

THE INKATHA FREEDOM PARTY'S RESPONSE TO THE ADDRESS TO THE
CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY BY THE PRESIDENT OF SOUTH AFRICA

BY MANGOSUTHU BUTHELEZI, MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS AND
PRESIDENT OF INKATHA FREEDOM PARTY

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The Government of National Unity is faced with challenges of titanic proportions. There is a looming crises around the issue of whether or not we can be successful in the implementation of the programmes adopted for the social and economic reconstruction and development of our country.

We in the IFP are committed to do what we can do to succeed in the challenges we face. The Government of National Unity is now called upon to tackle the challenges of making the Reconstruction and Development Programme work for the people. The Inkatha freedom Party accepts the challenge, but as we do so, we give notice that we will bring into play the reality of the rich political and social diversity of our country.

As we are opening a new page of history, it is important that there is clarity on the terms of our commitment. We must ensure that the task of social and economic reconstruction and development is assumed Â» enforced and supported by all major political and social segments of our country. More importantly, we must ensure that all major political parties which participate in the Government of National Unity will continue to play an active role in supporting the reconstruction and development effort from its first enunciation to its final implementation.

We must ensure that all those who come aboard the train are in the position to travel all the way to the station of final destination. It is, for the IFP, important that there is a clear understanding and a fundamental agreement on what needs to be done to succeed, including an understanding of what will be needed in the preparatory planning, as well as in the steps which need to be taken to implement the plans which are agreed to in principle.

This is an essential condition for our full participation in the implementation phase. We must be assured that the Government of National Unity will indeed perform its historical task because it is driven by a true spirit of co-operation and common purpose. We must avoid failed agreements, duplicities of intentions and hidden political agendas.

We have listened carefully to President Mandela's vision for a new South Africa. We also have read, with great care, the ANC's Reconstruction and Development Programme proposals to which President Mandela has repeatedly referred. We found both President Mandela's speech, and the ANC's Reconstruction and Development Programme, commendable.

Clearly, there might be differences of opinion and approach on the level of detail between the ANC's programme and the IFP's own vision for the future of South Africa. However, this is not the time to raise negative points about what are otherwise acceptable fundamental policies.

President Mandela has submitted to us his own vision for the future. He has presented the ANC's Reconstruction and Development Programme as a programme containing the basic guidelines which will shape the actions and policies of the Government of National Unity for years to come. We pause to point out that the President is asking us to make an important commitment to assist the Government of National Unity to take South Africa into a new future.

We are extremely concerned by the generalities of the terms of the ANC's Reconstruction and Development Programme. In fact, there is a lack of basic detail on policy development, on the required implementation techniques, on the required legislation, and most of all on the necessary economic and financial manoeuvres on which the long-term policies of the Programme will ultimately depend.

We are wary of lending approval and credibility to a well written and very promising document which does not leave the domain of generalities and good intentions and, which by itself, does not translate into specifically identifiable policies and programmes. In fact, the meaning, value, significance and the implications of the ANC's Reconstruction and Development Programme will emerge only once every government department concerned takes the mission statements contained in the development programme seriously, and develops them into implementable policies and strategies.

Accepting the ANC Reconstruction and Development Programme as the fundamental programme of the Government of National Unity would unfortunately be tantamount to committing the Government of National Unity to a document which might, when the costs have to be met, produce very desperate strategies to support the actual programmes.

This is a serious risk for the future of the Government of National Unity. It may open the door to predictable tensions and conflict which would be worsened by claims that the Reconstruction and Development Programme had been agreed to, and by implication, its costs had been agreed to.

A Government of National Unity is based on, and inspired by, the need to make compromises and seek consensus. This effort of reconciliation must be inspired by the principles set out in the Constitution, and by our common goal of serving the needs wants and aspirations of all the people of South Africa. We share President Mandela's vision that the people must be empowered. This principle must especially apply to the fundamental issue of social and economic reconstruction and development. This means that the Government should not dare to paternalistically presume to know what the needs of the people are. We should not have a top-down programme, which, in the mind of the government, is meant to satisfy the needs of all the people.

On the contrary, the people themselves must be empowered to implement and administer programmes for the reconstruction and development of their own communities. This means that the final formulation of the programme of reconstruction and development must come from the people concerned, and once finalised, the implementation and execution of the programme must be entrusted to the people at grass root level.

I wish to make a proposal on how to follow what I believe to be the only constitutionally correct approach in this matter. I argue that all the parties

participating in the Government of National Unity must reach a clear constitutional understanding on how the programme is going to be developed and implemented.

I propose that all the chapters of the ANC's Reconstruction and Development Programme which fall under the functional areas the Constitution assigns to the jurisdiction of the provinces are to be developed and implemented autonomously by the provinces. I proposes that each province, which wishes to do so, may take the language of the ANC's Reconstruction and Development Programme and translate it into implementation strategies and actual programmes which they will develop on the ground.

In the implementation of the Reconstruction and Development Programme I strongly argue that the Constitution requires that the central government limits its role to receiving and co-ordinating plans for programmes developed by the provinces.

I say let us entrust to those provinces that wish to undertake the political responsibility of doing so, the implementation of all the chapters of the Reconstruction and Development Programmes which relate to job creation, land reform, housing, water and sanitation, provincial transport, environment, health, social welfare, education, culture, sports and recreation, promotion of trade and industry, local government and other subject matters which the Constitution ascribes to the authority of the provinces.

Let us have the true courage of empowering the people at local and provincial levels to implement the programmes. Let us see whether the 1993 Constitution has promise in it.

The central government should provide a co-ordinating and financing function to enable the provinces to implement the programmes.

This is an important matter on which the future of provincial autonomy hinges. It would be a tragic mistake if the beginning of a new era is marked by the breach of the constitutional promise of provincial autonomy.

We should all agree, in the spirit of national reconciliation, and with a view to long-term harmony and co-operation in the Government of National Unity, that the provinces, and not the central government, will translate the language of the Reconstruction and Development Programme into actual practice.

As the provinces undertake the efforts needed, they will summon into the process the local governments and the local communities concerned which, in being brought in, will be finally empowered to decide their futures for themselves.

It is only in this approach that we can guarantee that we truly carry into the - programmes the rich political and social diversity of our country.

I wish to stress the fact that this is the time to show that the Constitution has promises in it. For instance, the Premier of the Province of KwaZulu-Natal tabled a document with the President last week. In terms of the provisions of the Constitution, the Premier of KwaZulu-Natal has claimed for the Province the maximum amount of powers allowed to it under the Constitution.

Most likely this document will need to be negotiated with representatives of the central government, even if it reflects the constitutional entitlement of the

province of KwaZulu-Natal under the Constitution. We hope that enlightenment, long term vision and courage in fulfilling the promises which may lie in the constitution, will guide the actions of the new central government in this respect.

Other provinces might not wish to choose this road, and might prefer to rely more heavily on central government intervention. Also in this respect we need to fulfil a constitutional promise - the promise of asymmetry. This is relevant to our deliberations in respect to the Reconstruction and Development Programme.

In fact the Reconstruction and Development Programme must record, and take into account, that provinces such as KwaZulu-Natal are claiming substantial powers and provincial autonomy under the Constitution in areas which are crucial to the implementation of the Reconstruction and Development Programme.

Therefore, the Government of National Unity should not deny the constitutionally correct aspirations for autonomy of any province because the claims for them do not conform to, or fit in with, a centralist vision of reconstruction and development. We should rather adjust our approach to reconstruction and development to ensure that institutional developments taking place are provincial developments.