



## **POLICY POSITION: COALITIONS AND INTER-PARTY CO-OPERATION**

### **Problem Statement**

As South Africa moves from a dominant-party democracy, into an era of coalitions characterised by inter-party co-operation, our political culture must change with it. But, the rise of coalition politics in South Africa has been fraught with challenges and instability as this culture is forged.

These challenges are caused by immaturity and power-mongering among political parties who act without principles and values, as well as some weaknesses in the regulatory framework and 'rules of the game' to govern this complex political artform.

South Africans are sick of the divisive, adversarial and immature rhetoric that has punctuated the political scene in this country for far too long. They want our leaders to check their egos at the door, show maturity and come together to forge sensible, selfless solutions to the serious problems that we face.

For GOOD, coalition politics gives us an opportunity to display our values and our principled approach to governance. But it also presents a risk. If we do not act consistently in line with our principles, we will be painted with the same brush as those who are destabilising our councils.

Whenever GOOD takes political actions in coalitions scenarios, it only does so in accordance with the principles of this policy, and is motivated only by the best interests of the residents that live in the jurisdiction of the relevant legislature.

### **Solutions**

- a) Values and Principles by which coalition actions are made

Whenever GOOD takes a coalition action, it does so only according to the following Values and Principles:

- Independence and Non-Alignment: GOOD is not committed to any permanent coalition partners or 'coalition bloc', although the NMC may decide to form or join

political alliances in any given election if it deems it in the best interests of GOOD and the residents of South Africa;

- Best interests of the residents: The primary consideration in every coalition action that GOOD takes is the decision that will be optimal for the best interests of the residents in the relevant community that the legislature serves. This includes: the best standard of service delivery; ethical and quality governance; and stability of the governing arrangement;
- Best Candidate: Similarly, when voting for elected positions, GOOD will prefer the candidate that is best suited for the position being elected, having considered their track record and experience; standard of ethics; and their support and respect in the relevant community.
- Compatibility with GOOD's values: GOOD will prefer to work with progressive political parties and pursue governing relationships that promote and deliver on our founding values of social justice, spatial justice, economic justice and environmental justice.
- Local input: local representatives should have a significant say in influencing the coalitions actions to be taken by the Party at local level;
- Centrality: ultimate control of the party's coalition actions must be retained by the central Party executive to ensure that such actions align with these values and principles; as well as to ensure accountability of its public representatives and consistency in terms of the Party's broad strategic objectives;
- Respecting the general wishes of the electorate: GOOD will not take coalition actions that would yield a result that is wholly and obviously disproportionate to the general wishes of the electorate as evidenced by the election result in the relevant legislature.
- Necessity: GOOD would generally prefer to stay out of coalition arrangements that bind its actions in a legislature. GOOD will only enter into coalition agreements when it is deemed absolutely necessary for the purpose of forming a government that will deliver a programme of government that is consistent with the values of the party and this Policy;
- Formality: if GOOD decides to enter into any coalition arrangement, it will only do so when the coalition has the appropriate structures in place that is typically required for a well-functioning and professional coalition arrangement, including a written coalition agreement.

## b) Assumption of Positions by GOOD Representatives as a Result of Coalition Actions

- “Positions... as a result of coalition actions” typically refer to positions in a governing executive as part of a coalition agreement, but could also refer to other key elected positions in the legislature such as Speaker or ‘Chair of Chairs’. It excludes Chairpersonship of ordinary committees;
- Due to our principle of necessity, GOOD’s representatives will only take up such Positions if it is necessary to form a government that promotes our Values and Principles as described above;
- While GOOD’s national leadership will make every effort to permit local representatives to negotiate agreements on local issues and local politics, the NMC may at any time intervene and direct a member or public representative to make or refrain from any coalition in order to ensure consistency of GOOD’s overall approach to coalitions, and all members must abide by any instruction so given by the NMC;
- GOOD will only take up such positions if the following conditions are met:
  - 1) The position is offered and accepted in good faith. In other words, it is offered and accepted for no ulterior motive other than those typically associated with the need to form coalition governments and in line with the Values and Principles of GOOD;
  - 2) The position is related to a portfolio that is relevant to the core policy positions and convictions of GOOD;
  - 3) GOOD’s representative who would take up the position has the suitable capabilities required for the position;
  - 4) Taking up the position would be in the best interests of the Party and the residents of the relevant municipality, province or country.

## c) Legal Regulation of Coalition Politics in South Africa

- GOOD believes that the answer to South Africa’s early coalition troubles lie primarily in voters exercising electoral accountability over political parties, and transforming the country’s adversarial political culture, rather than a legislated solution;
- GOOD does support minor legislative amendments to create a more enabling legal environment conducive to coalition politics, such as extending the timeframe to negotiate coalition arrangements, and the public disclosure of coalition agreements

- GOOD stands against any moves to increase legislative thresholds in South Africa, viewing it as both unconstitutional and inappropriate to the uniquely diverse South African society.