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## QUARREL, FIGHT ... BUT FIND COMMON GROUND

**T**he IFP is confident that the GNU is on the right track, despite the spat between ministers during the state of the nation debate last week.

IFP president Velenkosini Hlabisa described reports of tension in the GNU as par for the course, as the coalition gets down to the real business of governing.

Last week's debate exposed the deep enmity between the minister of public works, the DA's Dean Macpherson, and his ANC deputy, Sihle Zikalala, after Zikalala chastised his superior over his stance on the Expropriation Act.

It was not the first sign of antagonism between the pair. Zikalala had publicly complained about being appointed as a deputy to an individual less educated than he was. He told parliament last week that ministers have a constitutional obligation to implement legislation, referring to the Expropriation Act. This was in response to Macpherson declaring on social media that on his watch there would be no compromise on the protection of property rights, which the DA believes are threatened by the act.

President Cyril Ramaphosa weighed in on the quarrel in his reply to the debate, saying that despite appearances, the parties to the GNU were working well together and were finding ways to deal with their differences. "These political parties are working well in the GNU, whether people like it or not," he said. "We will not be diverted from the path that we have set out ... and I repeat, we will not be bullied from our intent to work together."

The president's confidence is unsurprising. The FM understands that a crucial internal fault line regarding the GNU was addressed inside the ANC this week. The party's national leaders confirmed their decision to dissolve the ANC's Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal provincial structures and replace them with task teams.

The ANC's Gauteng chapter has become the face of internal opposition to the GNU, fronted by premier Panyaza Lesufi, who the FM understands is set to be stripped of his party post as chair and replaced by former Joburg mayor and deputy speaker Amos Masondo. A key protagonist in Gauteng pushing against the GNU, ANC provincial secretary TK Nciza, is also set to be removed.

Neutralising these factions would be a key victory for Ramaphosa in consolidating support behind the GNU.

However, it won't be smooth sailing.

Hlabisa concedes that legislation such as the Expropriation Act, the Basic Education Laws Amendment Act and the National Health Insurance Act – all dating back to the sixth administration – will remain points of contention. The DA has approached the courts to have the

The GNU will have to work out ways to deliver the goods

Expropriation Act declared unconstitutional. The IFP also has problems with the legislation.

"A coalition is like a marriage," says Hlabisa. "You quarrel, you fight, but you sit down and find common ground to stay together as a family. A GNU was not our choice. A GNU was a dictate by voters. Voters said: 'We're not going to give anyone among you a majority. Work together.'"

"If the GNU fails, we would have failed the people of South Africa. We have an obligation, and our personal views and personal interests must come second to the interests of South Africa."

For the IFP – which now controls the second-largest province by population, KZN, thanks to a coalition – the aftermath of the 2024 general election and its participation in the GNU has been positive. The party has the post of premier in KZN and it has largely outperformed the ANC and newly formed rival, the MK Party, in by-elections since the May polls last year.

MK's internal strife and its reliance on former president Jacob Zuma to dictate its every move have limited its reach and culminated in deep factional rifts that play out on social media.

Still, its potential as a disruptor cannot be downplayed, at least as long as Zuma remains in control of the party, which, to avoid messy leadership contests, has shunned any talk of internal elections.

The tumult inside MK is likely to further bolster the IFP, which was weakened electorally in KZN after Zuma's initial rise to the ANC presidency in 2007.

Hlabisa says the initial months in government were rocky, as parties had to learn to work together. Ministries were also bound by budgets decided upon by the previous (sixth) administration.

The national budget delivered by finance minister Enoch Godongwana this week will mark a turning point, as it will be the first for the seventh administration and should allow ministries to get into high gear and deliver on their mandates – which all 10 GNU parties agree on.

"Each ministry knows what to do," says Hlabisa. "We're just waiting for the finance minister to deliver the new budget, which is going to be our budget. I'm confident from my department's perspective that when the president delivers the state of the nation address next year, he will do so with pride, because he would be touching on tangible progress and the turnaround that has happened."

The GNU seems to be stabilising and finding its rhythm politically. But its ability to deliver on its commitment to make a tangible impact on the lives of South Africans will ultimately determine its success or failure. **x**



**We will not be diverted from the path ... we will not be bullied from our intent to work together**

Cyril Ramaphosa