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SACC CONDEMNS “FAKE LIST” OF ANC MPs SUSPECTED OF VOTING FOR “NO CONFIDENCE” MOTION - UNDERMINES SECRET BALLOT PRACTICE OF NATIONAL ELECTIONS

JOHANNESBURG: The South African Council of Churches (SACC), following the August 8 No Confidence Vote in President Zuma, commended Speaker Baleka Mbete speaker for the manner in which she handled a very sensitive matter - her decision on the secret ballot, and the professional manner in which she announced it; and how she and Deputy Speaker managed the debate, positively influencing both the Assembly and the public. Members of Parliament were also to be commended for their measured approach to the debate. The outcome was reached fairly and showed the growing maturity of our democratic processes.

A significant constitutional principle clearly laid out by the Chief Justice recently is that Members of Parliament are bound to uphold their parliamentary oath as representatives of the citizens beyond their parties and their dictates. Our political parties need to recognize this for they all fail in this regard - stark examples of recent cases include the DA's lie detector shame of Mogale City; likewise the EFF at Mogale City and their conduct at the Johannesburg mayoral election. This is an important area of growth for our major parties. We need multiparty democracy to flourish in the interests of the millions of South Africans who have never enjoyed the franchise, so that their voice may count in the parliamentary process in the spirit of the Constitution.

In this context also, the SACC cautions against the Opposition calls for dissolving Parliament. Even though the SACC National Conference had made a similar call in June, that was based on the Conference's disappointment with Parliament for their failure on the Nkandla matter, and over this a meeting is pending with the Speaker. But to call for elections as a response to the failed No Confidence Vote is not helpful at this point.

Similarly the bellicose pronouncements and finger pointing at those MPs who exercised their vote to support the motion is unhelpful for our democracy. The SACC condemns the circulation of fake lists of ANC MPs suspected of voting for the motion, blacklisting people and potentially endangering their lives in this environment. Where can such a list have come from? If the governing party can be perceived to suggest that a secret vote is so non-secret that they know exactly how MPs voted, what message are they communicating about the country's electoral process of secret voting? This irresponsible act will inadvertently undermine the integrity of our electoral processes. The ANC must condemn and put a stop to this without equivocation!

Beyond all of this there remains the urgent need for a revisiting of the public values of our society. Ordinary South Africans and value-based organs of civil society need to build a platform of public standards and values that can hold, regardless of who leads the governing party.

The SACC campaign of The South Africa We Pray For speaks to this, mounted on the five pillars of: Healing and Reconciliation, Family Fabric, Poverty and Inequality, Economic Transformation, and Anchoring Democracy. Anchoring Democracy comes much to the fore on the issues related to corrupt government/business relations, politically complicated by such relations involving a ring pivoting around the President. The context of the capture of state institutions remains a burning issue that needs to be resolved and a foundation of hope and trust established.

To this end, the SACC will later this month, be launching the National Convention process to address the question of Public values and standards, as to work towards the establishment of a reconciled social and economic dispensation for the realization of the post apartheid promise of South Africa - a just, equitable, reconciled, peaceful, and sustainable South Africa, free of racist, tribalist, xenophobic and gender prejudices and violence; free of corruption and deprivation, where every child born is free to develop to its God given potential.

ENDS

