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STATEMENT FROM THE NATIONAL FOUNDATIONS DIALOGUE INITIATIVE (NFDI)

PRESIDENT JACOB ZUMA'S CABINET RESHUFFLE

For some time now it has been clear that South Africa faces enormous challenges, most importantly the failure of leadership as shown by the conduct of our President. He pays no regard to the constitutional injunction that the President “*must* uphold, defend and respect the Constitution as the supreme law of the Republic” (s. 83(b)). This is despite the fact that the President had very clear and emphatic guidance in case of *EFF et al v Speaker of the National Assembly et al* (CCT 143/15 and CCT 171/15) [The Nkandla Judgment] on his exercise of executive conduct in a constitutional democracy.

Past midnight last Thursday, President Zuma announced a major reshuffle of the Cabinet. He did so without consulting his colleagues in the ANC or critical constituencies such as Alliance Partners or Business Leaders that have been involved in staving off a ratings downgrade for the past few months. The announced reasons were meaningless, and no explanation was given why the Minister and the Deputy Minister of Finance were both removed. He has not accounted for the fact that ministers Bathabile Dlamini and Faith Muthambi, identified by our courts and a parliamentary committee as incompetent, still enjoy his confidence. Our perception and that of the capital market is that His actions were irrational and reckless in that he paid scant regard to the impact the reshuffle would have on the financial stability of the country, let alone the loss of confidence on the part of investors, financial markets as evidenced by the ratings downgrade as well as the tarnishing of the country's image. He needs to be reminded that he can only exercise his powers within the constitution and the law.

In fact, the reshuffle had little to do with “efficiency and effectiveness” as he announced. The Public Protector's Report on State Capture has raised serious concerns about threats to the integrity of the National Treasury. President Zuma has applied for a review of the Public Protector's Report. Even before the matter has received judicial attention, he acts to undermine that report.

The call for the removal of Mr Jacob Zuma as President of South Africa is well founded. He is a “rogue” President. He is gambling with the economy of the country and the fiscus, affecting the lives and well-being of all South Africans, especially the poor and most vulnerable.

The problems of South Africa go beyond the conduct of President Zuma. It is time for South Africans to reflect on the road that has been traversed for the past 23 years, assess our successes and failures and find solutions to the challenges that confront us as a nation. The National Dialogue is a clarion call to all South Africans to reimagine their

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Country afresh and to renew their commitment to the constitution. With the experience we have had in the management of the Constitution and the financial system in the country under this President, South Africans should consider a review of the Constitution, especially the powers of the President, and the electoral system that has brought this about this crisis.

The National Foundations Dialogue Initiative¹ is convening a series of dialogues across the country. The first such will be held at Wits University on Friday 5 May 2017. Former Presidents FW de Klerk, Thabo Mbeki and Kgalema Motlanthe, and former Deputy President, Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka will address this inaugural dialogue session.

Date: Johannesburg, 4 April 2017.

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¹ The National Foundations Dialogues Initiative (NFDI) is a programme of the following Foundations acting together: the Albert Luthuli Foundation, the Robert Sobukwe Trust, the Helen Suzman Foundation, the Desmond and Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation, the FW de Klerk Foundation, the Thabo Mbeki Foundation, Umlambo Foundation, and the Jakes Gerwel Foundation.

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