



## WOMEN'S CALL FOR EQUITABLE GOVERNANCE POST-ELECTION

### PREAMBLE

We, a coalition of individual women and women's organisations from across South Africa, declare that women have been the majority of the electorate in South Africa throughout our thirty years of democracy, and account for 55.25% of the 27,672,264 registered voters in the 2024 elections. Women achieved the highest voter turnout, with almost 2 million more women voting than men, yet there has been a 3% decrease in women's representation in the National Assembly, from 46% to 43%.

As women, we continue to raise our voices during this watershed moment in the life of our country. The election result is an opportunity to reset and rejuvenate governance. The first sentence of South Africa's Constitution calls on us to recognise the injustices of our past, arising from *Apartheid's* oppression of people who were Black ('African, Indian and Coloured') while privileging those who were white. *Apartheid* spatial planning continues to trap the vast majority of SA's people in poverty and inequality, whilst a minority continues to own SA's land and wealth. These systemic and structural fault lines result in women bearing the brunt of precarious employment, unemployment and climate change. This seventh administration needs to ensure economic policy takes account of women's unpaid and invisible contributions to social reproduction.

The election results reflect the will of the people. The people, and women in particular, have provided a mandate for the sharing of power. SA's Government of National Unity/Coalition must focus on implementing SA's Constitution, to transform people's lives, especially women and people who are marginalised for being poor, living in rural areas, having disabilities or for being LGBTQIA. The GNU/Coalition must therefore be inclusive, adopt an intersectional approach, and prioritise the well-being of all, but particularly the well-being of women and gender non-conforming persons, people living in rural areas, children, the elderly and those with disabilities, as well as create an environment in which our youth can grow and participate to their full potential.

The political parties have been given a mandate to exercise leadership that is responsible, accountable and ethical, and that enables the country to move forward in a more united and reconciled way, in which the President and political parties put the citizens and country first.

They are mandated not to regress on already hard-won rights, but to move us forward in ways that can translate the rights promised by our Constitution into improvements in our lived realities.

The majority voice of women must translate into equal opportunities for all and bold and ambitious, accelerated and transformative actions to ensure the enjoyment of human rights, development, and peace and security for women and girls in all our diversities.

**Women of South Africa therefore declare that they will not tolerate:**

1. Anyone or any party in the legislature and executive that has no respect for the rule of law, or promotes bigotry, including racism, sexism, ageism, homophobia or xenophobia. (See Constitution Article 2, Sec 9 Equality Clause)
2. Any party that has failed to declare its commitment to and respect for a constitutional democracy.
3. Any party that does not support the human security<sup>1</sup> of all, and women's security in particular.
4. Any party that tries to roll back gender equality gains, e.g. in the workplace, rural women's rights to land, and socio-economic rights, or attempts to introduce policy that is in any way sexist and patriarchal.
5. The continued exclusion of women from the economic landscape

**Women therefore demand that the Government of National Unity/Coalition:**

1. Ensures that its members and public representatives deployed are based on upholding Constitutional values, principles, priorities and ethical behaviour; including transparency, accountability and public participation
2. Ensures that the incumbents of the next administration are competent, selected on merit, beyond reproach and inclusive of women and youth in strategic positions.
3. Ensures that the socio-economic commitments are gender sensitive, transformative and developmental, serving the needs of poor people and rural communities.
4. Ensures that the National Strategic Plan on Gender-based Violence and Femicide and the National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security are implemented and resourced.
5. Considers measures for socio-economic protection which should include the Universal Basic Income Grant as a form of solidarity economy, while at the same time urgently implementing inclusive economic growth measures that prioritise job creation towards productive self-reliance and active citizenry.
6. Commits to the equal representation of women in all their diversity in the National Assembly, Provincial legislatures, Cabinet, Executive Council, and the Presidency.

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<sup>11</sup> "Human security is a human right; it refers to the security of people and communities, as opposed to the security of states. Human security recognises that there are several dimensions related to feeling safe, such as freedom from fear, freedom from want, and freedom from indignity." <https://gppac.net/what-we-do/human-security>

7. Ensures women's equal, effective, transformative participation in all structures and processes
8. Continues to give effect to SA's regional and international commitments to uphold a human-rights, rules-based system, focused on global peace and cooperation, in all multilateral and global institutions, including the International Court of Justice and International Criminal Court

As women of South Africa, we have demonstrated a rich history of working across parties, as we effectively did as the Women's National Coalition in the run-up to the first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994. Thirty years down the line we are recommitting to shaping the nature of democracy in our country. South African women contribute to families and society, including as workers, employers and job creators. The GNU/Coalition can create an inclusive and growing economy if it recognises the value of this work to reproduce a society based on the wellbeing of all its people. We therefore appeal to our political parties to exercise the necessary maturity and vision to collectively lead our nation to peace, stability and prosperity for all.

We are supportive of the call to convene a Multi-stakeholder National Dialogue in the first quarter of the 7th Administration in 2024 as a constructive way of pulling the country together, collectively developing strategies to deal with South Africa's socio-economic and social cohesion challenges, and for ensuring that peace and stability prevail.

We make this submission, mindful that our own task is to hold those in power accountable for their decisions and omissions, and to organise ourselves into a women's movement that can support the continued pursuit of gender equality and human security for all.

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