

## WELCOME NOTES

### LAUNCH: COALITIONS BAROMETER SUMMARY

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#### MISTRA COALITIONS BAROMETER (2021 – 2023) HIGH-LEVEL SUMMARY LAUNCH

Good afternoon and welcome to all colleagues who have joined us for today's launch of the summary of the first instalment of the Mapungubwe Institute's municipal Coalitions Barometer.

We wish to welcome in particular the team led by Prof Susan Booysen for the plodding industry that has spawned what we believe will be an important frame of reference, as South Africa trudges the widening terrain of managing coalition governance, quite possibly beyond sub-national spheres soon.

Special gratitude goes to the panellists from SALGA and the Gqeberha Metro who, we are certain, will lend wisdom to our discussions.

We have special guests led by Rolf Mutzenich from the Social Democratic Party in Germany - welcome to SA and profound thanks for joining us today, and the same applies to Martin Menger from the Embassy. We cannot of course forget FES-SA which is a longstanding and valuable partner of ours.

Maybe as a teaser: why have we embarked on this thankless and gruelling task? Colleagues would be aware that some two years ago we published a seminal study on coalition governance in SA, creatively and appropriately titled, *Marriages of Inconvenience*. Therein, the researchers raise many issues that are fundamental to making coalitions work - not for its own sake; but because the *raison d'etre* of any government is to improve the human condition.

Unfortunately, as this Barometer attests, we have not only had cycles of instability in many coalition governments. Provision of basic services has suffered. Infrastructure has hardly been upgraded or maintained, and health hazards arising from the collapse of water and sanitation services are becoming all too common.

We can of course take the easy route of blaming coalitions for this. The fact of the matter is that many of these ills do exist in municipalities without coalitions. But they are worsened by coalitions because of systemic political paralysis, unethical handling of service providers, illegal parcelling out of management positions, lack of capacity to spend national grants...and the list goes on. As the Barometer points out, there are hardly any coalitions where the agreements among the partners are made public.

But having said all this, the point needs to be made that there are a few islands of functionality and some excellence. In this era where self-flagellation has turned into a national sport, I wish to make bold to say that it is also (and perhaps primarily) at these islands that we should train our gaze and extract lessons for generic application.

We do hope that this initiative by MISTRA will start a process through which there will be evidence-based assessment of coalition practice in our country, the better to return to that core Constitutional

injunction, about improving the human condition. The summary released today does contain the fundamental issues; but you can be rest assured that the detailed report – which will come out in a few weeks – will itself be riveting reading.

So, you are all welcome - and we can get into the substance of our engagement!

**END**