



# African People's Convention

**Presidential Address at the Inaugural Convention of the APC**

**The 29 March 2008 Tshwane City Hall**

tBy: Comrade President Themba Godi

## **The credible and progressive voice that will not betray the revolution**

Comrades, sons and daughters of Africa,

It is an honor for me to welcome you all to this momentous inaugural occasion of the African People's Convention party.

The 29<sup>th</sup> March 2008, marks the day the African People's Convention ushered a dynamic, assertive and forward looking party in the political terrain for us collectively and severally. This day sets in motion an event that will have immense political and historic ramifications for our country. The political landscape will from today be permanently reconfigured.

Your presence here today, comrades, in large numbers are to not only bear witness but to also serve as the midwives in the birth of our progressive party. And that you will, from here-on go back to your provinces, regions, branches and everywhere in our country, as disciples to spread the good message to our people. We are launching the APC today with hope and conviction. We are convinced of the correctness of our political stance.

Let history be the judge.

Comrades, we are launching the APC out of historical necessity to fill the void that has been there in our country's politics since 1994. Our country has been yearning for a credible and progressive voice to the status quo as required by the objective laws of dialectics. Those parties that historically and ideologically had the potential to play that

role have failed dismally with no discernible prospect of changing their misfortunes. That voice cannot be represented by any other party other than the APC.

The people have been yearning for an alternative that will not betray the revolution. We are launching the APC as an alternative that is steeped in the values and traditions of the Liberation Movement. We are a party of the Left. As things stand, it's only a party of the Left that can meaningfully strengthen democracy and prevent a slide into a de facto one party state. Since the APC is destined to play an ever central role in the politics of our country and the lives of our people, it's imperative that our standpoints be adumbrated very unequivocally.

Comrades, we live in a globalized world where the interconnections of nation states are very pronounced. The process of globalization is not a neutral process. It is a product of deliberate political and economic processes. This global village we are living in is an unhappy place. It has a world order where might is right, it is a unipolar world dominated by one super-power. It dominates key international multilateral institutions to the disadvantage of the majority of nations. Institutions like the World Bank [WB], the International Monetary Fund [IMF] and the World Trade Organisation [WTO] are dominated by a few and used to advance their hegemony over the rest. Whilst they preach democracy to everyone, the institution they dominate are run undemocratically, they bully and blackmail to get their way. These countries have constructed a financial, trade and economic system that is meant to keep the poor countries poor whilst maximizing the movement of capital from poor countries to the rich ones. The unequal terms of trade are being strenuously defended and advanced by the rich countries at the stalled negotiations in the WTO. This reinforces their dominant economic system of free market fundamentalism. This sees the continued exploitation of poor countries to cushion the opulence of the rich nations.

As a progressive party, the APC locates itself as part of all the forces in the world that are striving for a better world, an anti-thesis to the status quo. We seek a just world, free of partiality and the hegemony of one nation over the other. We are for a world that advocates greater international collaboration for the good of mankind, a world that

nonetheless remains rooted in the equality of nations. A world of economic justice and social solidarity.

One of the greatest challenges of our age is the increasing accumulation of wealth in a few countries and fewer individuals, and the impoverishment of billions of people. This can not be right. It is not sustainable. It must be changed. The APC must be part of the struggle for that change. The APC will stand shoulder to shoulder with those forces that seek the creation of a just social and economic order. A new order that seeks to create equality within societies, an order that seeks to distribute the resources of society in as equitable a manner as it will seek to eliminate poverty.

We envision a world free of poverty, a world in perfect harmony with itself and nature. The system of capitalism, its highest phase of imperialism and imperialism's highest phase of neo-colonialism, are an anti-thesis to the just world that we envision. Therefore, every party member, every militant, every cadre should spare neither effort nor energy in the struggle for a just world order, and against the hypocrisy that informs the conduct of the dominant powers.

Where do all these leave Africa, our beloved motherland? Its condition is a product of both internal and external factors. After 1994, with South Africa's liberation, the initial phase of our struggle was completed i.e. the struggle to free Africa from foreign rule and give the majority the political rights to determine their own destiny. Africa remains a continent of challenges and opportunities. The attainment of political independence has not translated into sustained economic and social progress. Political instability, economic stagnation and social strife continue to haunt us. The people of Africa yearn for unity, for integration as a panacea for all their ills.

Without the political, economic and military integration of Africa there is little room for sustainable and substantive development for the individual countries of Africa. The system of unequal trade terms have ensured that Africa remains in the margins. We remain the prime exporter of raw materials and an importer of finished products. This

neo-colonial economic relationship is incompatible with Africa's developmental needs. In the world today, Africa does not occupy the front rows amongst nations of the world in the development index. Africa accounts for no more than 3% of international trade. We thus suffer the negative effects of globalization.

As Pan-Africanists we are committed to an African agenda, we look at the world from an African reference frame. We believe in Africa, we have faith and hope in Africa. We share in the vision of a free, proud, united and prosperous Africa as envisioned by its great leaders like **Kwame Nkrumah, Marcus Garvey, Sylvester Williams, William du Bois, Amilcar Cabral, Sekou Toure, Thomas Sankara, Patrice Lumumba, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, Kamarage Nyerere, Samora Machel, Herbert Chitepo, Anton Lembede, Robert Sobukwe** and many others.

The APC believes that Africa deserves better than its present circumstances. We acknowledge that Africa's capacities and capabilities have been consistently and viciously assaulted through years of the slave trade, colonialism and currently through neo-colonialism.

Whilst we damn the imperialists for laying waste to Africa and straight jacketing us in an international economic system that perpetuates our subjugation, we also need the courage to face up to those amongst us who have betrayed the trust of the people to either satisfy their clique interest or served as "native assistants" to the imperialists i.e. the comprador bourgeoisie. There can be no denying that there has been a dearth of courageous leaders in the mould of Sankara, Nkrumah, Lumumba, Sobukwe etc who were outspoken in the interest of the people. Despite the hostile international climate, with unity, purposefulness and mobilization of the people, a lot can be achieved or done for the people of Africa. Part of our responsibilities as APC, as progressives in Africa is to mobilize against and expose, in Africa, those who are just the native variance of the foreign exploiters.

Corruption, inefficiency, maladministration, fruitless and wasteful expenditure by our own governments, our own brothers and sisters at the expense of the people is just as bad, if not worse than the exploitation of African resources by imperialism. We don't need and cannot defend the likes of Mobuto Sese Seko, Kamuzu Banda, Daniel Arap Moi, Sani Abacha, King Mswati, Omar Bongo, Idres Derby etc.

Africa requires men and women of courage, commitment, fearlessness, uprightness of character and above all a consuming love for our people. In this struggle for the regeneration of Africa, the APC, and indeed our country should play no less a role.

Our country, South Africa, is a proud and integral part of Africa. There can be no sustainable development for South Africa in isolation from the rest of the continent. The basis of the APC's existence and relevance is in correctly analyzing the socio-economic situation of our people and mobilizing them to make and realize those demands.

The attainment of liberation in 1994 addressed the political question of the free participation of the majority in the political system of our country. Two years later, the country's constitution was adopted and signed in Sharpeville, Gauteng, the place of the gruesome massacre of our people (in 1960 March 21). Since then, many progressive pieces of legislation have been enacted, and various government programmes have been put in place to give meaning to the attained freedom. A lot has been done, more could have been done and much more still needs to be done.

We remain fundamentally opposed to the chosen developmental trajectory that has not fulfilled the needs and interest of our people. Instead of striving to create an equal society, which was the promise of freedom, inequality within our country has actually worsened.

There has been massive casualisation of workers, especially in the retail sector, leading to massive profits for the owners and brutal exploitation for the workers. The creation of quality jobs and higher re-investment levels as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product [GDP] to create jobs has not happened. Influenced by international trends the economy

has become more knowledge based, thus creating jobs on the wrong side of the societal spectrum. Thus despite the creation of some jobs and a growing economy, joblessness, poverty and inequality remain the greatest potential threat to social stability. The majority, which fought for freedom in the hope that it will lead to a radical change in their material conditions remain trapped in the poverty quagmire.

The current developmental trajectory has deliberately and programmatically sought to create a parasitic bourgeois element that is tied to political power (this element has also been heavily favored by private capital looking for political influence peddlers). Thus a few from the previously oppressed have joined the economic establishment and some have become muted or merely rhetorical about the need for fundamental change. This is anti- people. This we cannot support. This we reject totally. The APC therefore seeks to mobilize and articulate positions in favor of the popular masses. We want a return to the altruism of the Liberation Movement, the values and traditions of people centeredness, popular democracy and people centered development. We reject the alien class values that have contaminated a section of the liberation movement.

The pressures brought on the people by economic hardships have led to increased deviant social phenomena in family and societal lives, like the disintegration of families, drug and alcohol abuse, children and women abuse, loss of moral values and general criminality. The nation building efforts therefore need to be holistic, looking at the political, cultural, material needs and social aspects of the people's lives.

It is our conviction that the developmental challenges of our country requires the unity and efforts of all its citizens, all progressives and patriots should put the shoulder to the wheel. That is why we eschew sectarianism in state institutions or administration. The country should utilize all its talents without favor or discrimination. We believe in a state of all the talents. We should mobilize all to strive for a just, caring and equal society. However there can be and there should not be any confusion about the class forces that must play the vanguard role.

Comrades, the APC has transformed from being just an idea to the reality that you here represent. The APC has carved a clear vision for itself that of being a viable, credible and progressive alternative governing party in South Africa. The ultimate prize is the liberation of the people from social and economic oppression. But for us to do so, we need to be government, win elections through a popular mandate from the people. However in the immediate to medium term we seek to make the APC the official opposition party. This will be a step forward to our ultimate goal. Our position as official opposition will guarantee that it is the concerns of the majority that comes to the fore and government is held to account on its policies to the people. This, the APC, will seek to archive by at all times and in all circumstances representing the political, economic, social and cultural needs of the people.

But is our vision mere wishful thinking or is it a product of clear and careful analysis? The latter is the case. We are convinced that the APC has what it takes to achieve its vision. We know that the ultimate strength of any party is its people, its members, its cadres. This talks to the quality of its members politically, ideologically and organizationally. However this is not the only ingredient. There are also other factors that put the APC two steps ahead of many others. It is important to stress that the APC has a progressive ideological outlook. The people are looking for an alternative that will not betray the revolution. We embrace and defend the democratic dispensation as a product of our people's long and bitter struggles.

We reject any yearning for the so called "good old days" under apartheid, as reactionary. We believe that the solutions to the people's current challenges and indeed our future lies in going forward, advancing the revolution. Unlike others, we stand ready to participate in all programmes or projects that seek to uplift our people and advance the struggle towards a just, caring and equal society. We stand to engage with the state in a matured, flexible and reasonable manner. We are a party of the Left. To be a party of the Left means being on the side of the people, the poor, the majority, the vulnerable [the working class, children, women and people with disabilities]. There is no party of

substance in South Africa today that embodies pan-africanism, Africanism and socialism. We do!

Comrades, what can we say now about the APC? All we can say is: So far so good! We have outperformed ourselves in firmly building the APC on the ground. To all of you comrades, members, cadres and leaders-revolutionary salute for your heroism, creativity and self-sacrifice in building the APC to be this vibrant, dynamic and growing party. I like the spirit in the party, the feel, the mood, and the momentum-lets sustain it, lets up the tempo; let the flag of the APC fly higher and higher!!

Lastly comrades, let us address ourselves to an important milestone ahead of us- the 2009 elections. We must say that we are looking forward to the elections with confidence and hope. Hope that it will be a free and fair election, which should be determined more by policies, issues and ideas than money and appearance. We approach these elections with confidence that the APC will confound the skeptics and firmly establish itself as a force in our parliamentary democracy. We would like to firmly set ourselves a minimum target of between 5% - 10% of the overall national electoral support. This we are convinced is within reach, and beyond today we shall work out the strategic and tactical lines in preparation for the elections. From today all our activities should be galvanizing the entire party in preparation for the elections, and we hope that by the fourth quarter of this year we should be absolutely battle ready and be able to confirm or positively adjust our basic assumptions about the outcomes.

Whilst a whole range of policy positions will be tied down when we hold our national policy conference around the middle of this year, it is important to stress the following:

Central to the attainment of the people's happiness and the creation of a caring society is the quality and timeousness of state service delivery. There is no dispute about the fact that the state currently lacks the kind of capacity required to provide services in a manner that restores substantively the dignity of our people. It has high vacancy rates; there is political nepotism in some instances in the appointment of staff which robs the

country of capable people. There is in general poor leadership of state institutions both administratively and politically, you can look at Home Affairs, Defence, Correctional Services, Arts and Culture, Sports and Recreation, Education , Health, Water Affairs and Forestry, Safety and Security, Provincial and Local Government, Labour, Eskom, the list goes on.

Corruption, maladministration, inefficiency- all of these undermine democracy and service delivery. We are sitting with an electricity crisis in the country, firstly of insufficient supply that could have been prevented with simple planning and secondly of moves by government to make electricity inaccessible to the poor by making it expensive. The current mentality in government seems to be that we don't deserve cheap electricity. Eskom is a government institution; it is not in the business of making profits. It is there to provide a social service. Comrades, the reason this electricity crisis has received this kind of attention is because it now affects the rich. We know that in poor and rural areas electricity blackouts have been a permanent feature for years. For the rural poor, it's nothing new and no one lifted a finger then.

There is a water crisis affecting the poor and rural areas. This has been going on for years but there is no acknowledgement, actually there are denials from the government side. But those of us who come from rural areas do know the grim and bitter reality of water shortages. This we must challenge!

Despite promises of more than a year ago, the stench of the bucket system remains a reality to thousands of our people. This we must challenge!!

Despite promises of over two years ago, learning under trees and dilapidated buildings is a reality to thousands of learners and teachers. This we must challenge!!

Despite a huge budget and the best national strategy, the grim reality is that hundreds of thousands of our people infected and affected by HIV and AIDS do not have access to

treatment and care. They continue to die painfully and needlessly so. This we must challenge!!

Despite the assertion, before Scopa, by the National Police Commissioner that the police have all the resources they need to fight crime, our people continue to be victims of crime, especially violent crime. They live in constant fear for their lives and well being. This we must challenge!!

Despite the launch of Operation Consolidate, some years ago, to capacitate municipalities to deliver to our people, the bitter reality is that local governments' administration remains in a mess, leaving our people praying for services they rightly deserve. This we must challenge!!

Despite the passing of the Public Finance Management Act [PFMA], years ago to help managers of state institutions to manage and modernize state resources management and administration, the grim reality is that managers of state institutions are not managing effectively and efficiently, opening the door for growing mismanagement, fruitless and wasteful expenditures, irregular expenditures and deviations from the supply chain management procedures (thus opening the door for tender corruption). This we must challenge!!

Our country has seen a deluge of drugs from overseas and serves as a conduit for drugs by organized gangs. The government intends to restructure the specialized unit set-up to fight organized crime. We will support the re-structuring, if the intention is to build a new entity with better capacity and capabilities. But if that is done to emasculate the unit, if it's done for some narrow self- preservation goals, government won't have our support. That we will challenge!!

Despite the fact that the majority in our country have chosen the path of peace and reconciliation, this gesture of magnanimity has not been enthusiastically embraced by some of our white compatriots. We see the continued, unabated farm evictions,

assaults, killings and most recently the disgraces at the University of the Free State. This racism, that is still pervasive in our country cannot and should not be swept under the carpet. It can not be right, it can not be tolerated.

This we must challenge!!

Despite the fact that they constitute the majority in our society and the talk of the women's empowerment, the bitter truth is that women especially the rural women continue to be the face of poverty, they continue to be the face of poverty, they continue to be abused, marginalized in society, places of employment, organizations, in church, academia etc. continue to bear the brunt of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Their liberation and empowerment constitute in large measure one of the central tasks of the revolution.

You see comrades, all of these issues and many more do point to the need for a strong, vibrant and dynamic APC that, in pursuing the revolutionary Mass-line must indeed distinguish itself as a PARTY OF CAMPAIGNS!!

The APC believes in servant leadership, we place ourselves at the services of the people.

As an opposition party we intend amongst others to hold the state to account for its policies and actions in relation to the people. In pursuing the interest and concerns of the people, we intend to ask uncomfortable questions and seek unambiguous answers, to explore every wrong doing and to restore the significance meaning of liberation struggle slogan of Amandla nga Wethu (Power to the people).

An APC government would enshrine in our constitution and put in practice the principle of participatory democracy. An APC government will be people-centered, concerned with the well-being and happiness of the people.

To the APC the basis of any legislation and policies will be whether or not it conforms to the fundamental interest of the people.

I am making a clarion call to the People- the petty- bourgeoisie, the urban and rural proletariat, the woman and youth of our land, people with disabilities and the lumpen - proletariat to join us in this titanic struggle against deprivation.

Comrades,

Lets rally the people around the progressive banner of the APC, **the credible and progressive voice that will not betray the revolution.**

Let's unite into a single man, one heartbeat to safeguard our historic achievement of 1994 and to advance the revolution to its glorious conclusion.

Here is the APC, come join us, sit under its shade and become with us leaves of the same branch, and branches of the same tree!!

I am honoured

I am inspired

I am an African

For further clarifications please feel free to contact us at 082 454 6875 or 082 464 2181