

PROGRAMME

OF

ACTION

AUGUST 2022



**DEFENDING SOUTH AFRICA'S
CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY**

Envision a new politics that will enable people's power!

ON 1-2 JULY 2022, DEFEND OUR DEMOCRACY HOSTED THE CONFERENCE FOR DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL AND CHANGE. THE CONFERENCE ENVISIONED A NEW POLITICS THAT WOULD ENABLE PEOPLE'S POWER. A DECLARATION WAS ADOPTED IN THE PRESENCE OF INDIVIDUALS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF OVER A HUNDRED ORGANISATIONS AT THE CONFERENCE. THIS DOCUMENT IS THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION THAT WILL TAKE FORWARD THE CONFERENCE OUTCOMES.

THE PROGRAMME SET OUT IS WORK IN PROGRESS. IT REQUIRES COLLECTIVE WORK BY CIVIL SOCIETY TO IMPLEMENT THE PROGRAMME. WHERE ELEMENTS OF THE PROGRAMME ARE ALREADY DRIVEN BY VARIOUS ORGANISATIONS, THIS WORK MUST BE SUPPORTED, STRENGTHENED AND AMPLIFIED.

1. People's power

"We need new and innovative ways of thinking about politics, mobilising and organising to re-ignite people's power. Our point of departure should be based on clear constitutional principles, economic inclusion, values of solidarity, social and climate justice, ethical behaviour, respect, collaboration, and transparency, which must advance participatory democracy and unity... We need to reinvent democracy and take back statutory organs aimed at enhancing participatory democracy in our communities."

- Conference for Democratic Renewal and Change Declaration

Key actions

In relation to local democracy building and community organising work, Defend our Democracy will:

- Map out community organisations, social movements and local struggles linked to democratic renewal and change across the country.
- Draw together best practices in community organising and mobilisation.
- Develop education and training programmes to support community organising.
- Work with others doing such work, to assist in scaling up programmes of accountability, and monitoring.
- Campaign for the introduction of a recall mechanism for underperforming ward councillors.
- Promote models of partnership to solve immediate service delivery problems and protect community infrastructure.
- Consider a summit on participatory democracy.



2. Political and electoral reform

“We will campaign for fundamental reforms of the electoral system based on the principle of direct accountability of public representatives to voters and the citizens at large; adequate voter and civic education; maintaining and strengthening the existing provisions of the Political Party Funding Act (2018); increased transparency in political party funding, and the imposition of severe penalties on political parties that fail to declare their source of funding.”

- *Conference for Democratic Renewal and Change Declaration*

Key actions

In relation to electoral reform, Defend our Democracy will:

- > Convene a national indaba on electoral reform and establish a national coalition for electoral reform.
- > Engage with the parliamentary process underway on legislative amendments.
- > Develop a grassroots mobilisation approach to advocate for electoral reform – explain its importance in relation to holding public representatives accountable – and initiate public action to support this.

In relation to political party funding, Defend our Democracy will:

- > Campaign, support and strengthen existing work that opposes calls for amending the Political Party Funding Act.

In relation to the integrity of the 2024 elections, Defend our Democracy will:

- > Raise the alarm bells on possible attempts to interfere with the management and outcomes of the 2024 elections.
- > Engage the IEC on preparedness to withstand any attempts to weaken its management of the elections so as to justify non-acceptance of the results.
- > Launch a national campaign for election observers. This campaign would aim to have civil society and community members recruited and trained as observers for the 2024 elections.

In relation to voter education and mobilisation, Defend our Democracy will:

- Map out organisations involved in this area of work.
- Develop a national voter and civic education programme which should use existing material where possible.
- Focus extensively on youth engagements.

In relation to developing a 'People's Manifesto', Defend our Democracy will:

- In the run up to the 2024 elections, present the aspirations of civil society and its views on: key policy issues, candidate quality and governance models, to get leaders to a point where they are afraid of disappointing the people who Defend our Democracy represents.

In relation to developing national accountability and training education, Defend our Democracy will:

- Convene organisations working on the issue of political accountability and monitoring of members of Parliament and the Executive and assess if existing work by organisations can be scaled up nationally.



3. Countering destabilisation

As civil society formations we will stand up to activities aimed at destabilising our constitutional democracy...We will mobilise citizens in defence of our democratic constitutional order."

- *Conference for Democratic Renewal and Change Declaration*

Key actions

In relation to standing up to destabilisation, Defend our Democracy will:

- Create capacity to counter disinformation on a scale that is adequate to meet the extent of the problem that it poses.
- Counter populism through a national civic and democracy education project.
- Advocate for the building of conflict resolution and mediation capacity in communities.
- Respond to and mobilise against attacks on the Constitution and judiciary.
- Work with organisations who foster connection between community structures and law enforcement agencies to counter acts of destabilisation in a coordinated and coherent manner.
- Engage municipalities to develop public campaigns to defend public infrastructure.

4. Combatting corruption and state capture

“Widespread corruption and the capture of the state by shadow private, political and criminal networks have led to the weakening of democratic institutions and diminished the capability of the state to meet the needs of citizens. We welcome the Report of the Zondo Commission of Inquiry into State Capture, which has marshalled the evidence proving the stark reality of prevalent corruption and state capture in our country; and urge our citizens to engage with the Reports.”

- *Conference for Democratic Renewal and Change Declaration*

Key actions

***In relation to tackling state capture and corruption,
Defend our Democracy will:***

- Advocate for civil society to have a comprehensive and coherent response to the Zondo Commission’s report and recommendations before October 2022.
- In consultation with other civil society organisations, develop a monitoring and tracking system on the implementation of the Commission’s recommendations.
- Pledge support to the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) as well as step up pressure on the need for prosecutions.
- Work with all whistle blower organisations to finalise a plan to support and protect whistle blowers.
- Develop popular versions of the Commission’s reports and recommendations for usage by civil society organisations in public outreach work.
- Engage the private sector on reforms needed to eradicate state capture from its own ranks. There should be a special focus on the companies implicated the Zondo Commission report.

- Take forward discussions on the Zondo Commission at the upcoming conference being held by the Council for the Advancement of the South African Constitution and the Public Affairs Research Institute on 14-15 September 2022.
- Continue public mobilisation and awareness on ongoing issues of state capture and corruption.



5. Reforming the public service

“Cadre deployment has led to the politicisation of the public service and the intelligence and security services, and the appointment of inept officials in the public service and state-owned entities (SOEs). It must be done away with.”

- *Conference for Democratic Renewal and Change Declaration*

Key actions

In relation to campaigning against cadre deployment,

Defend our Democracy will:

- > Engage the Public Service Commission on measures that will ensure the isolation of the bureaucracy from political manipulation.
- > Advocate for a transparent and participatory appointment process for senior public servants, and SOE board members and management.

In relation to campaigning for procurement transparency

Defend our Democracy will:

- > Use the experience of work done during Covid-19 around procurement transparency to make this applicable across the public sector.
- > Support the work of the procurement reform working group initiated by the Public Affairs Research Institute to ensure that their proposals become owned by wider civil society.
- > Develop a specific programme targeting public servants – who are central to preventing capture and corruption – to engage with the Zondo Commission’s report.

In relation to policy interventions, Defend our Democracy will:

- > Engage with the parliamentary processes on the professionalising the Public Service Bill and the Preferential Procurement Bill.

In relation to matters related to the structure of government,

Defend our Democracy will:

- > Track work being done on the restructuring of government and ensure that these deliberations get greater public participation.
- > Consider arguments in favour of eradication or the restructuring of provinces and champion calls for new thinking around local government systems and models.

6. Deepening democracy in South Africa

“The measure of a democracy is the quality of life and dignity of the people who live in that democracy.”

- *Conference for Democratic Renewal and Change Declaration*

Key actions

In relation to developing new ideas on democratic renewal and change, Defend our Democracy will:

- > Identify from local and international experiences new ideas that will assist in invigorating the praxis of democracy in South Africa.
- > Establish a centre for democratic innovation in partnership with research and academic institutions.
- > Host regular democracy dialogues to engage on new and emerging ideas on democracy locally, nationally and internationally.

7. Advocate for a new economic model

“We envisage a new economic model that is inclusive and leaves no one behind, that meets people’s basic needs and is characterised by values of empathy, solidarity, and social and climate justice.”

- *Conference for Democratic Renewal and Change Declaration*

Key actions

In relation to advocating for a new economic model, Defend our Democracy will:

- > Establish an economic transformation task team to help the movement clarify its thinking and actions on all issues related to economic issues.
- > Map out and track work on new economic models and give voice to those in Defend our Democracy convened dialogues on ‘economic democracy’.
- > Convene an economic summit to deal with issues of low growth and high unemployment.
- > Host engagements on the calls for the Basic Income Grant with wider civil society.

8. BUILDING THE DEFEND OUR DEMOCRACY MOVEMENT

**"We hereby resolve that the
Defend our Democracy Campaign
be transformed as soon as
practicable into a flexible popular
movement based on institutional
and organisational affiliation,
including individual association,
where deemed necessary."**

- Conference for Democratic
Renewal and Change Declaration**



Key actions

*In relation to playing a convening and coordinating role,
Defend our Democracy will:*

- > Hold regular civil society sessions that require collective accountability work.
- > Avoid duplication of existing work – help to scale it up and foster greater connectivity between organisations working on specific areas and others who have an interest.
- > Campaign for government, particularly at local level, to redirect its energies to meet people’s basic needs.

*In relation to playing an oversight and accountability role,
Defend our Democracy will:*

- > Keep watch on national government, SOEs and key issues in provinces.
- > Consider a parliamentary office on behalf of civil society.
- > Identify issues that require collective accountability work.
- > Engage on how to reinvent democracy and take back statutory organs aimed at enhancing participatory democracy and accountability in our communities.

*In relation to mobilisation and giving voice to various struggles,
Defend our Democracy will:*

- > Support community and issue based mobilisation and give profile to local and national struggles where linked to the core work of the movement.
- > Develop messaging and drive communications-based work to enhance democracy at all levels.
- > Work with communities, community media and various sectors, including youth, on issues related to the core work of the movement.
- > Organise and support visible public action where it aligns with the core work of the movement.

In carrying out this work,

Defend our Democracy will:

- Promote effective partnerships between communities, government and businesses.
- Give a voice to community issues and draw links between them and need for democratic renewal and change.
- Focus on trust building across and between activists, organisations, civic movements and people from different geo-locations and classes.
- Act as an umbrella to organise and civil society to run joint campaigns.
- Organise communities to talk about socio-economic issues which will bring to the surface the issues of state capture, maladministration, corruption, and state capture.
- In doing this work, the movement will embody the following characteristics – being a movement that is: non-partisan, inclusive, reachable, not a political structure, a network that can connect organisations, fosters solidarity, hope giving, and is mindful of working across socio-economic barriers.

Broad timeline leading to the formal launch of the Defend our Democracy movement:

In becoming a movement, Defend our Democracy will work towards drafting a basic constitution and articles of affiliation for organisations and individuals interested in joining the movement. This will be circulated to organisations leading to the movement's launching congress, which will occur before the end of 2022.

This will be preceded by a range of sectoral meetings, provincial visits, discussions and thought on restructuring Defend our Democracy into a movement for democratic renewal and change.

Organisations who attended the conference and those who signed the conference Declaration will be kept abreast of developments leading to the launching congress.

However, during this period, work around the Programme of Action will be initiated, laying the basis for its effective roll out post the launching congress.