



ANC Youth League 25th National Congress

Discussion Document

REPOSITIONING THE ANCYL FOR THE FUTURE:

A Strategic Perspective



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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The formation of the ANC Youth League in 1944, 70 years ago, followed a long protracted process of struggle in which all South Africans, young and old, men and women, black as well as white, had bravely and heroically participated.
- 1.2 In essence, its launch on 10 September 1944 at the Bantu Men's Social Centre in Johannesburg must not be viewed as a single event, but as a culmination of objective material conditions particularly during the period of the Second World War. At the same time, it served as a harbinger for a new phase of struggle which commenced in the forties with the growing radicalisation of the black workers and the youth, in particular, as well as black communities in general in both urban and rural areas.
- 1.3 Accordingly, the 70 years of the ANCYL is an historic milestone, not only for the ANCYL, the ANC and the mass democratic movement, but for the youth and people of South Africa as a whole; a commemoration of an historic intervention by the youth which served to increase the tempo of the struggle and propelled it to new heights.
- 1.4 Accordingly, throughout the period of the struggle the enemy learned to recognise and hate the gallantry of the youth. Consequently, in re-imagining the ANCYL going forward, we need to appreciate the role played by the youth in the national liberation struggle, not

only after the formation of the ANCYL, but even prior to that.

2. PREOCCUPATION WITH THE QUESTIONS OF THE FUTURE

- 2.1 Preoccupation with the questions of the future – what it will be, what it will look like and how it shall be achieved – place the youth at the very centre of every nation's endeavours.
- 2.2 It was precisely for this reason, because he had fully grasped and appreciated the central role of the youth in pursuit of the future, as well as the fact that the youth and the future were inseparable one from the other, that the late President O.R. Tambo made the incisive remark that: *"A country, a movement, a people, that does not value its youth, does not deserve its future"*. Equally, the inverse of this statement is also true that – a youth that do not value their country, movement and people, do not deserve their future.
- 2.3 In essence, what this means is that every class or social stratum – indeed every society – that neglects investing in its future – its own sustenance and survival – is ill-fated. The sustenance and perpetuation, indeed the propagation, of the ideas of any class and social stratum, as well as any movement, depends on this deliberate and conscious investment in the youth as the rising generation.

- 2.4 The South African revolutionary movement learned this truth about the role of the youth in the course of its struggle, particularly since the formation of the ANCYL. At the same time, the youth learned their own lessons about the role of revolution in exposing them to the fact that nothing in this life is permanent; everything changes and all tyrannies and empires eventually fall and become antiquity.
- 2.5 These historical lessons are not easy to learn; they cannot be taught to the youth in universities, but only from the vantage point of revolutionary action – praxis. At the same time, reactionary organisations can also impart the same lessons to the youth, albeit for completely different reasons and in order to preserve the old order, or to derail the revolution.
- 2.6 The correctness of all these observations has been extensively vindicated by time itself as the South African youth played a pivotal role in the popular uprising against apartheid-colonialism. They were often thrust by history into a leading role, carrying on their young and inexperienced shoulders the difficult burdens of the struggle, having to lead in providing answers to intractable questions and to commit death-defying feats that helped to propel the struggle.
- 2.7 Youth, on their own, are not a social class, but are very much a part of society and belong to social classes. They mirror the ramifications of the society within which they live and have similar social gradations as generally in society – that is, working youth, students, peasants, petty bourgeoisie, intellectuals, exploiters. However, given concrete conditions as they grow up, they might migrate from the one to the other social class or stratum.
- 2.8 This means that whilst youth is a special category defined and made common by age, a transient phase for every person, they however are not a homogeneous group which shares the same political and even social outlook about the current challenges of society or their prospective solutions. Because of their age, they may share many commonalities across the political and cultural spectrum, in the form of popular culture, music, sport, arts and fashion. However, these do not in the slightest degree mean that they would accordingly all agree that the prevailing social, economic and political system is right or wrong, whether it must be preserved or overthrown.
- 2.9 Accordingly, the political outlook of each category of youth generally mirrors its social position, even though a political outlook contrary to its objective interests could be acquired. The youth reflect more or less the material and spiritual divisions in that society, and generally their position and aspirations in that regard.
- 2.10 Due to their inexperience and even illusions, young people can be easily swayed into positions or social and cultural value systems that are counter to their interests. Accordingly, all societies in general, and classes in particular, pay special attention to the youth. For any people or class to shirk this responsibility is to do great harm to itself as its very future depends on the practical and spiritual moulding of the youth.
- 2.11 No revolution can be victorious without the effective education, organisation and mobilisation of the youth into political action. For, ultimately, the youth are the catalysts of the future of any people, country, class or stratum; their energy and dynamism give them an urge above all groups, bar the revolutionary working class, in the zealous pursuit of the ideas in which they single-mindedly believe. Hence, within the different class formations, they are to be found in the front trenches of practical and theoretical struggles displaying both initiative and self-sacrifice; always eager to perform great feats in the theatre of battle.
- 2.12 The youth act as such not as a separate contingent *vis-a-vis* the motive force of the revolution, but as an integral part thereof. This means that the youth need to understand that even their own political and socio-economic aspirations are integral to those of the masses as a whole for total emancipation. The struggles of the youth would not count

for much if they were not linked to those of the working people and other progressive social strata and motive forces pursuing the common objective of a national democratic society.

2.13 At the same time, the youth lends the revolutionary struggles this youthful vigour only if and when it enjoys the guidance and experienced tutelage of the older generation. The older generations must not seek to blunt or mute the youth; they must allow their inexperience and militant thinking to flourish. Whilst they lend the struggle their youthful zeal and energy, and inject it with militancy and urgency, their militant outlook and zeal for action must be tempered by the wisdom and experience of the older. This calls for a wise and balanced approach in dealing with the youth as well as for the understanding amongst the youth that whilst their views will not be suppressed or militancy blunted, they too have an obligation to respect the wisdom of the elderly, the wise counsel and leadership of the ANC as well as the revolutionary imperative of discipline.

2.14 The fact that the youth has to act as an integral part of the people as a whole does not preclude their organisation and action as youth per se. In fact, their dynamising role is greatly enhanced by their autonomous organisation and mobilisation around issues that both affect them as youth as well as those that affect society as a whole. It is through such organisations that the youth can develop requisite independent political, organisational and leadership experiences and thus be empowered with the wherewithal to impart these skills to the struggle as a whole for its benefit, as well as that of the revolutionary forces and movement.

2.15 Indeed, this also places great challenges on the revolutionary movement. As well as the imperative to build the mass organisations of the youth from the branch upward, for the battles ahead, this calls for the need continuously to attend to the issue of raising the calibre of the leadership and the all-round competencies of the youth, to impart

to them the skills that are necessary for them to carry out their tasks as the shock troops of the revolution. Youth can play a meaningful role in the revolutionary movement only if there is a systematic cadre policy.

2.16 Such a cadre policy addresses fundamentally the question of converting the youth from activists into cadres – transforming them from quantity to quality. It will address simultaneously both the question of developing future leaders as well as deepening the ideological outlook of the youth in order to lend content to their militancy. This will also ensure they do not become gullible and hence unreliable in the theatre of struggle and ideological battles in particular. They need to be moulded and socialised into progressive ideas and practice.

3. FORMED TO DYNAMISE THE STRUGGLE AND ADVANCE ANC IDEAS AMONG YOUTH

3.1 From its inception, the ANCYL was thrust into the very heart of a difficult struggle. Three factors had conspired to give rise to the necessity to establish the ANCYL; that is:

- First, it was the ***Second World War***, which led to an economic boom in South Africa whilst the socio-economic and political conditions of the black majority, in both urban and rural areas, not only remained stagnant but deteriorated, causing massive socio-political disquiet in many townships and villages,
- Secondly, and as a result of the above-mentioned conditions, ***the radicalisation of the black workers***, in the mines and elsewhere, and
- Finally, ***the radicalisation of the black students in universities***, as a result of both these factors. On the one hand, as the children of black workers, students could not remain unaffected both by the super-exploitation of their parents as well as the growing savage violence of

the system in connivance with the bosses when responding to the shop-floor needs of the workers. And yet, on the other hand, as a sector of society imbibing higher education, having access to advanced knowledge and information, both local and international, students were being speedily politicised and radicalised.

- 3.2 At this time, and although it was undergoing a period of renewal under Dr. Xuma's presidency, the ANC was quite weak, having gone through an extended period of divisions, still prevalent in the forties when the ANCYL came to be.
- 3.3 From its founding, the ANCYL was preoccupied with three inter-related issues:
- First, ***the struggle of the African people*** as led by the African National Congress,
 - Secondly, ***the ideological and organisational rebuilding and renewal, as well as unity***, of the ANC, its injection with radical African Nationalism, imparting it with a "*national character*" and its transformation into a militant fighting organ of the African people ready to face the tyrannical regime and conquer it; and
 - Thirdly, ***the role of the youth in the struggle*** under the banner of a united and radical ANC.
- 3.4 From its very inception, the founders of the ANCYL believed in the ANC as a vehicle for the unity of the African people in their struggle for freedom. They believed that divisions and factionalism within the national movement could not be tolerated and had to be viciously defeated as they would detract from its historical mission. Not denying weaknesses within the ANC, they believed that these could not be used as an excuse to divide the African people by dividing the Congress. They believed that the task of uniting the oppressed and leading them to national freedom could not be accomplished through a divided ANC and fractious struggle.
- 3.5 Secondly, they believed firmly that if they were to achieve national liberation, Africans had to extricate themselves from the destructive and debilitating clutches of white Trusteeship, to wage an independent struggle for national freedom as a confident people. Accordingly, they rejected white Trusteeship and asserted the African people's right to national freedom and self-determination and fight for their own freedom themselves, under the banner of the ANC. Accordingly, the ANCYL sought to imbue the ANC with a radical African Nationalism as a philosophical outlook and basis for a militant programme of action to confront white supremacy.
- 3.6 As well as a radical creed and programme of action, the youth were soon to learn from practice that militancy without revolutionary discipline is nothing but anarchy and downright dangerous adventurism; whilst discipline without militancy is sheer reformism that would blunt the struggle. Militancy and discipline are two sides of the same coin; one without the other would lead to the historic defeat of the revolution.
- 3.7 Over time, the ANC has attached high value both to militancy and revolutionary discipline, and always distinguished itself in struggle, not only through the militancy and valour of its cadres and combatants, but also because of their revolutionary discipline. Of course, it would have been nigh impossible to solve the problems spawned by apartheid-colonialism without the oppressed adopting a militant posture in the struggle. At the same time, their struggle for national liberation would not have progressed any farther had they not been disciplined enough to know when and how to advance as well as when and how to retreat in order to advance again.
- 3.8 In this way, therefore, militancy had to go hand-in-glove with discipline. Discipline neither means cowardice nor does it amount to being less militant. It also does not mean the absence or suppression of debate. However, it enables one to make proper assessment and judgements of challenging situations

ahead and make measured observations and pronouncements about what needs to be done. Only disciplined militants win revolutions.

- 3.9 Nobody in the movement, especially after the formation of the ANC Youth League in 1944, has doubted the revolutionary capacity of the youth, or tried to blunt their militancy. Militancy, devoid of a clear understanding of the historic mission of the movement, the historic tasks of the national democratic revolution and the movement's high position in society could be counter-productive and result in any anarchy being interpreted as revolutionary, or in any enemy agent being labelled as militant, or, as said above, in dangerous adventurism.

4. THE YOUTH: THE CUTTING EDGE OF THE REVOLUTION

- 4.1 Founders of the ANCYL believed that the youth had a decisive and catalysing role to play in the struggle, given their militant outlook and willingness to sacrifice in the name of freedom and the people, and given their energy and eagerness to sweat for mass mobilisation, organisation and education.
- 4.2 As well as the above, from the outset, the ANCYL, through its founders, made their choice to become the ***league of the youth of the African National Congress***, and not an independent youth organisation pursuing a mission parallel or even at times opposed to that of the ANC's. They also believed that the struggles and efforts of the youth were integral, rather than independent, parallel or opposed, to those of the masses of the people as a whole. Their own struggles had their origins in the struggles of the masses of our people which dated back to the first resistance wars to stave off colonial incursion.
- 4.3 They could only fulfil this role, both in the broader struggle as well as within the ANC, through an organisation of their own where they would develop organisational and leadership capabilities, as well as experience, in a manner relevant to their own generation. Their dynamising role is greatly facilitated by their organisation and mobilisation around issues that affect them as youth. It is through such organisations that the revolutionary forces are able to impart skills and experience in a manner fitting the peculiar station of the youth, and to galvanise them into a broad movement attracting all potential participants.
- 4.4 At the same time, they learned from the onset, when they immediately clashed with Dr. Xuma, both in 1944 as well as in 1948/9, that there would be healthy tensions between the young and the old, and organisationally between the ANC and ANCYL from time to time on matters of perspective or even strategies and tactics. These tensions are healthy and ensure progress. However, at all times, the youth and their organ, the ANCYL, are subject to the overall discipline and political directives of the ANC in whose formulation they participate. This is why youth are represented in all the decision-making organs as a political organ and body of opinion.
- 4.5 This then emphasises the pivotal significance of the "*organisational autonomy*" of the ANCYL, which narrowly is defined in terms of the right to administer their own financial transactions, hold their own national congress, elect their own leadership and adopt their own programme of action under, however, the broad political line and discipline of the mother-body. This means that the autonomy of the ANCYL, which is often referred to as "*organisational*" does have bounds; it does not extend to political autonomy or independence.
- 4.6 Yet, whilst it maintains its primary responsibility to provide its Youth League with the overall political directive, the ANC acknowledges the right of the youth to engage in youthful political debates and, through their actions and youthful innovation, to dynamise the struggle. The ANC does not seek to curtail the youth in their quest for new and more militant ideas, but expects them to exercise this

right guided by the responsibility both to listen to the wise counsel of the ANC as well to adhere to its revolutionary discipline.

- 4.7 The ANCYL must act as a direct bridge between the youth and the ANC; to bring the youth into the ANC and the ANC to the youth. It has twin tasks to rally the youth into politics and the struggle under the banner of the ANC and, at the same time, to champion their political and socio-economic interests. From the outset, the ANCYL was radical, disciplined, and over time developed a correct understanding of its historical role in relation to the struggle, the ANC as well as the youth themselves.
- 4.8 Throughout its history, the ANCYL has regarded it as one of its foremost duties jealously and steadfastly to safeguard and advance the **“unity of purpose”** and **“unity in action”** of the ANC.
- 4.9 It threw itself headlong into the struggle for freedom, not merely of the South African people but of the African people continent-wide. From the onset, the ANCYL cast its eyes on the continent and pledged its unyielding support for the struggles of all the oppressed peoples of Africa.
- 4.10 Knowing the difficult journey ahead, they defined for their generation the mission – **“Freedom in our Lifetime”**. They not only vowed, but proceeded, to pursue this vision vigorously and with unyielding zeal, both until they handed over the baton to the next generations and until victory over racial bigotry was achieved. This was to be the mission of every generation of youth until freedom was achieved.
- 4.11 Throughout its different phases, from its very inception, the ANCYL has led the youth to realise their historic mission as the foot-soldiers of the revolution. Not a single decade has passed since the forties that the youth did not participate and make a watershed contribution to the struggle of the oppressed. Often, history called upon the youth to commit heroic feats of struggle, indeed, to carry on their shoulders the difficult burdens

of the struggle in order to propel it forward. At each moment when history asked of them, the youth, led by the ANCYL, has never been found wanting or acted cowardly.

5. PHASES IN THE STRUGGLE

- 5.1 The period of the forties for the masses was characterised by the radicalisation of the workers, especially in the mines, the black communities in both urban and rural areas, as well as that of the youth in universities. Upon its formation, the ANCYL dedicated most of its time trying to conceptualise the historic mission of their generation as well as the historic tasks of the ANCYL arising therefrom. At this juncture, most vital was the formulation of the creed of African Nationalism and its injection into the ANC through robust and fearless engagement, as the youth began making their mark on it. Its militant formulation of **African Nationalism** was to be refined after the death of its founding President, Anton Lembede. This gave the ANC its purpose and mission, and began to define the ANC not merely as an organisation either seeking accommodation within the colonial political establishment or an organisation against white minority rule, but, above everything else, as an organisation FOR African national-freedom and self-determination.
- 5.2 From 1947, after the death Lembede, the ANCYL began outlining its own political and socio-economic perspective and programme, culminating in the adoption of the **“Basic Policy Document”** in 1948, which advanced the initial ideas of **“African nationalism”** and laid the basis for the militant programme of action subsequently adopted by the ANC’s Annual Conference in 1949 which emphasised civil disobedience against and mass defiance of apartheid laws.
- 5.3 Following the adoption of this POA, the ANCYL lobbied ANC branches for some of its leaders to be elected into key ANC positions, resulting in it spreading its sphere of influence within the ANC, to ensure they can take direct custody of the

implementation of the POA. Accordingly, when defiance campaign was launched in 1952, ANCYL members were found at the forefront of the campaign as volunteers, leading to the commencement of the mobilisation for the Freedom Charter.

- 5.4 Towards the end of the fifties, ANCYL members began agitating for the commencement of the armed struggle, an argument they were eventually to win as the apartheid-colonial regime was getting more and more violent. The masses needed to begin responding to the growing violence of the regime by returning fire-with-fire.
- 5.5 As the armed struggle became a dominant pillar of the struggle post the Sharpeville massacre, the ANCYL made it its responsibility to recruit the youth to receive military training and become armed combatants. At this moment, the ANCYL decided to fold its organisational business in South Africa, join the ANC in exile and focus its activities on recruiting youth for military training in exile.
- 5.6 In exile, and because there were many youthful combatants in the camps, it was decided to re-establish the ANCYL as the ANC Youth Section, and focus on the arts and culture, political education and ideological training of the youth as well as to participate, on behalf of the ANC youth, in international youth forums such as the World Federation of Democratic Youth, the World Festival of Youth and Students, and others.
- 5.7 Between 1960 and later in the decade, there was a gaping vacuum in the political involvement and organisation of the youth in South Africa. However, students' organisations formed in the late sixties, despite being sectoral in character, took it upon themselves to organise the youth at large.
- 5.8 After the 1973 Durban workers strikes, the youth were once again rallied into the struggle, leading to the June 16th Uprising which, for the first time since the December 16th 1960 MK actions around the country, directly challenged the might of the apartheid regime.

5.9 After 1976, the terrain of struggle and particularly youth involvement was to change drastically, with the formation of the Congress of South African Students (COSAS), representing high school students, and the Azanian Students Organisation (AZASO), representing university students, coming into the picture in 1979. Both organisations subsequently adopted the Freedom Charter and resolutions to work towards the formation of a national youth organisation, which eventually happened in 1987 when the South African Youth Congress (SAYCO) was formed.

5.10 Like that of the ANCYL in 1944, the formation of SAYCO changed the course of South African history and gave impetus to the struggle, injecting the much needed dynamism and militancy in township and rural struggles in ways only the youth could and can do. This led to the ANC relying on the youth as the cutting edge and the shock-troopers of the struggle when the moment came to make South Africa ungovernable and render its institutions of power unworkable. What the youth lacked in experience, they made up for in death-defying valour.

5.11 So valiant were they in battle that the late ANC President, OR Tambo, eventually referred to them as the Young Lions of the struggle. So decisive and courageous were youthful political and organisational interventions after the formation of SAYCO that they unwittingly invited themselves the wrath of the apartheid regime's repressive machinery. Their resilience prevailed, albeit at a huge cost to many of them, in terms of their lives and socio-economic conditions. Their valour did not go unnoticed among the masses and they occupied pride of place in the hearts of their people.

5.12 At the attainment of freedom in 1994, a new era dawned for the ANCYL. During the negotiations, the organisation had grappled with the challenge of a changing political scenario. During this period, as well as maintaining the tempo of the negotiations process, the movement had decided to engage in sustained and at

times rolling mass action in order to keep the masses mobilised and involved in the process, in order to tilt the balance of forces in favour of the progressive forces.

5.13 The ANCYL was vital in mass and youth mobilisation during this period. During a really difficult time, it maintained both a high level of militancy as well as revolutionary discipline.

5.14 After the 1994 elections, the ANCYL faced a serious challenge of having to adjust to the new conditions and adapt, or face death. For 50 years, it had existed as an apartheid fighting machine, with its political programme and organisational structure oriented towards fighting apartheid-colonialism. 1994 occasioned the need to set a new vision, review the organisational machinery and adopt new strategies.

5.15 However, what compounded the ANCYL's political and organisational renewal during this period were three main subjective and inter-related things,

5.15.1 The generation of leadership that had taken the youth struggles to this moment, mainly drawn both from the ANC Youth Section as well as SAYCO, had just relinquished their leadership responsibilities in 1993 at the 18th National Congress, which created a bit of a void as some of them had become household names for a period spanning almost a decade;

5.15.2 A new group of leaders, although largely drawn from the same generation as above, had come in during a complex and confusing period, and had not had sufficient time to conceptualise the new period and thus be able theoretically to locate the mission and role of the youth and thus the tasks of the organisation during this new phase; and

5.15.3 There was a mass and unplanned exodus of this seasoned youth leadership to national and provincial legislatures in 1994,

which denuded the ANCYL of seasoned national and provincial leadership and left a huge void, which effectively weakened the organisation.

6. POST THE 1996 CONGRESS: A PERIOD OF POLITICAL AND ORGANISATIONAL RENEWAL

6.1 The first serious seeds of renewal were planted at the 1996 19th National Congress, when a new leadership was elected singularly to focus on rebuilding the organisation and when the Congress resolved agreed to begin grappling with the question of the role of youth post-1994. It was resolved to explore the strategy of "*cooperation and confrontation*" with the new ANC-led government. Of course, there would be no Chinese wall between these two as they could through careful and tactical manoeuvres complement and reinforce one another.

6.2 The period between 1996 and 2000 was characterised largely by the painstaking work of rebuilding organisational structures. During this time, critical debates continued to rage as to the role of the organisation and youth in general post-apartheid.

6.3 An organisation that was militant from its inception, how could it articulate its militancy in a period when the ANC itself was the governing party, when a crucial element of "*freedom in our lifetime*", that which pertained to the transfer of power from the white minority regime to the non-racial democratic majority, had been attained! However, militancy was never an approach directed against the ANC leadership or even any government – the ANCYL were not anarchists and aimless rebels against any form of government or authority – but it was directed at the system of apartheid-colonialism. This perspective had to be maintained at all times as it could easily result in describing even the popular democratic government as itself indistinguishable from the abhorrent system of oppression and hence an

enemy. Similarly, supporting the new popular government and State could not in itself mean a rejection of militancy against the system of apartheid-colonialism.

- 6.4 Around 2000, the organisation decided to start embarking on youth mass action around youth economic participation and the HIV and AIDS awareness campaigns. Prior to this, the organisation had been busy with campaigns around peace, nation-building, youth development, racism and others. It was these campaigns that re-took the ANCYL to the youth and ensured that by the time of the 22nd National Congress its membership stood at 507 889, which was at the time higher than even the ANC's.
- 6.5 After the 2001 National Congress, the ANCYL NEC decided that both political and organisational focus had to be shifted towards more mass mobilisation around the issues of youth unemployment, guided by the NEC document, ***“Getting Young People Working: an employment strategy of the ANCYL”***. The Youth Economic Participation Programme, was adopted, anchored around creating employment for the youth, raising their skills levels and promoting youth entrepreneurship in both the public and private sectors.
- 6.6 At the same time as the organisation was engaging in mass mobilisation, it began developing policy capacity. It was necessary that the organisation does not just make noise about its proposals, but it would have to formulate coherent policies and programmes to back their proposals up.
- 6.7 One of the issues that became a huge concern at this moment was the toxic correlation between youth unemployment among ANCYL members and their manipulation by some ANC leaders at various tiers who exploited them as pawns in pursuit of their political ambitions. This had a massive impact on the quality of ANCYL members and bred hooligan behaviour in structures and meetings. The process of organisational renewal would thus begin to be marred by the abuse of resources by those who

commanded them over those that did not.

- 6.8 Nonetheless, this process was successful in that it achieved the political re-orientation and re-ideologisation of the youth and ANCYL as an organisation, its organisational renewal as well as its grounding both within the ANC as well as in society as a whole. The ANCYL once more became a force to be reckoned with, a vital commentator on all important issues pertaining to the youth and the nation.

7. 2004 NATIONAL CONGRESS: A HARBINGER FOR IMPENING ANC LEADERSHIP CHANGES

- 7.1 The ANCYL 22nd National Congress in 2004 took place amidst a brewing leadership succession tussle in the ANC which the ANCYL had correctly anticipated would be vicious, costly and divisive not only within the ANC, but within the ANCYL itself and the broader national liberation movement led by the ANC. For over four decades, the ANC had enjoyed peaceful succession, but this was about to change in 2007.
- 7.2 The leadership rift at the highest level in the ANC had become irreparable and a bitter succession battle could not be avoided. The ANCYL would not sit on the fence in this succession battle; it would be called upon to take sides and play a critical role. It would take a strong organisation to engage in this decisive battle and yet not be consumed by it, and a strong leadership to guide the organisation through it all.
- 7.3 Whereas after the 2004 National Congress, the attention was on implementing Congress resolutions, however, the 2005 *“release”* of the then Deputy President from his government role precipitated a complete change of focus, with the questions of succession in 2007 becoming predominant. From then on, the focus became the ANC and its leadership questions, as the ANCYL crowned itself, with the connivance of the media, as the ANC's *“king-makers”*.

This was unfortunate as it was not only ahistorical, a distortion of the ANCYL's rich history which deviated it from its twin tasks. This conception confined its role to ANC leadership elections and bred arrogance and ill-discipline that began to characterise the organisation in later years.

- 7.4 In parenthesis, the notion of “*king-makers*” never existed in the minds of the founders of the ANCYL and was never, throughout the ANCYL's history, a part of the organisation's culture. Actually, it took 5 years since the ANCYL's launch eventually to propagate for leadership changes in the ANC, and even then there were objective conditions and reasons that led to this eventuality.
- 7.5 The period leading to and following the ANC's 2007 Polokwane Conference was sad as it was tragic for the ANC as a whole, and the ANCYL was affected as the divisions in the ANC had permeated all its structures. This period caused much consternation and paranoia within the ANC and ANCYL, and created a gap for factionalists and opportunists to exploit. This had immensely disastrous consequences in the ANC as factionalists gained upper-hand and suppressed the ANC's rich democratic culture.

8. THE ADVENT OF POLITICAL AND ORGANISATIONAL DEGENERATION

- 8.1 After 2007, the ANCYL would begin to be consumed by the divisions it had actively participated in trying to diffuse. The recognition of the outcome of its 2008 flawed electoral process by the ANC NEC was a huge and uncalculated mistake the consequences of which were to be almost fatal for the ANCYL.
- 8.2 The ANCYL started becoming a voice and very embodiment of gross ill-discipline, vulgarity, anarchy and factionalism. Both in terms of its political posturing as well as its organisational functioning, the ANCYL both became a problem and was in deep trouble, under the firm clutches of political hooligans, if not downright agents. The organisation developed an

increasingly antagonistic relationship with its mother-body, seemingly defining itself outside of the political framework of the ANC, embracing alien organisational practices that flouted long-established internal democratic practices of the movement.

- 8.3 The ANC 53rd National Conference in 2012 instructed the incoming NEC to “**urgently intervene to address the situation of the ANC Youth League**” and to take “all the necessary measures to ensure that the League plays its proper role and acts within the policy and Constitution of the ANC.” After much agonising, the ANC NEC resolved to dissolve the ANCYL NEC.
- 8.4 This created a gaping political vacuum in youth politics that has been particularly painful for the youth in general, who look up to the ANCYL for political leadership, as well as for the ANC itself that has witnessed the political and organisational decay of once-mighty, influential and coherent ANCYL and its standing among the youth.

9. THE URGENT NEED TO REBUILD THE ANCYL NOW

- 9.1 At this crucial moment, four inter-related questions rise to sharp prominence:
- 9.1.1 First, the urgent need to rebuild the ANCYL, in terms of both its organisational machinery as well as political and ideological orientation;
- 9.1.2 Secondly, the urgent need to mobilise, organise and educate – that is, conscientise – the youth in general so that they remain a dependable, conscious and disciplined revolutionary-democratic force;
- 9.1.3 Thirdly, the urgent need to re-establish the vast political influence of the ANCYL in society in general, among the youth and within the ANC; and
- 9.1.4 Finally, the urgent need to define the role of the youth during

this period that the movement has unanimously decided to characterise as the second phase of the transition.

- 9.2 Rebuilding the ANCYL must be about repositioning it at the very centre of youth struggles, sharpening its ideological and political orientation and strengthening and remoulding its organisational machinery as a potent force for revolutionary change and repository for the best youth in society. Accordingly, the rebuilding of the ANCYL is an urgent political and organisational priority for the ANC as a whole, and not only the youth of the ANC.
- 9.3 It must continue in its role as a perennial political and organisational reservoir for ever newer recruits and cadres for the pursuit of the national democratic revolution. It acts as a nursery for the revolutionary upbringing of those who come into the movement and provides the material requirements for the fulfilment of a cadre policy designed to meet all the demands of our struggle, particularly as the struggle traverses through newer dynamics. Its existence ensures that the ANC's vision of the future is both transmitted to and translated for the newer generations of the youth so that it remains permanently relevant to them.
- 9.4 To do so requires that the ANCYL be strong and sharpened ideologically, politically and organisationally to be able to confront the struggles of today and the future. It must continue to ground itself among the youth, placing itself at the centre of youth struggles, and particularly at the very helm of the progressive youth movement.

A. Political, ideological and organisational renewal

- i. The ANC's Decade of the Cadre must be about the youth – that is, about nurturing and preparing young activists to become better cadres for the movement and, indeed, the deepen the level of political consciousness of the youth and raise the

caliber of their leadership on all fronts. The ANCYL must accordingly claim this decade as its own. Focus must be on intensive political education and extensive mass political work in order to blend theory and practice, and help the youth learn the dialectics between the two.

- ii. ANCYL members must singularly focus on the ANCYL itself, on its (political, ideological and organizational) renewal, and stop the rush to lead the ANC and/or to occupy public office. A balance must be struck in this regard. Amongst other things, the strength of the ANCYL has always been to have large numbers of cadres whose total focus is its building and functioning, who seek neither political office in the ANC nor public office at local, provincial or national levels. This practice must be restored as it is the only way, among others, to teach the scores of young cadres about humility and imbue them with the culture of selfless service. After all, it helps the ANC a great deal to have young activists and cadres that address youth issues, particularly bearing in mind the age demographics of our society and the fact that the ANCYL is itself first and foremost a youth organization that must be composed of and led by the youth.
- iii. The question must, accordingly, arise whether there is a need to drop the organisation's age-limit at this particular juncture. The answer to this question must not be determined by technical or emotional and opportunistic considerations. Two contrary arguments arise in this regard, that is,

■ Reducing the age limit may work in a social organization, but not in a political organization where cadre and leadership development cannot be rushed but requires a painstaking effort which could take long. By the time someone is ripe for leadership, their exit may be nigh. We must take into consideration that the times have changed and conditions for nurturing and grooming the youth are no longer the same as in the past. It might be politically and organizationally suicidal to fast-track leadership in a political organization, even of youth; and

- On the other hand, reducing the age limit may help the ANCYL given that as a result of the new dispensation, many young people above 30 develop new interests, at a career and family levels, which accord with the period of transition at which the nation is and at which they, as individuals and growing young women and men, are.
- iv. ANCYL members must be encouraged to undertake formal education and acquire formal qualifications. Whilst the movement can do so much to educate and develop its cadres through its political education programmes, all cadres must also undertake programmes to empower themselves both through informal reading and political study as well as through formal education in order to deepen their intellectual insight and empower themselves for the benefit of the movement, the revolution and people.
- v. Central to this task is the mobilisation and organisation of the different sectors of the youth – that is, the students, workers, professionals and the unemployed – the combination of which will broaden the mass political and progressive character of the ANCYL, deepen its ideological orientation and make it the most representative mass political youth organ in South Africa.
- vi. It goes without saying, accordingly, that the ANCYL assumes the same broad character amongst the youth that the ANC assumes in society as a whole. It represents the broadest section of the South African youth, and this must consciously include immigrant youth that have been naturalised. Consequently, both in its character and leadership, the ANCYL must develop the political and organisational capacity to manage these different sectors and mediate their interests.
- vii. Furthermore, the leadership layer of the ANCYL must be built from branches upward. In this regard, the ANCYL does need to develop its own leadership principles, its own customised variant of *“Through the Eye of the Needle”*,

outlining who can and should lead the ANCYL, what are their characteristics and why the youth must be the most idealistic in this regard. A youth organisation conscious and jealous of, and which cherishes its, role as the guardians of our future, a breeding ground for the future leadership of the ANC and our society, must be very vigilant in terms of its leadership structures and the qualities of its leaders. The ANCYL leadership, especially its full-time cadres, should be free of the ambitions to be ANC leaders and public representatives whilst still leading the ANCYL. Nothing distracts a youth organisation more than having its leading layers stretched between many responsibilities. This does not mean the ANCYL should not aspire to have youth represented in the ANC or holding public office; however, the priority and focus of the ANCYL should be the ANCYL. This, again, brings the age question into focus!

B. Mobilising, organising and educating the youth

- i. As an integral part of the revolutionary movement, the ANCYL is charged with the task of fulfilling the strategic objectives of the movement with the greater involvement of the youth. It must rally all the sectors of the youth to participate in the struggle for fundamental social change and champion their political and socio-economic interests. It has the responsibility of organising, mobilising and guiding all our youth into participation in the revolutionary struggle of our people.
- ii. It must bring the youth into progressive politics, the struggle and the ANC and must also bring progressive politics, the struggle and the ANC to the youth. Accordingly, it bridges the gap between the different generations of the youth and ensures that there is healthy tension between the various generations in such a way as to help imbue the youth with the experience and wisdom of the older and yet fire the older with the enthusiasm, the fearlessness and revolutionary zeal of the new.

- iii. The grooming of those who have to ensure that the genuine aspirations of the people are fully realised demands a conscious effort on the part of the movement and, therefore, our ability to educate them in a genuine revolutionary spirit is pivotal. To be clearer on this point: the successful pursuit of the creation of the National Democratic Society and the successful execution of the tasks of the second phase of the transition cannot happen without the strong leadership of the ANC as well as the active and central participation of the ANCYL as the political home of the youth, the custodians of our future.
- iv. Nothing develops political consciousness and deepens political and ideological education than mass political work wherein the members are involved and can both develop, in practice, the theory of organisation and understand other basic theoretical frameworks of the struggle. In the course of this, activists develop the culture of mass political work, the discipline of working in a collective and of leading and being led, as well as the discipline of Mass political work does not only involve
- v. The ANC must invest in the ANCYL and the progressive students' movement. This requires engagement, presence and visibility on an on-going basis rather than intermittently. We must begin to take SRC elections in tertiary institutions serious. Whilst it must continue to establish its branches and exist in tertiary institutions, the ANCYL and SASCO must enter into a pact that the former will no longer, from now henceforth, contest SRC elections except under the banner of SASCO. However, this does impose an enormous responsibility on the latter to conduct itself wherever it leads an SRC in a manner conscious of the ANC's leading role in society, the aspirations of the students for inspirational, transformative, servant and ethical leadership as well as the imperative for young leaders to develop out of this experience so that they become competent leaders of the movement, country and people in the future.

C. *Re-establishing the ANCYL's political and organisational influence*

- i. Rebuilding the ANCYL is not about taking it to its next national congress, or about electing one leader or group of leaders or another, but it is fundamentally about rebuilding it to position it as the natural and only correct political home of all youth, male and female, black and white, drawn from all the sectors – working, students, professional and rural youth. This process must result in the restoration of the ANCYL's essential quality and glory on the basis of which it was founded in 1944.
- ii. As a youth organisation, the ANCYL must continue to espouse the twin tasks; that is, rallying the youth into the struggle under the banner of the ANC as well as championing the political and socio-economic interests of the youth. This means that, as well as being a political youth organisation with a broader political focus, the ANCYL must pay urgent attention to youth issues particularly such as youth unemployment, education and skills development and youth entrepreneurship, as well as others. Youth issues are the primary objective of the ANCYL.
- iii. At the same time, as a political youth formation, the ANCYL must not be confined but must engage with broader political issues that affect the movement and the nation. These include taking on other political organisations on behalf of the movement – indeed, to amplify the ANC voice and lend it a youthful spirit and militancy – as well as issues of the economy, poverty and inequality, land and others.

D. *Defining the role of the youth during the second phase of the transition*

- i. In so far as the second phase of the transition, nobody can or will question and doubt the central role of the ANCYL. The successful accomplishment of the tasks of the second phase of the transition depends precisely on the successful mobilisation of the youth as a potent force for revolutionary change,

indeed, as the catalysts, the foot-soldiers and the cutting edge of the struggle during that phase.

- ii. The second phase of the transition must be characterised by radical socio-economic change; but what is “radical socio-economic change”? Answering this question would give shape, content and direction to the current conjuncture and assist the movement as a whole to avoid adventurist pitfalls. At the same time, it would ensure that we do not merely change the language and nothing else beyond that.
- iii. However, drawing from a general understanding of what were the essential features of the previous twenty years, we can safely conclude that they consisted in,
 - the transfer of political power from the white minority clique to the non-racial majority,
 - the drafting of the new democratic Constitution which would set the new South Africa apart from apartheid South Africa as a “**South Africa for all**”, based on social inclusion and where racial bigotry would finally be banished from official state policy,
 - the establishment of democratic systems of governance throughout the length and breadth of our society based on the new Constitution, voted for and by all on the basis of the universal franchise of one-person-one-vote, and
 - the establishment of a democratic state that plays an active and confident role in socio-economic change particularly in favour of those hitherto socially-excluded, leading the process of the reconstruction and development of our society, a state that would break down the monopolies, redistribute wealth and property and discipline capital if needs be to force it to invest in the productive sectors of the economy.
- iv. As the ANC Strategy and Tactics states it, this was about ridding the country of the vestiges of apartheid colonialism and launching the process of constructing a National Democratic Society, which formed the basis of our Programme of National Democratic Transformation during this period.
- v. Accordingly and whilst bearing in mind the limitations imposed on our transition by the balance of forces at the moment of the advent of our transition, which compelled us to enter into certain compromises, it would be safe to conclude that our revolution has accomplished the political tasks which had to do with its first phase of the transition, and that therefore the shift towards next phase characterised by radical socio-economic change is now urgent and is the imperative of this conjuncture.
- vi. However, “**radical socio-economic transformation**” means different things to different people within the movement. To others it means implementing new economic programmes in the infrastructure sector, albeit within the confines of the current production system – more of the same, and yet to others it means a fundamental shift in the current structure of production and moving towards a more radical, equitable system and job-creating framework – a more heterodox approach.
- vii. The question is, can the current structure of production support job creation, skills development and create equality? Can it lead to social justice? The answer is, NO! And this is not because it remains in the hands of a white male minority, but because it has reached its zenith; it can no longer support any new advancement in the productive forces and cannot hence lead to wide-scale production as we seek in South Africa or change the fundamental colonial

structure of relations between South Africa and Africa, as well as between South Africa and the world. In reality, since decolonisation, Africa as a whole has remained the producer and exporter of primary commodities, which it produces not for her own consumption, but for the consumption, gratification and enrichment of the hitherto colonial-masters.

- viii. The old colonial economy predicated as it was on the minerals-energy complex remains intact in Africa, as well as South Africa, with stubborn resistance from the mining owners and entrenched economic and political interests to changing it. This still defines Africa's relations with the world and retards the further development of the forces of production which played so vital a role in the past development of the South African economy. Only those countries that have transcended to the productive economy – manufacturing – have become the engines of growth. Unless industrialisation is the ultimate objective of our infrastructure programme, even this programme will end up reinforcing the current production and social relations and will entrench racial, class and gender disparities.
- ix. Accordingly, the second phase of the transition must be characterised by the fundamental change in the structure of the economy. Anything else will fall short and will not address the fundamental yearning of our people for social justice which must constitute the programme for economic and social change – the social revolution! We need to identify the areas in the economy, such as mining, the automotive sector, the oil and gas, fleet locomotives and the oceans economy which are going to be the drivers of our industrialisation programme and align our economic policies – which are often contradictory to one another – to pursue the same objective. Only this can create jobs, develop the skills and open entrepreneurship opportunities for the youth on a sustainable basis, and create sustainable decent jobs in general.

- x. The ANCYL must elaborate a radical industrialisation programme, linked with youth employment, skills development and entrepreneurship opportunities – as the key focus theme of “**Economic Freedom in our Lifetime**” – rather than be locked into a “nationalisation” abyss as if nationalisation on its own is a panacea for the problems of our society, or as if it could on its own characterise an entire change in the production system.

10. SOCIAL FORCES TO BE MOBILISED IN REBUILDING THE ANCYL

- 10.1 The **working youth** forms the most consistent and reliable section of the revolutionary movement. Their belonging in the working class, relation to production, involvement in daily class struggles as well as their age accords them a leading position in the revolutionary youth movement and makes them the most consistently militant section even of the working class as a whole. They must be consciously recruited into the ANCYL so that they become its backbone and inject into it the acquired militant tradition of the working class as a whole. The pursuit of the national democratic revolution requires their militancy and most progressive outlook. Because of their class allegiance and experiences in the workplace, in relation to the employers within the broader capitalist system, ensures that they are not easily lured by the trappings of wealth and conspicuous consumption. This sector of the youth must be organised directly in the communities and working closely with the progressive unions so that while they bring into the youth movement their working class character, they also participate as youth in their own right.
- 10.2 The **unemployed youth**, while they may transit as they get employment, also bring into the youth movement a special progressive character. The apartheid-colonial economy has bequeathed the new dispensation a large army of unskilled, unemployed and largely unemployable sector of youth whose

existence, across generations of the youth sector, serves to supply a super-exploitable reserve army of labour caught in a vicious cycle of poverty, unemployment and lack of skills. This group, unless a conscious intervention is undertaken, is incapable of rescuing itself from this vicious cycle. They can get easily drawn into the political pessimism, cynicism and disgruntlement, and can easily fall prey to social ills and even into reactionary political activities. Their organisation deepens the political consciousness as well as conscientisation of the ANCYL and, at the same time, engages them into organised political activity.

10.3 Historically, the *student youth* has been the organised and dynamic social force that has also served as a perennial reservoir for the revolutionary intelligentsia of the movement, interpreting the character of oppression, the struggles of people as well as the future we are fighting for. Because of the social origins of most of them, drawn as they are from the ranks of the working class, whilst they can upon graduation, acquisition of specialised skills and jobs, transit into the ranks of the middle-stratum and even employers, they often possess a militant working class allegiance and often strive when they act in alliance with and through the support of the working class. In the course of the struggle, they have turned to the working masses to achieve results. This, above everything else, has enabled them to display their revolutionary initiative to the full. Calling for students to be organised consciously within the ranks of the ANCYL does not preclude the necessity for them to organise themselves as students and to define their sector of struggle in pursuit of their common objectives. The ANCYL must militantly and unapologetically take up their interests, both acting alone as well as in alliance with the progressive students' movement, and champion their cause for free education as well as affordable and accessible higher education.

10.4 The new dispensation has enabled the emergence of a vast layer of *professional/middle-stratum youth* that plays a vital role in terms of knowledge production, dissemination and public discourse, as well as in relation to the economy as managers, corporate leaders and consumers. These are a product of our revolutionary successes, and as they progress, some may begin to attribute that progress to their own selves and not to credit the movement and its programmes for it. Their relation to production places them in a position where they are most likely to consider themselves as "*having arrived*" during this dispensation; and, frankly, regardless of which political party is in power, they view their fortunes as secure, given the strength of our Constitution. Whilst particularly the black middle-stratum remains potentially progressive, they are, however, as a stratum, unreliable and their outlook oscillates depending on their parochial interests between one of the primary classes, or even political parties. Their allegiance to the ANC cannot be assumed and is highly contested. The ANCYL needs to find creative ways and programmes to appeal to and mobilise this group, highly critical and outspoken as they are, and to ensure they view it as their representative too in the broadest sense.

10.5 At the same time, youth cannot be treated as being of a homogeneous age category. They have different age-cohorts, which both share interests and diverge in terms of their location in the cohorts. For example, those in the 14-21 cohort may not have much in common with those in the 28-35 cohort. However, the different youth cohorts remain vital to the sustenance of the ANC and ANCYL ideas among the youth. The different cohorts are found at different social locations in the society, with the first group mostly at high school up to university, the second group between university and early work and the last cohort working, rising up the corporate and political ladder and already building families and preparing for their exit from the youth. This, and their different locations among

the age-cohorts, enables them to bring their diverse experiences to bear in the progressive youth movement, which can only help to enrich it and make it dynamic. Furthermore, the different cohorts ensure that as one exits, at the end of its pipeline, newer waves of youth cohorts step up and yet still receive training from the exiting groups. This also assists to educate and provide political mentorship to the young and imbibe them with the movement's ideas. There could be healthy tensions between these different cohorts arising from their different experiences, perspectives, aspirations as well as ambitions.

- 10.6 The ANCYL needs to find creative ways to lead these different youth social forces in pursuing their common aspirations, ensuring that their sectoral interests are linked to the strategic objectives and harnessing their different talents towards a positive progressive movement for social change. All these social forces must be galvanised behind the twin tasks of the ANCYL.

11. CHARACTER OF THE ANCYL

- 11.1 What then is the character of a youth organisation that must lead the youth to rally them into the struggle whilst pursuing their political and socio-economic aspirations, given the tasks arising during the second phase of the transition? To carry out such tasks requires a progressive – militant and disciplined – youth movement which:
- i. understands the interconnection between political and socio-economic challenges in our society;
 - ii. leads the youth motive forces of the NDR in pursuing their common aspirations and ensuring that their sectoral interests are linked to the broader strategic objective as characterised by the ANC;
 - iii. masters the terrain of electoral contest, utilises political power wielded by the ANC and uses its position within the ANC as such as to advance the broader objectives

of the NDR as well as the particular interests of the youth, and ensuring that by its participation in the ANC, it influences the wielding of state instruments in line with these ideals as reflected in the Freedom Charter and the National Constitution;

- iv. organises and mobilises the motive forces at large, and the youth motive forces in particular, and builds broader partnerships to drive the process of reconstruction and development, nation-building and reconciliation in general, and youth development and empowerment in particular; and
- v. conducts itself, both in its internal practices and in relation to society at large, in line with the ideals represented by the NDR and acts as a microcosm of the future.

11.2 Obviously, these tasks are drawn largely from those of the African National Congress as outlined in the Strategy and Tactics.

11.3 During the seven decades of its existence, the ANCYL

- became synonymous with the youth – there has never been a day or decade when they had to do one without the other,
- ensured that since its formation, there never was a decade during which the youth never made a remarkable contribution into the struggle and played a catalysing role in order, indeed, to take it to newer heights,
- has been among the front rank combatants in the struggle, and in the centre of the struggles of the youth, providing them with principled and militant leadership, and drawing them into the struggle under the banner of the ANC,
- led the youth of South Africa into the struggle for national freedom as an integral component part of that struggle, in the conviction and knowledge that youth interests

- were inseparable from those of the people as a whole,
- imbued the youth with a militant political outlook as well as (with) a militant and yet disciplined activities, and
 - taught the youth through united, militant and disciplined action to shed their fear for the tyrannical regime and its repressive machinery and wage a concerted and relentless struggle until total victory was won.
- 11.4 A revolutionary youth movement understands, conceptualises and characterises itself not in relation to its members – *“an organisation of one-hundred members per branch...”*, but in relation to the revolutionary tasks it carries on its shoulders, which it must accomplish in history, as well as in relation to the historic mission of a generation.
- 11.5 The ANCYL must always understand that it is not a youth organisation of a modern parliamentary political party, but that of a progressive national liberation movement. This imposes on it the understanding of a particular character, responsibilities and role in society, among the youth as well as within the ANC itself. It must fulfil this role in relation to the struggle of our people in general, under the leadership of the ANC; the unity, cohesion and sense of purpose and direction of the ANC at all times; and, finally, the role of the youth in the struggle, rallied into action by the ANCYL under the banner of the ANC.
- 11.6 The primary tasks of the ANCYL remain the mobilisation of the youth in all their different classes, strata and sectors into the struggle under the banner of the ANC; and championing the political and socio-economic interests of the youth. The youth must remain the cutting edge, the foot-soldiers and catalysts of the revolution, espousing militant ideas and actions and yet disciplined.
- 11.7 This remains a revolution of the whole people, whose liberation of the most oppressed would simultaneously result in the liberation of white people in general from the false ideology of apartheid. In particular, it would free the white working class and the white poor from the pact they made with white capital to defend the status quo and bind them into a new principled pact with their black counterparts. It would free them wholeheartedly to pursue their genuine interests together with their black counterparts without having to pay allegiance to a system that negated their genuine interests and made them partners to its depravity. It also freed the white youth from continuing to bear the brunt of a system most of whom never had to vote for.
- 11.8 The progress made thus far by the revolution does not mean, as some commentators have tended recently to suggest, that the national content of the NDR has been accomplished. This, at best, is based on an oversimplification of the challenges faced in our society today based on the emergence of a small emerging black bourgeois class, which has not yet reached its full bloom, as well as the proliferation of a very consumerist black middle stratum whose spending power has immensely influenced economic growth in recent years, but is yet to equal that of their white compatriots.
- 11.9 The truth is that the national interests of black people remain as pertinent as ever and yet there are new social dynamics which have begun to tilt the struggle emphasising its class content. However, even a cursory look at the black middle strata and the emerging black bourgeoisie would indicate that they still have national aspirations which tie them to the fulfilment of the interests of all black people, under the principled leadership of the black working class. These groups cannot as yet strike out on their own. Their very consolidation and further growth, and survival, still depend very much on the success of the lot of all black people.

- 11.10 These dynamics described above impose on the ANC the responsibility more intensely to continue rallying all sectors of the population behind its pursuit of a better life for all. Amongst the youth, this task falls on the ANCYL, with a particular bias towards the working class and the poor youth. The three interrelated challenges of apartheid-colonialism – race, class and gender – still require both that the ANCYL should mobilise around the resolution of these issues, and hence rally into the struggle those social forces most interested in their fundamental and most sustainable resolution, as well as that it should recognise the leading role of the working class youth in the pursuit of fundamental social transformation.
- 11.11 In this context, the ANCYL is a disciplined and militant political organ of young revolutionary democrats of the movement, established to bring the youth into the ANC and, at the same time, bring the ANC to the youth. It represents and moulds the future of the ANC and our society all in all its best elements and helps to bridge the gap between the different generations of the movement. It summarises and articulates the militant and idealistic sentiments and aspirations of the young revolutionary democrats and ensures they find space in the mainstream political and policy milieu. As a militant youth formation, it eschews reformist struggles, neo-liberalism and ultra-leftism.
- 11.12 To fulfil its leadership role, the ANCYL places a high premium on the involvement of its cadres in all centres of power in order to ensure that the voice and ideas of the youth are not marginalised, but resonate in the very mainstream of societal endeavour. This includes the presence of ANCYL cadres, members and supporters in the legislatures, state institutions, structures of civil society as well as their involvement in the intellectual and ideological terrain to help shape the value systems of society. The ANCYL must in the coming period pay greater attention to this latter sphere of intellectual and ideological terrain, by ensuring that its cadres are found within the intellectual community, including institutions such as universities and the media, promoting progressive ideas.
- 11.13 As well as the above-mentioned sphere, ANCYL activists must be found everywhere youth are found, everywhere being the custodians of the principles of fundamental social change; winning respect among their generation and society at large through their exemplary conduct and espousing the very ethos of the ANCYL.
- 11.14 Given the multifarious nature of its character, and that the sectoral interests of each of its social forces may from time-to-time clash, the ANCYL must develop the art and master the science of mediating between and managing these diverse interests to ensure that all these social forces pull in the same direction and appreciate the primacy of the common strategic interest. In managing the clash between sectoral interests, it should remain steadfast to principle and, like the ANC, it must guard against attempts by any force to turn it into a hostage of narrow sectoral interest.
- 11.15 This requires that the ANCYL, specifically its leadership echelons, must at all times be conscious of their responsibility to muster all the youth social forces towards the same direction. To achieve this, its members should continually improve their capacity – both political and technical – to act as the most advanced elements of society.
- 11.16 Given the very character of the ANCYL as a youth organisation, it essentially cannot avoid being the microcosm of the future and cannot, accordingly, afford becoming a fossil of the past, conservative and failing to appeal to ever-newer generations of the youth. By its nature, it must always strive to become the harbinger of the impending changes in broader society as well as in the direction and tempo of the struggle.

- 11.17 The ANC has always prided itself in being the broadest and most ardent representative of the youth. Denuding it of this capability, strength and advantage consequently immediately converts it into an ordinary political party on par with all its opponents, and loses the advantage of the dynamising effect and influence of the youth. In this way, it becomes a relic of the past and will be overtaken by events and cruelly swept aside by the revolutionary process.
- 11.18 The ANCYL must pay conscious attention to this task. It belongs to it. Without the ANCYL, the ANC will neither appeal to the youth nor will it have a guaranteed future. This lends enormous weight to how and where it recruits its members, how it nurtures them politically and how it raises their leadership and all-round competencies, how it constitutes its leadership collectives at every tier of the organisation and how it deploys its cadres and activists in order to expand its influence. Wherever its cadres are deployed, whether in the executive, the legislatures and state institutions, or in civil society or even business, they must never be allowed to lose their dynamism and militancy, and neither must they be blunted by the elders.
- 11.19 More than even the ANC, the ANCYL must be keen not to create '*social distance*' between its leaders and members, as well as between its organisation and the youth. The ANCYL must retain the most dynamic contact between itself and the youth, live among them and ensure they are at all times not only attracted to its programmes and listen to its directives, but believe in the ANC and have faith in its programmes, principles, values and the future towards which it is leading them!
- 11.20 For this reason, at all times, the ANCYL members, activists and cadres must always return to the five tasks outlined in 11.1 and answer most candidly whether it is living by and fulfilling them.
- 11.21 This means the ANCYL must never detract from its responsibility of being a "*mass youth political organ of the ANC*". It must never be allowed to reach a stage of confusion where it acts both as an ANC and anti-ANC youth league. It is solely an ANC Youth League and must, whilst being organisationally autonomous, live by the principles and political injunctions of the ANC. The youth must never be confused about the ANCYL's standpoint in relation to and allegiance to the ANC.
- 11.22 As a "*body of opinion*" within the ANC, it must both express itself fearlessly on any matter of debate and discussion within the ANC, be they broadly political / socio-economic issues or youth matters specifically. The militant voice and dynamism of youth must be felt and heard by the ANC on all matters and at all times. At the same time, the youth must be prepared to listen to the wise counsel of the older which they must imbibe after critical scrutiny in order not to find themselves locked into conservative adult paradigms. This means that the ANC itself must accept the sharp critical analysis of the youth on all matters presented to them. To preclude the ANC from descending into a political fossil that is irrelevant to society, ever-newer challenges and generations, the ANC must always sharpen the ANCYL's critical analysis and not blunt their constructive criticism and youth rebelliousness.
- 11.23 The character and strength of the ANCYL must continue to reside in and derive from its mass base. As the leading force among the youth, the ANCYL should continually improve its capacity and skill to influence and transform the instruments of power.
- 11.24 The character of the ANCYL will never be complete unless the organisation deliberately recruits **young women** into its ranks. South African women have always been active, across the generations, and their militants have been found in all the pillars of the struggle, during every epoch. Today's

young women face a unique challenge to lead and carry forward to completion the struggles of the women whilst still participating in the mainstream struggle so that they do not get marginalised. Actually, women's issues must be placed into the very centre/mainstream of youth and broader struggles. Whilst their overall situation has drastically changed in relation to the older women, young women remain marginalised in terms of employment and economic empowerment, education and skills development in general, and others. The ANCYL must militantly take up the political, social and economic issues that affect young women.

12. PROGRAMME OF THE ANCYL

12.1 The vision for the rebuilding of the ANCYL having been established, what then are the elements of the programme it must pursue? What is outlined herein does not confine the ANCYL narrowly to youth issues, but highlights its tasks in terms of its mandate and accordingly programme. However, even as it pursues broader political matters, the ANCYL must always pay attention to youth mobilisation and championing youth interests in order always to remain relevant to them.

12.1.1 *Governance*

12.1.1.1 Youth participation in governance straddles between the broader structures of governance – the executive, the legislature and administration – as well as statutory youth structures, that is, the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA).

12.1.1.2 The NYDA must not be viewed as a panacea for all youth challenges; but as a vehicle both directly and indirectly to empower the youth in terms of their socio-economic aspirations through its own programmes as well as to coordinate with various

government departments, agencies and institutions, including the private sector, also in order to empower the youth, particularly the most disadvantaged.

12.1.1.3 The location of the NYDA in the Presidency, as well as the establishment of an executive function for the youth within the Presidency, lends youth development urgency and weight. This enables capacity for coordination across government.

12.1.1.4 The ANCYL must be very interested in how these function and must interface with them directly and receive regular reports from them in order to guide them. This requires that the ANCYL NEC must ensure strategic and standard leadership of these structures, and establish mechanisms of strategic coordination between the statutory and non-statutory youth development structures (the South African Youth Council).

12.1.1.5 Regularly, the ANCYL deploys, as part of the ANC contingent, a team of its members as public representatives at municipal, provincial and national levels. Whilst they draw their mandate from the ANC Manifesto, these youth public representatives must be made to understand their specific youth mandate and the ANCYL, through relevant structures, must provide guidelines for mandating and conscientisation.

12.1.1.6 Furthermore, the ANCYL has members serving in state institutions in the administration. Whilst it will always prove complex to coordinate these, ways must be found to ensure

these are fed the ANCYL line and understand their broad mandate arising out of the ANCYL vision and programme.

12.1.2 **Economic Transformation**

12.1.2.1 The ANC Strategy and Tactics says that: *“Central to the country's economic challenges in the current phase is to build an integrated and growing economy from which all South Africans can benefit.”* It then identifies programmes to be pursued towards the realisation of this objective.

12.1.2.2 In relation to the youth, the biggest challenge is to engage them in positive economic activity. Three critical elements are vital towards this endeavour; that is, jobs, skills and entrepreneurship.

12.1.2.3 Youth employment needs to be prioritised. Instead of ad-hoc, piece-meal solutions, a sustainable long-term strategy must be developed to get the youth employed in the infrastructure programme particularly. Specific infrastructure programmes must be targeted at youth in order to get the youth employed. Their advantage is both scale and their ability to empower the youth with requisite artisanal skills to make them employable on a sustainable basis. In this way, the youth will create a legacy linked to the infrastructure roll-out.

12.1.2.4 Previous skills development programmes spearheaded by the SETAs have failed to change the fortunes of the youth. Clearly, the above-mentioned interventions in terms of infrastructure programmes earmarked for the youth would change the situation and create urgency in terms

of youth employability and employment. Furthermore,

- ❑ government must double NSFAS in order to address the funding challenge and ensure that financial exclusions are precluded,
- ❑ government must demand of State-Owned Companies (SOC) to invest heavily towards skills development, particularly of artisans, at their learning academies; and
- ❑ the ANCYL must campaign unrelentingly for free education, especially at junior degree level.

12.1.2.5 Youth participation in the economy cannot be confined to employment and skills development; they span to entrepreneurship. Countries that do well economically have strong and vast entrepreneurship and manufacturing bases. These two ingredients to faster, larger and more sustainable economic growth are also vital ingredients towards a shared growth as well as sustainable and decent employment. It is crucial to identify those strategic areas where the youth can be involved in entrepreneurship and industrialists' development. These could include youth cooperatives forged around renewable energy, water and sanitation and others.

12.1.2.6 The ANCYL must advocate for the speedy and full implementation of the ANC Mangaung Conference resolutions on the transformation of mining as well as the reconfiguration of the architecture of State-Owned Companies.

12.1.3 **Social Transformation**

12.1.3.1 The age of youth and, indeed, their interests, is not politics and the economy. Youth interests also span across health, education, sports and recreation as well as arts and culture issues.

12.1.3.2 As well as being the strongest and most vociferous advocates of the National Health Insurance (NHI), the ANCYL must spearhead specific campaigns aimed at improving the general health status of the youth particularly through preventive health care and addressing poverty afflicting the youth, especially young women. Furthermore, the ANCYL must continue to occupy the space around preventable and communicable diseases, against with particular reference to young women who remain vulnerable. Fighting diseases is not just about defending the vulnerable, but it is about empowering them so they cease being vulnerable.

12.1.3.3 With regard to education,

- ❑ The ANCYL must spearhead campaigns to enhance public education and make education fashionable among the youth. Furthermore, Technical and Vocational Education and Training Institutions (TVETs) must be popularised among the youth, with requisite funding provided;
- ❑ TVETs must be linked particularly with State-Owned Companies (SOC) in order to ensure they can benefit from the vast capital resources and skilled human resources of the SOC, and further so

that the skills they provide are the types of skills required in the economy; and

- ❑ A vigorous campaign to fight the escalating cost of higher education must waged.

12.1.3.4 Sports and recreation are vital to the mental, physical and moral health of the youth, as well as to social cohesion and nation-building. The ANCYL must spearhead campaigns for the establishment of vibrant and extensive school and community sports. Of course, this requires that resources be invested towards this objective in order to establish community and school sports and recreation centres.

12.1.3.5 The ability of the democratic transformation to find root and resonance within South African society depends on it being able to capture the hearts and minds of society and on it being able to reflect the mood, the sentiments and aspirations of the people, especially the poorest of the poor. This is where and how arts and culture is vital and relevant to the nation's mores, vision and aspirations. But, cultural industries are equally vital to the country's economy and, properly harnessed, can be a serious source of income for thousands, if not millions, of people. The ANCYL must pay attention to this area of work too, advocating for community arts and culture centres, more museums and other such sites that commemorate and immortalise our struggle, effective anti-piracy laws and their implementation in order to end the robbing of arts and culture activists of their hard-

earned incomes, and others.

12.1.3.6 Youth development is vital to ensuring that the historical deprivation of the youth, and their locking into the vicious cycle of poverty, is ended. This places this programme at the very centre of the empowerment of the youth – particularly the working youth, students, rural youth, young women and the unemployed – so that they can fulfil their historic role at the helm of the NDR.

12.1.4 ***Building a Progressive International Youth Movement in pursuit of the New World Order, particularly in Africa and the developing world***

12.1.4.1 The international balance of forces always plays a vital, though not a determining factor, in the progress of the NDR. They can and do influence the extent to which we are able to accelerate it or its slowing down. We, therefore, cannot neglect them in assessing the speed and extent to which we can carry out the NDR by focusing simplistically on the domestic front.

12.1.4.2 When added to the legacy of colonialism and neo-colonialism, the combination of imperialism and globalisation has had a very negative impact on both the emerging economies as well as Africa. This has created unequal power relations between the developed North and the developing South, even though some countries of the South have in recent decades emerged as economic power blocs on their own.

Significant as this has been, it still has not significantly altered the unequal power relations to a point where real equality – in political and economic terms – could be achieved.

12.1.4.3 However, much has changed in Africa in the last two decades, largely with the ending of the civil wars in many countries and the spread of democratisation. As they have stabilised politically, many African countries have had time to focus on economic growth and the improvement of the quality of life of their citizens. While 7 of the 10 fastest growing economies in 2013 were in Africa, the Sub-Saharan Africa economy has grown steadily and on a sustainable basis for about a decade, achieving growth rates of over 5% even the global recession of 2008 was wrecking many developed economies. But, this growth has been off a low base and it was still predominantly based on minerals extractions and commodity exports, an exploitative economic relation Africa enjoys to this day with the world.

12.1.4.4 The above resulted, among others, in many African economies continuing to underperform, and in Africa's human capital, both those that are skilled and those that are not, leaving the shores of the continent to seek greener pastures elsewhere, especially in Europe where they are not welcome. Of course, it cannot be presumed that lack of good governance in many countries has not had a negative impact as well.

- 12.1.4.5 Imperialist arrogance has continued unabated as witnessed during the interventions in, among others, Ivory Coast and Libya, and failed regime change attempts in Zimbabwe. This has been exacerbated by the lack of a progressive movement for Africa's renewal that involves both liberation movements/ political parties as well as governments. Much of Africa's cooperation around various programmes, be they political or economic, or even social, is bureaucratic, happening within the framework of interstate cooperation, rather than driven by a shared political and strategic perspective.
- 12.1.4.6 The ANCYL must fill in this gaping vacuum and establish a progressive youth movement for Africa's renewal, the seeds of which already in many countries, particularly in the former Frontline States. However, the ANCYL ought to engage the African students studying in South African universities, and thus consider opening membership to them so that they can belong to it and imbibe its progressive ideas and policies, and democratic political culture.
- 12.1.4.7 The ANCYL should continue to be an advocate for an international progressive youth movement, forging bilateral

alliances and participating actively in the structures such as the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY) and the International Union of Socialist Youth (IUSY). In these structures, its role and voice as Africa's own champion must be vociferous and unequivocal.

13. CONCLUSION

- 13.1 Rebuilding the ANCYL is an urgent strategic priority for the ANC itself. Success in this regard ensures not only the resonance of ANC views among the youth, but, above everything else, it guarantees the ANC its future.
- 13.2 Two decades after the advent of democracy in our country, the ANCYL must question the reasons for its existence, the role and place of the youth in struggle as well as the environment in which it must carry out its historic tasks. As it does so, it must locate its own role within the ANC, in society and among the youth. It must re-establish itself as the authentic voice of the youth, the harbinger of changes in the revolutionary process as well as the microcosm of the future.
- 13.3 Towards this end, it must pay attention to the tasks outlined above, conscious of its role as an organisation of young revolutionary-democrats of the movement and confident of the continued support of the South African youth for the national democratic revolution.



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