Towards a Framework for Achieving Social Cohesion
within the 2030 Timeframe of the NDP

1. Introduction

1.1 Social cohesion is recognised as the product of various societal features, including non-racism and non-sexism, reduction of disparities in wealth and income, and the presence of a sense of belonging, of shared values, and a sense that society is committed to a common endeavour.

1.2 South Africa displays a number of factors which undermine the attempts at achieving social cohesion, especially relating to inter-generational trauma, trust in others, a common identity and inequality.

1.3 The NDP identified the following elements as critical in the nation building effort, which is a key part of fostering social cohesion: knowledge of the Constitution and fostering Constitutional values; equalising opportunities, promoting inclusion and redress; promoting social cohesion across society through increased interaction across race and class; promoting active citizenry and broad-based leadership and achieving a social compact that will lay the basis for equity, inclusion and prosperity for all.

1.4 In this document the National Planning Commission sets out a process which aims to involve all parts of society notwithstanding their political position, nor their level of privilege or deprivation. The process is envisaged to yield before the end of the year a framework for social cohesion.

1.5 This draft document should be to consolidate various efforts of the NPC's workstreams in so far as they impact on social cohesion and nation building.

1.6 The process the NPC follows should address in the immediate the almost daily experience of racism the majority of black persons are subjected to. Thus, an immediate outcome of the process should be strategies for the promotion of tolerance and embracing of diversity in various areas and for the emergence of a shared South Africa identity and pride in this nation.

1.7 The document proposes the development of a social cohesion gauge, drawn from a variety of barometers and indicators, as a way of measuring the state of social cohesion. It is proposed that one of the research areas that the NPC should engage in is the

establishment of a baseline document against which future reports of the social cohesion gauge can be measured.

2. Problem Statement

2.1 Within government Outcome Six of the MTSF dealing with social cohesion has been allocated to the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture (DSAC). This has resulted in social cohesion often mistakenly being assumed as the outcome mainly of sporting events, heritage, cultural and artistic activities.

2.2 Given the state centricity of the approach taken, social cohesion then does not enjoy the profile that such a multidimensional and cross sectoral endeavour requires. This has seen the lack of engagement of racial minority groups in social activities such as celebration of national days and in social dialogues. It has also a distance between government and business/labour on social cohesion issues.

2.3 SA has a plethora of organisations trying to contribute to social cohesion, bringing in much needed facilitation and mediation skills, resources and commitments. However, government engages with these civil society bodies very much on the terms and terrains specified by government.

2.4 Given the extent to which women and youth bear the worst effects of social exclusion, specially through economic exclusion and intergenerational and other forms of trauma, the envisaged process must place at the centre of its considerations issues impacting these sectors of society.

2.5 Relations between South Africans and foreigners have been largely seen by the state as a law-and-order issue. It has been left to civil society, especially religious and welfare organisations, to foster healthy relations between the various communities.

2.6 The SA Constitution has underlined the importance of cultural, linguistic and religious rights. At different moments the assertion of these rights at the expense of others have served to undermine social cohesion.

2.7 According to the Social Cohesion Index of the Inclusive Society of South Africa carried out after the July 2021 uprisings, almost half of respondents felt that it was not possible to form one nation out of all the different groups in SA[1]. About 32% believed it was possible with the remainder not having an opinion either way. About 30% believed that race relations were getting worse, with 70% saying they had remained the same, and 22% saying it had improved. The high level of respondents feeling it had remained the same is reflective of the parlous state of race relations in the recent past. About 49% of Black South Africans felt it had remained the same, while 22% saw it as improving.

2.8 South Africa is home to people of many different racial, ethnic, religious and national backgrounds, and its economy and cultures have been enriched by the contributions of migrants from around southern Africa and the continent. The NPC is under increasing pressure to adopt more effective approaches to secure inclusion and bring people together to achieve social cohesion and nation building. It is in this context that the Social Cohesion Framework calls or appeals for political leadership from the Office of the DP to overcome social divisions and to generate acceptance for tolerance and diversity. It has emphasised that social cohesion requires the implementation of integration policies that promote equality and diversity, based on a recognition of the non-racial and non-sexist nature of our society.

2.9 The NPC needs a strategy for the integration of migrants and ethnic minorities as a matter of urgency based on the perceived or real exclusion experienced by some minorities and migrant communities and the exploitation of public concerns about racial, ethnic and religious differences by political groupings, and ensure that this issue is indeed high on the political agenda. To play a significant role in devising and directing cross-national integration policies and focus on the legislative and policy instruments to promote diversity, tolerance and integration.

2.10 Social cohesion and nation building must aim to achieve a well-functioning non-racial and non-sexist society that shares common goals and values where everyone has shared responsibilities and willingness to live and participate in communities that are driven by justice, fairness and equity.

3. **Immediate Steps**

3.1 This document is processed by the Social Cohesion Task Team, and ACCSL Workstream.

3.2 A briefing note on the basis of this document be prepared for the Chair/Deputy Chair of the NPC to brief the Minister of DSAC. Parallel to this NPC shall brief the relevant DSAC officials.

3.3 A meeting of the bodies working on Social Cohesion met to discuss the development of a framework social cohesion and plan to invite relevant representatives of political parties.

3.4 The Framework on Social Cohesion Document was presented to the May 5 plenary meeting of the NPC. Feedback is incorporated and through the NPC Chair shared with the President/Cabinet.

3.5 The Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Committee is then established as a decision of Cabinet and through the office of the Speaker of the National Assembly, before the end of 2023.

3.6 A set of social cohesion targets is then incorporated into the 2024-2029 MTSF to be served to the incoming Cabinet.