



AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

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Dear Comrade,

LET THIS BE A TURNING POINT IN OUR FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION

I write this letter to you, my fellow ANC member, as our movement and our country face one of the greatest challenges since the advent of democracy.

I am sure that you are aware that across the nation there is a sense of anger and disillusionment at reports of corruption in our response to the coronavirus pandemic. This anger is understandable and justified. In recent weeks, we have heard stories of tenders for personal protective equipment that have been given to individuals associated with ANC leaders and of public servants flouting the law in issuing tenders.

What has caused the greatest outrage is that there are private sector companies and individuals (including civil servants) who have exploited a grave medical, social and economic crisis to wrongfully enrich themselves. This is an unforgivable betrayal for the millions of South Africans who are being negatively affected by the impact of COVID-19, experiencing hunger daily, hopelessness and joblessness.

The mandate of our 54th National Conference on corruption

At the 54th ANC National Conference in December 2017, our organisation's highest decision-making body, in reflecting on corruption, noted that there is an increase in corruption, factionalism, dishonesty and other negative practices that seriously threaten the goals and support of the ANC.

The Conference further said that these practices contradict and damage our mission to serve the people and use the country's resources to achieve development and transformation. Corruption robs our people of billions that could be used for their benefit.

Conference further said that the lack of integrity perceived by the public has seriously damaged the ANC's image, the people's trust in the ANC, our ability to occupy the moral high ground and our position as leader of society.

It was with this in mind that conference accordingly declared: "The ANC commits to the people of South Africa that we shall isolate and root out corrupt tendencies in the public and private sectors."

We have made progress in dealing with corruption in the State

Emboldened by the decisions of our conference, we embarked on a number of measures to tackle corruption in the public sector.

Since the 54th National Conference, we have taken decisive measures in government to disrupt and dismantle the state capture networks and decisively deal with the scourge of corruption.

As mandated by Conference, we have worked to restore the integrity and independence of law enforcement agencies and provide them with the means to effectively fight crime and corruption. As part of this, we have brought in new leadership at the National Prosecuting Authority, South African Revenue Service, Public Investment Corporation, the Hawks and State Security Agency. We have also replaced board and executive leadership at strategic state-owned companies.

We established an investigating directorate in the NPA to investigate and prosecute high-level corruption. We have also set up the SIU Special Tribunal to speed up civil claims against wrongdoers.

Some state-owned companies, like Eskom and Transnet, have successfully recovered stolen funds and continue to pursue others that have allegedly siphoned off money from these companies.

We have used competition policy to tackle excessive pricing and abuse of market dominance in the private sector, particularly during the state of disaster where several firms have been found guilty of illegally inflating prices of things like face masks and sanitisers.

Despite all this work, corruption stands as one of the greatest challenges facing our society. The progress that our nation has made in improving the lives of our people in the last quarter century is being eroded by corruption and patronage.

The ANC is the movement that was so central to mobilising our people for the achievement of our freedom. It has also led the government that has brought peace, development and transformation to our society. It is a matter of great concern to us that corruption has so deeply infected the state, the business community and society to a point of threatening to undo the gains we have made in the last 26 years.

While the current allegations about corruption in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic have brought this issue sharply to the fore, the reality is that corruption in this country has far deeper roots.

Apartheid was both morally and materially corrupt. Even as its laws enabled the theft of resources that rightly belonged to the people of South Africa, there were many in the administration, in state companies, in bantustans and in business who flouted even those corrupt laws to enrich themselves.

As a movement representing the aspirations of the South African people, having fought a just struggle against a brutal regime, it was our intention and our hope that the overthrow of

apartheid would herald a new era of integrity, honesty and ethical conduct by all in positions of responsibility.

We sought not merely to change the political system, but to build a new nation on a fundamentally different moral foundation. It was to be a society based on equal rights for all, on solidarity, integrity and accountability.

We need to take responsibility

As the inheritors of the legacy of Luthuli, Tambo and Mandela, we must be honest with our people and ourselves. We must acknowledge that our movement, the African National Congress, has been and remains deeply implicated in South Africa's corruption problem. We have to be sensitive to the concerns that are being raised by our people about our role as a movement in corrupt activities.

This painful truth was recognised by delegates to the 54th National Conference. In a frank and direct diagnostic report tabled at the Conference, then Secretary General Gwede Mantashe said: "When our people protest against the unethical behaviour of our leadership, they do so not out of hatred but from feeling betrayed as they expect better and higher standards from revolutionaries."

The 54th National Conference was a seminal moment in the history of our movement. In much the same way as it had done at the historic Morogoro Conference nearly 50 years earlier, the leadership and membership of the ANC had to confront its severe weaknesses and embark on a programme of renewal.

When we went to the general election last year, we admitted the mistakes we had made, we acknowledged how corruption and state capture had damaged our country, and we made a solemn pledge to our people to correct our ways. Despite the clear progress we have made since the election, we still have to give full effect to the promise we made.

Today, the ANC and its leaders stand accused of corruption.

The ANC may not stand alone in the dock, but it does stand as Accused No. 1.

This is the stark reality that we must now confront.

At its last meeting, at the beginning of this month, the ANC National Executive Committee (NEC) recognised the justifiable public outrage cause by recent reports of corruption. It said these developments "cause us collectively to dip our heads in shame and to humble ourselves before the people". The NEC recognised that it had a clear mandate from the 54th National Conference to deal decisively with corruption and to restore the integrity and values of the ANC. It said this is a responsibility it cannot defer, outsource or avoid.

Now is the time, the NEC has resolved, to make a break with the past and to act.

How did we get here?

For more than 26 years, the ANC has been in government at a national level and in most provinces and municipalities. This has meant that leadership positions in the ANC have been

seen by some as the most direct route to, in the first instance, employment and, in the second instance, to influence in the award of tenders and the distribution of other government resources.

The people see how organisational principles and processes are corrupted for personal gain. They see how this deviant behaviour goes unchecked and allows unscrupulous and sometimes criminal elements to flourish. We cannot then blame the people if they stay away from our branches, programmes and initiatives.

Our lack of discipline and failure to deal with the issues in our movement have eroded our organisational ethos and standing.

Over many years, we have seen corruption in the state, in society and in the ANC take several forms.

Perhaps the best-known form of corruption is the award of tenders and other contracts to certain companies based on conflictual relations such as friendships or family connections. For these people, success depends on who you know in the public service. Sometimes those awarding the tenders receive kickbacks from the successful companies.

Then there are ‘jobs for pals’, where politicians and officials disregard hiring procedures to employ family members, friends or associates. Not only is this grossly unfair to other prospective candidates, but it often means that the people employed are simply not up to the task. Public services are not rendered, public institutions are poorly managed and public funds go to waste.

As we have seen during the COVID response, there are local ANC leaders who have used food parcels meant for the poor to buy political favours from those people in the branch or broader community who they rely on for their positions. These practices quite literally take food out of the mouths of the poor.

On a hugely different scale, but with the same effect, is the capture of state institutions by public interests facilitated by politicians and officials at the highest level. This ‘state capture’ is being laid bare through evidence being heard by the Zondo Commission of Inquiry. It reveals a disturbing level of grand corruption, where individuals were placed in various institutions to manipulate procurement and other processes to siphon off massive amounts of funds for a network of politicians, public servants and business people.

The effect has been devastating. Billions of rands that should have gone to improved public transport, to better infrastructure for the poor, to reliable and affordable electricity, to emerging black farmers and to the broader development of our country have been stolen to line the pockets of a criminal few.

Not only has money been stolen, but many of these institutions have been left deeply dysfunctional and some virtually destroyed. It has caused huge damage to the economy and to the capacity of the state.

We must have the political courage and the honesty to acknowledge that ANC leaders, public representatives and members have on numerous occasions been implicated in such forms of corruption.

To be quite clear, I am not suggesting that corruption is only a problem of our movement. Nor am I suggesting that corruption is widespread among our membership or leadership. In fact, I know that the overwhelming majority of ANC members and leaders strongly oppose corruption, patronage and all other forms of criminality.

However, as a movement we have so far been unable to turn our organisational positions into actions that will end corruption once and for all. As a result, we have allowed corruption to continue and, at times, to flourish within our ranks.

Now is the time for action

As the NEC has determined, we now need to draw a line in the sand. We need to act urgently, we need to be decisive and we need to demonstrate a clear political will.

The time has come for the ANC to be unflinching in restoring the values, ethics and standing of our organisation. Our deeds must, always, match our words.

We cannot as the ANC rightfully call ourselves leaders of society if we fail to lead the people in eradicating corruption from our own ranks.

We cannot hope to win back people's trust if we continue to allow cadres who are charged with criminal conduct for corruption to occupy positions of responsibility within government and our movement. Those charged are required to insulate the African National Congress from reputational damage arising from their personal challenges by stepping aside while their cases are being heard.

To address corruption in the ANC, we must:

- Implement without delay the resolutions of our 54th National Conference on dealing with corruption, including that:
 - Every cadre accused of, or reported to be involved in, corrupt practices must account to the Integrity Commission immediately or face disciplinary processes.
 - People who fail to give an acceptable explanation or to voluntarily step down while they face disciplinary, investigative or prosecutorial procedures should be summarily suspended.
 - The ANC should publicly disassociate itself from anyone, whether business donor, supporter or member, accused of corruption or reported to be involved in corruption.
- Require ANC leaders to make regular declarations of financial interests.
- Conduct lifestyle audits of all ANC leaders and public representatives.
- Develop a clear policy on ANC leaders and their family members doing business with the state. We must acknowledge that once one accepts a leadership position, a higher standard of behaviour applies.

- Strengthen the Integrity Commission and provide it with clear administrative and legal support. The ANC must develop uniform terms of reference and guidelines for provincial and regional integrity structures.

To address corruption in the state and society, we must:

- Mobilise for a ‘whole of society’ response against corruption and ANC members must support progressive organisations in their stand against corruption.
- Ensure transparency and accountability in procurement. We need to build on the ‘open tender’ processes employed in certain areas and make use of technology and artificial intelligence as a standard practice to tackle corruption across all of government.
- Information about who is tendering for contracts should be made public, as well as the vetting process to verify their credentials. Items being tendered for must be costed per unit, and civil society should be able to access this information so that the public can monitor if prices are being inflated beyond reasonable acceptable profits before a tender is awarded.
- Government should establish in conjunction with civil society an anti-corruption hotline reporting and online service specifically in relation to COVID-19 and beyond. This platform should allow ordinary people to report corruption.
- Strengthen and resource law enforcement and insulate it from political interference. The process of establishing an independent and multi-disciplinary agency to deal with cases of white-collar crime, organised crime and corruption must be fast-tracked.
- Conduct lifestyle audits of senior public servants and leaders of public entities.

We each need to be the solution

In the end, we will not stop corruption within our ranks unless we deepen the ethical consciousness of our members and, particularly, our leaders.

When we joined the ANC, we each made a solemn declaration that we were joining the organisation without motives of material advantage or personal gain. Yet there are some among us who have clearly forgotten their oath or consider it irrelevant.

We cannot and must not have a “we don’t care”, and “it does not matter what people say about the ANC” attitude. We must be sensitive to what our people think and say about the ANC and our behaviour because we are their servants.

Those who see the ANC as a path to wealth, to power, to influence or status must know that they do not belong in our movement. They must change their ways or they must leave.

If we are to rebuild the ANC as an ethical movement that enjoys the confidence of the people, then we need cadres of integrity, honesty and commitment.

I am raising this matter with you, my beloved ANC member, because it is you who has the power to bring corruption to an end in our movement and in our society.

It is you who chooses the leadership, who sets the policies and who implements the programmes of our organisation. It is you who lives in communities, who interacts daily with the frontline of service delivery and who sees the damage that corruption causes.

As the President of the African National Congress, as part of the national leadership collective, I am fully aware of the decisive mandate we have been given by the 54th National Conference to end all forms of corruption, and to renew and rebuild our movement. This is the mandate I intend to fulfil.

We are acting swiftly to end COVID-related corruption and bring those responsible to book. This includes the establishment of a multi-agency centre that coordinates the work of several investigative and prosecutorial bodies in detecting and acting against any criminal activities. We have also empowered the Special Investigating Unit to probe any alleged corruption or misuse of COVID resources in any department, province, municipality or state institution. To promote transparency, we are publishing the details of all tenders awarded under the national state of disaster.

Our criminal justice agencies must do their work without fear, prejudice or favour. As decided at our conference, “all ANC members and structures should cooperate with the law enforcement agencies to criminally prosecute anyone guilty of corruption”.

The ANC and its members must continue to respect the Constitution of the country and the rule of law.

Let us together make this a turning point in the fight in corruption.

Let us together restore the integrity of our movement and earn the trust that the people of South Africa have placed in us.

Comradely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Cyril Ramaphosa' in a cursive script.

Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa
PRESIDENT