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CLOSING ADDRESS BY ANC PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA

ANC 54TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE

NASREC, 20 DECEMBER 2017

National Chairperson, Cde Gwede Mantashe,
Outgoing President of the African National Congress, Cde Jacob Zuma,
Members of the newly-elected National Executive Committee,
Members of the Electoral Commission,
Representatives of the Alliance, fraternal parties and observers,
Distinguished guests,
Delegates,

This is a deeply humbling moment, to address the closing session of the 54th National Conference of our beloved and glorious movement, the African National Congress.

There is no doubt that this has been a Conference of enormous importance and great significance.

In the months and weeks before this Conference, speculation was rife that this 54th National Conference would either not be held or that it would collapse.

Your attendance at this Conference, representing your branches, is a victory over the doomsayers and those who do not wish our movement well.

We therefore congratulate you for having defied the negative speculative predictions by making this Conference happen and ensuring it is successful.

There were some who even suggested that Nasrec would represent the end of the ANC as we would emerge from here divided.

We are still here. Standing almost 106 years later. United.

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Nasrec 2017 has not only united us. It has strengthened us.

It has galvanised us and rejuvenated us.

We continue to confound our critics.

Over the course of the last five days, our movement has grappled with the challenges and tasks of this critical moment in the history and life of our people and our country.

The ANC has listened to the aspirations, hopes, wishes, cries and concerns of our people through the voices of the delegates representing our people from the length and breadth of our country.

As delegates representing branches of our movement you have given expression to our peoples hopes through the resolutions you have adopted here and the leadership you have chosen.

In electing the leadership, you, as the delegates to this Conference, have turned your back on the politics of the slate.

You have insisted that the people who lead this movement should not be from one or another faction, but should serve our people in their own right as representatives of the membership as a whole.

This Conference has given us an opportunity to confront difficult truths.

In recent times, we have seen the ANC at its worst.

We have seen an organisation divided against itself.

And yet, we have also seen glimpses of the ANC at its best.

Over the last few days, we have seen the ANC that we know and love.

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As representatives of nearly a million members, you as delegates have demonstrated that the ANC is an organisation that is alive to the needs of the people and that it is hard at work to develop policies and programmes that respond to these needs.

More than that, we have seen at this Conference a movement that is determined to enhance its policies, to strengthen implementation and to work with greater determination to unite its members and build its structures.

Our people will judge this Conference not only by what we have done here over these five days, but – perhaps more importantly – by what we do next.

The people of South Africa want action. They do not want words.

Our people want an ANC that lives up to its promise and is true to its mission.

They want an ANC that lives the values that it espouses and holds fast to the principles that have long defined it.

They want an ANC that uses public office not to serve vested interests, but to build a truly developmental state and a vibrant, inclusive economy that creates jobs and improves lives.

As we leave this Conference, we are resolved to humble ourselves before the people.

We are resolved to respect our people and earn their respect.

We are resolved to cast aside those attitudes and practices that have seen a gulf grow between those in public office and those they were elected to serve.

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The African National Congress wishes to send a clear message to all South Africans that we are resolved to be a more responsive and more accountable leadership and movement.

We will continue to be rooted in communities through our branches and always seek to champion the interests of the people.

We must examine, critically and honestly, our commitment to gender equality.

We must be conscious of the practices and attitudes that reinforce patriarchy within our organisation and society – and we must work together to end them.

We need to become a more youthful organisation, more representative of the age profile of our population.

This Conference has resolved that we engage and pay heed to the views and insights of the veterans of our movement, organisations that have always worked with us, and many others.

We will reach out to community organisations and other organs of civil society, understanding that they are critical for the exercise of people's power and are valuable partners for development.

We shall do so because we have a historic responsibility as the ANC to lead society.

The Alliance has faced many challenges and problems in the recent past.

We will work with our Alliance partners to repair relations between the four formations that our people expect to lead the National Democratic Revolution.

As this Conference, we are in agreement that the ANC cannot be strong and effective unless we are part of an Alliance that is strong, united and cohesive.

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We are confident that the outcomes of this Conference will assist in advancing efforts to unite the former combatants of Umkhonto we Sizwe.

We must make the achievement of unity between MKMVA and the MK National Council a priority of the incoming leadership.

As we leave this Conference, we are resolved to pursue with greater determination a radical path of socio-economic transformation, premised on growth, job creation and equitable distribution of income, wealth and assets.

The issue of land has been a matter of great concern to our people whose land was taken from them.

We will accelerate our programme of land reform and rural development as part of our programme of radical socio economic transformation.

This Conference has resolved that the expropriation of land without compensation should be among the mechanisms available to government to give effect to land reform and redistribution.

It has also resolved that in determining the mechanisms of implementation, we must ensure that we do not undermine the economy, agricultural production and food security.

As the ANC, we have been the central driver of progress in our country and the economy over the last 23 years.

Our efforts have been aimed at eradicating poverty, inequality and reducing unemployment

We have placed the challenge of unemployment at the forefront of all our actions in the economy.

Our focus on education and skills training is beginning to bear positive results.

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Our social social development programmes have been aimed at addressing poverty amongst our people.

The policies we have adopted here provide a platform for faster and more meaningful implementation of the National Development Plan.

We will elaborate the decisions of this National Conference more fully when we release the NEC Statement on January 13 when we celebrate our 106th year of existence.

At the state level we must confront the reality that critical institutions of our state have been targeted by individuals and families who, through the exercise of influence and the manipulation of governance processes and public resources.

This has led to the weakening of our State Owned Enterprises whose governance structures need to be revamped.

Given all these challenges we are called upon to act against corruption, collusion and other economic crimes prevalent in the public and private sector.

We must investigate without fear or favour the so-called 'accounting irregularities' that cause turmoil in the markets and wipe billions off the investments of ordinary South Africans.

This Conference has resolved that this must be acted upon and stopped.

We must also act fearlessly against alleged corruption and abuse of office within our ranks.

We embraced the Integrity Commission at our NGC and endorsed that decision at the 53rd National Conference.

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The setting up of the Integrity Commission is therefore not in question as there is consensus that the Integrity Commission should be supported and empowered to do its work without fear, favour or prejudice in order to restore the Integrity of the ANC and help cultivate and promote ethical leadership.

The terms of reference including its duties and powers should be discussed and finalised by the National Executive Committee.

This Conference has resolved that corruption must be fought with the same intensity and purpose that we fight poverty, unemployment and inequality.

Through your deliberations, we have together developed a clear line of march for the movement and for the new leadership.

You have, over and over again, emphasised that the ANC is the strategic centre of power for all its cadres.

The actions of Comrades who are deployed by the movement should always be informed by the interests of our members and our people, not personal gain.

Their actions should always be a source of pride, and not a cause for embarrassment.

They should take us closer to the National Democratic Society to which we aspire, not undermine it.

This National Executive Committee that you have elected commits itself to follow the instructions that you have issued from this, our 54th National Conference.

You have instructed us to forge a united ANC.

You have also directed us to unite the Alliance and ensure that its programmes are underpinned by unity.

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Another overarching task you have charged us with is to unite the people of South Africa and work harder to heal the wounds of conflict and division.

We must focus afresh on the task of building a non-racial country, guided by the injunction in the Freedom Charter that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white.

Personally, I wish to thank you, with all humility, for the confidence that you have shown in me.

I shall strive to serve our members, our supporters and the nation with commitment and diligence.

As the newly elected National Executive Committee, and as President I speak on our behalf, we accept without reservation your clear instruction that we must work together as a collective, undivided and motivated by a single purpose – the service of our people.

We are aware that leadership in our movement is not confined to those who hold office.

I wish to pay tribute to Cde Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, who contested the position of President, for the manner in which she demonstrated commitment to our movement during the campaign.

Together with the other candidates, we all pledged to work closely in pursuit of the objectives of our revolution whether we succeeded in our election bid or not.

On your behalf, I wish to thank those people who have made this Conference possible – the management of NASREC, the Electoral Commission and the Elections Agency, technical staff, marshalls, security officials and the many service providers, donors and exhibitors.

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The SGO and the Steering Committee have done a sterling job to ensure that we hold a most successful conference.

I wish to thank the media for having reported the proceedings of this Conference to our people and the broader global community.

As revolutionary democrats, we recognise the vital role that the media plays in facilitating the free flow of information and in promoting transparency and accountability.

We register our concern about an incident at this Conference involving a journalist and security officials.

We have sought a report on what happened and must look at how we ensure such incidents do not occur in the future.

I wish to thank our Alliance partners, representatives of civil society organisations, guests from fraternal parties and members of the diplomatic corps who have been with us in various capacities over the past five days.

Above all, I wish to thank all our branch members, whose wishes and aspirations we had come here to represent.

To all delegates thank you for your attendance and patience and forbearance with delays in voting and programme planning.

As Officials we have already observed a number of things we can improve.

We will make sure that our next NGC and Conference becomes a better experience for all delegates.

Please travel safely, arrive alive and have a peaceful festive season.

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Make sure to have a good rest and come back from the holidays revitalised for the hard work that lies ahead in 2018 and beyond.

We look forward to meeting again at the ANC's 106th anniversary celebrations in East London on the 13th of January.

Next year, we will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the birth of our founding President, Isithwalandwe Nelson Rolihahla Mandela.

True to his legacy and inspired by his remarkable life, let us hold fast to the principle that guides us as the ANC – that we serve the people of South Africa!

We serve them with humility, integrity and unwavering commitment.

We serve them without expectation of reward or recognition.

We serve them because we have chosen, each one of us, to become members of the African National Congress and thereby to become selfless agents of revolutionary change.

Finally, I would like, on your behalf, to thank President Jacob Zuma for the 10 years he has spent as the President of our movement and for a lifetime of service to the people of this country.

It was during your tenure Nxamalala, and thanks to your vision, that the National Planning Commission was established and produced the country's first National Development Plan.

This is a framework for economic and social change that will guide our country for many years to come.

History will record that it was at your insistence that South Africa expanded its antiretroviral programme rapidly and progressively to be the largest in the world.

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Through your intervention, we have made great strides in combating the epidemic, many lives have been saved and many infections prevented.

We cannot close this, the 54th National Conference of the African National Congress, without paying tribute to you for your contribution over many decades to the struggle for freedom, democracy and development.

I thank you.