

cc Gillian
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WOMEN'S NATIONAL COALITION

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ATTENTION : MULTI-PARTY FORUM
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External
Submission

OPEN LETTER TO POLITICAL LEADERS

The Women's National Coalition welcomes the resumption of constitutional negotiations. We congratulate all the participants for having reached agreement for the Multi-Party Negotiations beginning on April 1st.

We have been concerned at the relative absence of women in the negotiations : in the various CODSA structures, the bilateral and other meetings and in the preparations for the multi-party talks. If we are to fulfil the expectations of South Africans for a new democratic era that is non-racial and non-sexist, then the processes through which we reach that objective must reflect new values amongst the foremost of which are representativity and inclusiveness.

Women are the most disadvantaged of South Africans. Collectively, they have the lowest income levels, employment, legal status, esteem. One of the great challenges facing all our leaders is how the new South Africa is going to accommodate the needs and concerns of women.

This can best/only be done if women are included in the processes that lead to the new South Africa at every level, while at the same time ensuring that questions of gender are considered and integrated into all the discussions.

The structure and function of the Gender Advisory Committee as established at CODESA served to place women in a ghetto and isolate their concerns. Regrettably, some participating organisations used the establishment of the GAC as an excuse not to involve women in the delegations and in the management and other committees.

Now that multi-party talks are about to commence, we urge you to ensure that your own delegation includes a significant number of women. Further, we would ask that the structures of the multi-party negotiating forum facilitate the integration of gender issues at all stages.

FRENE GINWALA
CONVENOR

ANNE LETSEBE
CO-CONVENOR