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This discussion document is a product of extensive research. It takes forward reflections in the Ten-Year Review (TYR) and the Scenario Planning Process (SPP) as well as discussions at several Cabinet meetings.

The document (hereinafter termed the Macro-Social Report) addresses, among others, the following questions:

- how have the material conditions of South Africans changed in the past decade?: a summary of the trends identified in the TYR and an update on major trends
- in what way has the structure of South African society changed since 1994?: social mobility in the context of class, race, gender and age
- what have been the trends in the organisation of social life?: trends in households and families, community organisation and economic relations
- through what identities do South Africans define themselves?: how do the diverse and overarching identities and value systems affect their self-worth and aspirations?

These issues are critical in understanding the movement of South African society from its apartheid past towards non-racialism, equity and unity in diversity. Though many of the critical macro-social trends would require a timeline longer than a decade to assert themselves with a degree of certainty, this treatise starts to point to major critical drifts, some at the behest of public policy and others defining themselves independent of material conditions and policy prescripts.



The fact that some macro-social developments play themselves out irrespective of public policy does emphasise the need to understand the capacities and limitations of the State. In part, this underlines the importance of partnerships across all sectors of society. But it can also reflect omissions on the part of public policy, or unintended consequences of a particular programme or a combination of programmes.

The identification of key driving forces in the SPP, over some of which the State has little influence, was meant partially to fill this gap. At the same time, public discussion of these issues and their implications for public policy should help society in pursuing the objectives enshrined in our Constitution.

The methodology used in this analysis is premised primarily on facts and figures. In this regard, the document avoids the temptation to allow *a priori* prejudices and beliefs to sully an objective appraisal of social dynamics, with the hope – and, the conviction – that the facts will speak for themselves. The main sources of data in this document are the TYR, Statistics SA, and research studies and surveys conducted by organisations such as the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), Institute for Democracy in South Africa (Idasa), South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), FutureFact Surveys, Medical Research Council (MRC), South Africa Institute of Security Studies (ISS), South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF), Markinor, etc. The bibliography comprises complete details of these and other relevant selected studies.

Although methodologies may differ from country to country, macro-social analyses (integrative country-social analyses) are conducted in many countries to examine such issues as social identity, social intercourse, trends within and among social groups and interaction between formal institutions, social institutions and informal practices.

Government hopes that, arising out of this experience, South Africa will be able to conduct such reviews on a regular basis to inform public policy and help in forging effective social partnerships to build a better society.

