

Virtual Dialogue Electoral Reform and the Future of Democracy In South Africa

Date: 18 July 2023

1. INTRODUCTION

The NPC hosted a virtual dialogue, titled 'Electoral Reform and The Future of Democracy In South Africa' on 18 July 2023. The dialogue aimed to gather information on electoral reforms and brainstorm ideas on improving the electoral system from its current state so that it can inform the NPC's advice to government. The dialogue was motivated by the 2020 Constitutional Court ruling that found the Electoral Act unconstitutional due to its lack of inclusivity in relation to the election of independent candidates to Parliament and provincial legislatures.

2. OVERVIEW

The panel discussion was guided by the following questions:

- The significance of electoral reform and the future of South Africa's democracy.
- Public discourse and the direction South Africa should be taking in reforming its electoral systems
- What is feasible from the administration of elections point of view?

The dialogue into electoral reforms in a democracy was led by the following panel members

1. Mr Valli Moosa - one of the architects of South Africa's constitutional democracy, who has been at the forefront in calling for electoral reform.
2. Professor Mcebisi Ndletyana - a political scientist who has written extensively on electoral politics.
3. Mr Terry Tselane - the former Deputy Chair of the Independent Electoral Commission.

3. KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

The dialogue considered the following issues:

- Electoral systems have several characteristics that inform the functioning and outcomes of democracy.
- An electoral system serves as a tool for conflict management among political competitors by creating a structure for electoral competition.

- Electoral systems influence how citizens participate in electoral politics and their attitudes to voting.
- Electoral systems influence policy development by determining who gets elected and who does not.

4. CONCLUSION

The dialogue was summarised as follows:

- 1) The Constitution is a document that should be maintained.
- 2) The political settlement of the time must be promoted, as it was in 1994. This means that the electoral system should be reformed to promote inclusivity.
- 3) Electoral reform should be citizen driven.
- 4) A unique electoral system that will cater to South Africa's needs should be identified, instead of adopting the ones from other countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States of America. Our country is different and should be treated as such.
- 5) Independent candidates should be given more attention and be given the means to succeed and not be marginalised by the system.
- 6) Something must be done urgently to address the concern about the high number of disengaged youth about voting.
- 7) It is crucial that the cut in funding to the Independent Electoral Commission be addressed as the institution requires the resources to function optimally and maintain democracy by managing elections on a regular basis.



Vision 2030: Our Future, Make it Work