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DRAFT ANC/NEC

GUIDELINES ON THE EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN IN SOUTH AFRICA

The ANC's commitment to eliminate racism, oppression and exploitation from our society cannot fail to address also the question of the emancipation of women within the ANC, the mass democratic movement, and in post apartheid South Africa.

The experience of other societies has shown that emancipation of women is not achieved as a by-product of a struggle for democracy, national liberation or socialism, but has to be addressed on its own right.

Noting that the majority of South African women who are black are the most oppressed section of our people, suffering under a triple yoke of oppression, we have recognised the centrality of the liberation of women in our people's struggle.

We consider that it is long overdue for the ANC and the entire democratic movement **to establish the principles and initiate practices which should guide us** in redeeming the joint pledge made in 1985 to the women of Namibia and South Africa by Presidents Sam Nujoma and Oliver Tambo: that we would not *"consider our objectives achieved, our task completed, or our struggle at an end until the women of Namibia and South Africa are fully liberated"*.

Accordingly, the ANC submits for discussion to the people of South Africa these guidelines on how we can ensure that the emancipation and development of women is correctly addressed and incorporated into the necessary process of transforming the legal and constitutional, the economic, ideological and cultural framework for a post apartheid society.

To achieve genuine, rather than notional equality, our policies must be informed by an understanding of the basis of gender oppression, as well as recognition of its particular manifestations in our society. On such a basis we will be able to work towards creating the necessary conditions for truly liberating women, not simply in theory and at the level of declarations but in the practical reality of our daily lives.

Gender oppression is universally rooted in a material base, in socio-cultural traditions and attitudes all of which are supported and perpetuated by an ideology which subordinates women. In South Africa, as in many other countries, it is institutionalised in the laws as well as the customs and practices of all our people. Within our racially and ethnically divided society, all women have a lower status than men of the same group in both law and practice, and as with racism, the disadvantage ranges across the political, economic, social, domestic, cultural and civil spheres.

The manipulation of gender relations has been a characteristic of state control over especially the African people and the effects have impinged most harshly upon the women. Their mobility has been rigidly controlled, and the unpaid labour of African women in the rural areas has underpinned the migrant labour system and subsidised the profits of the mining industry.

Within apartheid ideology African women have been perceived simply as the breeders of future generations of labour. With the creation of the bantustans large numbers have been confined to deteriorating rural environments, dependent on the commitment of absent men for small cash remittances.. As sole minders of the elderly, the disabled and the children who form the majority in the Bantustans, women have carried a heavy load of responsibility for survival and generational reproduction, while still subject to the legal authority of absent breadwinners who are removed from day to day decision making.

Centuries of women's subjugation have resulted in their being deprived and marginalised in different ways. Nationally, women have the lowest levels of health, education and skills. The majority still bear the sole burden of domestic labour, their contribution to the creation of our country's wealth unrecognised and mostly unpaid. Proportionately, fewer women are in wage employment, while those in employment are channelled into the lowest paid low status jobs. Neither black nor white women participate fully in the decision and policy making organs of our country.

Notwithstanding their special disabilities, women have made significant contributions to our liberation struggle. But, as is evident among the youth, the people's army and elsewhere in our ranks, we have to acknowledge that their full potential has not been realised, not least, because we have not as yet fully integrated women's concerns and the emancipation of women into the objectives of our liberation struggle.

The prevalence of patriarchal attitudes in South African society, our own organisations included, has further limited the participation of women to their fullest capacity. The absence of sufficient numbers of women in our organisations, especially at decision making levels has been to the detriment of our struggle. As a consequence the concerns of more than half of our population do not sufficiently inform our policies or are adequately taken into account in determining strategy and tactics and our programmes of action. It is appropriate to recall the words of President Tambo when opening the ANC Women's Conference in 1981:

"The struggle to conquer oppression in our country is the weaker for the traditionalist, conservative and primitive restraints imposed on women by man-dominated structures within our Movement, as also because of equally traditionalist attitudes of surrender and submission on the part of women."

A speedy conclusion to our struggle and the realisation of our objective of a non-racial and democratic South Africa is dependent upon the extent to which we are able to address and mobilise all the people of South Africa : male and female

ANC POLICY

As we embark on a further phase of our struggle within South Africa on the terrain of organisational "legality", the ANC commits itself to the development and implementation of a wide range of policies for restructuring the organisation and simultaneously addressing the unequal gender relations within it. The adoption of such policies and programme, will enable and facilitate the upliftment of women, and bring women in their millions into active participation in all forms of struggle and at all levels.

The NEC together with the NMED is re-examining the functions of the ANC Women's Section as part of the overall restructuring of the ANC, and of ensuring that our pronouncements are consistent with practices and gender issues are integrated in all spheres of our movement.

As recommended by the ANC Women's Conference we are actively considering the appointment of a National Commission on the Emancipation of Women to sensitise, monitor, stimulate and report on women's position.

Within its tasks and in the light of the urgency of the current situation, the Commission will be asked to accord high priority to examining mechanisms to facilitate women's participation in the struggle and within all the political, administrative and military sectors of the ANC from the grass roots through to the NEC.

We are immediately embarking on a policy of affirmative action within the ANC. Patterns of discrimination and inequality are not self-correcting, but rather tend to replicate themselves, as those already in leading positions acquire necessary experience and confidence and appear better equipped to bear responsibility. To break this cycle, affirmative action will need to be taken within the ANC to supplement and reinforce education and advancement programmes based on the principle of full equality.

The Department of Political Education has been instructed to embark on a systematic programme of formal and informal education to promote an understanding of the origin and effects of gender oppression on our people. While the ANC Educational Council has been asked to re-examine our education policy to ensure that its style and content is non-sexist and avoids gender typing.

PREPARING FOR POST APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

In post apartheid South Africa, our policies will have to simultaneously address the material base, the legal system, the political and other institutions and the ideological and cultural underpinnings of gender oppression. In this regard the NEC is giving urgent consideration to the recommendations of a recent internal Seminar which examined the formulation of national policy regarding the emancipation of women and the promotion of women's development in our country.

Among these recommendations are amendments to the ANC Constitutional Guidelines, including the categorisation of South Africa as an independent, united, democratic, non-racial and non-sexist state. Laws, customs, traditions and practices which discriminate against women shall be held to be unconstitutional.

However, in the new South Africa women will not immediately have the education, skills and resources to claim the rights provided in the constitution and laws. It shall therefore be incumbent upon the state to take appropriate measures to ensure the realisation of the principle of gender equality. At the same time, our legal system must be such as to be easily accessible, with a judiciary that is familiar with the experience of and has the confidence of the least privileged of our people.

The Seminar further recommended that the Constitutional Guidelines be re-examined so as to ensure that patriarchal rights, especially but not only with regard to the family, land and the economy are not entrenched or reinforced. These and other recommendations are being finalised by the Department of Constitutional and Legal Affairs, and the amendments will shortly be made available for discussion.

The Seminar also examined the material, ideological, educational and cultural basis of gender oppression and its recommendations range over the economy, the family, joint responsibility for childcare, the domestic division of labour, women's right to control their fertility, the legal system, and most importantly women's right to democratic participation in all decision making. They provide a basis for a thorough discussion of the policies we will have to adopt to create a society in which there is effective gender equality. The papers and report of the Seminar are to be published in order to stimulate further debate.

THE CHARTER OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Men and women alike bear the responsibility for eliminating gender oppression, for no society can claim to be free or democratic when half of its members are less than equal. However as those most affected, women must take the lead in creating the non-sexist South Africa. They must move the ANC and the MDM to adopt policies and forms of organisation that facilitate the

participation of women in the struggle that still lies before us. Women must lead the national debate for a Charter of Women's Rights which will elaborate and reinforce our new constitution, so that in their own voice women define the issues of greatest concern to them and establish procedures for ensuring that the rights claimed are made effective.

We call upon the **ANC Women's League** to initiate a campaign involving all other structures of our organisation, the membership and supporters throughout South Africa. The campaign should involve millions of women directly in the process of determining how their rights would be protected in a new legal and constitutional order. Such an initiative will provide the opportunity to set an example of democracy in practice, and be a major agency for stimulating women to break the silence imposed on them.

Based upon the demands and needs of African women, the great majority and most oppressed, it should draw in and represent the wishes of women from all sections of South African society, and as such be an important step in preparing half the population for full citizenship and equality.

Although the principle themes of the Charter must be guided by women, men must be engaged in the process, so that we ensure that the Charter has the backing of the widest strata of society.

Although the dominant always find it difficult in the short term to give up age-old privileges and habits, in the long run they only stand to gain from living in a world in which the health, happiness and welfare of all is guaranteed.

Office of the Secretary-General
The NEC Secretariat
ANC Headquarters
LUSAKA

April 15, 1990

Dear Comrades

Subject: **ANC Policy Guidelines On The Emancipation
Of Women In South Africa: A Draft Document.**

The ANC Women's Section in conjunction with the Department of Constitutional and Legal Affairs and the Youth Section held, from 8 - 12 December 1989, an In-house Seminar on Women, Children and the Family In a Future Constitutional Order at the Mulungushi International Conference Center in Lusaka. Participants included, representatives of all ANC departments (at the highest level), comrades with specialist knowledge (as resource persons) and invitees representing a cross-section of our population in Lusaka.

The topmost objective of this seminar was to assist the **ANC/NEC formulate cogent policy guidelines on the gender question** in the South African struggle.

For various logistic reasons the report of the seminar has not yet been completed. However, we have attached for your easy reference the draft section pertaining to Women in Society. It is from this section that the draft policy statement for the NEC was derived. A copy is herewith attached for consideration, amendment and publication by the National Executive Committee.

The NWECC requests the NEC Working Committee to adopt and publicise this statement as soon as possible because it provides a way forward for re-building the ANC Women's League nationwide.

The NEC statement includes a call for a national campaign on the **Charter of Women's Rights** based on grass roots discussion at home before the document is drafted, similar to the discussions which preceded the Freedom Charter, and giving it similar weight. We propose that this campaign be combined with the mobilisation/re-building of the Women's League.

Both the ANC Women's League and the Charter on Women's Rights must be based on strong grass roots support. In the case of women this means the rural areas. In this regard the Women's Section proposes to hold meetings across the country listening to women's problems and canvassing their opinions on the proposed Charter. This approach has the advantage of integrating the two issues while also:-

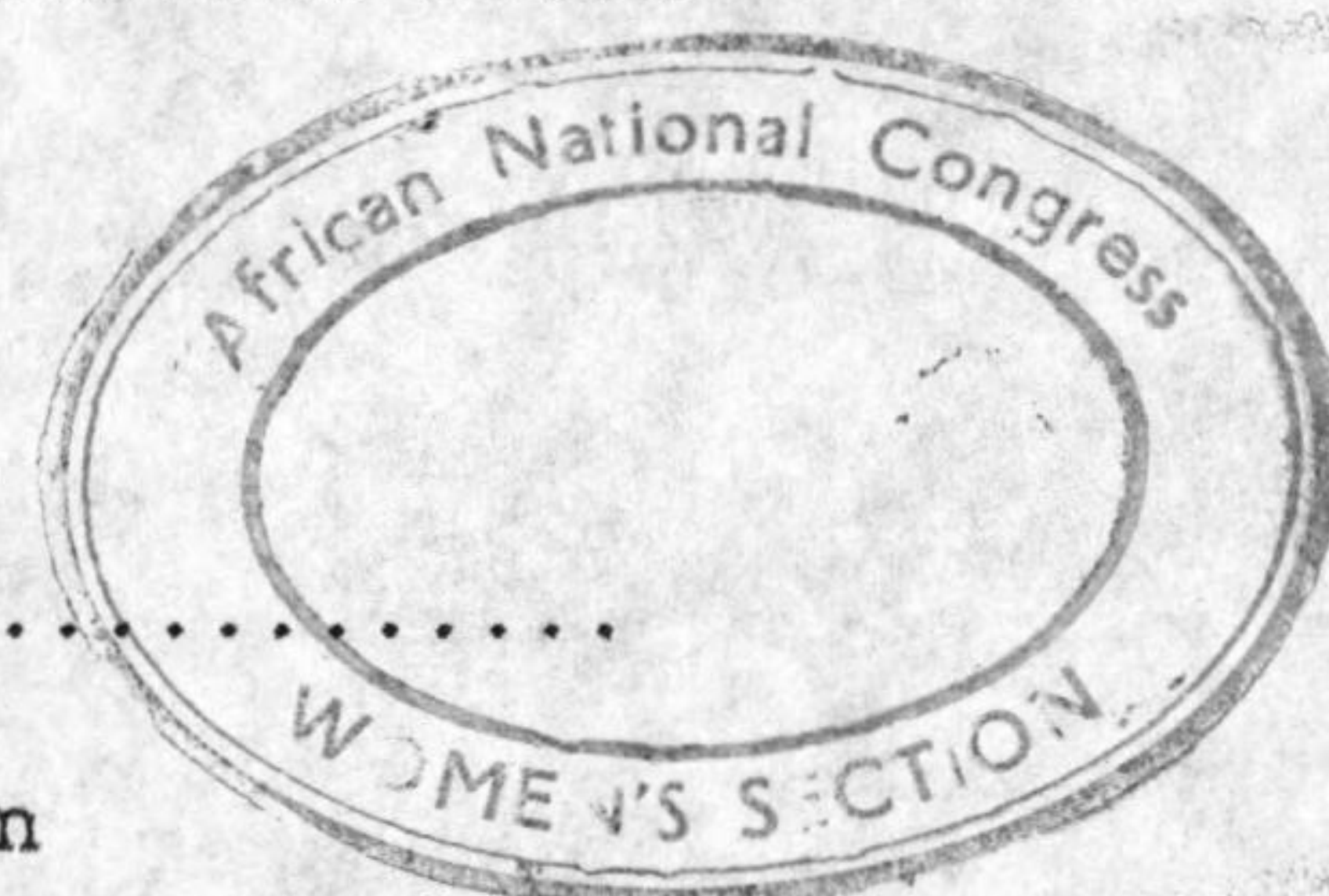
- familiarising the ANC with the grass roots issues which concern women and thus help the organisation to draw women into the Women's League and therefore into the ANC in their thousands;
- providing the ANC with a mass of information, particularly about the rural areas;
- popularising the ANC and making ANC policies on women known throughout the country;
- placing the issue of gender very firmly on the agenda in the next stages of our struggle, ensuring that policies, strategies and tactics agreed at Conference pay due heed to women's concerns, and that women and their views and perspectives feature in any discussions and negotiations about the future of our country; thus
- laying a very solid foundation for a national women's organisation, that would unite all women in our country, but in which the ANC women would clearly be seen to play a leading role.

We wish that the proposed NEC guidelines on women's emancipation together with the amended constitutional guidelines be circulated immediately to commemorate FEDSAW day which falls on 17th April. It should be circulated inside and outside South Africa as background information for the forthcoming seminar on **Re-building a Legal ANC Women's League** which is scheduled for April 30, 1990 in Lusaka. It would then be further discussed at a major conference and/or seminars inside the country from whence the National campaign will be given its full force.

I hope that this outline provides sufficient indication of what is being suggested. We appeal for your understanding regarding our late approach to the NEC working Committee and trust that you will give this issue priority attention which we think it deserves.

In The Year Of People's Action For A Democratic South Africa

Signed
 Gertrude Shope
 Head, ANC Women's Section



- Encl: 1. Draft ANC/NEC Guidelines On The Emancipation Of Women;
2. Draft report on Women In Society as discussed at the seminar