



African People's Convention

The rising sun of hope

APC SUBMISSION TO THE MOSENEKE COMMISSION

1. The African People's Convention (APC) would like to thank the Commission for extending an invitation for us to make a submission as an interested party.
2. We understand the Commission's terms of reference broadly to be, to inquire, make findings, report on and make recommendations to the Electoral Commission(IEC) on whether free and fair local government elections can be held in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and the current conditions imposed by government on the containment of the spread of the virus, how these government containment measures may or may not be a prohibitive constraint on Party political campaigning, and the monitoring of the elections by Party agents and independent observers.
3. The considered view of the APC is that indeed the elections will be held in conditions and ways unusual not only for South Africa but has been so to many countries around the world, including some of the worst affected and ravaged countries like the United States of America and, recently, Peru.
4. It is our considered view that the pandemic cannot be a hinderance to people exercising their democratic rights to freely choose their representatives. The actual process of people accessing voting stations and actually voting is easily manageable by observing the existing protocols, managing the queues to observe social distancing, a policy of No mask, No queuing to vote, sanitizing at the voting station entrance and on exit, and constant sanitizing by officials should guarantee everyone's health.

4.1. Part Agents and Independent observers may need to be restricted to one person per organisation, unless alternative larger venues are available. Having atleast a single observer inside the voting station guarantees that the Party still has an eye on the proceedings. This cannot be a disadvantage of proportions that should raise questions about the integrity of the election process. The right to raise objections to any irregularity will still be in place for any aggrieved party.

4.2. Under the circumstances, it demands of the IEC to be vigilant and summarily dismiss presiding officers from whose stations numerous complaints arise, as it raises red flags in an environment where there are already constraints on the political parties normal monitoring of the voting process.

It is the conduct of IEC officials at voting stations level that are a threat to free and fair elections than anything else.

5. The measures that government has put in place to contain the pandemic will certainly impact the way political parties engage in their campaigns. The most evident one being rallies in stadia and big halls. These have been the normal practice but certainly not the only ways of campaigning. It might be that the advent of Covid-19, and the likelihood of it being around for the foreseeable future will bring about a new culture of campaigning, that will emphasize small gatherings, street campaigning, door to door, enhanced use of technology (social media, personal calls, electronic and print media etc).

Street campaigning and door to door could actually give political parties an opportunity to not only look for votes but to also educate the public about Covid-19, and the need for the public to observe stated protocols for its containment.

The daily experience of our people currently is that they queue at stations, throng malls, travel to work in taxis, busses etc and the daily snaking queues at the Post Office. That we are surviving these suggest, in the considered view of the APC, that it is possible for parties within the measures in place to reach the people and sell their political message.

6. The APC wishes to stress that the democratic rights of the people are sacrosanct. We served, suffered and sacrificed so much for these rights. They must be protected. They must be advanced. We must do all that is necessary and possible to ensure that the people, at expected intervals, exercise those rights. Those rights are immovable.

The APC has noted that there are those who have with careless abound called for the postponement of the local government elections, by months or even years. We are of the firm belief that these loud voices are driven by impure motives, never mind the public rhetoric.

7. Finally, the APC once again thank the Commission for the opportunity to present our perspective.

We wish the Commission well in this national responsibility with far reaching ramifications for our hard won democracy.

We have confidence in the Commission. It has so far treated everyone in a balanced manner, and we believe that it will deal objectively with all the true facts before it.

We are anxiously looking forward to your report to the IEC.

We are preparing ourselves for the elections.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ernest Hlathi', written over a horizontal line.

Cde Ernest Hlathi

APC National Chairperson and Head of Elections