**Political parties just cannot agree on land reform procedures**

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Political parties have pledged their readiness to provide "leadership" on the land restitution programme but remain on separate paths on how to go about it.

The ANC, IFP and the FF Plus have made submissions to the advisory panel on land reform which convened a colloquium at the Saint George Hotel in Irene, Pretoria, on Friday.

The panel is expected to frame discussion papers towards formulating policy proposals on land reform in respect of restitution, redistribution and tenure reform.

The 10-member group of experts was appointed by President Cyril Ramaphosa in September 2018 to provide independent advice to the inter-ministerial committee (IMC) made up of 11 Cabinet ministers and convened by Deputy President David Mabuza.

They are expected to advise government on how to use its constitutional mandate for land reform and its powers to expropriate in the interests of land reform.

FF Plus leader Pieter Groenewald said that South Africans were generally very emotional, and said those who seek the land as well as those who have it should have "subtle and frank" discussions to address land reform in the country.

"The panel must tell the president to stop expropriation without compensation immediately," said Groenewald.

He argued that "politics" was not the answer to the land question and submitted that it should be treated as a business transaction.

He previously, on several occasions in Parliament, contended that if any piece of land was going to be taken away, especially from white people, there should be reasonable compensation.

He said there may be "war" should expropriation without compensation go ahead.

But Groenewald's arguments did not sit well with ANC national executive committee member Ronald Lamola, who responded and said the economy would never grow if the majority of citizens were excluded from participating in it and if small and large-scale farming were allowed to go unsupported by government and the private sector through land restitution.

Lamola also assured Groenewald that the ANC was not using the land matter as an electioneering tool in rhetoric, and said that "the party was formed in 1912 at the time solely to deal with the land questions".

The IFP's Nsikayezwe Cebekhulu also weighed in and said that in order for land reform policies to be successful, they need to be carried out by "leaders that have backbones".

However, he said that expropriation of land without compensation should be the very last option.

Cebekhulu said that there seemed to have been corruption by individuals who may have colluded with government officials to fix land prices, and submitted that that too could have halted the progress of land redistribution.

Lamola, however, said the "fact that there have been failures in land reform should not be the reason why we do not continue with it".

The panel's chairperson Vuyo Mahlati said she was pleased with the submissions made at the meeting.

"We had several inputs which are useful, some were based on practical examples. We also noted the dominance of the court and its negative implications and heard reflections from current land claims commissioner, so I am satisfied with the progress so far," she said.

Rural Development and Land Reform Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, speaking to the media outside the venue, denied claims that the land redistribution process in South Africa was at a crossroads.

"We have a Constitution that we celebrate worldwide, all we should be doing is quickening our steps in dealing with the matter," Nkoana-Mashabane said.

Justice and Constitutional Development Minister Michael Masutha also addressed the media, and said that "the panel should seek to unpack the entirety of the legislative regime as it stands, that governs the administration of land, and what extent it (legislature) enables the objectives that seek to be realised in the Land Reform Act".

Minister in the Presidency responsible for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma earlier on the day said that there were signs of growing impatience and that the government was under considerable and probably increasing pressure over possible failure to deliver on its land reform promise.

The two-day colloquium is expected to conclude on Saturday where the financing of land reform, the models of agricultural land reform and financing topics are expected to dominate the agenda.