

Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996

*As adopted on 8 May 1996 and amended
on 11 October 1996 by the Constitutional Assembly*

One law for One nation

Act 108 of 1996

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EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

This Constitution was drafted in terms of [Chapter 5](#) of the interim Constitution ([Act 200 of 1993](#)) and was first adopted by the Constitutional Assembly on 8 May 1996. In terms of a [judgement of the Constitutional Court](#), delivered on 6 September 1996, the text was referred back to the Constitutional Assembly for reconsideration. The text was accordingly amended to comply with the Constitutional Principles contained in [Schedule 4](#) of the interim Constitution. It was signed into law on 10 December 1996.

The objective in this process was to ensure that the final Constitution is legitimate, credible and accepted by all South Africans.

To this extent, the process of drafting the Constitution involved many South Africans in the largest public participation programme ever carried out in South Africa. After nearly two years of intensive consultations, political parties represented in the Constitutional Assembly negotiated the formulations contained in this text, which are an integration of ideas from ordinary citizens, civil society and political parties represented in and outside of the Constitutional Assembly.

This Constitution therefore represents the collective wisdom of the South African people and has been arrived at by general agreement.

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Preamble

We, the people of South Africa,

Recognise the injustices of our past;

Honour those who suffered for justice and freedom in our land;

Respect those who have worked to build and develop our country; and

Believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity.

We therefore, through our freely elected representatives, adopt this Constitution as the supreme law of the Republic so as to –

Heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights;

Lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by law;

Improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person; and

Build a united and democratic South Africa able to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations.

May God protect our people.

Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika. Morena boloka setjhaba sa heso.

God seën Suid-Afrika. God bless South Africa.

Mudzimu fhatutshedza Afurika. Hosi katekisa Afrika.