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## A cabinet for change

**A**s SA embarks on a new political journey with its government of national unity (GNU), the eyes of the nation – and indeed the world – are watching closely.

The GNU isn't merely a coalition; it's a symbol of hope, a promise of change and the potential blueprint for governance that transcends traditional party lines. But for this government to be more than a reshuffling of seats in the eyes of voters who called for this change, the new cabinet must embody a reimagined governance, where power is not concentrated but shared, and where policymaking benefits from a chorus of diverse voices.

Yes, the ANC's historical gravitas as the dismantler of apartheid is undeniable. Even so, its prolonged incumbency has been tainted by corruption scandals and inefficiency. Last month's election outcome, with the ANC suffering its worst performance yet, is exhibit A of the public clamour for change – a change that could be actualised through a GNU that genuinely reflects SA's diverse political landscape.

For such a government to be authentic, it's crucial that President Cyril Ramaphosa allocates consequential ministerial roles to GNU partners. This goes beyond tokenistic gestures; it is about entrusting key portfolios – energy, health, education, and trade & industry – to coalition partners. These aren't just bureaucratic entities; they are the engines of policy and reform. By sharing these pivotal roles, the ANC can demonstrate its commitment to a collaborative and inclusive approach to governance.

This week's formation of KwaZulu-Natal's multiparty government under Premier Thami Ntuli, an IFP leader serving in the provincial government with the ANC and DA, serves as a prime example of how to make a GNU a reality. The provincial cabinet,

### IT'S CRUCIAL THAT THE PRESIDENT ALLOCATES CONSEQUENTIAL ROLES TO GNU PARTNERS

which prioritises crime reduction and service delivery, embodies the collaborative spirit that a GNU should represent.

Ntuli handed the ANC the health, education, transport and human settlements portfolios. The DA will lead finance and public works. The National Freedom Party (NFP) will be the custodian of social development.

The IFP has four MECs. This model promotes shared governance that is substantive, setting the right tone that should inspire transformative reimagining across various levels of government.

Furthermore, the ANC must stand firm on its promise to reduce the size of the cabinet. This pledge is as much about cost-cutting as it is about streamlining decision-making and demonstrating readiness to make substantive trade-offs in power-sharing. Walking back on this promise would not only betray public trust but also signal a reluctance to embrace genuine collaborative governance.

A diversified cabinet has the potential to be a catalyst for tackling SA's most pressing issues, such as unemployment, which stands at a staggering 33%, and economic stagnation, with GDP growth hovering around 1%. The inclusion of opposition parties such as the DA and IFP can inject fresh ideas into policy discourse, potentially leading to more effective solutions.

The benefits of such an arrangement are manifold. For one thing, it can dilute the concentration of power that breeds complacency and corruption. For another, it can foster accountability as coalition partners serve as checks on one another. Importantly, it can restore faith in government institutions – a commodity that is in short supply but essential for national cohesion.

Of course, this set-up is not without its challenges. Coalition governments can be fraught with the discord of not being managed effectively. For evidence of that, look no further than the circus in Gauteng's metros, the control and governance of which have been hanging in the balance as political parties vie for dominance. The key lies in establishing clear governance structures, fostering mutual respect among coalition members and ensuring that national interests supersede party politics.

For SA to thrive in a complex global landscape, it must evolve politically. The ANC will always be an integral thread in SA's political tapestry; it need not be the sole weaver of our nation's destiny. A true unity government in which the ANC shares substantial power through meaningful ministerial allocations and adheres to its promise of a leaner cabinet could be the cornerstone on which SA builds its future success.

As we look forward to this new era of governance, let's remember that legitimacy is earned through actions that align with public sentiment. The GNU has an unprecedented opportunity to redefine SA politics by demonstrating that unity is not just about sharing seats; it's about sharing vision, responsibility and, above all, reflecting the will of every citizen in the halls of power.