

# ANC delegates support

*The climax of a*

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The ANC's 27-30 June 2007 national policy conference was an important opportunity to consolidate the policy perspectives of the ANC's mass membership. To its considerable credit, the ANC ran a very participatory discussion process. In the run-up to the conference, ANC branches, zones, regions and provinces, together with alliance partners, participated in a 'festival of ideas'. A wider public was also engaged, including progressive intellectuals and NGOs.

While the discussion papers were sometimes uneven and flawed, there are few political formations anywhere in the world that run such a comprehensive, participatory policy process. For the moment the recommendations emerging from the policy conference are exactly that – recommendations. They will have to be resolved upon at the December ANC national conference.

## A developmental state

The key policy recommendation is the consolidation of a progressive, national democratic state. This is now a major point of ANC and alliance consensus. Explicit in the concept of a developmental state is the realisation that we need a state that actively intervenes in the economy. Also explicit is the affirmation of a strategic state-owned sector. In addition to consolidating the existing public sector, many delegates called for the nationalisation of Mittal Steel, and the re-nationalisation of Sasol. There is also a strong recommendation from the conference for a public sector housing bank.

While stressing the need for strategic state intervention, the conference was clear that the South African developmental state cannot be top-down and authoritarian. It needs to strengthen and be strengthened by a broad popular movement. To succeed in carrying forward the NDR, strong legislatures and effective



participatory governance at all levels are critical. Against the immediate background of a prolonged public sector strike, the ANC policy conference also emphasised the centrality of public sector workers to the consolidation of a developmental state.

## State-led industrial policy

Linked to the above, the policy conference contributed to providing a general strategic perspective on what should be government's emerging industrial policy. Industrial policy must contribute actively to transforming the current import-dependent and capital- (rather than labour-) intensive growth path. The policy conference stressed the importance of aligning macro-economic policy in a sustainable way with industrial policy. Commissions also raised important questions

## A progressive democratic state - the major point of ANC consensus

around energy sustainability, global warming, and biofuels.

Major recommendations were also made around local economic development, the importance of cooperatives, and balanced spatial development so that rural and peri-urban areas are not neglected.

## Phantsi 'willing-seller willing buyer'!

Right across all commissions was a powerful critique of the slowness and inadequacy of land reform. There was virtual unanimity that the market-led 'willing-seller, willing-buyer' formula was a major reason for the unacceptably slow pace of land transfers – only 4% of agricultural land since 1994. At the present rate we will be nowhere near the target of 30% by 2014, as promised in several ANC elections manifestos.

However, the conference also stressed it was not just a question of transferring land. Land reform has to be integrated into a comprehensive agrarian, agro-industrial and national food security strategy. These, in turn, have to be central components of a new economic growth path. Agricultural extension officers, rural roads, irrigation schemes, marketing and input purchasing coops, and a sustained cooperation between rural communities and the state are critical.

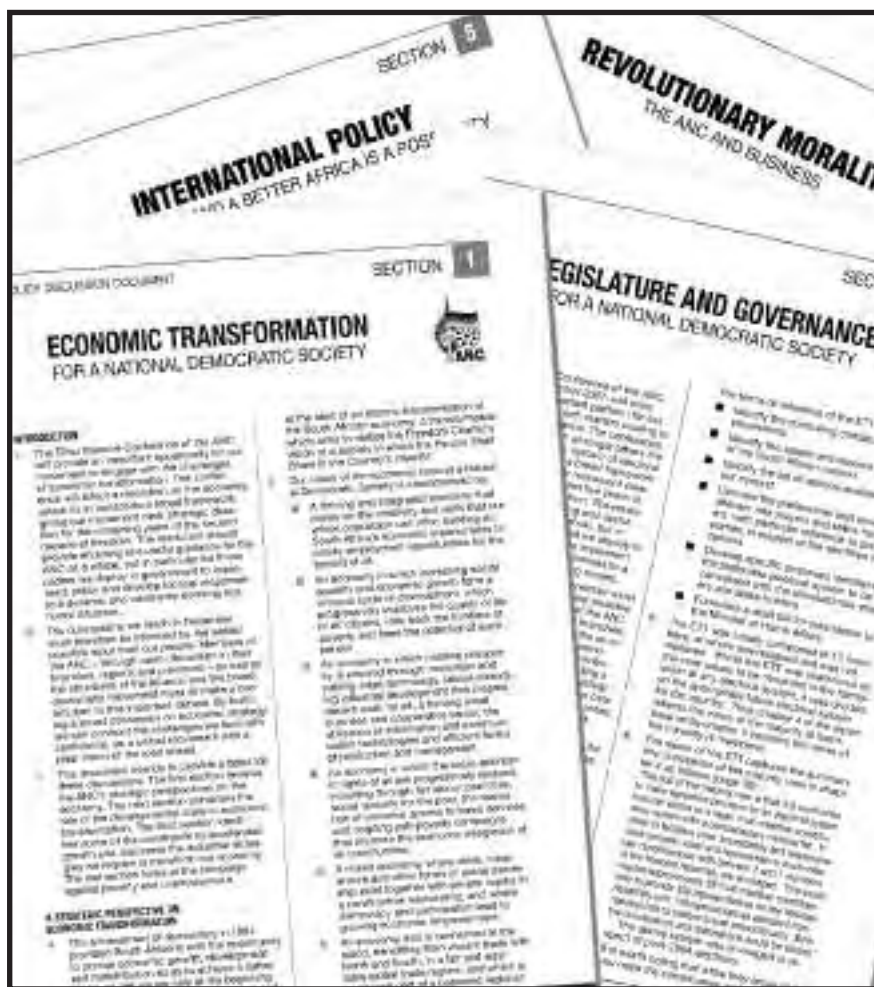
## Organisational challenges

Since the 2005 ANC national general council, there has been a growing clamour from within the ANC for a major shake-up and strengthening of the ANC and its structures. The problems of fragmentation, factionalism, regionalism, and corporate capture were once more highlighted. However, the major focus of this year's policy conference was a determination to reaffirm the ANC as the political centre. The great majority of delegates expressed concern that the organisation was often displaced and marginalised by government.

These concerns were at the heart of

# major left policy switch

*festival of ideas*



many strong recommendations around overall strategic policy development, as well as the need for structured ANC involvement in the appointment of key positions – mayors, premiers, etc.

However, if the ANC is indeed to play the role of key strategic political centre, then its own capacity and organisational functioning will have to be greatly improved.

The centrality of the office of the secretary general was high-lighted, and commissions affirmed the political and mobilisation role of the SGO, saying that it should not be reduced to an administrative function.

**Translating words into action will require that the ANC renews itself in the coming months**

## The Alliance

In opening the policy conference, president Mbeki elaborated on the nature of the ANC/SACP/Cosatu tripartite alliance. He re-affirmed that it was a strategic and necessarily enduring alliance. 'The objective reality in our country is that the NDR cannot succeed if it does not contain among its motive forces our country's socialist, trade union and civic movements.'

Less clear was the exact intention of the President's 'fundamental conclusion that, for many decades', as he put it, 'the SACP has never sought to delegate its socialist tasks to the ANC, and has never sought to impose on the national democratic revolution the tasks of the socialist revolution'. A number of newspapers chose to interpret this as a 'rebuke' to the present direction of the SACP.

So (for the record) let us state quite clearly that, as in the past, so in the present the SACP has certainly not sought to 'impose' anything on the ANC, nor 'delegate' socialist tasks to it. But of course we are seeking to influence the ANC and its mass membership in a constructive, open and non-factionalist manner. We are seeking, without apology, to underline the imperative of many socialist-oriented policies and programmes in order to advance, deepen and defend the NDR in the present.

Judging from the many key recommendations made by the nearly two thousand delegates to the ANC's national policy conference, these SACP endeavours have had a profound resonance.

But will the clearly stated programmatic aspirations of the ANC's policy conference translate into government policy?

Much will depend on whether the ANC renews itself in the coming months as an active, mass-based organisation, working closely with its alliance partners on the ground. Only this will enable the ANC to assert itself as an effective political centre.