

**Statement of Participation issued by the Chief Albert Luthuli Foundation at the
Inaugural National Dialogue
5 May 2017**

- His Excellences, former presidents of the Republic of South Africa
 - President Thabo Mbeki
 - President FW de Klerk
 - President Kgalema Motlanthe
- The Executive Director for Women in the United Nations and former Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka
- Conveners of the National Dialogue Initiative chaired by Ms Canca
- Members of the diplomatic corpse
- Ladies and gentlemen
- All protocol observed

The preamble to the Freedom Charter of 1955, the seminal document drawn and finalised during the ANC Presidency of our patron, states boldly and unequivocally that “**South Africa belongs to all who live in it**” irrespective of their differences whether defined along race, economic standing, gender or otherwise.

It is therefore no coincidence that this bold statement about South Africa’s shared destiny was reaffirmed in the preamble to the Constitution of the Republic adopted in 1998.

Implicit in this statement is that South Africans need to be afforded the platform to engage about the current and future political, economic, legal and social dispensation of the country. It enjoins us as citizens to participate fully in these matters to ensure that we have a dispensation that is responsive to the needs of the ordinary citizens.

The Chief Albert Luthuli Foundation accordingly saw the Foundations Dialogue Initiative as an important platform to advance these ideals. The hallmark of Chief Albert Luthuli’s exemplary, ethical and responsible leadership was to promote active engagement on all issues affecting society across race, class, gender, sexual orientation and established formations in order to promote social cohesion.

South Africans need to engage on a number of issues that will characterise the future of this beautiful nation and we see these as:

1. Engagement on an inclusive economic dispensation

Codesa remains one of the greatest dialogue interventions to deliver an equitable political dispensation to all South Africans. However, the political dividend bequeathed in 1994 has not been

met by an economic dividend to ensure that the ideals of the Freedom Charter are realised – the sense of economic belonging.

The country urgently needs to engage in an economic indaba lest the political gains are eroded by frustrations borne out of economic exclusion.

2. Engagement on inequality and poverty alleviation

The WEF on Africa held this week has clearly demonstrated that exclusionary growth has a negative correlation with investment. The current trajectory where the country's wealth is concentrated in the hands of a tiny minority is as unsustainable in its inevitably destabilising consequences. The level of inequality and poverty in the republic is more endemic in rural households and is borne mostly by women and children, which is unacceptable in any humane society.

Central to poverty alleviation is a non-emotive dialogue about patterns of land ownership in the country to facilitate small scale farming – a pillar of Luthuli's philosophies. Experiences from India, Bangladesh and Ethiopia confirm that small scale farming that is integrated into the agriprocessing value chain accounts for close to 90% of the household income of the most marginalised in society.

Robust engagement in this regard is urgently required for South Africa to achieve this.

3. Education and Youth formations

Young people make up approximately 50% of the SA population yet are the most economically excluded with youth unemployment hovering in the 65% region. The education system remains the chief contributor to this parlous state, having humiliatingly failed to transform young lives. The manifestations of youth challenges are various social ills including the scourge of drugs and disease. This high degree of isolation results in despondency, depression, anxiety, psychosomatic disorders and low self-esteem.

The nation can ill afford to sacrifice the future corpse of leaders. The NFDI needs to put this firmly on its agenda.

4. Engagement on workers' rights

Workers remain the backbone of the economy yet their voices are continuously been undermined by employers and trade union formations. Shop floor issues including the minimum wage, working conditions, mechanisation etc. are currently being sacrificed at the altar of political alignment and lobby groups. Worker formations are splitting up leading to a weakened labour movement.

We see NFDI providing a platform for these discussions to happen.

In conclusion, South Africa remains rich with promise. We are therefore excited to form part of this exciting initiative that seeks to close the conversational gap between those in power (whether economic or political) and ordinary citizens (the powerless). The dialogue initiative is not a unique concept but represents the revival of the grassroots inclusive nature of vision formulation where ordinary people are actively involved in articulating their vision of an alternative society.

Issued by

Chief Albert Luthuli Foundation