

# ANC resolution on "Communications and the Battle of Ideas"

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## COMMUNICATIONS & THE BATTLE OF IDEAS

### Noting that

1. At the 51<sup>st</sup> National Conference, a comprehensive and detailed resolution on Communications was passed.
2. This 52<sup>nd</sup> National Conference hereby reaffirms the Stellenbosch resolutions (51<sup>st</sup> National Conference) on media transformation but expresses concern at the slow pace of implementation.
3. Conference recognizes that whilst there has been much progress in engagement with the Media much still needs to be done as some fractions of the media continue to adopt an anti-transformation, anti-ANC stance.
4. This remains our responsibility to engage with.
5. The ANC is faced with a major ideological offensive, largely driven by the opposition and fractions in the mainstream media, whose key objective is the promotion of market fundamentalism, control of the media and the images it creates of a new democratic dispensation in order to retain old apartheid economic and social relations.
6. This offensive against our movement, in its content and form, is part of a global offensive against progressive values and ideas. The increasing concentration of ownership, control and content within the international media environment is reflected in the local industry and re-enforces this offensive.
7. The ANC's commitment to media freedom is well known and entrenched. This principle is reflected in the Constitution Act of 1996. The ANC's commitment to freedom of expression in society, including the media, is located within the context of the Constitution of the Republic. These rights need to be weighed against other constitutional rights, such as the right to human dignity and privacy.
8. Despite this, the ANC notes that in many instances the media in pursuit of the application of this freedom of expression principle, conducts itself to the detriment of the constitutional rights of others.
9. The ANC is of the view that the media needs to contribute towards the building of a new society and be accountable for its actions. The ANC needs to make creative use of a range of mechanisms to communicate with the widest spectrum of South Africans.
10. With particular reference to the print media, the ANC notes that the current form of self regulation as expressed in the form of the Press Ombudsman/ Press Council is not adequate to sufficiently protect the rights of the individual citizens, community and society as a whole.
11. The print media industry is not covered by a sectoral Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Charter, and that where media houses have concluded BEE transactions, these have not necessarily translated into a diversity of views, underlying the fact that advertising profiles and key management positions remain largely the same.
12. The apparent lack of skills within the media to analyse and explain the complex economic and social transformation through which South Africa is going is a both a challenge and a constraint. In the pursuit of capital accumulation owners of media houses do not readily invest in the development of journalism. Often they rely on syndicated reports, grouping editorial content, etc. Commercial interests are thus increasingly impacting negatively on editorial quality. These and other related factors constitute the real threat to media freedom, diversity and democracy.
13. There is a strong public broadcaster on whom millions of our people daily depend for information, and which has an important role to play in the deepening of democracy and involvement of the people in the process of social and economic change. The ANC notes the negative impact of advertising revenue on the cultures & values that we seek to inculcate through the Constitution and ANC philosophy.
14. The ANC notes the special role that both the SABC and the mainstream media can play in promoting the developmental state, social cohesion and nation building.

### Believing that

15. In our National Democratic Revolution, the media should contribute to the transformation of a country
16. The Media is a contested terrain and therefore not neutral, but reflects the ideological battles and power relations based on race, class and gender in our society

17. Press freedom is an important human right enshrined in our constitutional dispensation, which must be protected and promoted. It is important to note that rights go hand in hand with responsibility hence the need for a balanced, independent mechanism to adjudicate complaints between the media and society
18. The public broadcaster, the SABC, continues to play a critical role in shaping opinions of our Nation and therefore remains an important role player in the NDR
19. The debate on the influence of the advertising and marketing industry over the public broadcaster's programming content and the value system that the ANC seeks to inculcate in the building of a non-racial non-sexist and democratic society, must be deepened.
20. Building social cohesion and promoting values of a caring society are an essential part of the battle of ideas and must underpin and inform the manner in which the media operates.
21. Likewise, arts and culture is a cornerstone of a National Democratic Revolution and a fundamental pillar in the transformation of any society. In this regard, media needs to take on a specific responsibility.
22. The accountability and fairness of the public broadcaster are central to the objective assessment of the gains of the NDR.
23. The role of an objective and progressive media is critical in building a vibrant democracy. The SABC is therefore strategically placed to foster the principles of the Constitution, social cohesion, and nation-building;
24. The ANC has previously taken resolutions on increasing the funding of the public broadcaster, which has not been implemented. Its current funding model compromises its public service mandate;
25. The debate on the battle of ideas must begin within the ANC itself, the Alliance and the broader democratic movement.

## **Resolves**

### **1. On unity and coherence of the movement**

The unity and coherence of the ANC is an absolute requirement for the ANC to successfully pursue its revolutionary task in the battle of ideas in the advancement of the NDR.

Conference therefore recommends that the incoming NEC should, within six months, institute a specific programme aimed at restoring the unity and coherence of the ANC, the Alliance and the broader democratic movement. This programme should be accompanied by a comprehensive communications strategy at all levels of the organization;

### **2. On the battle of idea**

- To vigorously communicate the ANC's outlook and values (developmental state, collective rights, values of caring and community solidarity, ubuntu, non sexism, etc) versus the current mainstream media's ideological outlook (neo-liberalism, a weak and passive state, and overemphasis on individual rights, market fundamentalism, etc.)
- That the battle of ideas must be conducted in deeds not only theory and these deeds must find practical expression through the ANC structures.
- to encourage a more representative and diverse media environment which must also address the qualitative transformation of the newsrooms that reflect the transformation agenda of the country;

### **3. On building ANC Internal media capacity**

The ANC should establish its own platforms for the production and distribution of Information within and outside the organisation;

At the same time, the ANC needs to improve the capacity of its communications cadres, including the resuscitation of the 51<sup>st</sup> National Conference resolution on establishing media organising committees (along the lines of the previous DIP within the ANC) at both national level and in each REC and committees at sub-branch level to coordinate and disseminate information to the people and engage in the battle of ideas;

Related to this, the ANC should strengthen its interaction with journalists in all media;

#### **4. On Government Communications**

- improve its own internal and external communication tools and to strengthen government communications platforms;
- take practical steps to influence and engage the output of the creative, media, academic and intellectual communities;
- introduce a framework to establish a centralised government advertising unit which would enable government to utilise advertising economically;
- investigate the extent to which the prevailing administrative environment enables government to communicate effectively;
- ensure concrete communications initiatives required for effective local government communication.

#### **5. On regulatory capacity**

Conference recognises the need to continuously strengthen the capacity of the independent communications regulatory body (ICASA) in light of the changing technological and market environments.

The ANC and its Government should ensure adequate resourcing of this important institution.

#### **6. On the allocation of frequency spectrum**

The ANC and its Government should ensure that the allocation of spectrum - which is a scarce national public resource – must contribute to the promotion of national interests, development and diversity. This should involve increasing the amount of spectrum and licenses dedicated to public use; for example, community radio and TV, and mobile technologies.

#### **7. On media freedom**

The ANC must promote the school of thought which articulates media freedom within the context of the South African Constitution, in terms of which the notion that the right to freedom of expression should not be elevated above other equally important rights such as the right to privacy and more important rights and values such as human dignity.

#### **8. On the establishment of a Media Appeals Tribunal (MAT)**

Conference adopts the recommendation of the Policy conference that the establishment of a MAT be investigated. It accordingly endorses that such investigation be directed at examining the principle of a MAT and the associated modalities for implementation. Conference notes that the creation of a MAT would strengthen, complement and support the current self-regulatory institutions (Press Ombudsman/Press Council) in the public interest.

This discourse on the need for a MAT should be located within a proper context. It has to be understood as an initiative to strengthen the human rights culture embodied in the principles of our constitution (Constitution Act of 1996) and an effort to guarantee the equal enjoyment of human rights by all citizens.

It particularly relates to the balancing of human rights in line with section 36 of the Constitution of the Republic. This especially relates to the need to balance the right to freedom of expression, freedom of the media, with the right to equality, to privacy and human dignity for all.

The investigation should consider the desirability that such a MAT be a statutory institution, established through an open, public and transparent process, and be made accountable to Parliament. The investigation should further consider the mandate of the Tribunal and its powers to adjudicate over matters or complaints expressed by citizens against print media, in terms of decisions and rulings made by the existing self-regulatory institutions, in the same way as it happens in the case of broadcasting through the Complaints and Compliance Committee of ICASA.

The investigation should further consider remedial measures which will safeguard and promote the human rights of all South Africans.

The Media and other stakeholders, including civil society, shall be consulted to ensure that the process is open, transparent and public. Parliament will be charged with this mandate to establish this MAT, in order to guarantee the principle independence, transparency, accountability and fairness.

#### **9. On the Public Broadcasting Service**

The state must substantially and urgently increase its funding of the public broadcaster from the current 2% to a minimum of 60% by 2010, so that the SABC can properly fulfil its public mandate. This is in accordance with the 51<sup>st</sup> Conference resolution which has not yet been implemented.

Through government, encourage the SABC to increase its support and promotion of local content that is consistent with the outlook of the country's Constitution and the values of the ANC including a specific focus on women, the disabled and the youth.

That, in accordance with the provisions of the Broadcasting Act, the appointing body, ensure that the SABC Board is representative of all sectors broadly in our society.

#### **10. On the governance of the internet**

The ANC resolves that the matter of global governance of the internet should be democratized. Practical measures to deepen the debate and discussion on this important issue should be implemented.

#### **11. On Disability**

The ANC resolves that the media should commit itself to the principle of guaranteeing access for the physically challenged to the media, by ensuring that people with disabilities have access to media opportunities both as producers and consumers of content.

#### **12. On Gender**

Conference resolves to encourage and accelerate the commitments and practical mechanisms to promote gender parity within the media industry. Accordingly it calls upon public and private institutions to intensify and accelerate the implementation of such programmes.

Conferences also resolves to ask the incoming NEC to ensure that gender relations are transformed in and through the media.

### **13. On adverse impact of advertising on society especially youth and children**

Conference resolves that measures be instituted to protect and safeguard children and youth against negative effect of harmful advertising.

Those measures have to also ensure that advertising that continues to entrench gender stereotypes and commodification of women is curbed.

### **14. On 2010 and the media**

Conference resolves to ensure that the media legacy of 2010 includes the development of digital broadcasting and broadband infrastructure rollout to every part of S.A. especially rural.

### **15. On SENTECH**

Conference recognizes the strategic role of Sentech in the transformation and development of broadcasting. Conference thus reaffirms government's position that Sentech is a strategic asset and must remain in public hands, in order to guarantee the availability of TV and radio signals to all parts of the country; to ensure Sentech is adequately funded to ensure the digitisation of the infrastructure and access to broadband, especially for rural areas and public institutions;

### **16. On the Media Development Diversity Agency**

Access to information and a choice of media for all, is a fundamental right of citizens, especially the poor. All South Africans should have equal access to a diverse choice of media (public, commercial and community).

Conference notes the increasing concentration of ownership and control of the media, especially print media. Conference is of the view that the initiatives that are in place to diversify the ownership and control, views and opinions should be strengthened. In accordance with this, conference recommends that there should be a substantial increase in the funding allocated to the MDDA to fulfil this strategic task/mandate as enshrined in the MDDA Act.

Conference reaffirms the need to accelerate the rollout of community radio stations to reach a target of a minimum of one community station per each district. Similarly, the MDDA should pay equal attention to the development of community television and community print media across the country and strengthen community media, ensure it has access to the latest available technologies;

Similarly, the MDDA should facilitate the development of media aimed at youth, women, children and people with disability.

Government must ensure that citizens have access to media in all languages, and in particular support indigenous languages in print, TV and internet-based media. Support to content development and production in indigenous languages should be given.

Conferences resolved on leveraging government advertising power to support community media

### **17. On other related matters**

Conference resolves to address the quality of training of journalists together with other stakeholders such as the South African Newspaper Editors Forum (SANEF) and the Presidential Working Group on Higher Education.

Conference calls on the media industry to comply with the spirit and intention of the sectoral Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Charter; including the possibility of establishing its own media charter.

Conference resolves that at Local Government level, the government ensures that arts and culture desks in each municipal district are put in place and ensures the necessary funding.