

Press statement

12 June 2024

GNU must be premised on constitutionalism and good governance

We, the undersigned organisations, welcome the proposal for a Government of National Unity (GNU) committed to our Constitution, its values and the rule of law.

Our support for a GNU however, is conditional. It must serve the interests of the people of South Africa and prioritise their political, economic and social wellbeing. Our crises are multiple: the rationale for a GNU is that it can, at this moment, direct considered and coordinated efforts at reducing the horrifying levels of poverty, unemployment, crime and inequality in South Africa.

It must tackle the energy and water crises that everyday blight the lives of this country's people. The right to access quality education, healthcare, and basic services cannot just remain locked in our Constitution's pages, but must be brought to life.

A GNU will also need to root out corruption and state capture, prioritise the implementation of the Zondo Commission recommendations, and rebuild public trust in state institutions. Furthermore, a reduced cabinet will be a welcome sign of a government focussed on delivery and not on patronage.

Any coalition formation - including that of a GNU, as well as provincial coalitions - must be based on transparent agreements which allow for greater scrutiny, public oversight and accountability, as well as consequence management for compliance failures.

It cannot follow the course of coalition governments in the big metros which have failed to serve the interests of the public, and where political parties have in some instances run departments under their ambit as if these were their personal fiefdoms. The foundation of a GNU must be based on a collective vision to take the country forward, a joint strategy of how this is to be accomplished and a shared sense of responsibility.

We are encouraged by political parties who have expressed interest in joining a GNU, and have indicated a willingness to negotiate and compromise on certain policies and ideological standpoints in service of the people of this country. We also respect the decision of political parties who choose to remain in opposition benches.

We cautiously welcome the idea of a “national dialogue”. Further details about its terms of reference need to be formulated, and it should be truly representative of various sectors of society. A national dialogue cannot merely be a ‘tick-box exercise’ in public engagement.

While political parties will now make choices that will impact the future trajectory of the country, the period ahead also calls on civil society organisations to mobilise the public into being active participants in democracy. We do need to reverse trends which are beginning to perhaps indicate an erosion in democratic participation, such as low voter turnout. Furthermore, beyond voting, we now need to strengthen accountability work at every level.

Endorsed by:

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Business Unity SA

Centre for Good Governance and Social Justice NPC

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MSA Union (Muslim Students' Association Union)

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Issued by Defend our Democracy

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