



NATIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION CALLS FOR A COST-EFFECTIVE AND INCLUSIVE NATIONAL DIALOGUE

With the National Convention set to kick off the National Dialogue process next week, the National Planning Commission (NPC) welcomes the opportunity to participate in this very important initiative of our country. We also welcome the appointment of its Deputy Chairperson, Prof Tinyiko Maluleke, as a co-chairperson (together with Mr Roelf Meyer) of the Eminent Persons Group responsible for championing the National Dialogue. The NPC appreciates this as a signal of the President's recognition of the role that the NPC plays in South Africa's planning landscape. The NPC comprises independent experts from a wide range of sectors and is the custodian of the National Development Plan (NDP). It was appointed by the President to advise on the country's long-term plan to eliminate poverty, unemployment, and inequality by 2030.

We embrace the National Dialogue as a step towards shaping South Africa's long-term future, while remaining steadfast in our commitment to advising on the implementation of the NDP, whose 2030 vision and goals remain relevant. As the NPC initiated work on the country's next long-term plan in 2024, the National Dialogue comes at an opportune moment and aligns with our focus on planning beyond 2030. We see the outcomes of the National Dialogue, especially the Social Compact, and the ongoing inclusive and consultative process envisaged as a crucial component to the refinement of this work. The Social Compact, and indeed, South Africa's next long-term plan should reflect the will of its people and give effect to the founding provisions of our Constitution of '[H]uman dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms.'

We welcome the statement that the National Dialogue will be as inclusive as possible by 'building a platform for every voice — young and old, rural and urban, across race, class, and culture' and we look forward to drawing on the outcomes of the envisaged extensive consultation process.

While we welcome the initiative and the opportunity to support the National Dialogue, the NPC wants to caution against the process turning into what is colloquially referred to as a ‘talk shop’, a national catharsis and emotional ventilation with limited practical outcomes. As evidenced in the slow implementation of the NDP, noted in previous reviews by the NPC, we are conscious of the importance of ensuring actual implementation and hope that the issues and concerns raised during the National Dialogue will be taken seriously enough to inform policy changes where necessary.

We must be frank in acknowledging that the National Dialogue comes at a time when it appears that trust is broken and there is a lack of faith and confidence in institutions of authority. In such a climate of mounting public cynicism, this process must honestly acknowledge the failings of the state, political parties, and powerful individuals. It must also recognise the pain, suffering, and sacrifices of those who are brave enough to express them at these gatherings. While the need for change is easy enough to recognise, the effort that accompanies that change is much more difficult. For the National Dialogue to be a success, leaders across the spectrum will need to demonstrate levels of maturity, altruism, commitment and act in the best interest of the people of South Africa in order to rebuild trust and ensure accountability.

There needs to be clarity and transparency around the roles and responsibilities of the various role players involved in the process. Citizens must be empowered with accurate and timely information, in a constructive manner, which encourages South Africans to participate in the National Dialogue. We also call upon all South Africans to volunteer their time, energy and any other resources at their disposal to make the National Dialogue a cost-effective process.

The NPC is committed to making our country’s future work, and alongside the rest of the country, anticipates an inclusive, transparent, cost-effective and worthwhile National Dialogue.

For media inquiries, kindly contact Dr Zarina Rahman at 0823452919 or Zarina@dpme.gov.za and Dr Sandisiwe Mapine at 0713701048 or Sandisiwe.Mapine@dpme.gov.za.

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