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African National Congress

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DEPARTMENT OF ARTS AND CULTURE

CULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE


APRIL 25 - MAY 1, JOHANNESBURG CIVIC THEATRE

Given the history of the African National Congress, its leadership is taking another step forward. That South Africa belongs to all who live in it, we reaffirm. We always have, and continue to commit ourselves to making South Africa livable for all who live in it.

Our country as currently constructed is intolerable for the vast majority of freedom and justice loving peoples. Apartheid has bruised and brutalised both the dominated and the dominant groups. A just and free South Africa means a transformed and re-constructed country.

Indeed, the ANC declares, consistent with its track record, that it will not veer from the paths of construction, reconciliation and peace. Our cultural expressions, given the diversity and richness that flows from it, are an asset for understanding, tolerance and nation-building.

It is in the spirit of the foregoing that the ANC conceived and is now implementing the Culture and Development Conference (CDC). The CDC is a culmination of several projects and programmes undertaken by the ANC in exile. The Gaborone Conference in 1982, the CASA Conference in 1987 and the ZABALAZA Conference in 1990 - which comprised the widest spectrum of South Africans from home - were forerunners to the CDC. The CDC was conceived as a logical sequel to the fulfilment of our historical duties:


The People Shall Govern!

It is designed to celebrate the emergence of a new South Africa;

It is designed to mobilise ALL South Africans into a common commitment to reconstruction society;

But above all it is designed to work out a method to redress apartheid imbalances;

It is designed to empower disadvantaged victims of apartheid;

It is designed to investigate and implement a democratic restructuring of our cultural institutions;

It is designed to bring all South Africans together to reflect on the country's various languages;

It is designed to, for the first time in the history of our country, facilitate a process for South Africans to decide on a common heraldry, a truly national flag and an abiding national anthem;

It is designed to bring South Africans together to reflect and execute programmes and projects that will cohere our people into a common nationhood.

In this context, and with this vision we invite you to share with us your accumulated experience and seek of you to become a partner with us. In this mission we will be failing in our historic duty if we did not invite you to share this beautiful burden with us.

CDC FORMAT AND STRUCTURE

The Conference is open to all South African cultural workers, organisations, institutions and structures from across the political spectrum. Key individuals and agencies from the regions, Africa and the international community will also participate.

The conference is so structured that the ANC is bringing together various and diverse positions be interfaced in order that fellow South Africans arrive at a consensual understanding of what needs to be done to nourish and sustain a vibrant South African culture.

With this objective, each day of conference will focus on a different component of culture. The conference will be officially opened by Cde Nelson Mandela. This will be followed the next day with inputs from Cde's Cyril Ramaphosa and Thabo Mbeki. International specialists in the areas of language, cultural heritage, literature, music, theatre, dance, film, photography, visual arts, and education will deliver papers and be discussants at conference. This part of conference is designed not only to learn from international experiences, but also to usher South Africa into the international community, away from isolation and into the sphere of participation to lend itself and blend with world civilisation.

Key South African cultural formations, organisations and individuals have been invited to present their perspectives on culture and development. The ANC Department of Arts and Culture commissions on language; museums, monuments and heraldry; and negotiations, will table the policy recommendations to CDC for broader consultation and adoption. A major emphasis of CDC will be placed on the strategies, programmes and projects necessary for the development sustenance of a viable cultural infrastructure in all our communities, but especially in the rural marginalised areas of our country.

It is our hope that the concrete recommendations that the CDC will come up with will be accepted and adopted by the broadest spectrum of participants at conference.

WAY FORWARD

After going through this process the ANC has committed itself to a policy of non-sectarianism culture. We believe culture cannot be appropriated by any one political tendency. We will remain the facilitators in demonstrable ways to see to it that the sad history of our country in respected culture is not repeated. The evil of apartheid was in fact a manipulation of culture by successive governments in our country. We are re-emphasising, notwithstanding our cultural diversities, that culture can heal our bruises and re-unify us as a people.

To execute the findings of this conference to their logical conclusions, the ANC, in consultation with other groups, has initiated the formation of a Board of Trustees. This structure will be both the custodian and guardian of the ethos that the CDC declares.

In tandem with this, structures will be put in place in cooperation with the state, local authorities parastatals, community structures and NGO's to enter into a covenant to protect all the goodness endowed on us as South Africans. And the covenant will ensure not only that the Doors of Learning and Culture Shall be Opened to All, but will also enshrine the relationship between the State and all cultural formations as constituent and essential parts of civil society.