

Comment

A choice for all

The most historic Annual General Conference that Inkatha has held since its foundation some 15 years ago, marked the beginning of the establishment of Inkatha as a democratic political Party which will play its part in building the new South Africa.

The new Inkatha Freedom Party, as it is to be known, is open to all races. Previously barred by the South African Government from having members other than Blacks, the new Inkatha is now able to welcome members from all parts of the community, whatever their race or creed, as long as they subscribe to the basic beliefs of the new Party.

Inkatha is, as it always has been, dedicated to the establishment of a fully democratic society that respects the rights of all individuals within a fair and just legal system. Inkatha believes in a multi-party system that allows for free choice and an opportunity for all views that respect the tenets of democratic behaviour to be heard – and to play their part in establishing the new South Africa.

The Conference re-affirmed the commitment of Inkatha to the establishment of an enterprise-led economic structure that is accessible to all South Africans, since it knows that the only realistic path to solving South Africa's problems is to sustain and expand what exists and to build on it, rather than destroy it.

Inkatha believes that if the education and training of the hitherto neglected Black population is given priority, we will release new energies that will make it possible for us to succeed in fighting the real enemies of the people – namely poverty, hunger, unemployment, disease, ignorance, homelessness, insecurity and moral decay.

The Conference took a number of decisions that authorised its leadership – and the recently-formed Action Group for Democracy – to move forward with the great and vital tasks of re-organising and re-developing the Inkatha Freedom Party to be effective as a national political Party.

Recognising that the existing 1,8 million voluntarily paid-up members of Inkatha provide a unique and powerful base for the new Party, the Conference urged its leadership to bring into the new Party representatives of all other race and cultural groups, at all levels of leadership. It emphasised that the new Party has much to gain from the involvement of new blood with new ideas.

Although the Inkatha Freedom Party is very clear and specific about its principles (which remain as they were when established back in 1975); its values, and the kind of society that it wishes to see established in the new South Africa, it is also very willing to listen to – and to adopt feasible and appropriate solutions – that new members may wish to suggest. Unlike some other groupings in South Africa at this time, Inkatha is not a doctrinaire Party and it does not think that it has all the answers. The Inkatha Freedom Party intends to give its members, and those sympathetic to its ideas, plenty of opportunities to contribute to its detailed policy planning. The Action Group for Democracy, in particular, wants to hear from people of goodwill who are willing to participate in the Policy Discussion Groups it is now setting up.

The media, in South Africa and internationally, have given wide coverage to the launch of the Inkatha Freedom Party. The general view seems to be that the period of (quite justified) "euphoria" politics, following President de Klerk's remarkable series of new initiatives is now over, and that all politicians should get down to the business of readying themselves and their members for the challenges and new opportunities that are ahead.

There also seems to be a recognition that Inkatha is ahead of the field in "getting its act together." Inkatha is, as it has always been, a prime player in the future of South Africa. Now, with the formation of the Inkatha Freedom Party, there is a chance for all South Africans who believe in the peaceful, negotiated path to a united and democratic society, to join in with hope and optimism for the future.

Whether you become a member of the Inkatha Freedom Party, or merely agree that it is important for the new Party to succeed – or if you belong to another Party or organisation that feels that it can join in an alliance or partnership with Inkatha – you will find that your support will be welcomed.

The new Inkatha Freedom Party, under the leadership of Dr Mangosuthu Buthelezi and his now widening team, has set its hand to the task. It hopes that many more thousands of friends and allies will join with it to create a new South Africa that we can all be proud of, and which will once again take its place justifiably in the world community.