

MEDIA STATEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TO: All Media Outlets

FROM: Section 22 Ad Hoc Committee for the Christian Sector

DATE: 25 March 2026

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON THE NATIONAL CONSULTATION PROCESS FOR THE DRAFT SELF-REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR THE CHRISTIAN SECTOR

OPENING REMARKS BY THE CHAIRPERSON

Good morning, members of the media, esteemed leaders of faith, and all South Africans.

On behalf of the Section 22 Ad Hoc Committee for the Christian Sector, I stand before you today with a spirit of humility, hope, and a renewed commitment to the sacred task entrusted to us.

We are here not to impose, but to listen. Not to dictate, but to discern. Not to divide, but to unite.

Our Committee was established under the auspices of the CRL Rights Commission to develop a voluntary self-regulatory framework for the Christian sector, an initiative by the Church, for the Church. The draft framework, released for public consultation in December 2025, is not a final document. It is a starting point for a national conversation.

A SPIRIT OF RECONCILIATION

We acknowledge that some have expressed concern, scepticism, and even opposition to this initiative. To those who have questioned our motives, who fear state overreach, or who believe that the Church must govern itself without external influence, we hear you. We respect your convictions. We do not dismiss your concerns as illegitimate.

We extend a hand of reconciliation. We invite you to the table, not as adversaries, but as fellow stewards of the Body of Christ in South Africa.

We acknowledge that the Church is not a monolith. It is a tapestry of rich traditions, from the historic mainline denominations to the vibrant African Independent Churches, from the Pentecostal movements to the evangelical fellowships, from the migrant congregations to the rural ministries. Each thread is precious. Each voice is essential.

We also acknowledge that the Church has wounded some. To those who have suffered abuse, exploitation, or neglect within our walls, we see you. We honour your courage. Your voice is not a threat to the Church; it is a gift that can help heal it.

THE CONSULTATION PLAN: CERTAINTY AND CLARITY

When we launched the Draft Self-Regulatory Framework for the Christian Sector in December 2025, we committed to meet with umbrella bodies, denominational leaders, fraternal, abuse survivors, theologians, legal experts, traditional leaders, government departments and agencies, Chapter 9 Institutions and the general public. We committed to listening, learning, and refining the framework together.

Let me now clarify the path forward. Our Committee has developed a comprehensive National Consultation Plan that will unfold over the coming months. This plan is designed to ensure that every stakeholder, whether supportive, sceptical, or wounded, has the opportunity to be heard.

Phase 1: Preparatory Engagements with Umbrella Churches/organisations, Government and Chapter 9 Institutions (April – May 2026)

Over the next two months, we will engage in focused consultations with:

- **National Government Departments and agencies**, including COGTA, Social Development, Home Affairs, and SARS, to align on legal compliance and support mechanisms;
- **Umbrella Organisations**, including the Inter Denominational Ministers Association of South Africa, Koinonia Christian Council, Imvuselelo Theological Research And Dialogue, South African Ministers Fraternal, Medical Community Chaplains Republic of South Africa, Diakonia South Africa, Federation of African Independent Churches, Ikhaya Lase Zione, Congress of South African Churches, South African Christian Ministers Council and many others, to secure endorsement and gather strategic input. The above is in addition to the umbrella organisations represented in the Section 22 Ad Hoc Committee, comprising South African Council of Churches, The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa, Nazareth Baptist Church, Zion Christian Church, Rhema Bible Church, ST. Engenas Zion Christian Church and Moral Regeneration Movement.
- **Church Advocacy Organisations**, including Freedom of Religion SA, South African Church Defenders and other advocacy groups, to address constitutional concerns and clarify the voluntary nature of the framework; and
- **Chapter 9 Institutions**, including the South African Human Rights Commission and the Commission for Gender Equality, to ensure our framework aligns with constitutional protections for all.

Phase 2: Provincial Consultations (June 2026 – April 2027)

From June 2026 through April 2027, the Section 22 Committee will travel to each of the nine provinces for week-long intensive consultations. We will visit on:

- **June 2026:** KwaZulu-Natal
- **July 2026:** Eastern Cape
- **August 2026:** Western Cape
- **September 2026:** Gauteng
- **October 2026:** Limpopo

- **November 2026:** Mpumalanga
- **February 2027:** North West
- **March 2027:** Free State
- **April 2027:** Northern Cape

In each province, we will hold:

- Structured institutional engagements with government departments, denominational leaders, and independent pastors, traditional leaders;
- Open Provincial Summits where any member of the public, layperson, clergy, youth, or elder, can share their views;
- Targeted sessions with vulnerable groups, including survivors of abuse, foreign-national church communities, persons with disabilities, and youth caucuses; and
- Confidential sessions for those who wish to share sensitive experiences in a safe, trauma-informed environment.

Phase 3: National Summit and Finalisation (May 2027)

Following the provincial consultations, we will convene a National Summit in Johannesburg to synthesise all inputs, to refine the framework, and finalise the document for submission to the CRL Rights Commission and Parliament.

AN APPEAL FOR COOPERATION AND ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

To all South Africans, believers and seekers alike, I make this appeal:

Do not stand on the sidelines. The future of the Church in this nation is too important to be left to a few. This framework will be shaped not by the Committee alone, but by the collective wisdom of the Christian community.

- If you are a **church leader**, we need your theological insight and practical experience.
- If you are a **lay member**, we need your lived experience of church governance, or lack thereof.
- If you are a **survivor of abuse**, we need your courage to help us ensure no one suffers what you have suffered.
- If you are a **sceptic**, we need your questions to sharpen our thinking and test our assumptions.

We commit to you: **Your input will be recorded, considered, and, where possible, incorporated into the final framework.** We will publish a report detailing how public feedback shaped the final document. This is not a token exercise. This is a genuine, open, and accountable process.

A WORD OF ASSURANCE

Let me address directly the concern that has been raised most frequently: Is this about state control of religion?

The answer is a firm and unequivocal no.

The draft framework is built on the principle of Autonomy with Responsibility, respect for the doctrinal independence and freedom of religion, balanced with a voluntary commitment to ethical self-governance. The proposed Christian Practice Council for Ethics and Accountability is not a state body. It is an independent council of Christian leaders and experts who will award a Seal of Good Standing to organisations that voluntarily adopt and comply with the framework.

This is not about the state controlling the Church. This is about the Church holding itself to a higher standard, a standard worthy of the Gospel we proclaim.

A CALL TO UNITY

We are at a critical moment in the life of the Church in South Africa. We face challenges, financial impropriety, exploitation of the vulnerable, and a loss of public trust. But we also have an unprecedented opportunity to say: We will do better. We will be accountable. We will be worthy of the trust placed in us.

This is not a moment for division. It is a moment for the Church to demonstrate that it can govern itself with integrity, transparency, and love.

I invite you all, whether you lead a congregation of thousands or worship in a small fellowship, whether you have been in the Church your whole life or have walked away wounded, to join us. Your voice matters. Your contribution is essential. The table is open.

Thank you.

Issued by the Section 22 Ad Hoc Committee for the Christian Sector

"Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock." — 1 Peter 5:2-3

ENDS