



Report of the First National Convention

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Acronyms

Acronym	Definition
COC	Convention Organising Committee
EPG	Eminent Persons' Group
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GBVF	Gender Based Violence and Femicide
GNU	Government of National Unity
IMC	Inter-Ministerial Committee on the National Dialogue
IKS	Indigenous Knowledge Systems
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NDSA	National Dialogue of South Africa
NHI	National Health Insurance
PTT	Preparatory Task Team
SC	Steering Committee

1 Introduction



This report documents the inaugural National Convention of the National Dialogue of South Africa (NDSA), marking the beginning of a profound, citizen-led journey towards national renewal. This dialogue was not born from simple optimism, but from a deep-seated frustration that the promises of the nation's democracy have been deferred for too long. Convened under the heavy weight of national expectation, the Convention brought together South Africans from every walk of life to confront uncomfortable truths. It was a testament not only to a shared commitment but also to the courage required to face the country's deepest challenges head-on. This document captures the foundational spirit of that difficult but necessary engagement, aimed at translating hope into tangible action.

Over two days, the Convention created a necessary, if often contentious, space for conversations that have become too rare in South Africa's public life. Guided by the principles of inclusivity and accountability, the discussions were not always easy. Participants wrestled with well-known problems from starkly different and sometimes conflicting perspectives, exposing the deep fractures that still divide the nation. Through hours of often tense debate, a hard-won consensus began to emerge, not on specific policies, but on the fundamental values that must underpin the society. These include the non-negotiable need for an ethical and developmental state, the essential

role of community solidarity in building a just nation, and the imperative to heal the intergenerational wounds of the past and present. The spirit of Ubuntu was reaffirmed not as a simple ideal, but as a challenging practice for rebuilding a fractured social fabric.

The outcome of the Convention was the establishment of a clear, if fragile, mandate for change. It signifies a decisive shift from a culture of passive citizenship to one of active participation, a move away from awaiting solutions towards taking shared responsibility for building them. However, this mandate was not easily achieved, and its success is not guaranteed. This report serves as a foundational document for the extensive community engagement and citizen dialogues that must now follow, capturing the collective will to move from dialogue to delivery, fully aware that the journey ahead will test this newfound resolve at every turn. It is a record of the moment South Africans chose to confront their reality together, affirming that while the path is difficult, the power to build a better nation resides firmly within its people.

2 Opening of the Convention and Setting the Scene

2.1 Objectives of First National Convention

The 1st National Convention of the NDSA convened at UNISA on 15-16 August as the inaugural step in a six-to-nine-month journey of inclusive dialogue across the nation. The first National Convention was convened by the President in terms of Section 83 of the South African Constitution. It marked the formal launch of the National Dialogue process, envisioned as a citizen-led platform for addressing difficult conversations, shaping pathways toward unity, towards rapid response, radical change and rebuilding and healing, in the interest of the country.

The Convention brought together representatives from across thirty sectors of society, ensuring the widest inclusivity. Participation spanned civil society, labour, business, government, political parties, sports and creatives, faith-based, youth, students, women, older persons, LGBTQI, grassroots and advocacy structures. This broad coalition underscored the central ethos of the dialogue process: that the future of the nation requires the active involvement and voices of all citizens, united in our diversity.

The meeting functioned primarily as an agenda-setting forum, laying down the framework and spirit for the envisaged year-long engagement to follow. In line with this, delegates were guided away from substantive debate on issues, but rather to review the values and roadmap for local and sectoral dialogues, so that in-depth discussion of issues to be located in the public and sectoral dialogues at the community level.

Key objectives achieved during the proceedings included:

- Launching the National Dialogue process as a platform for inclusive, citizen-driven engagement;
- Introducing the citizen-led dialogue model and roadmap, emphasising community ownership and initiative.
- Affirming participation across social sectors, with civil society, labour, business, government, and political parties committing to the process;
- Showcasing successful or model dialogues to encourage replication and innovation;
- Agreeing on organising principles and processes for ward-based, citizen-initiated, community and sectoral dialogues; and
- Introducing the Eminent Persons Group and Steering Committee, who will guide and oversee the process.

2.2 President Cyril Ramaphosa Keynote Address



President Cyril Ramaphosa delivered the keynote address, setting the tone for what he described as the beginning of a nationwide journey of engagement, rather than a once-off event. He described this inaugural session as merely the “opening match”. The President situated the Convention within the context of South Africa’s pressing

challenges: unemployment, inequality, poverty, service delivery failures, and declining public confidence in state institutions.

He emphasised that this dialogue would be citizen-led, with civil society organisations and communities taking the lead while the government provided only limited logistical and financial support. The Convention was a national, non-partisan platform where all voices, across political, social, and economic lines, could be heard.

President Ramaphosa stressed that the process for the National Dialogue would be designed to be outcome-oriented, requiring all dialogues to produce social compacts underpinned by clear, SMART action plans, moving beyond discussion to collective action aimed at resolving systemic issues. These compacts would outline shared responsibilities among citizens, government, business, labour, and civil society in building political stability, economic renewal, social cohesion, and a capable, ethical state.

There would be representation of a wide spectrum of society, including traditional leaders, business and labour groups, faith-based organisations, youth and women's movements, artists, sports figures, farmers, informal traders, public servants, and the unemployed. Consultations would extend into every corner of the country, from schools and churches to stokvels, burial societies, sports clubs, and rural villages, with the ambitious aim of reaching at least ten million South Africans. This diversity, he noted, reflected the country's unity in diversity and the potential of dialogue to drive transformation.

The President highlighted the need to confront difficult questions: persistent gender-based violence, racial and economic disparities, unequal pay, discrimination against LGBTQI+ people, and failures in health and basic services. To ensure sustainability, part of the funding would come from private partners, and the President committed to spending only one-third of the R700 million allocated, underlining the need for fiscal prudence. Looking beyond the logistics, he framed the dialogue as a catalytic vision for South Africa: an opportunity to build a new, socially cohesive nation that is united in purpose and responsive to the needs of its people.

Ramaphosa acknowledged the role of civil society, legacy foundations, and UNISA in bringing the initiative to life. He also recognised the Eminent Persons Group, a body of 35 respected South Africans from diverse fields, who will act as guarantors of the Dialogue process.

He urged in closing that participants and citizens view the Convention not as an event of speeches but as the beginning of a long-term, citizen-driven process of shaping the country's future. He declared the Dialogue officially open, calling for participation, accountability, and collective commitment to South Africa's renewal.

2.3 Citizens' Call to Action

The first plenary session, with the participation of two panels of citizens and experts expanded on the vision expressed by the President and highlighted the practical foundations for success. Panelists put forward the key principles to guide the envisaged outcomes of the Convention and the National Dialogue that would unfold. They stressed the importance of broad reach and participation, ensuring the process was inclusive and far-reaching, aiming to engage thousands of cultural and community groups. Social media platforms and a dedicated digital application will be deployed to widen participation, with young people encouraged to help older generations navigate the technology. Dialogues will take place in diverse and accessible venues, from schools and churches to public parks and community gatherings.



Central to the message was the vision to forge a social compact that unites citizens, labour, civil society, and the private sector in reclaiming South Africa's future. Such a social compact should be anchored in peace and human dignity. The expected outcome of the envisaged social compacting process should ensure inclusivity and shared ownership.

The dialogues should promote active citizenry and empower citizens to play an active role in governance. Communities should be able to hold leaders accountable, engage

meaningfully with municipalities, and take ownership of the country's development priorities.

The dialogues must bridge the persistent gap between government policies and citizens' lived realities. The dialogue should provide policymakers with direct insights into the realities of communities, ensuring that all voices, especially those historically excluded, are reflected in policy design and implementation. Panellists warned that the process would fail if it did not go beyond sound bites and resolutions to focus on practical actions and implementation plans. It must directly confront the country's pressing challenges, from unemployment and inequality to infrastructure collapse and poverty and other socio-economic challenges, while ensuring that marginalised voices are heard and citizen-driven solutions are acted upon.

Panelists emphasised the importance of accessibility to the dialogue processes. Dialogues should be hosted in diverse public spaces such as schools, churches, parks, imbizos, and other community gathering points. Municipal forums will provide structured spaces for dialogue with officials, while communities would be encouraged to convene their own sessions and submit outcomes. At the same time, technology platforms such as a dedicated website and toolkit would help expand participation, with young people assisting elders to ensure no one was excluded.

The panels set the tone for a transformative, grassroots-led national dialogue. It clarified the structure and objectives of the process, stressed accountability and inclusivity, and underscored the need for results-driven engagement. Above all, it framed the dialogue as a chance to rebuild South Africa's social fabric, restore trust in institutions, and co-create solutions to the country's deepest challenges, ensuring that the voices of ordinary citizens shape the nation's future.



3 Reports and Reflections of the Dialogue Labs

The session following the Opening Session and Setting the Scene Plenary was Dialogue Labs, a methodology for showcasing or modelling citizen-led dialogue conversations and engagements. The main intention of the Dialogue Labs was to catalyse discussions on a range of issues that would be addressed through the National Dialogue rollout process, beginning to focus the National Dialogue on issues that would contribute to building recommendations and solutions for radical change, rapid response measures and rebuilding and healing actions for the envisaged implementation plan. The Dialogue Labs were facilitated by various civil society organisations, working together, in the spirit of dialogue. The issues for 10 Dialogue Labs were themed as follows:

- A Dynamic, Inclusive Economy, Jobs and Livelihoods
- Crime and Corruption
- Winning the Future through Education and a Healthy Nation
- Fixing the State and Making the Constitution Work
- Building South African Values, Culture and Strengthening our Social Fabric
- Gender and Gender Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF)
- Dealing with Intergenerational Trauma and Healing
- Environmental Justice
- Poverty and Spatial Inequality
- Land Tenure and Mineral Rights

The Dialogue Lab discussions followed a standard approach and framed the reporting on the Labs to each address:

- Key Aspirations: encouraging delegates to imagine the South Africa they aspire to build for each of the themes.
- Recommendations: proposing recommendations for radical change, rapid response measures and rebuilding and healing (3Rs)
- Emerging themes, issues and questions: identifying and recommending themes, issues and questions for future dialogues of the unfolding National Dialogue process

3.1 Dialogue Lab 1: A Dynamic, Inclusive Economy, Jobs and Livelihoods

3.1.1 Key Aspirations

Participants deliberated on pathways towards a transformed and inclusive economic future for South Africa. The dialogue was guided by a collective vision to strengthen local economies, create sustainable livelihoods, and restore dignity through meaningful employment. The Lab identified the key aspirations of the theme. These key aspirations can be summarised as:

- establishment of a vibrant and resilient township economy where local goods and services are valued and consumed with pride;
- establishment of a state-owned bank to address systemic discrimination in financial services; and
- transformation of the education system through outcome-based learning and vocational training to promote entrepreneurship and self-employment.

3.1.2 Recommendations

The key recommendations for **radical change** were to reform the education curriculum to ensure employability and entrepreneurship readiness; promote vocational training as a catalyst for economic growth; and shift societal perceptions to recognise the value and quality of township products and services.

Key recommendations to guide **rapid response measures** included implementing local beneficiation of natural resources to create industrial jobs, introducing protective import surcharges to safeguard local industries, and taking bold decisions to transform the economy without fear of sanctions.

The key recommendations for **rebuilding and healing** were to address the root causes of unemployment and inequality to ensure long-term healing; promote job creation as a key driver of dignity and social cohesion; and nurture trust and belief in the capabilities of communities.

3.1.3 Emerging issues/themes/questions

Participants recommended that, going forward, the approach and methodology for conducting engagement should consider ensuring Afrocentric and Ubuntu-based dialogue methodologies, guaranteeing inclusivity, particularly for people with disabilities, providing clear, step-by-step toolkits to support implementation, expanding participation through multilingual and online platforms, and improving turnaround time between dialogue and implementation.



A fair number of emerging thematic priorities for future engagement and dialogue were largely focused on the transformation of the SA economy. The overarching issues in this regard related to the harmonisation of grassroots innovation and policy-level interventions; definition and operationalising inclusivity in the South African economy, identifying economic sectors of future growth and their sustainable growth, including township and rural economies. The emerging transformation of the economy themes pointed to the need for dialogue to arrive at solutions that:

- address criminality: address illegal mining and informal economies that attract youth into unsustainable and criminal practices;
- develop township economies: redefine, formalise, and scale township businesses while addressing legacy infrastructure challenges;
- demand accountability of the private sector: demand accountability within the private sector for corruption and ensure constructive contributions to infrastructure and sustainable jobs;
- develop rural economies: recognise subsistence farming, support rural farming academies, and empower communities to respond to climate change;
- grow SMMEs: provide tax breaks, access to finance, and enterprise development support to small and emerging businesses;
- increase employment opportunities: tackle youth unemployment, support older generations excluded from opportunities, and promote industrialisation and digital skills; and
- remove barriers to entry in critical sectors of the economy: for instance, remove restrictive entry conditions into industries such as banking and energy.

In addition to other emerging issues, themes for future dialogue included addressing governance challenges by establishing anti-corruption mechanisms, reforming procurement systems, strengthening local government service delivery and addressing immigration within a human rights framework by ensuring safety, law enforcement, and coherent migration policies to attract investment.

The Dialogue Lab reaffirmed that achieving a dynamic and inclusive economy requires bold and coordinated reforms across education, finance, governance, and industrial policy. At the heart of this vision lies the empowerment of local communities, the revaluation of township and rural economies, and the fostering of trust among government, private sector, and citizens.

3.2 Dialogue Lab 2: Building a Peaceful and Just South Africa

3.2.1 Key Aspirations

The collective aspiration agreed was for a South Africa that is peaceful, prosperous, and rooted in justice. Delegates envisioned a society free from poverty, violent crime, and corruption, where accountability, honesty, and competence underpin governance and public service. Participants articulated a dream of communities taking charge of their own economies with transparency, while laws would prioritise victims' rights, and justice would be both swift and fair.

A recurring emphasis was placed on decisive leadership, effective law enforcement, and the revival of institutions such as the Scorpions to confront high-level crime. Delegates called for measures to protect whistleblowers, prosecute political crimes decisively, and return stolen funds to the people. The session underscored the urgent need for systemic integrity, eradicating mafia influence, addressing illegal immigration linked to crime, and ensuring safety for women, children, and vulnerable groups.

3.2.2 Recommendations

The recommendations for **radical change** highlighted the need to overhaul the security cluster, strengthen intelligence services, and end the normalisation of violent crime and corruption. Delegates argued for community-driven solutions, including local cooperatives to fight crime and public accountability mechanisms to remove accused officials from power. There was strong advocacy for a hybrid justice system blending restorative and retributive measures, with calls to amend the constitution to enshrine victims' rights and to establish a victims' rights charter. Education, particularly for youth, was identified as critical – both to reinforce civic responsibility and to inspire active participation in democratic processes.

Regarding **rapid response** measures, recommendations were for immediate interventions to address hotspots of crime, such as Cape Flats and Mamelodi. These included swift redeployment of police, activation of emergency task forces, rapid intelligence responses to cross-border crimes, and expedited judicial processes for corruption and violent crime. Delegates called for the urgent suspension of accused officials and for the accelerated implementation of the Zondo Commission's recommendations.

For the theme **rebuilding and healing**, emphasis was placed on the need to restore public trust in police, the judiciary, and political leadership as a cornerstone of national healing. Active citizen participation was seen as key to rebuilding communities, supported by neighbourhood development and environmental design for safer public spaces. Delegates stressed the importance of strengthening family structures, reviving

cultural values of honesty and solidarity, and addressing socio-economic inequalities fuelling criminality. Youth mentorship and positive role models were highlighted as long-term strategies for sustainable peace and security.

3.2.3 Emerging themes/issues/questions

Emergent issues/themes/questions identified included dialogue and solutions to:

- dismantle organised crime networks;
- put in place legislative reforms necessary to prioritise victims' rights;
- establish measures for citizens to hold political leaders accountable between elections;
- establish deterrents most effective against violent crime in the South African context;
- leverage technology (dashboards, surveillance, analytics) for crime prevention;
- strike a balance between restorative and retributive justice; and
- put in place measures to sustain youth engagement as a means of contributing to long-term crime reduction.

Delegates concluded that success would hinge on community involvement, rapid and visible consequences for criminal acts, and sustained investment in prevention through education, jobs, and social support. Transparency, consistent oversight of leadership, equal access to opportunities, and the protection of whistleblowers were seen as non-negotiable pillars of progress. Finally, embedding moral values and discipline into both education and public life was affirmed as essential for building a resilient, ethical, and united society.



3.3 Dialogue Lab 3: Winning the Future through Education and a Healthy Nation

3.3.1 Key Aspiration

Participants' main vision is centred on happy, healthy children at the core of all development strategies, supported by strong families, inclusive schools, and responsive healthcare systems. The aspirations highlighted were:

- every child entering the system should complete their educational journey;
- education and health must be fully integrated and not treated in isolation;
- strong families are critical to raising resilient children, with family strengthening and trauma healing emphasised as national priorities;
- a child-centred approach must guide all programmes and policies, ensuring children are no longer marginalised in government structures;
- South Africa should embrace diversity and inclusivity in both health and education, with universal access for persons with disabilities and recognition of all official languages, including braille and sign language; and
- investment in maternal and child health is vital, alongside policies that prioritise mental health for both learners and caregivers.

3.3.2 Recommendations

The **radical change** recommendations stressed the urgency of transforming entrenched systems that reproduce inequality. Key proposals included:

- redefining success by moving away from higher education as the only pathway, elevating vocational training, artisanship, and entrepreneurship as equally valuable;
- entrepreneurship should be introduced as early as Grade 1 to nurture job creators rather than job seekers.
- establishing one integrated ministry of education, eliminating the two-tier separation between basic and higher education;
- reviewing the curriculum and pass rate thresholds to ensure relevance, fairness, and preparedness for higher education and the workforce;
- revisiting definitions of 'quality' and 'basic' education to reflect equity, inclusion, and local contexts;
- strengthening teacher development with competitive remuneration, career support, and recognition of teaching as a calling; and
- promoting accountability across leadership structures in both education and health.



Participants identified **rapid response measures** for immediate, actionable steps to close gaps and rebuild trust in public systems. The key ones highlighted were:

- deploying social workers in every school and psychosocial support structures;
- ensuring a teacher in every classroom every day, supported by permanent principals and adequate infrastructure;
- expanding internet access and digital literacy to all schools;
- establishing vegetable gardens and nutrition programmes that combine food security with entrepreneurship skills;
- reviving agriculture in schools to strengthen livelihoods and reconnect learners with sustainable practices;
- ensuring inclusive education with specific attention to learners with disabilities; and
building situation rooms and dashboards to contextualise challenges and enable responsive decision-making.

For **healing and rebuilding**, emphasis was placed on family and community healing as a prerequisite for national transformation. Participants noted that education alone cannot 'fix' children; rather, stable families, safe communities, and functional infrastructure are essential foundations. Key proposals included:

- trauma-informed interventions to support parents, caregivers, and teachers; expanding access to sports, arts, and extracurricular activities to keep children engaged positively;
- integration of traditional medicine alongside formal health systems to ensure cultural inclusivity; and
- promoting soft skills development, such as communication, problem-solving, and financial literacy, alongside technical skills.

3.3.3 Emerging themes/issues/questions

The dialogue subdivided into different sessions. Five cross-cutting themes consistently emerged across the sessions:

- skills for the future: ranging from digital and entrepreneurial skills to health, nutrition, and robotics;
- communities of practice: networks linking schools, families, government, faith-based institutions, and civil society;
- family stability: prioritising strong values, responsible parenting, and violence prevention;
- child inclusion: ensuring children's voices and needs are central to all programmes; and
- curriculum reform – modernising education to reflect current and future societal needs.

Key questions identified for ongoing dialogue were:

- How do we define quality and basic education in the South African context?
- What does a truly child-centred approach look like in practice?
- What future skills are essential for the South African economy?
- How can mental health be integrated systematically into education and healthcare?
- How can collaboration between NGOs, NPOs, government, and private sector be deepened to ensure shared vision and accountability?

The Dialogue Lab 3 highlighted the inseparability of education and health in shaping South Africa's future. Delegates affirmed that transformation requires radical systemic change, immediate action, and long-term healing strategies. Above all, the discussions reinforced that children, families, and communities must be placed at the heart of policy and practice. The Lab closed with a collective call for unity of vision, urgency of action, and sustained partnerships across sectors to win the future through education and a healthy nation.



3.4 Dialogue Lab 4: Fixing the State and Making the Constitution Work

3.4.1 Key Aspirations

Participants expressed a strong aspiration for a functional, caring, and citizen-led state. Such a state would:

- put its people first, linking service delivery to dignity and safety. Be responsive, participatory, and accountable, with well-skilled and ethical public servants;
- demonstrate respect for the rule of law, justice, and equality;
- foster active citizenry and strong societal cohesion, grounded in Ubuntu and Pan-African values;
- reduce corruption, unemployment, and inequality, while strengthening trust in public institutions;
- provide efficient public services: reliable healthcare, education, transport, and safety systems;
- ensure true separation of powers, effective oversight, and transparent governance; and
- encourage youth representation, civic education, and clear public participation channels.

Delegates identified deep and interlinked obstacles to achieving this vision. These included:

- corruption and cadre deployment undermining governance, service delivery, and trust;
- uneducated or unethical leaders; political opportunism and the conflation of party and state;
- policies enacted without capacity, planning, or monitoring and evaluation;
- institutional culture failures characterised as compliance over outcomes, lack of accountability, and overprotection of bureaucracy;
- lack of inclusivity in the justice system, structural racism, and dishonesty about South Africa's colonial and apartheid legacies;
- lack of citizen responsibility that is apathy, weak civic oversight, and the erosion of active citizenship;
- economic dysfunctions in the form of wasteful use of resources, tender corruption, illicit financial flows, and absence of scenario planning; and



- no acknowledgement of historical legacies, the preamble of the Constitution seen as inadequate in acknowledging the pain of the wounded, with insufficient space for decolonisation debates.

3.4.2 Recommendations

Participants called for deep structural reforms under the theme of **rapid changes**.

These were identified as:

- constitutional reform: clarifying provisions, amending the preamble to recognise historical pain, addressing land redistribution, and revisiting qualifications for public office;
- governance reform: strengthening separation of powers, enforcing accountability, and depoliticising leadership;
- institutional overhaul: reducing bureaucracy, modernising systems through digitisation, and rebuilding the public service on meritocratic and ethical foundations;
- decolonisation and inclusivity: integrating African systems and values into governance, expanding access to justice, and affirming equality in practice; and
- economic accountability: curbing misuse of funds, strengthening procurement processes, and ensuring fiscal discipline at borders and in state-owned enterprises.

The short- and medium-term priority **rapid response measures** included:

- investing in civic education to strengthen citizen responsibility;
- promoting advocacy around monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and expanding access to information;
- enhancing safety and security through visible policing and regulation of crime drivers, such as alcohol abuse;
- reducing the 30-year planning horizon to shorter, more realistic timeframes with synchronised interdepartmental coordination; and
- improving public transport, job creation initiatives, and service delivery systems

Regarding **rebuilding and healing** recommendations, delegates underscored the importance of healing alongside reform. The proposed recommendations were that there is a need to:

- acknowledge the wounds of history and embed this recognition in constitutional and policy frameworks;
- build a moral compass to address gender-based violence and ethical decline;
- reform the justice and correctional systems to emphasise rehabilitation;
- encouraging leaders and institutions to set a tone of honesty, empathy, and justice; and
- cultivate a renewed sense of Ubuntu, patriotism, and shared responsibility.

3.4.3 Emerging themes/issues/questions

Participants highlighted unresolved but critical questions to guide future dialogues. The questions were as follows:

- What kind of leaders do South Africans want and not want?
- What is justice and equality in practice?
- How do we define an inclusive, people-led developmental state?
- How can public participation become meaningful, not performative?
- How should fiscal resources and public money be protected and accounted for?

Dialogue Lab 4 discussions revealed both the deep fractures within South Africa's governance systems and the shared determination to address them. Delegates affirmed that fixing the state and making the Constitution work requires not only structural reforms and institutional accountability but also healing, civic responsibility, and visionary leadership.

The discussions made clear that the road to a capable, ethical, and people-centred state will depend on collective will, honest dialogue, and sustained action. The vision is known; what remains is its realisation through courageous reform, citizen participation, and a renewed social contract.



3.5 Dialogue Lab 5: Building South African Values, Culture and Strengthening our Social Fabric / Creating the South Africa We Want

3.5.1 Key Aspirations

Dialogue Lab 5 convened a diverse assembly of stakeholders, including faith-based leaders, labour representatives, students, indigenous leaders, NGOs, traditional authorities, and civic organisations. The lab was framed around the urgent need to strengthen South Africa's social fabric by building on shared values, cultural heritage, and a renewed sense of national cohesion. Participants acknowledged that while South Africa possesses one of the world's most progressive constitutions, its promises remain unrealised without collective responsibility, social healing, and effective implementation. Importantly, delegates affirmed that the aspirations identified must be pursued without marginalising vulnerable groups, including LGBTQI+ communities. It was within this context that delegates articulated a vision of a South Africa that is united, inclusive, and anchored in ubuntu. Key aspirations included:

- a society rooted in family values, mutual respect, and collective responsibility;
- a multilingual nation where all indigenous languages are respected alongside English;
- citizens who are patriotic, accountable, and united by national symbols such as the flag and sport;
- an economy that is inclusive, providing equal opportunities, land access, and employment;
- a country free from the shackles of poverty, racism, and inequality;
- a South African dream that embraces diversity, recognises indigenous histories, and offers hope especially for young people; and
- communities that embody neighbourliness, care, and solidarity in times of crisis.

3.5.2 Recommendations

In recommending **rapid changes**, participants stressed the need for profound transformation. The recommendations put forward were:

- redefining ubuntu as a guiding philosophy, not just sporadic acts of kindness, and embedding it in education, corporate culture, and governance;
- revisiting the Constitution to strengthen inclusivity, correct historical erasures, and address weaknesses that undermine cohesion;
- challenging capitalism's dominance, particularly harmful advertising that promotes gambling, alcohol abuse, and moral decay;
- reclaiming indigenous history and identity, acknowledging traumas predating 1912, and confronting the persistence of race classification; and

- building pro-family leadership and institutions that prioritise coherence, integrity, and responsibility.

Rapid response measures identified highlighted practical interventions to drive immediate impact. These included:

- leveraging media to share positive values and stories;
- teaching ubuntu and civic responsibility in schools;
- instituting national unity programmes such as a “clean-up day” or “poverty day”;
- using national days (e.g., Heritage Day) as authentic platforms for cohesion rather than political spectacles;
- decolonising education by correcting historical narratives, centring African experiences, and celebrating figures such as Tsietshi Mashinini and Chris Hani;
- enforcing consequence management for corruption, lawlessness, and failure of leadership; and
- promoting youth engagement through sports, arts, goal-setting, and constructive alternatives to harmful industries.

The **rebuilding and healing** dialogue focused on addressing deep wounds from South Africa’s past. The view was that there is a need to:

- recognise the enduring trauma of apartheid and earlier genocides against indigenous communities;
- acknowledging that all South Africans carry unresolved pain, requiring new platforms for truth-telling and healing beyond the TRC;
- restoring the family unit as the foundation of social healing and rebuilding moral fibre;
- reinstating cultural and spiritual anchors such as ubuntu, prayer in schools, and traditional practices;
- revisiting the derogatory “coloured” classification and affirming Khoi and San identities; and
- addressing the broken ecosystem of families, where parental absence and community disintegration have left young people vulnerable.

3.5.3 Emerging themes/issues/questions

From the discussions, five thematic pillars emerged:

- National Identity, Values, and Cohesion – Building unity through ubuntu, shared symbols, multilingualism, inclusivity, and a collective national dream.
- Strengthening Families and Communities – Positioning families, parenting, and intergenerational respect as the cornerstone of nation-building.

- Cultural Preservation and Decolonisation – Correcting history, protecting indigenous heritage, elevating traditional leadership, and promoting performing arts.
- Accountability, Governance, and Implementation – Moving from planning to action, enforcing consequences, and addressing constitutional shortcomings.
- Active Citizenship and Positive Change – Engaging youth, mobilising communities, using media responsibly, and cultivating civic responsibility.

For South Africa to rebuild its social fabric, participants stressed the need to develop a national charter of values and cascade it through government, schools, and communities. It would also be important to provide spaces for the use of language and translation to ensure inclusivity and restore meaning lost through English dominance. Ensuring inclusivity in dialogues would include strengthening institutions that historically sustained communities, including families, faith structures, and traditional leadership. Heritage Day, which has tended to become a “braai day”, needs to have its meaningfulness again as a celebration of culture and unity.” Continuous messaging to grow positive attitudes to nation-building in everyday spaces (e.g., in taxis, schools, and public media) should be encouraged. There are lessons to be drawn from other countries, such as the UAE and Singapore, tailoring them to South African realities.

Dialogue Lab 5 reaffirmed that South Africa’s greatest strength lies in its people, their values, cultures, and resilience. Yet, for the dream of a united, just, and inclusive nation to be realised, words must translate into action. The success of this dialogue will rest on the credibility of implementers, the courage to confront uncomfortable truths, and the willingness of citizens to take collective responsibility. As participants cautioned: “When the family goes, the nation goes.”



3.6 Dialogue Lab 6: Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF)

3.6.1 Key Aspirations

To contextualise discussions, participants voiced current challenges. Social development efforts remain disconnected from grassroots realities. While reports are demanded, funding seldom reaches community-level organisations that shoulder the real burden of service delivery. Particularly in townships, the state's presence is limited, leaving communities unsupported and vulnerable. There was amongst citizens erosion of trust in security structures and the justice system, whereby communities expressed exhaustion with a cycle where crimes are reported but perpetrators are released within hours; women and children, the most vulnerable groups, are systematically failed; and rape survivors face delays in public hospitals, often risking HIV infection, while children's voices remain absent from national discourse.

Sex workers raised concerns about systemic neglect and discrimination in healthcare and justice systems. Despite the National Strategic Plan for HIV, TB and STIs' non-discrimination promise, stigma at clinics remains widespread, police profiling restricts access to essential medication, and unregulated sex work leaves minors exposed to exploitation. The judiciary itself was described as unsympathetic, with even female magistrates perpetuating bias.

The conversation also highlighted the normalisation of violence against women in South Africa, compounded by hate crimes against lesbians and failures of religious and traditional institutions. Participants underscored how the church, once a moral anchor, often acts as an instrument of oppression against women and gender-diverse persons. Schools, once hubs for assemblies, sexual education, and condom distribution, no longer fulfil these critical roles, leaving young people exposed to greater risks.

It was against this backdrop of challenges that the session emerged with the aspiration statement that called for grassroots activism, framed not as anger, but as mutual activation and solidarity, resulting in a citizenry that is not only aware but also educated about the negative effects of GBV, not only on individuals but also on the communities and the nation. Above all, the dialogue reaffirmed that the struggle against GBV is not only about protection from violence but about building a just, inclusive, and equitable society and includes:

- declaring GBV a national disaster, thereby mobilising state resources with urgency;



- regulating churches and traditional leadership, to prevent them from violating women's rights under the guise of cultural or religious authority;
- creating safe platforms for open dialogue where survivors can speak without fear;
- reintroducing school assemblies, sexual education, and condom distribution as preventative measures;
- strengthening psychological education and mental health support, particularly for children and youth;
- establishing functional help desks in police stations, especially in rural communities, to ensure access to social workers; and
- ensuring equitable funding access for grassroots organisations, whose compliance and reporting requirements currently disadvantage them compared to large NGOs.

Resources and the implementation of innovative community-driven solutions, as well as digital tools supporting abuse survivors, should be taken up by the government.

3.6.2 Recommendations

Participants outlined a vision for radical transformation, anchored in Radical Change, Rapid Response, and Rebuild & Healing.

Radical changes proposed included the need to: increase funding for prevention, not just crisis response; reform funding mechanisms to prioritise grassroots organisations and ensure transparency; decriminalise sex work and integrate protection and health services for sex workers; embed financial, emotional, and systemic abuse into GBV frameworks, not only physical violence; and ensure legislation keeps pace with technological change, particularly cyber-based forms of GBV.

Under the **rapid response measures** theme recommendations, the report called for the establishment of clear accountability systems with a single independent body capable of representing marginalised voices. Real-time response systems to GBV cases were needed to avoid long delays, backlogs, and institutional cover-ups. The involvement of victims and survivors in prevention strategies is important.

Rebuilding and healing called for the promotion of multi-sectoral, intergovernmental collaboration in GBV responses. Community solidarity and ubuntu should be promoted with the inclusion of faith-based organisations, civil society, and local leaders. There is a need to foster inclusive healing spaces for survivors of all genders, children, people with disabilities, and LGBTQI+ communities. Regulations to hold churches and private

sector actors accountable for their role in perpetuating harmful norms should be enacted.

The session closed with a collective recognition that activism must not stop, even amidst fatigue and frustration. The dialogue highlighted that while government commitments remain unfulfilled, civil society continues to carry the burden of frontline response. Participants emphasised that the path forward requires genuine accountability, radical structural reform, and the centring of marginalised voices.



3.7 Dialogue Lab 7: Dealing with Intergenerational Trauma and Healing

3.7.1 Key Aspirations

This Dialogue Lab created a reflective yet urgent space for participants to confront the persistent wounds of the past while envisioning pathways toward collective renewal and transformation. Participants articulated visions of a future South Africa rooted in listening, compassion, and unity. They imagined a nation where leaders embody empathy and integrity, where democracy is revitalised, and where prosperity, wholeness, and freedom are accessible to all. Central to these dreams was the hope for genuine healing, honest dialogue, and the recognition of the power that ordinary citizens, particularly the youth, hold in shaping a better future.

3.7.2 Recommendations

Proposals for **radical change** centred on land reform, democratic renewal, ethical leadership, and economic restructuring. Calls for social justice, the elimination of systemic racism, and recognition of collective power were echoed strongly. Based on concerns expressed regarding issues such as constitutional loopholes, deepening inequality, institutional collapse, and the enduring effects of intergenerational trauma, participants warned that without systemic overhaul, the nation risked further crisis. Other key concerns were also raised about repeated processes that fail to bring change, poor media coverage, and the risk of dialogue being used as a diversion from real issues. Participants highlighted that outdated policies and entrenched injustices, particularly in education and governance, continue to impede transformation. Participants called for a decisive break from cycles of promises without action. Delegates urged the government to abandon top-down approaches and instead engage directly with communities.

Grave concerns were voiced over rising crime, gender-based violence, child abuse, and the escalating economic emergency. The brain drain, worsening poverty, and the erosion of trust in government were highlighted as urgent crises requiring swift and transparent responses. Under the theme, **rapid response measures**, consensus was that immediate action should be non-negotiable. Participants demanded urgent anti-corruption measures, enhanced security, improved service delivery, and decisive interventions to tackle unemployment.

Concerns highlighted the need for structured trauma processing, healing spaces for men, trust restoration, and sustained intergenerational healing. The outcry was recognised as deep and long-standing, demanding both acknowledgement and action. Recommendations for **rebuilding and healing** for the long term are centred on national

and community healing, reconciliation, family resilience, and spiritual renewal, as well as the creation of an inclusive society, one attentive to the disabled and other marginalised communities and groups.

3.7.3 Emerging theme/ issues/questions

Participants invoked the memory of those who had sacrificed their lives, acknowledged the pain of marginalisation, and reflected on the unmet expectations of the democratic era. Feelings of guilt, grief, and disillusionment were palpable, yet these were interwoven with hope for renewal and courage to face the emerging future.

In conclusion, Dialogue Lab 7 underscored the urgency of coupling radical transformation with immediate responses to crises, while simultaneously laying foundations for deep healing and reconciliation. The deliberations revealed that intergenerational trauma is not only a historical legacy but also a contemporary driver of inequality, despair, and systemic breakdown. Yet, through collective courage, compassion, and honesty, participants affirmed the possibility of renewal and a shared journey towards a just, inclusive, and healed South Africa.



3.8 Dialogue Labs 8 & 10: Environmental Justice, Land Tenure and Mineral Rights

Dialogue Labs 8 and 10 convened jointly under the thematic focus of Environmental Justice, Land Tenure and Mineral Rights. The decision to merge the two groups was informed by the recognition that land and mineral rights are central to any meaningful discourse on environmental justice, making it impossible to treat them in isolation. The sessions were marked by robust debate, critical reflection, and a collective search for solutions that promote equity, sustainability, and healing.

3.8.1 Key Aspirations

Participants articulated a vision where government respects and protects land rights, ensuring both surface and sub-surface ownership for citizens. They underscored the need for:

- Land: equal access, support for land claimants with resources to utilise their land, and constitutional amendments to guarantee rights;
- Mining: transparent management of green funds, domestic beneficiation of minerals, fair taxation of exports, and community-centred mining practices; and
- Environmental Justice: local manufacturing of green energy materials, nationwide water testing facilities, and models for inclusive ownership, such as a 20% community share in energy resources.

3.8.2 Recommendations

To achieve a **radical change** agenda for systemic transformation, participants called for:

- Land Reform: policy amendments to strengthen rights, inclusion of women and girls in land ownership, reclamation of hijacked buildings, and meaningful local government involvement in service delivery;
- Mining Sector Reform: training of illegal miners into artisans to formalise their participation in the economy, coupled with transparent redistribution of mineral benefits; and
- Environmental Stewardship: integration of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) into higher education, expansion of renewable energy initiatives, and stronger rights frameworks for natural resources.

Discussions regarding **rapid response measures** stressed the urgency of constitutional reform, warning against prolonged delays. The call was to move from 'dreaming' to concrete action, ensuring frameworks that uphold equity and accountability.

The Dialogue Lab 8 & 10 emphasised inclusivity as a cornerstone of **rebuilding and national healing**. All stakeholders, that is, government, traditional leaders, civil society, academia, and communities, should collectively address historical injustices in land and mineral ownership. Importantly, participants urged that victims of apartheid should no longer be criminalised but supported in rebuilding livelihoods.

3.8.3 Emerging themes/issues/questions

The Dialogue Lab raised critical areas requiring further exploration. Some of those highlighted were:

- tensions between common and customary law in land administration;
- insufficient land reform policies that fail to empower new landowners;
- soil preservation as a neglected priority;
- mining monopolies, lack of national consultation on mineral ownership, and weak enforcement of constitutional judgments;
- solutions to address failures in mine rehabilitation and the displacement of communities without restitution;
- environmental challenges, including unreliable data, inadequate climate change awareness, corporate greenwashing, bureaucratic inertia, and neglect of resource rights (water, soil, fisheries, biodiversity).

Key success factors identified for the aspirations of the Dialogue Lab to materialise, participants highlighted the importance of: government and stakeholder accountability; effective implementation of policies and programmes; broad-based participation, including voices of traditional authorities, communities, and women; and education and awareness campaigns at both community and institutional levels.

Dialogue Labs 8 and 10 successfully fostered a space for critical engagement on the interlinked issues of land, mining, and environmental justice. The discussions highlighted both deep systemic challenges and the collective resolve to pursue transformation. The participants concluded that achieving environmental justice and equitable land and mineral rights requires urgent constitutional reform, inclusive stakeholder engagement, and a commitment to both social and ecological healing.

3.9 Dialogue Lab 9: Poverty and Inequality

3.9.1 Key Aspirations

The dialogue opened with reflections on South Africa's structural inequalities, described as a violation of human capacity and opportunity. Participants stressed that a "one size fits all" approach, particularly in education and skills development, fails to account for diverse realities. Concerns were raised about the fate of school dropouts and marginalised groups, including transgender individuals, who remain excluded from economic participation despite qualifications. The aspirational vision was that government needed to amplify creativity, adapt responses to varied levels of poverty, and utilise existing systems such as SETA for skills development.

3.9.2 Recommendations

Delegates argued that entrenched bureaucracy continues to hinder service delivery and access to resources. **Radical change** called for electoral reform, with emphasis on strengthening accountability by moving from a party-based to a people-centred voting system. The Constitution was critiqued for failing to adequately alleviate poverty, with participants insisting on urgent adaptation to the different dimensions of poverty. Poverty was described both as a mindset and a structural cage, reinforcing cycles of exclusion. Politicians were urged to apologise for failing to implement policies such as the National Health Insurance (NHI) and for neglecting to prioritise the fight against inequality.

The dialogue revisited the Freedom Charter, questioning the slow pace in eliminating poverty and fulfilling its promises. The conversation also touched on the legacy of colonialism and the Berlin Conference of 1884, emphasising the need for decolonisation, ethical leadership, and collective responsibility for future generations. Skills development, youth education on civic duty, and community-driven economic initiatives, including cannabis farming, were viewed as pathways to inclusive growth.

The proposals for **rapid response measures** centred on the need to address hunger, unemployment, and economic disempowerment. Statistics, such as 56% of South Africans living in poverty and 64% youth unemployment, were cited as evidence of a deep crisis. Delegates challenged government slow responses, false reporting on aid, and failure to create employment despite qualified professionals remaining idle. Structural dependency on imports, particularly in agriculture, was identified as a weakness, with participants advocating for community-based production hubs. Issues of foreign labour, border control, corruption, and lack of accountability featured prominently in discussions, alongside the need to restore dignity for vulnerable groups such as the elderly waiting in long queues for social grants.



The dialogue Lab, in discussing **rebuilding and healing measures**, shifted to the need for restorative approaches rooted in South Africa's history and the preamble of the Constitution. Delegates called for addressing historical injustices, rebuilding broken family structures, restoring social cohesion, and combating corruption. Trauma, victimhood, and unresolved pain were identified as barriers to transformation.

3.9.3 Emerging themes/issues/questions

The Lab also raised questions about the Government of National Unity (GNU), the exclusion of people living with disabilities, and the neglect of military veterans. Personal testimonies revealed how social policies often fail individuals in mixed-income households, further exposing gaps in the social safety net. Issues that need to be unpacked as the National Dialogue unfolds include dialogue on addressing inequality, which remains spatially entrenched, with wealth concentrated in gated communities, while the majority face worsening exclusion compared to the pre-1994 period and poverty, which is both structural and experiential, tied directly to injustice and institutional design.

Participants called for submissions from royal leaders. Their inputs would inform dialogues as well as assist in narrowing in on the details. It was also pointed out that some dialogue thematic areas, like land, are too important to be dealt with in two days. Therefore, going forward, there would need to be consideration for alternative ways of organising citizen dialogues.

The Lab discussions closed with participants expressing frustration at the lack of follow-through from dialogues, calling for clear guidelines, processes, and a steering committee to advance resolutions. The moral tone of the dialogue was captured in participants' appeals for honesty, accountability, and a recommitment to the preamble's promise of dignity, equality, and justice.

4 Journey to the National Convention and Expectations

4.1 Lessons from the Convention

This section provides a consolidated overview of lessons emerging from the National Dialogue Convention. It draws upon deliberations from the Opening Session and Dialogue Labs 1 to 10, convened with the participation of citizens, civil society, labour, business, political actors, and traditional leaders. The Convention underscored that South Africa's renewal cannot be achieved by government alone, but must be a citizen-led endeavour, sustained by inclusivity, accountability, and decisive action.

Core lessons from the dialogue are summarised as follows:

- Dialogue must translate into delivery. Citizens demand that discussions move beyond symbolic statements towards tangible, measurable outcomes. Trust will only be rebuilt if dialogue produces real change.
- Inclusivity is non-negotiable. All voices – youth, women, traditional leaders, the unemployed, sex workers, persons with disabilities, and marginalised communities – must shape the nation's solutions.
- Healing and reform must proceed hand in hand. Addressing structural inequality without confronting trauma or addressing trauma without systemic reform will render efforts incomplete.
- Ubuntu must be redefined as a daily practice. A culture of care, accountability, and solidarity must underpin governance, the economy, and social life.
- Citizens are not spectators. Active citizenry, civic responsibility, and community-driven initiatives are central to accountability and transformation.

The thematic lessons from the Dialogue Labs are:

Theme	Affirmation
Economic Renewal and Livelihoods	The dialogue underscored the need for a bottom-up approach that values township and rural economies, promotes vocational training, and dismantles structural barriers to entry. Inclusive growth requires trust, bold reforms, and shared accountability.
Justice and Crime	Participants emphasised that safety cannot be delivered by the state alone. Community solidarity, victim-centred justice, protection of whistleblowers, and decisive action against corruption are vital to restoring trust.



Theme	Affirmation
Education and Health	Transformation requires child-centred policies that integrate education with healthcare, mental health, and family support. Vocational skills and alternative pathways to success are as critical as formal higher education.
Fixing the State	The dialogue identified corruption, cadre deployment, and weak accountability as corrosive. A capable state must be ethical, merit-based, and rooted in active citizen oversight.
Values, Culture, and Cohesion	Ubuntu, family resilience, indigenous histories, and multilingualism must be at the heart of a united national identity. Constitutional promises must be matched with cultural restoration and shared values.
Gender-Based Violence and Femicide	The struggle against GBV requires urgent structural reform, survivor-centred interventions, and grassroots-led action. Declaring GBV a national disaster must be followed with resourcing and accountability.
Intergenerational Trauma and Healing	Healing and reconciliation are inseparable from democratic renewal and systemic reform. Acknowledging pain while pursuing transformation is essential to national wholeness.
Land, Minerals, and Environmental Justice	Land reform, mineral rights, and ecological stewardship are inseparable. Justice demands inclusive ownership, sustainable practices, and urgent constitutional reform.
Poverty and Inequality	Structural inequality must be addressed through electoral reform, people-centred democracy, community-based production, and a recommitment to the dignity promised in the Constitution.

The National Dialogue Convention affirmed that South Africa's renewal requires courage to confront its fractures, humility to listen to all voices, and resolve to act decisively. The lessons distilled across the ten Dialogue Labs reflect a shared aspiration for a just, inclusive, and united South Africa. The call, therefore, is for all sectors of society to embrace collective responsibility, embed ubuntu in practice, and work with urgency to translate dialogue into delivery.

4.2 Dialogue Lab Facilitators Feedback: Lessons Learnt

The National Convention brought together 21 facilitators to guide thematic dialogue sessions aimed at fostering a collective process of reflection, healing, and solution-

building. Their feedback painted a vivid picture of the strengths and challenges that defined this landmark engagement.

Facilitators highlighted the immense passion and readiness of participants to engage in national dialogue, yet structural constraints limited the process. Sessions were shortened to just over two hours instead of the intended four, and facilitators had not yet completed the full National Dialogue facilitator training. As a result, the process often leaned heavily on emotional release, leaving limited space for solution-driven outcomes.

Several recurring themes emerged across sessions. Time was the most pressing challenge, as facilitators struggled to balance participants' need for processing with the urgency of progressing toward solutions. The absence of an action-oriented component on the second day left many participants with a sense of incompleteness, underscoring the importance of carrying processes through to their intended outcomes.

The feedback also revealed the depth of skills required from facilitators. Managing high emotion, diverse perspectives, and even conflict demanded advanced facilitation abilities. Calls were made for rigorous, trauma-informed, and culturally sensitive training, enabling facilitators to “meet groups where they are,” while recognising issues of power, rank, and historical wounds.

Facilitators emphasised the need for adaptability within the dialogue methodology, while retaining a strong and structured process. They called for extended timelines, clearer reporting frameworks, robust validation mechanisms, and stronger safeguards against political interference. Sustaining community engagement beyond dialogue sessions was highlighted as essential, with suggestions to partner with local organisations, train ward-level facilitators, and ensure the presence of trauma counsellors and security where needed.

The thematic sessions offered a spectrum of experiences. The “*Winning the Future through Education and a Healthy Nation*” discussions benefitted from visioning exercises, while “*Environmental Justice, Land Tenure and Mineral Rights*” dialogue managed to hold respectful engagement across diverse demographics. The “*Poverty and Inequality*” session showed particularly high participant motivation for action. On the other hand, “*Fixing the State and Making the Constitution Work*” discussions surfaced deep resistance and emotional intensity, showing the necessity of strong conflict management strategies. The “*Intergenerational Trauma and Healing*” session achieved approximately 80% process completion but revealed that participants struggled to engage effectively in forward-looking exercises. This indicated how vital it is to balance acknowledgement of historical pain with pathways toward constructive futures.



The feedback made the following key strategic recommendations for improving future engagements:

Theme	Recommendations
Adaptability in Application of Methodology and Process	Ensure adaptability of current approach based on grassroots realities and diverse community needs.
Enhanced Facilitator Training	Develop a specialised training programme focusing on high-emotion, multi-stakeholder dialogue facilitation.
Extended Timeline	Revise the dialogues session structure to allow adequate time for both emotional processing and solution development.
Improved Communication Protocols	Establish clear boundaries regarding external interruptions and protocol requirements and expectations of the dialogue process and outcomes
Complete Process Implementation	Ensure ‘action’ components are properly delivered and not skipped during the dialogue process

The potential of dialogue to bridge acknowledgement of past traumas with forward-looking solutions was one of the key tenets that the National Convention demonstrated. Yet the path forward requires careful refinement: strengthening facilitator capacity, extending session duration, embedding cultural sensitivity, and ensuring transparent validation. Only by addressing these systemic challenges can future dialogues fully realise their transformative promise and safeguard the integrity of citizens’ voices.

4.3. Participants Feedback

The participant feedback from the National Dialogue Convention paints a vivid picture of both the promise and the challenges of convening such a large-scale, inclusive event. Many attendees expressed deep appreciation for the opportunity to gather and engage in meaningful conversations about South Africa’s future. They valued the diversity of voices present—from youth and faith leaders to civil society and traditional communities—and the space created for open, honest dialogue. For some, it was the first time they felt truly heard, and they praised the professionalism and emotional intelligence of the facilitators who helped maintain order and respect throughout the sessions.

However, frustrations were also widespread. A recurring theme was the lack of adequate time for participants to fully express their concerns and engage in robust

discussions. Several attendees noted that the logistics were poorly managed, with last-minute communications, unclear venue arrangements, venue not sufficiently disability friendly and insufficient signage causing confusion and delays. Others felt excluded—either because their communities were not formally invited or because the structure of the convention did not allow for adequate participation. Many felt that the themes and breakout groups were predetermined without sufficient consultation, which limited the relevance and impact of the discussions.

Despite these challenges, the spirit of the convention was largely seen as positive. Attendees appreciated the inclusivity, the chance to network, and the genuine efforts to foster unity and understanding. They emphasised the importance of creating this safe space for dialogue—one that is citizen-led, adaptable to local contexts, and grounded in shared values of respect, transparency, and service.



5 Constituting the National Dialogue Steering Committee

Plenary convened to review progress on the establishment of the Steering Committee (SC) as part of the ongoing National Dialogue process. At the outset, participants reaffirmed the foundational principles that must guide the Steering Committee. It should be people-led, democratic, inclusive, and participatory, deeply rooted in the South African Constitution. The Committee is expected to embody accountability, social justice, intergenerational equity, intersectionality, and diversity across geography, class, gender, and ideology. It was emphasised that the Steering Committee (SC) is not to function as an elite or technocratic structure, but as a custodian of the people's process, answerable to communities, movements, and constituencies.

The outgoing Convention Organising Committee (COC) presented its role in facilitating the transition towards a fully representative Steering Committee. Delegates were reminded that the COC responsibilities included:

- Providing guidelines to ensure inclusivity and broad participation
- Expanding engagement across sectors by enrolling and mobilising the widest possible range of organisations
- Deploying members to sectors to reorganise clusters, identify credible representatives, and mediate disputes
- Offering political, strategic, technical, and organisational support
- Overseeing transparency in the nominations process to enhance legitimacy and trust
- Working closely with the Eminent Persons' Group (EPG) to build credibility and extend institutional support, particularly towards organisations that have yet to join the process.

The discussion then turned to sectoral outreach and enrolment. A detailed account of contacts was presented (see Annexure 2), reflecting steady progress across many constituencies. Sectors such as transitional justice, sex workers, military veterans, immigration, older persons, professional bodies, men's organisations, environmental groups, health associations, small businesses, incarcerated people's rights advocates, the taxi and e-hailing industry, unemployed people's movements, and organised business outside NEDLAC were all confirmed to have enrolled contacts. It was reported that in several areas, dialogues have already been initiated.

At the same time, the meeting acknowledged that gaps remain. Follow-up was identified as necessary with Rastafarian groups, immigration, refugee and asylum seekers, and language organisations (including PANSALB), where formal engagement is still outstanding. Participants noted the importance of bringing these voices into the process to ensure the Steering Committee truly reflects South Africa's full diversity.

The Plenary also examined the revised sectoral categories being developed for SC representation. The updated list was extensive, covering education, labour and trade unions, faith-based organisations, traditional leaders and Khoi-San leaders, women, anti-GBV movements, LGBTIAQ+ communities, youth, students, children, health and HIV/AIDS (including SANAC, NCD Alliance, and traditional healers), national NGO and NPO networks, academia and research institutions, persons with disabilities, media and communication, sports, arts and culture, governance and democracy, small and informal business sectors, and civic movements engaged in local service delivery.

For several of these categories, lead organisations and coordination mechanisms remain to be finalised, but the progress made demonstrated a strong basis for inclusivity. Delegates expressed that as coordination structures solidify, the Steering Committee will be better positioned to take forward its mandate.

The Convention decided that the process of constituting the Steering Committee be extended for at least a further two weeks, to enable all sectors and identified sub-sectors to convene and nominate representatives to the Steering Committee and Subcommittees.

The Convention reaffirmed that the Steering Committee must guide the next phase of the National Dialogue, including the implementation of the Roadmap agreed at the First National Convention. This includes advancing citizen-dialogues, sectoral dialogues, developing community action plans, and preparing for the Second National Convention. Participants stressed that the process is entering a critical consolidation phase where legitimacy, transparency, and credibility will be central to success.

6 Closing of the National Dialogue Convention

The closing address of the National Dialogue Convention, delivered by Ms. Lindiwe Mazibuko, Co-Deputy Chairperson of the Eminent Persons Group, was both a reflection and a call to action. She spoke with humility about the extraordinary journey of the past two days, where South Africans from diverse walks of life had come together in respectful dialogue to envision a more inclusive, citizen-led future.

Ms. Mazibuko reminded the Convention that dialogue has always been woven into the story of South Africa's democracy. From the CODESA talks that birthed freedom, to the historic 1994 elections where millions queued to vote for the first time, to the Constitution shaped by the voices of ordinary people, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that taught the nation the value of listening, courage, and honesty – dialogue has consistently been the cornerstone of progress.

In this spirit, she reflected on what had been witnessed during the Convention: young people urging boldness, communities claiming their space in shaping the future, and a collective reaffirmation that this dialogue is owned by the people, not the government alone. It was not about producing all the answers immediately, but about laying a foundation and setting an agenda for the years ahead.



She emphasised the issues at the heart of South Africans' daily struggles: the urgent need for jobs and livelihoods, safety from crime and corruption, an education system that works, a state rooted in integrity, cultural values that bind communities, tangible action against gender-based violence, and healing from intergenerational trauma. These priorities, she said, are not abstract ideals but lived realities demanding urgent attention.

Ms. Mazibuko acknowledged the challenges that lie ahead – setbacks, disagreements, and moments where despair may feel easier than hope. Yet, she affirmed the unwavering commitment of the Eminent Persons Group to walk alongside citizens throughout this process. She posited that South Africa’s strength is not found in the absence of obstacles, but in the determination of its people to face them together.

The Convention closed with a spirit of optimism and resolve: a recognition that while the journey is long, the people of South Africa possess both the resilience and the collective power to transform dialogue into meaningful, lasting change.



7 SPEECHES TO THE NATIONAL CONVENTION

7.1 Keynote Address by President Cyril Ramaphosa

Programme Director,
Vice Chancellor of the University of South Africa,
Members of the Eminent Persons Group,
Distinguished delegates,
Representatives of civil society,
Traditional leaders,
Faith-based organisations,
Business and labour leaders,
Youth and women's movements,
Leaders and representatives of political
parties, Esteemed guests and, most
importantly, Fellow South Africans

I welcome you all to this historic gathering.

I have called this first National Convention in my capacity as the Head of State.

I have done so in line with Section 83 of our Constitution, which requires the President, as the Head of State and head of the national executive, to promote the unity of the nation and that which will advance the Republic.

I should thank everyone here today for accepting this invitation.

Today marks the first sitting of the National Convention of the National Dialogue, a space where we confront our realities openly, respectfully and constructively.

This is not a partisan platform. This is a national platform.

Here, no voice is too small and no perspective is too inconvenient to be heard.

We are gathered to listen to each other, to understand one another and to chart a

common path forward for our country.

We meet at a time of profound challenges: economic hardship, unemployment, inequality, growing poverty and a crisis of confidence in our institutions.

We also meet at a time when the world is rapidly changing and our ability to adapt and renew ourselves will define the next generation.

But history teaches us that nations are not defined solely by their difficulties; they are defined by how they respond to challenges they face.

Our own struggle for freedom from the nightmare of apartheid proved that unity in diversity is not an abstract slogan. It is a powerful force for transformation.

Gathered in this hall are people from all across our land, people from all walks of life, people of all races, all classes, all languages and cultures.

Gathered here, at this National Convention, are farmers and informal traders, civic activists and policy makers, traditional leaders and waste pickers, industrial workers, unemployed men and women, unemployed young people, unemployed graduates, religious leaders, business people and public servants.

There are young people and older persons, men and women, people from informal settlements and rural villages. There are people with disabilities. There are survivors of various forms of violence. There are artists, sports people and cultural activists.

In this National Convention is gathered the rich diversity of the people of this country.

Yet, although we are different in many ways, although we represent different experiences and hold different views, there is one thing we have in common.

We are all South Africans.

We are, each one of us, sons and daughters of the same soil. We share a common past.

We share the same inheritance of division, of inequality and of injustice.

We share the same pride at ending the crime of apartheid and establishing a constitutional democracy.



We also share a common future.

And that is why we have chosen to gather here today.

Because each one of us, regardless of our differences, is committed to work together to build the future of which we all dream.

We have chosen to be here because we believe in the power of dialogue and united action. We believe that if we share our concerns and fears, we can conquer them.

If we understand the challenges we face, we can overcome them.

If we know what hurts us, we can heal. If we know what divides us, we can unite. We gather here today, in all our diversity, to launch a National Dialogue.

We are embarking on a process that will launch a million conversations.

Across the length and breadth of South Africa, people will and must meet to talk of what worries them, what gives them hope and how they think their lives and our country can be better.

This initiative is about what all South Africans must do – together – to make our lives and country better.

Through this process we want our people to meet in homes and community halls. We want them to meet in churches, synagogues, mosques and temples. Our people must meet in schools and lecture halls, in boardrooms and on the shopfloor, on the pathways of our villages and the streets of our townships and our cities.

We will meet online. We will call into radio stations. We will debate on television.

We will share our views and make our suggestions without hesitation. We will be direct and honest.

We will need to have difficult conversations about many issues, including: Why do South African women have to live in fear of men?

Why do so many people live in abject poverty and so few live lives of opulence?

Why, after decades of democracy, are the prospects for a white child so much better than those of a black child?

Why do women get paid less than men for the same work?



Why, when we have a Bill of Rights, are LGBTQI+ people still discriminated against, stigmatised and harassed?

Why do clinics run out of medicine? Why do taps run dry?

These are some of the questions that we must be willing to ask and which we must be prepared to answer.

But more than that.

These are the challenges that we must be ready to do something about – as individuals, as organisations, as communities, as parents, as elected representatives, as public officials.

The National Dialogue is a call to debate and to discuss. More importantly, the National Dialogue is a call to action.

It is a call to all South Africans to seize this moment for change and progress.

It is a call to build a society in which there is a place for everyone, where the country's wealth is shared by all. A South Africa that truly belongs to all who live in it.

We have come together in this National Convention not to have the dialogue, but to start the dialogue.

Gathered here are more than 1,000 people from over 200 organisations across all sectors of society.

Our task is to prepare for the thousands of public dialogues that will happen in communities across the country over the next six to eight months.

We are here to consider some of the themes that may arise in these discussions, understanding that it is ultimately the people of this country that will determine the issues that should be discussed.

We are here to reflect on how we should approach these public dialogues, what methods we should use to ensure that everyone has a say and that the discussions take place in an environment that promotes understanding and that encourages healing.

Through this National Convention we seek to equip delegates to be champions and enablers of these public dialogues.

We seek to ensure that we give the space to South Africans to define the outcome of the National Dialogue process – so that these thousands of conversations can be drawn together into a clear vision for the country and an agreed programme of action into the future.



Through the National Dialogue process, we hope to arrive at a social compact that will outline the role and responsibilities of all of us – as citizens, as the arms of the state, as business, labour, traditional leaders, religious bodies, civil society, activist and civic organisations.

This National Dialogue must be about citizens taking responsibility for their future.

Through the dialogues, people must be able to attend to the challenges where they live or work or study.



They must be able to hold their public representatives accountable and ensure that all public institutions fulfil their responsibilities.

This National Convention is the moment at which the people of South Africa take over the National Dialogue.

For more than a year, various formations of civil society have been working to conceptualise and champion the National Dialogue.

Central to this effort have been a number of legacy Foundations established by and named for stalwarts of our liberation struggle.

We express our gratitude and appreciation for the work of these Foundations in giving life to the National Dialogue.

We also thank all those from civil society, government departments, provincial governments, state owned enterprises and business who have worked tirelessly to bring this National Convention together.

We are extremely grateful to the Vice Chancellor, leadership and staff of UNISA for hosting this National Convention and providing the facilities and services that have made it possible.

I wish to thank the members of the Eminent Persons Group, all of whom graciously and enthusiastically accepted my invitation to serve as the champions and guarantors of the National Dialogue.

These esteemed South Africans are:

- Dr Brigalia Bam, former Independent Electoral Commission Chairperson,
- Mr Robbie Brozin, entrepreneur and business person,
- Judge Edwin Cameron, former Constitutional Court judge,
- Mr Manne Dipico, former Northern Cape Premier,
- Dr Desiree Ellis, Banyana Banyana coach and football legend,
- Ms Ela Gandhi, peace activist and stalwart,
- Ms Nomboniso Gasa, researcher and rural activist,
- Mr Bobby Godsell, business leader,
- Dr John Kani, award-winning actor,
- Mr Siya Kolisi, Springbok captain and world champion,
- Ms Mia le Roux, Miss South Africa 2024,
- His Grace Bishop Barnabas Lekganyane, leader of the Zion Christian Church,
- His Grace Bishop Engenas Lekganyane, leader of the St Engenas Zion Christian Church,



- The Most Reverend Thabo Makgoba, Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town,
- Prof Tinyiko Maluleke, Chairperson of the National Planning Commission,
- Dr Barbara Masekela, poet, educator and stalwart,
- Ms Lindiwe Mazibuko, former Member of Parliament,
- Mr Roelf Meyer, former Minister and constitutional negotiator,
- Ms Gcina Mhlope, storyteller, writer and actor,
- Ms Nompandolo Mkhathshwa, former Member of Parliament,
- Ms Kgothatso Montjane, Grand Slam tennis champion,
- Prof Harry Ranwedzi Nengwekhulu, former activist and educationist,
- Mr Bheki Ntshalintshali, unionist and former COSATU General Secretary,
- Hosi Phyllia Nwamitwa, traditional leader,
- Kgosi Thabo Seatlholo, chairperson of the National House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders,
- Dr Gloria Serobe, business leader,
- Bishop Sithembile Sipuka, President of the South African Council of Churches,
- Dr Imtiaz Sooliman, founder of the Gift of the Givers,
- Prof Derrick Swartz, academic,
- Ms Lorato Trok, author and early literacy expert,
- Mr Sibusiso Vilane, mountaineer and adventurer,
- Mr Siyabulela Xuza, award-winning scientist and entrepreneur.

Since their appointment, they have provided valuable guidance and support to me and to all those involved in this work.

Lastly, I wish to thank all of the delegates to the National Convention and everyone who is followings these proceedings around the country.

You have taken upon your shoulders a historic task.

You have taken upon your shoulders the responsibility to launch a conversation among South Africans that will reach every corner of our country and that will determine the future of our nation.

Let this National Convention be a call to every South Africa to participate, to be heard and to be counted.

This Convention should not be remembered for fine speeches alone, but for the process it begins towards a new roadmap — a framework for political stability, economic renewal, social cohesion and a capable, ethical state.

We must aim to emerge from this process with a shared national vision: one that is bold enough to inspire, yet practical enough to implement

Let us speak with courage, listen with humility and negotiate with goodwill.

Let us be reminded that our disagreements are small compared to the magnitude of what we can achieve together.

In the words of the Freedom Charter, “The people shall govern.”

That governance starts here, with a dialogue that belongs to the nation.

I declare the first National Convention of the National Dialogue of South Africa officially open.

May our work here be guided by wisdom, grounded in truth and blessed with the spirit of ubuntu — for ourselves and for generations to come.

I thank you.



7.2 Welcome by UNISA Vice Chancellor, Professor Puleng LenkaBula



His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa, the President of the Republic of South Africa; Deputy President Mr. Paul Mashatile; former Presidents and Deputy Presidents; the Speaker of the National Assembly; Justice Mandisa Maya, Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court; cabinet ministers and deputy ministers; members of parliament, premiers, mayors, various public representatives and public sector leaders; leaders of the University of South Africa and all sister universities, TVET colleges as well as community colleges; the eminent group as appointed by the President of the Republic; representatives of other institutions in the public and private sectors; members of the leadership of various civil society, the religious community, organised labour, business, women, youth, people with disabilities; members of the media, delegates of the convention, participants, fellow South Africans from all walks of life, and all protocols observed. Sanibonani.

Thank you for the opportunity to welcome you all to this historic convention of the National Dialogue of South Africa. Today is yet another turning point in the history of South Africa. It is a day in which we set a process in motion to define the future that we South Africans, the world, and people of goodwill would want for us. A process that will



culminate in a comprehensive national dialogue in which all South Africans can remake the South Africa of their dreams. A process in which we can build sufficient consensus on the vision, plans, and outcomes we would like to see. A process that can help us to reclaim our futures and the outcomes we desire. It will also be a process that can help us to reclaim our futures in respect to peace, human dignity, and happiness for all.

We know that the present and the future are born out of the past. Because of this knowledge, we know who we are. We know where we come from. We come from a past of many pasts. We come from struggle, from suffering, pain, and we come from hope. We come from oppression, violence, dehumanisation, and destruction. We come from a deeply divided and unequal past, with many of its elements still defining our lives and our land. And yet, at the same time, it is through the struggle that we could triumph over the evils of colonialism and apartheid.

We do not only come from dispossession, poverty, and exclusion. We also come from wealth, health, and prosperity. We come from the rich histories and cultures that make us one of the strongest and proudest nations in the world. We are a people of great imaginations, discoveries, and innovations in almost all facets of life; a people of rich culture and respect for the natural environment.

We also come from the women and the workers who have built this beautiful land over centuries. And as their descendants, we know that their blood, sweat, and pain should mean that we have a stake in the present and the future. And that we dare not fail or cower in the face of adversity and setbacks. No matter how insurmountable the setbacks of the day may seem, we must march on.

We also come from a spiritualism and belief that humanises, affirms, and protects. It is a belief in the value system that says all life is of equal worth and everyone deserves a place in the sun. I'd like to repeat: all life is of equal worth and everyone deserves a place in the sun. That is who we are. A people of many pasts, a people of many shades, united in our diversity. A people in a place of many ebbs and flows, twists and turns in our continuous search for greater freedom.

Today we are confronting a reality of national hopelessness, restlessness, and stagnation, including the real declines in many important indicators of human development. In this land of plenty and boundless talent, we should be able to arrest this dangerous national situation. We have done it before, and we have emerged out of the most complex and opaque days of apartheid to build a new South Africa. This national dialogue process, which begins today, gives us a grand opportunity to find our true north again. I hope we take this opportunity to reclaim the great South African promise: a better quality of life for all, a governance system that works for all, and a society where all can coexist and that ensures that every South African can reach their full potential as human beings, agents of change, and masters of their own destinies.

The humanity of all parties must be affirmed. And then what follows is the sharing of ideas, of space, and of imagination about the past, the present, and the future, so that we can co-create life, nurture the environment, and produce the technologies that make life possible under the sun, including humanising civilisations. It is for this same reason that the women, children, and people of Palestine, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ukraine, and Russia must first see each other before they can talk and find lasting solutions to peace, development, and prosperity.

It is when we see each other, when we see the humanity in each other, that we will be able to reaffirm that we are inextricably bound together. And therefore, the future that we must co-construct must be for the benefit of all. Our government, our civil society, our public sector, our private sector, and all intersecting sectors must ensure that we reclaim the future together.



Our university is the oldest university in the country. It is also the largest in South Africa and on the African continent. It accounts for 37% of the higher education system in our country. It is a partner to our country, to our continent, and to the best that Africans must project to the world. It is for this reason that we at UNISA are committed to ensuring that while you engage in the critical issues of national importance, you will enjoy the University of South Africa's hospitality. You will enjoy its architecture, its

various cultural and historical sites, and monuments that make up our beautiful university.

But above all, you must enjoy the commitment to being part of the emancipatory project and histories of this country, whether in the past, as it will be in the future. Our relevance and value-add to society is not only about teaching, learning, and research. It is also about engaged scholarship and community engagement, including facilitating and providing platforms for engagements, for learning together with one another from varied vantage points so that when we converge, we converge together to dream the future that we want to craft together.

As universities, we are public institutions which are necessarily invited to ensure that knowledge is transformative and revolutionary. Knowledge creates opportunities for engagement so that we find cohesion and social capital, so that even amongst foes and friends, there is an opportunity for success in a project of emancipation. It is important that universities are not ivory towers but are partners. And it is for this reason that the University of South Africa accepted the invitation and the challenge to be the venue that hosts this important historic event in the life of our country. It is also one of the ways in which we realise our vision of being a truly African university shaping futures in the service of humanity.

We also hope that we can use this opportunity and the processes that will follow to debate, to contest one another, but more importantly, to find the solutions and produce the outcomes that will create the South Africa that we yearn for. In our view, this is a dialogue of equals, and it should get us out of here feeling more energised and hopeful about the processes ahead and the South Africa we desire.

In his poem "pastpresentfuture", written as one word, the late poet laureate Professor Keorapetse Kgositsile says: "there are cycles in the circle. I may even mourn my deadness or mourn your death in this sterile moment asking where is the life we came to live. Time will always be past, present, future is always now. Where then is the life we came to live?"

Welcome to the University of South Africa. The University of the Land, the home of leaders, the home of the democratic presidents of this country, the home of President Mandela, President Mbeki, and President Ramaphosa, who are alumni of this university, and we are quite appreciative. President Ramaphosa, you being an alumnus of this university reminds us of the imperative that we should talk, we should engage, and we should all bring our talents together to ensure that this country prospers, not only in the economy but in social cohesion, as well as in the contribution that South Africa and Africa make in the world.

Let me conclude with the words of our alumnus, the first democratic president, uBaba Madiba, President Nelson Mandela, when he said, "May the sun never set on this glorious achievement." Let the South African promise flourish. I thank you.



7.3 Address by Eminent Persons Group Co-Chairperson, Professor Tinyiko Maluleke



Fellow South Africans, we are gathered here at the campus at the only University in the land, that bears the name of our country – the University of South Africa. For this privilege we extend our thanks to the Vice Chancellor and Principal, Professor Puleng Lenkabula lephuting la kgoase, motho wa go hlaba kgokgo ka lemao *ngoana pali ya mathonya, mohalakhibe ka seqhobosho ka sebonong!* Thank you for welcoming us into the magnificent premises of UNISA, the only university in the land that carries the name of the country. Deservedly. I bring you greetings from the Tshwane University of Technology. Thank you for enabling the commencement of one of the most important processes in democratic South Africa. Please convey out gratitude to the Chair and Council of the University of South Africa.

I know that I speak for each member of the 32 Eminent Persons Group when I say, there is nowhere we would rather be at this time, than to be in this moment, in this place, at this historic occasion in this beautiful country, South Africa. Today, we gather here not as factions, but as a nation; not as strangers, but as fellow South Africans, united in our

purpose to build the South Africa we promised ourselves the constitution, in the National Development and in the words of the inaugural speech our founding President Nelson Mandela delivered on the 10th of May 1994.

Fellow South Africans, the Eminent Persons Group — or EPG — was appointed President Cyril Ramaphosa. It consists of patriots from different walks of life and different professional backgrounds. What unites us however, is an unflinching commitment to our country South Africa and to safeguard the integrity, inclusivity, and credibility of this National Dialogue.

Every one of us serves voluntarily — giving our time and our expertise because we believe in South Africa. We do not seek fame, prestige, or payment. In fact, we do not want to be paid.

Our role is threefold:

- To champion participation in the national dialogue — encouraging every South African, wherever they live and whatever their circumstances, to take part in this process.
 - To advise the Head of State and the National Dialogue structures — ensuring that the people's voices shape both the agenda and the outcomes.
- And
- To act as guarantors — that this process will remain open, honest, and truly national.

We accept this responsibility with humility — but also with determination. The EPG is determined to make our contribution to the National Dialogue and to do what we can to ensure that what begins here today becomes a shared and truly national journey. Fellow South Africans, we meet today at a moment when our beloved country stands at a crossroads.

The gains made over the past 30 years notwithstanding, we now face the highest unemployment rate in the world — a crisis felt most sharply by our young people. We live with the daily realities of crime, violence, and gender-based harm that tear at the fabric of our communities. And too many of our people have lost faith in politics and public institutions. The faith of citizens in democracy itself is under severe strain. South African is suffering from what French writer and philosopher, Jean-Paul Satre once described as a “nervous condition”.

It is in this context that the National Dialogue takes on historic importance as a moment for the building a shared vision for the next 30 years. Through the national dialogue,



South African citizens must begin the process of taking their country back and putting it on a new developmental trajectory – away from corruption, away from poverty, unemployment, violence and inequality.

Through the National Dialogue, our new vision be shaped in every village and town, every township and suburb, by the voices of all who call South Africa home.

Fellow South Africans, for this National Dialogue is to succeed:

- It must be citizen-led.
- It must be radically inclusive, both in terms of participants in in terms of the issues on the table.
- No sector, no issue and no community should be left outside.
- There should be no holy cows and no no-go-areas.

To this end, the National Dialogue process must be led with integrity and transparency. The National Dialogue must be beyond reproach — from how decisions are made, to how resources are used, to how outcomes are recorded and acted upon. At all times, we must ensure that the process is accessible to all citizens. All our official languages must be used, and universal access must be provided for persons living with disability to participate meaningfully. Only thus can the process be made credible.

Fellow South Africans, we all have the responsibility to enable a credible and a successful National Dialogue. We say this in full awareness of the difficulties we face as a nation including the differences that have surfaced within the Preparatory Task Team over the past few days. These differences will and must be overcome. Dialogue is the South African way. Dialogue is the womb out of which democratic South Africa was born. All of us gathered here today, have an obligation to do everything in our power to reach out and to persuade our fellow South Africans and their organisations to become part of the National Dialogue - both those who have withdrawn and those who have chosen to stay away.

So, today we call on every village and platteland dorpie, every township and suburb, every informal settlement and rural hamlet to step forward and make this process your own.

We call on stokvels, churches, mosques, temples, burial societies, book clubs, sports clubs, ratepayers' associations, political parties, business chambers, trade unions, youth groups, women's groups, and community forums: turn your regular gatherings into dialogue circles. Ask the hard questions. Listen deeply to one another. Above all,

search together for solutions – solutions you can act on, solutions local government, local community organisations and national government can act on. In the months ahead, thousands of local dialogues will ensue – and they will feed into this national process. Each of these will be a brick laid upon the foundation of our National Compact — the shared agreement that will guide our country for the next 30 years. The National Compact we pursue of the kind that will be written in the tears that will flow at the places where the dialogues will take place. It will be written in the sweat of the workers of this country. It will be written in the blood the martyrs who gave their lives for our democracy. Failure to deliver a credible and a successful National Dialogue is not an option. We dare not fail.

I thank you.



7.4 Closing Address by EPG Deputy Chairperson Ms Lindiwe Mazibuko



It is my great honour to deliver this closing address. Reflecting on the incredible journey we have embarked on together over the past two days, we have achieved something extraordinary. We have come together from all walks of life, engaged in respectful dialogue, and dared to envision a more inclusive, citizen-led future for South Africa.

I was profoundly humbled when President Ramaphosa invited me to participate in this dialogue. I also recognised the challenges ahead. Meaningful dialogue is rarely easy. I accepted the invitation without hesitation, as did all members of the Eminent Persons Group. We have unwavering faith in South Africa's promise and people's resilience.

There is something profoundly unique about South Africans: across all our diversity, when we are called, we come. And when we gather, our voices are loud, not only



because we want to speak, but because we are ready to listen. This is what gives us an incredible, transformative power.

Let us remember that dialogue has always been fundamental to our democracy. In the early 1990s, South Africans came together at CODESA, embracing dialogue to pave the way for freedom.

In 1994, millions of hopeful South Africans stood in long queues to cast their votes for the first time. A moment that transcended the ballot; it was a nationwide dialogue that resounded through the very fabric of our democracy. Every voice was valued; every life mattered.

Two years later, we adopted a Constitution born from the spirit of collaboration, negotiation, and the willingness to listen. It was written with the words of millions of South Africans who shared their dreams, aspirations, and expectations, a testament to the power of dialogue.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission emerged from the spirit of dialogue, teaching us that true reconciliation comes from listening, courage, and honesty.

These historical lessons serve as a reminder of our shared identity and responsibility. South Africans do not shy away from challenges; we face them together.

Over the past two days, we have witnessed a spirit so alive and thriving in these halls: those who have stepped up to lead, young voices reminding us to be bolder, and communities claiming their role in shaping our future.

This inaugural Convention was never intended to provide all the answers. It is a foundational step, setting the agenda for the long journey ahead. It is a powerful example of inclusivity and the beginning of a process that truly belongs to citizens in every community.

From the outset, we established that citizens drive this dialogue. Grounded in our President's commitment to unity, this dialogue is owned by the people. Together, we will create a shared vision for the next thirty years.

We are here because South Africans want real action: jobs and livelihoods, safety from crime and corruption, a functioning education system, a state that embodies integrity, a culture of values and social cohesion, tangible progress in addressing violence against women and girls, and healing within communities grappling with intergenerational trauma. These are not abstract concepts; they reflect the daily lives of South Africans.

The road ahead will not be easy. Our obstacles are deep-rooted and complex; we will have setbacks and disagreements. There may be moments when despair seems more appealing than hope. The Eminent Persons Group, which I am proud to be a part of, is committed to walking this path with you. We will not waver or abandon our efforts. This dialogue is for the people, and it belongs to you.

South Africa's greatest strength lies not in the absence of challenges but in our collective determination to face them together. We can and will transform dialogue into lasting change for all South Africans.



ANNEXURE 1 - NATIONAL CONVENTION SECTORAL CAUCUSES

SECTOR	ORGANISATION	STATUS AT CONVENTION
Reported not included		Contact Enrollment Status
Rastafarians	Rastafarians National Council of SA	To be followed up
Transitional Justice	SA Coalition for Transitional Justice and Reparations	Contacts enrolled
Sex Workers	Sex workers	Contacts enrolled
Military veterans	Various	Contacts enrolled
Immigration	Operation Dudula	Contacts enrolled
	Refugee and Asylum seekers	To be followed up
Older persons	SA Older Persons Forum	Contacts enrolled
Professionals Bodies & Associations	Legal Practice Council Engineering Council of South Africa National Association of Democratic Lawyers (member of Legal Practice Council)	Contacts enrolled
Men's sector	Mpumalanga, Gauteng, Western Cape Provinces	Contacts enrolled
Technology Security		Contacts enrolled
Township Development and Economy	TECSA Foundation	Contacts Enrolled (Dialogues initiated)
Language	PANSALB	Contacts enrolled
National Groups	Various	Contacts enrolled
Environment	Kanana Life Change Environment (NW)	Contacts enrolled
	MN Green Planets	Contacts enrolled
Health	National Unitary Professional Association of African Traditional Health Practitioners of South Africa NUPAATHSA	Contacts enrolled
Small business sector	Cannabis Marijuana Board of SA	Contacts enrolled



SECTOR	ORGANISATION	STATUS AT CONVENTION
Incarcerated People Rights	Organisation Just Detention	Contacts Enrolled
Taxi & E-hailing Industry	SA Taxi Drivers Union	Contacts enrolled
Unemployed organisations	Unemployed Peoples Movement	Contacts enrolled
Organized & Formal Business (Outside NEDLAC)	Various	Contacts enrolled

Revised Sectors for Steering Committee		
SECTOR	LEAD ORGANISATION	STATUS AT CONVENTION
Education	Equal Education	
Labour and Trade Unions	COSATU FEDUSA NACTU	Coordination to be determined
Faith-Based Organisations	Various	Coordination to be determined
Traditional leaders	Various	Coordination to be determined
Khoi-San Leaders	Various	Coordination to be determined
Women	Various	Coordination to be determined
Anti-GBV	Various	Coordination to be determined
LGBTIAQ+	Various	Coordination to be determined
Youth	TBC	
Students	TBC	
Children	Childrens Rights Institute Molo Songololo +	Coordination to be determined
Education	Equal Education	Coordination to be determined
Health/HIV-AIDS, incl Traditional Healers	SANAC NCD Alliance Rare Diseases	Coordination to be determined
National NGOs and NPOs Networks	Alliance of NPO Networks (ANNET) Civil Society Unmute Coalition-South Africa (CUSC-SA)	Coordination to be determined



Revised Sectors for Steering Committee		
SECTOR	LEAD ORGANISATION	STATUS AT CONVENTION
Academia, Think Tanks and Researchers	MISTRA	Coordination to be determined
Persons with Disabilities	TBC	Coordination to be determined
Media, Language and Communication	TBC	Coordination to be determined
Sports, Arts and Culture (Creative Industry)	TBC	Coordination to be determined
Governance, Democracy & Human Rights	TBC	Coordination to be determined
Small, emerging & informal sector	TBC	Coordination to be determined
Civic Movements & Local Service Delivery	TBC	Coordination to be determined



ANNEXURE 2 – LIST OF ATTENDEES

Organisation
1000 Women Trust
Abahlali baseMjondolo Movement SA
Access Chapter 2
Action GBV Collective
Action in Autism
ActionSA
Africa Centre
African Centre for Cities
African Christian Democratic Party
African Monitor
African National Congress (ANC)
Agricultural Development Agency/AFASA
AgriSA
Ahmed Kathrada Foundation
AIDS Foundation of South Africa
AIDS Healthcare Foundation
Ajuri Farm
Al Jama-ah
Albinism South Africa
Alliance of NPO Networks (ANNET)
AlternativeFutures
Amazing Grace
Antswisa Transaction Advisory
Armcor
Asivikelane and Tshwane Leadership Foundation
Assembly of the Unemployed (AOU)
Athari Abantu
Autism South Africa
Auwal Socio-Economic Research Institute
Aw dalia (Pty) Ltd
Banna Buang Free State Men's Forum
Bathbaine Foundation
Batswana Student Cultural Society
Be the Future
BE TRU2ME
Beatles Farm
Benica Farm
Besomething out of Nothing
Betereinders
Black Business Council
Black Child It's Possible
Black Management Forum
Black Mountain United Sports club
Black Sash
Black Womxn Caucus
Black Womxn Caucus/ Umpakathi Ecopeace Village
BMT College
Bosele Development Foundation Secretary
Buang Basadi
Build One South Africa

Man Youth Sector
Manala Mbuduma Traditional Council (Chieftancy)
Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection (MISTRA)
March and March
Marematlou
MB Teen Lifestyle
Media Monitoring Africa
Miss SA Org
Mobilize Agency
Mokoka Consulting
Molo Songololo
Mondlis Primary Coop
Moses Kotane Foundation
Mpulamlanga, Ehlanzeni
Mpumalanga Provincial Government
Mpumalanga Provincial Institutes of Civil Society Organisations (MPICSO)
MRM
MS Care Village Society Care Village
MTN Group
My Vote Counts
Nama Royal House RSA
Naomi's Widowed Forum
Naspers Prosus
National Community Radio Forum
National Council of Trade Unions
National House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders (NHTKL)
National Manufactured Fibres Employers Association
National Youth Coalition
National Youth Development Agency
Ndifuna Ukwazi
Nedbank
NEDLAC Civil Society Constituency
NEDLAC Labour
Nelson Mandela Children's Fund
Nelson Mandela University
Nestle
Netball South Africa
Nkangala District Municipality Men sector
NL
No Name Initiative Dialogue Institute
Nobuhle Virgie Foundation
Northern Cape Provincial Government
Ntlatfotso Trading
Nucleus Institute
Nyahbinghi Order
Nyema Foundation
Oagile Tshepo NPC
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Office on the Status of Disabled Persons
Omang-Who Are You Youth Development Initiative



BUSA - Coronation
BUSA - Discovery
BUSA - SASOL
BUSA – American Chamber of Commerce in South Africa (AmCham)
BUSA – Aspen Pharmacare
BUSA – Association for Savings and Investment SA (ASISA)
BUSA – Banking Association SA (BASA)
BUSA – Business Leadership SA (BLSA)
BUSA – Chemical and Allied Industries Association (CAIA)
BUSA – Consulting Engineers South Africa (CESA)
BUSA – Consumer Goods Council South Africa (CGCSA)
BUSA – Minerals Council
BUSA – National Association of Automobile Manufacturers of South Africa (NAAMSA)
BUSA – Small Business Institute (SBI)
BUSA – Talent10
C20 LGBTI+ Group
Cape Crime Crisis Coalition
Cape Provinces Foundation
Care Assistant
Centre for Constitutional Transformation of South Africa
Centre for Development Enterprise
Centre for Public Witness
Centre for Social Justice
Charlotte Manyi Maxeke Institute
Children's Institute
Chuck Dee Foundation
CICSA
CIFSA
Citi Bank
CitizensSA
Civil Society
Civil Society Provincial Chairperson
Civil Society Unmuted Coalition
COGHSTA
Commemorative Blanket & Projects Foundation
Commission for Gender Equality
Community Based Womens Movement
Congress of South African Trade Unions
CONTRALESA
COSAU
Council for the Blind
Council of Military Veterans Organisations
Council on Higher Education
Count Me In Movement
CountryDuty
Cradle Route Built Environment
Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Rights Commission
DAK Network
Daveyton Association for the Physically Disabled
Deaf SA
Defend our Democracy
Delft Disabled Forum
Deloitte
DEMAWUSA

Operation Dudula
Our Generation for inclusion Peace (OGIP)
OUT LGBT Wellbeing
Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC)
Pan South African Language Board
Parliament of the RSA
Passover Community Building Organization
Pelegi Movement NPO
People Against Race Classification
Peter Nchabeleng Foundation
Phafogang Community Homepage Care
Phakama Ndoda Foundation
Phela o Phedishe Health and Welfare Care Group
Phetolo Organisation
PILO
PLHIV
Pond a dag 63 (Pty) Ltd
Positive women in action against HIV/AIDS
Positive Women Network
Progressive Tamil Movement
Progressive Women Movement
Prophetic Prayer Conference of South Africa
Public Affairs Research Institute
Public Protector South Africa
Public Service Commission
Put South Africans First
QHAMASANDE/ SWIBSA Associate member
Quality Council for Trades and Occupations
Qunu Community Advise Office
Rainbow leaders
Raks Milling Agro-Processing Project
Rand West Business Co-operative
Rastafari Nation Council
Ratanang Youth Development Organisation
Reclaim The City movement(RTC)
Right 2 Know Campaign
RISE Mzansi
Rise Up Against Gender Based Violence
Rivonia Circle
Rixaka Heritage Forum
Ronnie Mamoepa Foundation
Roster Home of Safety
Royal Leaders of South Africa
Rural Development in Agro, Arts and Technology
Rural Women Assembly
SA Council of Churches
SA Hindu Maha Sabha
SA Tamil Federation
SA Waste Pickers Association
SA Youth Economic Council
SA Youth Trade Association
Sakhile Youth Empowerment Centre
Salome Weather the Storm
Samkeni Development Foundation



Democracy Works Foundation
Democratic Nursing Organisation of South Africa
Department of Agriculture
Department of Basic Education
Department of Communications and Digital Technologies
Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
Department of Correctional Services
Department of Defence and Military Veterans
Department of Electricity and Energy
Department of Employment and Labour
Department of Finance
Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
Department of Health
Department of Higher Education and Training
Department of Home Affairs
Department of Human Settlements
Department of International Relations and Cooperation
Department of Justice and Constitutional Development
Department of Land Reform and Rural Development
Department of Mineral and Petroleum Resources
Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
Department of Police
Department of Public Service and Administration
Department of Public Works and Infrastructure
Department of Science, Technology and Innovation
Department of Small Business Development
Department of Social Development
Department of Sport, Arts and Culture
Department of Tourism
Department of Trade, Industry and Competition
Department of Transport
Department of Water and Sanitation
Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities
Dinaledi Rising Stars
Disabled People South Africa
Eastern Cape, Sarah Baartman
EC Sex Workers
Elderly
Embrace Diversity Movement
Eminent Persons Group
Empowerment Hub
Engcobo Men As Partners
Engineering Council of South Africa
Enhancing Care Foundation
ENS Africa
Equal Education
Faith Based
Federation of Governing Bodies of South African Schools (Fedsas)
Federation of Unions of South Africa (FEDUSA)
Financial and Fiscal Commission
Financial Sector Campaign Coalition
First Indigenous People (Xam Khwa Khwe - San)

SANAB
SANERELA+
Saul Msane Foundation
SebataKgomo Civil Movement
Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University
Sekhukhune Chapter of the National Dialogue
September Strategy
Sex Worker Education and Advocacy Taskforce (SWEAT)
Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights Africa Trust (SAT)
Sexual Reproductive Justice Council
Shayisfuba
Show Me Your Number Online Radio
Sibusiso Mogale's Production Pty Ltd
Sicebise Social Inclusion +
Siemens
Simiso Nkwanyana Centre for Alternative Ideas
Sisonke
Sisonke Movement
Sisonke National Movement
Sisonke National Sexworkers Movement in South Africa
SMME News Publication
Snqobile Life Support
Society Health And Morals Association NPC
Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa
Sonke Gender Justice
Soul City Institute
South African Arts & Culture Youth Forum (SAACYF)
South African Association for Early Childhood Development (SAACD)
South African BRICS Youth Association
South African Business and Disability Network (SABDN)
South African Chamber of Commerce and Industry
South African Coalition for Transitional Justice
South African Disability Alliance
South African Federation of Trade Unions
South African Football Association
South African Hindu Maha Sabha
South African Human Rights Commission
South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA)
South African Muslim Council
South African National Aids Council
South African National Civic Organisation
South African National Council for the Blind
South African National Small Bus Operators Council
South African National Taxi Council
South African Police Service
South African Prisoners Organisation for Human Rights
South African Private Higher Education (SAPHE) Boston City Campus
South African Private Higher Education (SAPHE) Inscape
South African Private Higher Education (SAPHE) Mancosa
South African Private Higher Education (SAPHE) Stadio
South African Private Higher Education (SAPHE) The Da Vinci Institute
South African Private Higher Education (SAPHE) UXi Education



Forum for the Empowerment of Women
Fossil Free South Africa
Free State Provincial Government
Free State Sport Confederation
Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung Foundation
Futurelect
Gandhi Development Trust
Gauteng Community Forum
Gauteng Province Faith Based Organisation
Gauteng Provincial Legislature Youth Parliament
Gauteng Unmute
GBVF Response Fund
General Electric Health Care
Global Leaders Network
Global Leadership Network South Africa
Global Network of People Living with HIV
GOLDCO
Good Governance Africa
Government Finance Offices Association
GrayPower
Greater Aboriginal Community Council of South Africa
Green Connexion (PTY) Ltd
Ground Work Collective
Gun Free South Africa
Hands on Bafazi
HARISA
Heineken
Heinrich Boell Foundation
Helen Suzman Foundation
Her Initiative Study Circle (HISC)
Hlanganisa Community Fund
Hlengiwe Woman of Destiny
Holy Trinity Catholic Church
Home Italia (Pty) Ltd
Hope and Reconciliation Trust
Housing Assembly
Human Rights Agency
Human Rights Institute of South Africa (HURISA)
Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)
I AM
I_Menstruate Movement
Ibis Reproductive Health
Ikhwelo Healers Organisation
Ilima
Ilitha Labantu
Imali Yethu Coalition
Imbumba Yabahlali KZN Alliance
Impi Loy Group and Holdings
Impulse Cape Town
Imveli Research Training and Awareness NPO
In Transformation Initiative
Inam Ella Pty Ltd
Inclusive Society Institute
Independent Communications Authority of South Africa
Independent Electoral Commission

South African Qualifications Authority
South African Queens Council
South African Small and Medium Enterprises Association
South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee
South African Taxi Drivers Workers Union
South African Union of Students
South African Women in Dialogue (SAWID)
South African Youth Affairs
South African Youth Council
Southern African Liaison Office
Southern African Youth Movement
SoWeVote
Speaker of Parliament
SPM
SPOT
Storm NPO
SUCA Senior Partners
Sukuma Ndoda Sakhe
Sukumeni Sakeni Ubuntu
SWIBSA - Sisterhood for Women in Business SA
Taxi Rank Media Agency
Technical and Professional Education Training Colleges
Governors' Council
Teddy Bear Clinic
Thabo Mbeki School of Governance
The Afrikanerbond
The Chartered Governance Institute of South Africa NPC
The Hope Foundation
The Indlulamithi South Africa Scenarios Trust
The Late Bloomer
The Move Fitness Club
The Penuel Show
The Presidency
The Shackbuilders
The TLR Project and Suppliers (Pty) Ltd
The United South Africa Movement
The Youth Unified in Action SA
Thuli Madosela Foundation (Centre for Social Justice)
Timbaktu Collective
Tlou Cholo Foundation
Tokiso
Triangle Project
Tswelopele ya Ditalente
Turfloop Leadership Group
TUT Polokwane
Umalusi Quality Council
Umthombo Wempilo
Umuntu Ngumntu Ngabantu
Unemployed People's Movement (UPM)
Union Against Hunger
United Democratic Movement
United for Global Mental Health
United Nations
Universities South Africa (USAf)
University of KwaZulu-Natal
University of Limpopo



Infinite International
Inkatha Freedom Party
Insika Yebuntfu Organisation PBO
Institute for Justice and Reconciliation
Investec
Inyanda National Land Movement
IsiGqu Somama Organisation
Itireleng association for the Physically Disabled
Ivy Afrca
Iziko Museums of SA
Izindonga Ze Afrika - SWIBSA Agri Associate
Izwi Mentorship Hub
Jewish Board of Deputies
Jobs for Jobless and Business Development Organisation
Judicial Inspectorate for Correctional Services
Just Detention International - South Africa
Kagiso Trust
Kamvelihle Foundation
Kgoro Organisation
Kgoshi Maafeefee Foundation
Khulumani Galela Reparation Movement
Knowledge Hub for Empowerment & Youth Initiatives (KHEYI)
Kurara FM
KZN Christian Council
Land Access Movement of SA
Lawyers for Human Rights
Lejweleputswa District Council of Churches
Leratong Creche
Letsema
LGBTI Youth Change Drivers Mentorship Foundation
LGBTQIA+ IT'S A SOLVED MATTER
LGBTQIA+ South Africa
Lilian Ngoyi Foundation NPO
Limpopo Older Persons Forum
Ilitha Lababatu
Ma Medi Antswembu Foundation
Malihambe Women Outreach
Mamba Online

University of Mpumalanga
University of South Africa
University of the Western Cape
University of the Witwatersrand
University of Venda
Uyaya Mbangu Kamuti
VEJA
Vhatavhatsindi Royal Kingdom of Bataung Bahlalele Indigenous Monarch
Vhembe Traditional Healer Association
Vodacom Group CEO
VPCR
Vuka People's Rainbow Movement
Wakhumo Supply and Construction Projects
Wallmansthal Community Organisation
Walter Sisulu University
WARD - Women in Agri & RD
WeAreThePeople
WeThePeopleSA
Winners Without Gambling International
Wits Postgraduate Association
Woman SMME
Women for Change
Women In Diaspora Association (WIDA)
Women in Informal Employment Globalizing & Organizing
Women of Many Hats
Women of Power
Women's National Coalition
Women's Sector, Law and Human Rights
World Economic Forum Global Shapers Community: Tshwane Hub
Wow Life Foundation
Y20 South Africa
YLNS Foundation
Young Urban Women Movement
Youth
Youth Alliance for Leadership and Development in Africa
Youth Media Movement
Youth Must Rise
Zabalaza Pathways Institute
Zion Christian Church