



SACP hits Planning commission

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THE SACP wants the "free-floating" National Planning Commission (NPC) to be disbanded, saying the institution "is playing a lone-ranger game".

At a meeting of its Politburo held on Friday in Pretoria, the SACP signed off on its discussion paper on the National Development Plan (NDP) developed by the commission. The commission is chaired by Minister in the Presidency Trevor Manuel, with ANC deputy president Cyril Ramaphosa as his second in command.

The discussion paper drafted by SACP deputy general secretary Jeremy Cronin, sets out a sharp, pointed but nuanced interrogation of President Jacob Zuma's administration's efforts to develop a long-term vision to address inequality, poverty and joblessness.

"The NPC should now be dissolved (having produced a 2030

vision) - and with the incoming 2014 administration a new, more organic State Planning capacity should be established," the discussion document states.

"We cannot have a free-floating NPC, with an apparent presidential endorsement and using the budget of the presidency, playing a lone-ranger game. While we need to encourage public engagement, including critical engagement with our plans and policies, we cannot have a free-floating presidential National Planning Commission effectively playing a factionalist game."

While the SACP has gone to great lengths to keep its critique of the commission and the plan internal and devoid of ugly personal insults, its call could well up the ante and fuel tension in the lead-up to the

2014 general elections especially if the ANC takes umbrage with its leftist ally. The SACP warned of the development plan becoming a political football by elements within Cosatu and the opposition DA.

On the NPC's composition the paper asks: "Was it remotely realistic to expect a part-time, semi-external national planning commission, composed of 26 commissioners with disparate skills and ideological inclinations, to develop, in 18 months, a 484-page, relatively detailed 20-year plan that would also enjoy universal support from the entire nation and be purpose-fit for implementation?"

This "distance" from policy making processes in the government's departments and its inability to strengthen the existing raft of government economic policies such as

the New Growth Path, the 2010/2011 Industrial Policy Action Plan and the infrastructure roll-out plan are weaknesses identified in the discussion document.

It also says unlike most countries which have planning units or their equivalents the South African planning commission "does not have a strong organic link into the government and its diverse planning apparatuses and processes".

The paper is blunt in its assessment of how the lack of synergy between the NPC and government departments on policy formulation has caused confusion and ended up pitting cabinet ministers against each other.

The SACP's harshest criticism echoes Cosatu's draft response to the plan, particularly on economic policy and its approach to the rela-

Institution 'playing a lone-ranger game'

tionship between economic growth and transformational development.

It however rejected the "all or nothing approach" taken by the metalworkers union, Numsa, and instead argues that the plan "is a site of struggle" that has many solid suggestions on building a developmental state, education including skills development and dealing with corruption.

The SACP also praised the NPC and the NDP for prioritising "the imperative of national long range planning", a policy it had long championed and got the ANC to buy into in 2007.

SACP general secretary Blade Nzimande told The Sunday Independent, "I want to admit it (policy formulation) is a complicated and contested" terrain, however the SACP wants to "engage" the tripartite alliance on the plan.

SACP second deputy general secretary Solly Mapaila confirmed its Politburo "formerly adopted" the discussion document which will at



CRITIC: SACP general secretary Blade Nzimande says policy formulation is a complicated and contested terrain. PICTURE: DUMISANI SIBEKO

the end of its internal process lead to final adoption by the party.

Mapaila said, "Even though we recognise that the ANC adopted the vision at its Mangaung conference, like many other policy positions in the movement it was not cast in

stone and that it should be subjected to constructive criticism."

The last alliance summit was held in 2010. The allies are expected to meet soon, but the ANC is likely to announce the details of when such a gathering would take place.