

STATEMENT OF THE THABO MBEKI FOUNDATION REGARDING ALLEGATIONS OF
A LINK BETWEEN PRESIDENT MBEKI AND THE GUPTA FAMILY

In the last three weeks, we have noted news reports attributable to various persons claiming some link between former President Thabo Mbeki and the Gupta family.

We have agonised about this matter, avoiding to respond and thus descend to the lower depths to which the allegation desperately attaches.

Our honest and sustained attempt to avoid the gutter were nonetheless severely tested and strained by an *ENCA* news report which featured one Mr. Mpho Masemola, a representative of the Ex-Political Prisoners Association, yesterday.

Mr. Masemola takes the public into confidence about discussions between the Ex-Political Prisoners Association and President Jacob Zuma last week. He deploys innuendo in order to socialise accountability for an individual's ethical judgement.

For the record, President Thabo Mbeki did not at any point introduce the Gupta family to President Zuma.

Even if it were true that President Mbeki had introduced the Gupta family to President Zuma, unless it is alleged and proven that he did so with an improper motive, he would not be held responsible for whatever may or may not have transpired thereafter between President Zuma and the Gupta family. For Mr. Masemola to suggest otherwise is in fact to accuse President Zuma of lacking the capacity to make his own ethical judgements.

We have also noted reports which claim that a member of the Gupta family served as an economic advisor to President Mbeki.

This too is false!

No member of the Gupta family ever served in any economic advisory body during the time when President Mbeki served as Head of State. It is nevertheless true that Ajay Gupta, served on the International Marketing Council board (now Brand SA).

Mr. Ajay Gupta joined the board of the then IMC by agreement of the board on the recommendation of then Minister in The Presidency, Essop Pahad, who rightly or wrongly thought that he had the skills, knowledge and capacity to facilitate the work of the Council – not because of his alleged proximity to the President. The IMC board reported to the Minister in The Presidency. Former Minister Pahad can further elaborate on the matter.

When he commented on the Supreme Court of Appeal judgment in the matter between the *"National Director of Public Prosecutions v Zuma"* on January 13, 2009, President Mbeki made, among others,

the following observations: "It seems to me that the unacceptable practice of propagation of deliberate falsehoods to attain various objectives is becoming entrenched in our country. I am pleased that the SCA has provided firm leadership in this regard by insisting that nobody's integrity should be impugned on the basis of untested allegations."

Three months ago, on January 10, President Mbeki began publishing a series of articles intended precisely to address various falsehoods that have been perpetuated over many years.

And now once again enters Mr. Masemola!

Ends.

PS: This is what Mr. Masemola told *ENCA*: "*The Gupta family has not come with Jacob Zuma. The Gupta family was introduced to Jacob Zuma by Thabo Mbeki and Essop Pahad. Actually, we were shocked to hear that ... those words coming from the President. People are making noises now as if the President has been, you know, clinging to the Gupta family etc. It's not like that. Why Thabo Mbeki is keeping quiet? Why Essop Pahad is keeping quiet because we know that for the fact that the Gupta family is staying within, he's staying in the same region with the Gupta family, Essop Pahad. In India. Yes. We know that.*"

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