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Transkei Government Position Paper

Codesa

Working Group II

Meaningful Participation of Political Minorities

By political minorities we do not envisage a dispensation which makes provision for political participation by racial groupings by virtue of them being small in terms of numbers. Political minorities are those political parties which during elections manage to muster the support only of small numbers of voters with the result that they have few representatives in the legislative assembly.

Democracy being the principle whereby the people are afforded the opportunity to govern themselves through representation, the consultation should provide for the participation in the legislative process of the minority political parties in terms of the system of proportional representation. Such a dispensation ensures that all shades of political opinion are accommodated in the formulation of laws, while at the same time the views of the majority are not unnecessarily hamstrung by minority veto powers.

Democratic elections are about the empowerment of the political parties so as to be able to make and implement the laws for effective government. Accordingly the political party with the majority seats is the party chosen by the people to use the power in ruling the country. A constitution cannot override the wishes of the people by decreeing that even the party that has been voted for by a small portion of the electorate should have power to rule the country. Such a situation would amount to fraud.

In the premises it is sufficient for political minorities to be afforded the opportunity to take part in the legislative process through the system of proportional representation. The actual



implementation of those laws at the executive level is the prerogative of the majority party.

A constitution that decrees that all political parties be represented in the executive is unacceptable because it enforces coalitions. Coalitions work efficiently when they involve political parties that have policies whose differences are not so dissimilar to the point of being conflicting. Enforced coalitions do not promote good government in that a minority party could be placed in a position of vetoing the decisions of the majority party. Enforced coalitions can also result in corruption because there will be no meaningful opposition to the policies of the majority party.

It being the prerogative of the constitution-making body to determine the precise extent of the meaningful participation of political minorities in government, we accept that there should be a general constitutional principle to the effect that a new constitution should provide for effective participation of minority political parties consistent with democracy.