



AN OPEN LETTER TO RSA PRESIDENT ON THE FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF BELA ACT

Dear His Excellency, President Cyril Ramaphosa

Mr President as the country's progressive and pro-transformation formations, intellectuals, academics, professionals, patriotic entrepreneurs and the majority of South Africans supporting the course seize this moment to make a call to your revolutionary conscience as the political head of the country representing all South Africans but in the main the poor and vulnerable.

"A nation which recognizes its history is able to comprehend the present and thereby informing the future" these words Mr President remain the cornerstone of any developmental country which has over years been characterized by political and socio-economic injustices and imbalances.

Mr President you vividly know that South Africa is also not immune at all to this global imperialist phenomenon as the country was under colonial and apartheid rule for 342 years.

Throughout a period of segregation and discrimination in South Africa Mr President the then White supremacy used different legislated and prescribed instruments to oppress Blacks in the main and Africans in particular.

Education was a strategic tool used to perpetuate a system of oppression Mr President whereby citizens would be classified as first and second class, superior and inferior human beings and to promote job reservation.

Mr President the racialized education system back then was the determinant factor in the transmission of knowledge, values, skills and competencies intended for the oppressed Blacks to then apply in sustaining the economic development of the White supremacy.

Mr President it was also the same education system which was designed and implemented such that the dignity of human beings especially the Blacks including their culture and heritage continued to be subjugated.

The oppressive and divisive education system was designed and implemented such that White supremacy would be used to entrench their culture and heritage within any schooling environment.

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The racialized education system was also sustained through the racially skewed allocation and distribution of resources.

Lastly the racialized education system was among other things also designed to deny in the main Black learner access to schools through admission policies which were developed by school committees entrusted with a responsibility of governing schools.

Mr President, the above is the characterization of the country's racialized education system which must be recognized by South African society mainly to redress the imbalances and the intended consequences of the past in giving rise to a new vision of a free, united, non-racial, non-sexist, peaceful, democratic and prosperous society.

The adoption of the country's democratic constitution in 1996 heralded a gigantic step towards the endorsement of the sets of commitments to transform the South African society politically, socially and economically for the better as expressed in Chapter 2 of the country's Bill of Rights underpinned by a commonly acceptable South African standard that of reaffirming that South Africa belongs to all those who live in it both Black and White.

One of the rights enshrined accorded to the country's citizens is the right to participate in the governance of the country and other organs of state as part of entrenching the democratic values of human dignity, access, equality and freedom.

Mr President Section 29 of the RSA Constitution also makes it explicit that everyone has the right to basic education including adult basic education and further education to which the state must through, reasonable measures and mechanisms make such a right accessible and realizable.

It is against this backdrop that the democratically elected government of South Africa since 1994 has been progressively adopting and implementing measures and mechanisms seeking to redress the imbalances of the past when it comes to the democratization, de-racialization and decolonization of the education system.

Mr President and South Africans, it must be mentioned unequivocally that despite South Africa having attained its freedom and democracy in 1994 but transformation of the country politically, socially and economically remains a contested terrain in that the anti-transformation forces domestically and even supported globally are still prevalent masquerading as the voice of given sectors of the society.

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Secondly Mr President and South Africans, it must also be brought to your stark realization that despite the post 1994 era the country finds itself in but the majority of the South Africans especially those who were previously disadvantaged continue to languish in poverty, lack of access to basic services, lack of access to basic human rights mainly due to interalia glaring intentions declared and undertaken by anti-transformation forces who want to protect the White supremacy status quo of pre-1994 era.

Thirdly Mr President and South Africans, these anti-transformation forces find it difficult to accept the reality that competent Black and African people in the main have been appointed into positions of responsibility to drive the socio-economic transformation agenda for the entire South Africans irrespective of race, gender and or creed.

Fourthly Mr President and South Africans, these anti-transformation forces advocate for democratic participation and or involvement on matters affecting the governance of the country and such platforms would be created for them and pro-transformation formations and citizens after being defeated based on their principle of protecting the White supremacy status quo of pre-1994 era, they would then mobilize racially, cultivate seeds of societal polarization and even threaten to take democratic government to court.

Mr President and the South Africans, BELA Act reaffirms the realization of a commitment made by the people of South Africa Black and White back on 26 June 1956 when they adopted the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in anticipation of the liberation of South Africa and one of the values underpinning BELA Act reads thus **“THE DOORS OF LEARNING AND CULTURE SHALL BE OPENED”** and for all for that matter irrespective of race, creed, culture and or religion.

Mr President and South Africans a stark reality is that while the country has attained its freedom and democracy in 1994 but level of the country's grand transformation has not yet reached the desired standard as envisioned through the Freedom Charter document and now the RSA democratic constitution, education happens to be among those apex priorities of the nation which are engulfed with on-going challenges.

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The promulgation of BELA Act after extensive public participation and stakeholder participation throughout the country, reaffirms the will of the state through the people's mandate both Black and White, rich and poor to continue with redress agenda in education which has a direct bearing on nation building, peace, inclusive economic development and prosperity of the country.

Mr President the decolonization and de-racialization of the country's education system is premised on the posture that South Africa is a unitary country with spheres of government obtaining at three levels and each with assigned constitutional powers and responsibilities.

It therefore Mr President goes without saying that if South Africa as the nation were to work towards the realization of its democratic constitution, then provinces through the department of education managed by Head of the Department as the Accounting Officer, has to put in place controls, processes and mechanisms that schools and their stakeholders discharge their responsibilities in line with the democratic constitution of a country (not a province, district/region or a school)

Mr President as the political head of South Africa's sovereign state entrusted with constitutional powers to live up to the vision of South Africa underpinned by the Bill of Rights, South Africans who are for pro-transformation, social cohesion, unity and diversity, equality, social justice, inclusive economic transformation, access to quality basic services and access to nearby education facilities, you are respectfully called upon to exercise revolutionary obligation by assenting to the full implementation of BELA Act for a better South Africa.

Mr President, the inculcation and promotion of the values of non-racialism, unity in cultural diversity, social cohesion and nation building, equal human rights and inclusive transformational economy within a schooling environment can now be enforced at the stroke of a pen assenting to the full implementation of BELA Act.

Mr President and South Africans it must be emphasized that the ultimate promulgation of BELA Act took almost 10 years of rigorous consultations, internally and externally including members of public and key stakeholders through the established parliamentary processes in a form of National Parliament and National Council of Provinces wherein the country's political parties including some which are now standing with anti-transformation forces.

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Mr President in the parliamentary processes especially the National Assembly and Council of Provinces, the elected public representatives as coming from their respective political parties, argued in favor of the promulgation of BELA Act in its entirety mainly because they held a strong conviction that BELA Act accelerates transformation and change in the education system and thereby realizing the fundamental values of a democratic constitution and Bill of Rights which are equity, redress and access.

Mr President as progressive and pro-transformation formations, academics, intellectuals, patriotic entrepreneurs and the rest of the South Africans, rest assured of our commitment to fiercely defend the gains of freedom and democracy made since 1994 while also dismantling and isolating the agenda to preserve the White supremacy mentality of the pre-1994 era.

Furthermore, Mr President and South Africans while they are systemic challenges within the country's education system mainly caused by the 342 years of colonial and apartheid education(which cannot be turn around within 30 years) these forces which seem to oppose transformation are driven by the following agenda:

- a) Continued fear and or sheer opportunism not to embrace inclusive and equal education system.
- b) Clinging to the pre-1994 education benefits in terms of resource allocation for the few.
- c) Continued application of pre-1994 colonial and apartheid beliefs and practices to preserve (wittingly and or unwittingly) to preserve White domination through language.
- d) Reclaim the economic power

There is no doubt that education is a natural resource and a vital part of the society wherefore it is a prerogative of government to enact legislation to assert national ownership like any other national resource and this is what BELA Act seeks to do mainly to fight vociferously the anti-transformation agenda in education.

It is therefore imperative Mr President that the agenda of the 7th administration supported by the progressive formations, academics, intellectuals, professionals and patriotic entrepreneurs must among other things focus on the dismantling of pre-1994 convictions

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and practices as they continue to be held and demonstrated by some sections of the South African nation.

Mr President, it is hoped that an oversight committed when BELA Act was signed into law but excluded the implementation of the two sections would then be corrected as it sets dangerous precedent of undermining due processes especially in enforcing the fundamentals of a broader transformation agenda.

This open letter Mr President is endorsed by a broad spectrum of the country's body of progressive formations which among them include Progressive Professionals Forum, South African Democratic Trade Union, National Association of School Governing Bodies and Limpopo Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Progressively yours

Sithembiso Kubheka

Secretary General for PPF and the Convener for the Progressive Formations Endorsing this Open Letter to RSA President

About the PPF

The Progressive Professionals Forum (PPF) is a non-racial, non-sexist and non-xenophobic organisation of progressive professionals, academics, intellectuals and patriotic entrepreneurs subscribing the values of the Freedom Charter and the Constitution of South Africa and who are the think tank and resource base of South Africa towards the realization of the country's developmental goals through policy, research and advocacy.

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