

## South Africa's president to step down

South Africa's President Thabo Mbeki will resign, his office confirmed Saturday.

'The president has obliged and will step down after all constitutional requirements have been met,' said presidential spokesman Mukoni Ratshitanga.

The ANC (African National Congress) announced its decision to recall Mbeki from office Saturday.

Addressing the media in Kempton Park, ANC secretary-general Gwede Mantashe said Mbeki's reaction to the news was 'normal'.

'He didn't display shock or any depression. He welcomed the news and agreed that he is going to participate (in the parliamentary process). If I said he was excited I would be exaggerating.'

Mantashe said the decision was taken 'as an effort to heal and unite the African National Congress'.

He said the decision was a political way to deal with the implications of Pietermaritzburg High Court Judge Chris Nicholson's ruling that Mbeki may have been involved in a political conspiracy against ruling party leader Jacob Zuma.

'The biggest worry of the ANC had been the question of a reversal of the closure of the chapter (that the Nicholson judgment seemed to have promised).'

The National Prosecuting Authority's decision to appeal the judgment had become a worry, said Mantashe.

'If pursued it will continue to be a point of division for the ANC.'

When asked whether a vote had been taken to reach the decision, Mantashe said: 'We discussed until we reached a consensus.'

Mantashe said: 'The ANC president will meet with its members in the government to urge them to remain in the government... (but) if any individual wants to opt out of the movement, we cannot chain them to the process. We will respect their decisions.'

Earlier Saturday, deputy president Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka's spokesman Denzel Taylor said: 'I can confirm that the deputy president will resign if the president is asked to step down,' Taylor said.

'She was appointed by the president and has served him loyally. She feels that it is the right thing to do.'

'It is now up to parliament to work out a formula to implement the decision. We are quite patient for parliament to develop a system.'

Mbeki became president in 1999 after taking over from Nelson Mandela.

He was the head of the ANC from 1997 until he lost a battle for power at the ANC's national

conference in Polokwane in December 2007, when Zuma, his former deputy president, became the head of the organisation.

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