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**Demokratiese Party**  
**Democratic Party**

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TO: TECHNICAL COMMITTEE ON THE IEC, MULTI-PARTY  
 NEGOTIATIONS  
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FROM: DEMOCRATIC PARTY

COMMENT BY THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY  
 ON PROPOSALS IN RESPECT OF  
 THE INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL COMMISSION

1. DIRECT PUBLIC FINANCING OF POLITICAL PARTIES DURING ELECTIONS

- 1.1. The DP supports the principle of public funding of parties which have met the criteria for registration. Such financing promotes pluralism and contributes to the leveling of the playing fields.
- 1.2. The DP proposes that the following procedure be followed in the light of the fact that the support of the various parties is untested by any previous democratic election.
- 1.2.1. A total sum of money should be allocated to the IEC for this purpose.
- 1.2.2. The IEC should commission research by a variety of recognised, reputable market research companies or organisations.
- 1.2.3. After collation of results any party showing the support of more than 1% of voters should receive immediately and in advance, with no requirement of reimbursement and no surety, an amount proportional to two thirds of its shown support.
- 1.2.4. Each party shall further be entitled to receive, on presentation of satisfactory surety, further funding of up to double the amount so allocated, to be repaid after the election if the results achieved fall short of the funding.
- 1.2.5. Any party receiving a higher proportion of the vote than the proportion of money advanced to it shall be entitled to receive the outstanding balance after the election.



## 2. INDIRECT PUBLIC FINANCING OF POLITICAL PARTIES DURING ELECTIONS

### 2.1. Equal air time

2.1.1. To achieve free and fair access to public broadcasting and television equal unpaid air time must be given to all parties.

2.1.2. It is the function of the IMC to deal with complaints against editorial interpretation, content, approach and time allocation in political debates, news etc. However, it is the function of the IEC to lay down the requirement that there must be equal access to the airwaves, a finite and public resource, for parties that operate nationally and have structures in all or most regions. Regional parties should have access to regional radio.

2.1.3. It is submitted that the only way to achieve this is to give each party equal free air time for party political broadcasts which may take whatever form each party chooses, e.g. a broadcast by its leader, a TV or radio advertisement made for the purpose, etc. The amount the party spends on the broadcast is its own decision, but the air time is free. If the number of parties contesting the election makes it impossible to broadcast each party daily, such slots could be distributed across weekdays and evenings.

2.1.4. The DP submits that this is the only way to overcome the problem that no objective electoral test of party support exists, and to overcome the problem that editorial time allocation and news coverage is inevitably influenced by editorial judgment of news worthiness, which is a subject quite distinct from the merit of political arguments and policies. A viewer/listener market is not the same as a political market. The DP does not believe that the market research it advocates for funding can be used as a test for the allocation of air time. A party's campaign serves precisely to expand its existing support. Air time based on editorial interpretation or on market research runs the risk of becoming self-fulfilling prophecy.

## 3. ELECTORAL ACT

The DP reiterates the view that most matters should be settled in advance in an Electoral Act drawn up by the IEC. To leave the majority of questions to regulation is to invite ongoing dispute and uncertainty whereas it is preferable that the rules of the game are known and are made known to all voters.

The purpose of the negotiating process is to produce the rules of the game. The sooner they are settled the sooner negotiations can close and the game begin.

*Gene Jones*