

**POSITION PAPER: VOTER EDUCATION**

1. INTRODUCTION

In view of the agreement amongst all parties that a democratic election should take place as soon as possible, and given the fact that the overwhelming majority of South Africans have not previously participated in national elections, an urgent need exists for an official, intensive, country-wide, non-partisan and objective voter education programme managed on a multi-party basis.

2. OBJECTIVE

To timeously plan and execute or supervise a country-wide, non-partisan and objective voter education programme in order to ensure maximum participation in, and to promote a climate for, free and fair elections.

3. PROPOSALS

Given the extreme urgency of the question of voter education, it is proposed that this MPNP assume responsibility to initiate and conduct or supervise such a voter education programme, to be taken over by the Independent Election Commission once it has been established.

4. PROGRAMMES

4.1 At least the following items can be considered for the voter education programme:

- eligibility to vote
- voter identification
- voting procedures
- political tolerance and voter behaviour
- responsibility to vote
- where and when to vote
- publication of the election results
- after the election

4.2 The following topics can also be considered as part of the voter education programme:

- democracy as a lifestyle
- democracy and forms of government
- democracy and the economy
- democracy and property rights
- democracy and trade unions
- democracy and human rights
- democracy and political parties
- democracy and elections
- democracy and employment
- democracy and housing
- democracy and parliament
- democracy and the media
- democracy and education

## 5. METHODOLOGY

In order to ensure maximum penetration, both the programmes should be of a multi-media nature and provide for different literacy levels.

## 6. AUTHORITY AND LOGISTICS

The voter education programme should be conducted under the auspices of the MPNP. The Negotiating Council should take the initiative in this regard.

## 7. FUNDS

Public and private funds will be required to conduct a voter education programme. The Government accepts its responsibility in this regard.

## 8. TIME-SCALES

Planning for the voter education programme should commence immediately.

## 9. INTERNATIONAL INVOLVEMENT

- 9.1 A multiparty delegation should approach the international community to canvas funds for voter and democracy education.
- 9.2 Optimal use should be made of international expertise available in the fields of voter and democracy education.
- 9.3 A representative group of international observers should be involved in the monitoring the programmes.

## 10. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

In order to ensure free and fair elections, voter education programmes should satisfy the following requirements:

- Compliance with a code of conduct for voter education, drawn up and applied by the MPNP.
- All organisations, except political parties, should be advised to conduct their voter education programmes under the auspices of the MPNP.
- All voter education programmes should be non-partisan, objective, accurate and explanatory, without in any way impinging upon the voter's rights to freedom of choice and decision.
- All potential voters should have unhindered access to voter education programmes.