14 December 2017

In November 2017 Veterans & Stalwarts of Africa’s oldest liberation movement, the ANC, and ANC MK Veterans, convened a National Consultative Conference (NCC), out of a deep concern about the trajectory the current leadership of the ANC is following which is leading to the demise of the people’s organisation. This path is having a devastating effect on our country, and its people, whom our organisation has sought to serve since its inception in 1912. It is the view of the Veterans and Stalwarts of the movement that the elected leadership has failed to lead the ANC in the manner that preserves its tested values. Instead the dominant group among them serve only themselves and their families. Secondly, the leadership has also failed to act decisively to pull back the People’s Movement from its precipice and to liberate it from the clutches of the dominant group within it that have captured the Movement and the People’s Government.

The Nkandla matter is the best example of the failure of the leadership to lead. The rational voices within it were overwhelmed by the dominant group that continued to defend the indefensible. They abused the ANC majority to defend the President in Parliament at all costs, including breaking the law and placing the ANC on the wrong side of the Constitution of the country. They failed to avoid the Nkandla matter ending up in the Constitutional Court, a case they were clearly going to lose. Worse, they failed to institute remedial actions in compliance of the Constitutional Court’s ruling. Instead, they engaged in theatrical acts of deception and disregard for the intelligence of the people of South Africa.

This visible leadership paralysis, and its failure to act against those who committed crimes of corruption and fraud using state power, has enabled devastating corruption and the looting of State resources at the expense of millions of our people who still live in conditions of abject poverty twenty-three years after our 1994 democratic elections. Worse, it has resulted in the recalibration of the moral standards of the country to a level where looting of state resources go without being punished, thereby encouraging the worst forms of criminality.

There comes a time in the life of a nation when the people must take responsibility for their lives, their Government, and their country because of the failure of the leaders to lead. I believe that this is the time. It is the time to reclaim our country, our Government, and the people’s organisation, the African National Congress (ANC). Hence the theme ‘Reclaiming our Country, our Government, and the People’s Movement, the African National Congress (ANC), for The Sake of South Africa’ at the NCC Opening Address.

Many of the Veterans and Stalwarts joined the ANC in the prime of their lives, and have served it and the country loyally ever since. The ANC we know does not exist for itself, it exists solely and exclusively to serve the people of South Africa, Africa and the world. Throughout its history the ANC has remained loyal to this objective. It has led our people’s struggle against apartheid as a servant of the people.

The question we need to answer is ‘How could this happen? How could the revolutionary

movement we were part of be so easily hijacked for other purposes other than that of serving the people? What happened to the guiding principles taught to many of us who were involved in the struggle here in the country – underground and overboard; in apartheid prisons, particularly in Robben Island - and those who were in exile, particularly those who were trained in progressive countries around the world?

In the guiding document of the Veterans and Stalwarts of the Movement, 'For the Sake of Our Future' the '101 Plus' Veterans and Stalwarts elaborate on the way the organisation has been dragged through the mud. It says that critical organs of the state have been captured to ensure that leaders are protected from prosecution. State Capture extends to State-Owned Enterprises too as shown by the looting of billions of rands to enrich a few individuals, and, all this is at the expense of the poor and marginalised, the historically disadvantaged.

It is because of this deep concern about the state of the ANC and its impact on the people of this country that we, loyal Veterans and Stalwarts of this Movement decided to convene the National Consultative Conference (NCC) to deal with this crisis. We did so, inspired by the culture and traditions of the movement, to ensure that the ANC serves the people in a way the ANC taught us over many decades.

During its 105 years of existence, the ANC has used Consultative Conferences as fora to analyse and respond to the challenges the organisation was facing. But the dominant group within the current elected leadership of the ANC, which has brought the organisation into disrepute, resulting in the loss of its hard-earned, decades-long position as the leader of society, has resisted the vision of a consultative conference or any form of 'self-correction' as many of them are beneficiaries of the rot. Instead of a consultative conference to critically assess the state of the organisation they constructed a diluted version - a back-to-back NCC with the Policy Conference – that could not possibly achieve the objectives an NCC was intended to achieve.

The two most prominent previous ANC National Consultative Conferences were those at Morogoro, Tanzania, in 1969, nine years after the banning of our organisation, and in 1985 at Kabwe, five years before the unbanning of the ANC. The resolutions and programmes that arose out of these two conferences were truly historic in that they served as navigational beacons which guided the movement to:

- I. communicate unequivocally to the masses of our people that the defeat of the system of apartheid was the only and strategic task then facing the liberation movement
- II. re-energise the masses and its activist base to intensify and sustain a sharp focus on this strategic task, and;
- III. Introspect on its policy positions and internal practices, including but not limited to internal democratic practices.

As President Oliver Tambo put it at Kabwe, the consultative conference was to elaborate 'ways and means for the intensification of the struggle for the victory of the national democratic revolution.'

Throughout this period the ANC survived numerous threats to its survival precisely because it had within it the capacity and courage to confront its mistakes, rejuvenate and transform itself in line with the demands imposed upon it by changing conditions of struggle.

Following this tradition of the movement, the Veterans and Stalwarts of the ANC convened this historical NCC, together with MK Veterans, to help the organisation and its members, even at this late hour, to change its trajectory and avoid its inevitable demise.

The Veterans and Stalwarts took this initiative out of a deep concern for the country, and driven by the deep pain arising from seeing that what they sacrificed their lives for, and for which many died,

was being destroyed by a few of their comrades who had become rogue. Many of them have become the very antithesis of what the ANC should be, as we have known it for.

Many veterans and stalwarts of the movement who have passed away in the last few years died with sore hearts seeing that that for which they paid a huge price, had been high-jacked and used against the people of our beloved South Africa.

The ANC is now the governing party of the Republic, and, accordingly this Consultative Conference must be unique; quite different from those of Morogoro and Kabwe. The challenges the ANC faces today, which necessitated this conference, are very different from those the organisation faced in 1969 and 1985. The greatest challenge the movement faces now is that its elected leadership has captured the organisation to serve their own interests. As a result, the ANC has become part of the problems of the people and is impacting negatively on the country.

True to the revolutionary tradition and character of the ANC, the veterans and stalwarts of the movement set aside a whole day to listen to the people through their organised civil society formations, so that they could incorporate their views in the strategies the NCC would develop and implement.

The recent reports of the Public Protector and of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) on State Capture and corruption, and the proliferation of books about the conduct of some of the leaders, all bear testimony to the fact that our movement is at its most unhealthy state.

Part of this ill-health arises perhaps from a degree of schizophrenia in our leadership. Though some acknowledge our problems, others respond with an irrational condemnation of those who identify and attempt to address these problems. Internal debates are quashed with reprehensible practises such as the mobilisation of younger members into child-soldier formations who insult leaders who express different views and opinions on organisational and national matters.

Echoing conclusions previously expressed by various leaders of the ANC since 1994, Secretary General Gwede Mantashe raised many of the issues which concern the veterans and stalwarts in his Diagnostic Report to the recently held Policy Conference. These include the following seven: Corruption; the growing trust deficit between the people and the ANC; the decline in the ethics, values and traditions of the movement; the poor quality of branches and the membership in general; the decline in the ideological pedigree of the movement; divisions and factions, and the collapse in organisational discipline.

Judging by the number of corrupt cases that go unprosecuted, it is clear that some prosecution authorities and other branches of the law enforcement cluster have not escaped state capture and corruption. Many leaders escape prosecution. The failure to deal with criminal activity is demoralising the country and is leading to lawlessness.

All of us know the major challenges facing South Africa. These are poverty, unemployment, inequality, continuing racial polarisation, the exploitation of women, amongst a plethora of others. We also know that corrupt political organisations are incapable of addressing these challenges. Corrupt political formations are also incapable of uniting society around a common vision. They exacerbate existing fault lines and create new ones. They are incapable of playing a meaningful role beyond national borders since the neighbourhood and the world sees the corrupt for who they are.

Corrupt political formations are complicit in Mahatma Ghandi's 'Seven Deadly Sins': Wealth without Work, Pleasure Without Conscience, Knowledge Without Character, Commerce Without Morality, Science Without Humanity, Religion Without Sacrifice, and Politics Without Principle.

Throughout its history the ANC occupied the position of leader of society precisely because its leadership was characterised by its adherence to the highest standards of ethical and moral conduct. This is precisely why, in his Political Report to the 50th National Conference, President

Mandela correctly said that 'the process of reconstruction and development will also have to encompass the spiritual life of the nation, bearing on the moral renewal of individuals and institutions, as well as the ideas and practice of a new patriotism.'

We chose Constitution Hill as the venue of this Consultative Conference to emphasise the ANC's historic commitment to the protection of the values enshrined in the Constitution. The ANC was a leading force in producing our Constitution which is the envy of many internationally. Yet our current leadership routinely breaches it.

The question now is "What is to be done?" In answering this question, the NCC addressed the following issues amongst others:

- I. Corruption in the ANC, the government system and society as a whole;
- II. The quality of the ANC member;
- III. The ANC's accountability both to itself and society as a whole;
- IV. How to re-energise popular initiative as leaders of our destiny, regardless of party political affiliation;
- V. The challenge of national unity and social cohesion.
- VI. The scenarios for the immediate, medium and long-term future of South Africa.

The founding document of the Stalwarts and Veterans asserts the high quality and calibre of the members of the ANC when it says that "Throughout its history the ANC *confronted many serious challenges* including the possibility of divisions and splits. Its leadership, cadres and members, however, rose to the occasion - *protecting, defending and upholding the core values of the ANC.*"

The document continues to say that "We are once again called upon to emulate and demonstrate our commitment to the survival of our movement by rising to the occasion."

The theme of this NCC: "RECLAIMING OUR HISTORY FOR THE SAKE OF OUR FUTURE" is reason enough to be optimistic that the members of the ANC, together with the Veterans and the Stalwarts can still rise to the occasion to save the ANC.

From the 16-20 December 2017 the ANC will be holding its elective conference. By now, every delegate to the Conference must be aware of the enormity of the historical responsibility they have. The nation expects them to hold the bull by its horns and liberate the people's organisation from the clutches of corrupt and compromised leaders, and from those who are supported by such corrupted and compromised leaders. They have a responsibility of returning the organisation to leaders who will be true to the mission of the ANC of OR Tambo.

The delegates must ensure that leaders who are bent on betraying this mission and the people of South Africa do not lay their hands on the levers of power again, directly or indirectly. The delegates to the Conference are expected to recapture the centre of power of the ANC and liberate the Government from those who have captured it to serve their interests.

We call on all Members and Branches of the ANC to elect leaders who will change the trajectory of the organisation, for the sake of the people of South Africa, and For the Sake of our Future.