

There are no ANC Camps

Article by Jacob Zuma and Thabo Mbeki

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Last December, the ANC held its 52nd National Conference in Polokwane. As prescribed by our Constitution, the Conference elected the National Executive Committee which will lead the ANC until the next elective National Conference in 2012.

As a result of our respect for the views of our members, both of us accepted nomination by the branches of the ANC for election to the position of President. The National Conference democratically elected one of us, Jacob Zuma, as President of the ANC.

Consistent with the democratic traditions of our movement, both of us readily accepted this outcome, as has happened throughout our history since 1912. To emphasise this ready acceptance, when the election results were announced, we walked together from the Conference floor to the Conference stage as part of the process of installing the new President.

We did this to acknowledge the announced election results, and thus symbolise the smooth and amicable passage of the Office of ANC President from Thabo Mbeki to Jacob Zuma, as well as the other election outcomes.

In his Closing Conference Address, the new President of the ANC, Jacob Zuma, emphasised the reality that both of us had worked together closely for three decades as friends, brothers and comrades, and remained friends, brothers and comrades, even as he assumed the position of President of the ANC.

Since then, five months ago, everything that has happened in terms of the private and public relations between ourselves, and the functioning of both the ANC and Government, has confirmed the message we sought to communicate publicly in Polokwane - that we remain the same comrades, united in our commitment to the ANC and its historic objectives, as we were before the 52nd ANC National Conference elected Jacob Zuma as President of the ANC.

During this period, both of us have nevertheless been alarmed by the persistent campaign to communicate a false message that we are at war with each other, as alleged leaders of two opposed factions.

As part of this, determined suggestions have been made that the ANC National Executive Committee (NEC), elected in Polokwane, would inevitably seek to remove from their positions some comrades the ANC had previously deployed in Government, including the President of the Republic.

At the same time, the idea has been strongly promoted that our Government, led by a person who had failed to secure election as President of the ANC, would inevitably act in a manner contrary to the wishes of the NEC elected at the Polokwane Conference.

This shameless speculation and negative campaign have provided a very convenient basis publicly to project the false view that the ANC is a movement at war with itself.

Thus an attempt has been made to entrench the perspective that our country is condemned to experience a terminal war between the ANC and our Government, despite that fact that the latter, in all three spheres, is nonetheless made up of loyal ANC cadres who unequivocally accept and respect all the outcomes of the 52nd ANC National Conference. This includes the unreserved acceptance of the fact by Thabo Mbeki, a member of the ANC, that Jacob Zuma is President of the ANC.

In the meantime, at the practical level, ANC members deployed in Government have interacted and continue to interact very regularly with the constitutional structures of their movement, the ANC, the ruling party.

At the national level, this started with the normal January (2008) ANC NEC Lekgotla, which, as has happened every year for a decade, considered and accepted the principal directions of the (2008) Government Programme of Action, as reflected in the State of the Nation Address and the 2008/9 Budget.

At the same time, the ANC NEC has made it very clear that the ANC is determined not to destabilise our system of governance. It has therefore resolutely opposed all demands that ANC members of Government in all spheres, including the President of the Republic, should be removed from office, simply because, post-Polokwane, they are not members of the ANC NEC, or are otherwise perceived as losers in the Polokwane election process.

Related to this, for many years, together with the rest of our leadership, we have emphasised that our movement encourages open debate within its ranks. Simultaneously, we have insisted that political differences thrown up by this democratic practice, as manifested in our ongoing internal organisational processes, including the Conferences of our regions, Provinces and Leagues, do not translate into organisational divisions.

Political differences demonstrated during these processes are therefore nothing more than a natural democratic expression of different views typical of any organisation as large and democratic as the ANC is.

At the same time, both of us will continue to insist that these different opinions should be expressed in a disciplined, tolerant and peaceful manner, focused on advancing our revolutionary democratic outlook, and consistent with the Constitution, normal practices and traditions of the ANC. We admit that, in some instances, we have failed to achieve this objective.

As underlined by this failure, we consider it as one of our major tasks constantly to educate all our members to understand that their freedom freely to advance different views does not, and must never communicate the unacceptable message that this means that they should thereby become enemies or irreconcilable adversaries. We cannot afford the shameful and violent disruptions of our democratic processes we have experienced at our conferences, which have brought our movement into public disrepute at home and broad.

Despite what we have said concerning our own conduct, it has been clear to us for some time that some people in our country have nevertheless found it in their interest to sustain the mischievous notion that the ANC is divided into two warring factions, which, allegedly, respectively, we lead. To us, it seems that some among these have found it personally profitable to sustain this dangerous fiction.

In its May 25, 2008 edition, City Press carried a front page article headed "Mbeki camp fights back". This headline and the related inaccurate report perpetuate exactly the entirely mistaken notion that the ANC is divided into two camps - a Mbeki and a Zuma camp.

As a country and a nation we confront a multitude of important, difficult and urgent challenges. We can only solve these if we open our eyes to the truth about the real state of the nation, resisting all temptation to succumb to false and partisan propositions and expectations.

In this context, we thank the Editor of City Press for giving us the possibility honestly to convey some fundamental truths we believe should inform the consciousness of our nation about its condition and its future, especially as these relate to the ANC.

The ANC is fully conscious of its historic responsibility to all our citizens, black and white, always to serve the people of South Africa. Both of us are therefore intensely aware of our obligation to educate all members of the ANC to understand that they, including ourselves, have a task always to address the aspirations of the masses, rather than our personal interests.

The ANC leaders elected at the Polokwane Conference understand and accept that others who might not have been elected into the ANC NEC nevertheless remain leaders of both our movement and people, and should be respected as such. Like all other genuine members of our movement, Jacob Zuma will therefore never pretend that Thabo Mbeki is not a leader of the ANC.

The 52nd Polokwane ANC National Conference unanimously adopted policy positions relating to the future of our country, with absolutely no regard to any differences that might have emerged about who should be elected into the ANC NEC.

These policy positions do not represent a qualitative break with the decisions adopted by the 2002 51st Stellenbosch National Conference. Rather, they constitute a further refinement informed by the collective practical experience the ANC and the rest of the progressive movement gathered in the period between the 51st and the 52nd ANC National Conferences, and before.

The current ANC Government was elected in 2004 on the basis of the acceptance by the national electorate of our 2004 Election Manifesto, which reflected the decisions of the 2002 ANC National Conference, and consequently the popular mandate of the Government elected in 2004.

Similarly, our 1999 Election Manifesto and the subsequent Government programme represented the policy decisions adopted at our 1997 50th Mafikeng National Conference, and served as the people's mandate for our 1999-2004 National Government.

The 2009 ANC Election Manifesto will be based, necessarily, on the positions adopted by the 2007 ANC National Conference, in the same way that the 2004 ANC Election Manifesto, which our current Government is implementing, was based on the decisions of the 2002 ANC National Conference.

Since 1994, when we openly informed the nation about our Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), the ANC has not implemented any Government programme that was hidden from the people. This has confirmed our firm adherence to the critically important democratic governance principles of transparency and accountability.

Accordingly, from 2009 onwards, as usual, the ANC will not implement any Government programme that had otherwise been hidden from the people. The policies we will pursue are reflected in the decisions we took at the 2007 52nd ANC Polokwane Conference, which we have published, taking into account the objective national and international conditions our country will face from 2009 onwards.

The ANC has no camps. It does not function as a double-headed monster. It has one common membership. It has one leadership. It has one policy. It has one Government. It leads one people, united in its diversity. It has no hidden tricks up its sleeve. It will contest the 2009 election as one united movement.

At the same time, it will continue openly to debate within its ranks, media and publicly the central and complex issues of what next we need to do to accelerate our advance towards the achievement of the goals of a better life for all our people and the renaissance of Africa, and the role of the ANC in this regard.

Neither we, nor the ANC, have any tricks up our sleeves. Together, acting within the policy framework democratically decided by our movement, the ANC, we will do everything we can to achieve the

objectives the ANC has set itself at many conferences, including the 52nd National Conference. Between us and the nation, there can be no surprises.

In the interest of both the ANC and the nation, we will do everything possible to ensure that during this 96th year of the ANC, and the following years, including our 97th, in 2009, and Centenary, in 2012, the ANC remains a united and principled national movement determined to serve all the people of South Africa and Africa.

Both of us are acutely aware of our responsibility as leaders of the ANC and the people of our country, and will continue to act in a manner that respects this responsibility.

Neither one of us leads any ANC camp. Neither one of us represents any ANC faction. Neither one of us holds opposed policy positions. Neither one of us is involved in a struggle to build a personal support base in the ANC and the nation, which would divide both.

Neither are we involved in a contest about who, between us, will lead the Government our people will choose democratically in the 2009 General Elections. Both of us are committed to the unrelenting pursuit of the achievement of the goal of a better life for all our people and the renewal of our Continent, Africa.

There is no Zuma camp in the ANC. There is no Mbeki camp in the ANC. Nobody, including members of the ANC and the media, should use our names to pursue divisive goals that have nothing to do with the truth, and stand in direct opposition to the noble history, the real nature, and the historic objectives of the ANC, and our commitment to serve the people of South Africa.

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