



PARLIAMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES
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REMARKS BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES, HONOURABLE N. A. MASONDO, ON THE OCCASION OF THE STRATEGIC REVIEW AND PLANNING SESSION FOR THE COMMITTEES OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES

VENUE: CAPE TOWN LODGE **DATE:** 28 FEBRUARY 2023 **TIME:** 09h00

Programme Director

Deputy Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces, Honourable Sylvia Lucas

House Chairperson for Committees and Oversight, Honourable Jomo Nyambi

House Chairperson for International Relations and Members' Support, Honourable Winnie Ngwenya

Chief Whip of the National Council of Provinces, Honourable Seiso Mohai

Chairpersons of Committees and Whips

Honourable Members

Secretary to Parliament

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. INTRODUCTION

Programme Director, allow me to start by thanking you for the opportunity to address this year's Strategic Review and Planning Session for the Committees of the National Council of Provinces. This is an important exercise as it takes place after the delivery of the State of the Nation Address and the Budget Speech.

In particular, this session, which provides an opportunity for the Committees to reflect on the work they have done and to make the necessary adjustments going forward, takes place during the penultimate year of the 6th Parliament. As things stand now, we only have about 14 months left to carry out the mandate of this current Parliament.

That alone requires of us to be circumspect in how we approach our work for the remainder of the term, keeping in mind the outcome we set out to achieve by the end of 2024 of increasing government's responsiveness and accountability.

2. ON THE ROLE OF COMMITTEES

In light of this week's exercise, Programme Director, it is important to always restate the role and functions of Committees. Our Committees are responsible for:

- 1) Processing draft legislation;
- 2) Overseeing Executive action, including the budget;
- 3) Promoting public involvement;
- 4) Facilitating cooperative governance; and
- 5) Processing international matters.

The different Committees have one or more of the following functions:

- 1) They monitor and oversee the work and budgets of national government departments and hold them accountable;
- 2) They consider and amend Bills, and may initiate Bills;
- 3) They consider private Members' and provincial legislative proposals and special petitions;
- 4) They consider international treaties and agreements;
- 5) They examine specific areas of public life or matters of public interest; and,
- 6) They take care of domestic parliamentary issues.

In terms of the Constitution, the Committees have the power to summon any person to appear before them, to give evidence or to produce documents. As such, they may require any person or institution to report to them (This is very important for the NCOP given that constitutionally other entities, such as the Institutions Supporting Democracy, account to the National Assembly but are obliged to report to the NCOP especially when called upon to do so). The Committees may also receive petitions, representations or submissions from any interested persons or institutions.

3. ON SOME OF THE WORK OF COMMITTEES SINCE THE LAST PLANNING SESSION IN 2022

Programme Director, in line with their role and functions, our Committees have undertaken a lot of work since the previous review and planning session, which was held around the same time last year. The work carried out includes the processing of key pieces of legislation, among them finance Bills which were aimed at appropriating finance to government departments and the allocation of revenues to the three spheres of government. Other Bills considered and passed include:

- 1) The Employment Equity Amendment Bill;
- 2) The Criminal Law (Forensic Procedures) Amendment Bill;
- 3) The Children's Amendment Bill; and
- 4) The Financial Sector Bills.

The Bills that we passed were meant to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of the people. However, we must accept that despite ensuring that we pass some of the critical Bills late last year, which have since been enacted, namely the General Laws Amendment Act of 2022 and the Protection of Constitutional Democracy Against Terrorist and Related Activities Amendment Act, this was not adequate to prevent last Friday's decision by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to put our country under increased monitoring (known as greylisting). The FATF is an international body that monitors and combats money laundering and terrorism financing.

This, Programme Director, suggests that we should always monitor very closely the actions of the Executive arm of the state in respect of the totality of the interventions required to address the challenges that we face. If we fail to do so, we must also take responsibility for the negative impacts on government's expected outcomes.

For that reason, we must use the remainder of this term to ensure that we increase government's responsiveness and accountability, a commitment we made at the beginning of the 6th Parliament.

In the previous year, our Committees also processed a number of reports which were considered by the House. These include:

- 1) The Report of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, Economic Development, Small Business Development, Tourism, Employment and Labour on engagement with national, provincial, local and provincial development agencies on strategies to boost economic growth, attract investments and boost job creation in the Eastern Cape;
- 2) The Report of the Select Committee on Finance with regard to the Protocol amending the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of South Africa and the Government of the State of Kuwait for

the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income;

- 3) The Report of the Select Committee on Petitions and Executive Undertakings in relation to the Executive Undertakings made by the Ministers of Health, Social Development, and Transport, and others, during the Sittings of the House;
- 4) The Report of the Select Committee on Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Water, Sanitation and Human Settlements relating to the Withdrawal of Interventions issued in terms of section 139(1)(b) of the Constitution in Maluti-A-Phofung and Mafube Local Municipalities, the Notice of Interventions in terms of sections 139(7) of the Constitution and 150 of the Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act in Mangaung Metro Municipality and Enoch Mgijima Local Municipality, and the Notice of section 139(1)(c) regarding Ditsobotla Local Municipality. All this was an attempt to support the observance and adherence to the principles of cooperative government and intergovernmental relations as articulated in the Constitution.
- 5) The Report of the Select Committee on Finance on the 2022 Revised Fiscal Framework and Revenue Proposals; and
- 6) The Report of the Select Committee on Appropriations regarding Expenditure and Performance of the Informal Settlements Upgrading Partnership Grant for provinces, Expenditure and Performance of the Land Care Programme Grant, Expenditure and Performance of the

Learners with Profound Intellectual Disabilities and Maths, Science and Technology Grants.

In addition, our Committees undertook various oversight activities across different sectors and across the length and breadth of the country. They followed up on a number of matters, doing so in collaboration with relevant structures in the Provincial Legislatures and the South African Local Government Association. We also participated in the work of the Ad Hoc Joint Committee on Flood Disaster Relief and Recovery.

4. ON THE NEED TO PRIORITISE

Programme Director, in last year's chapter of the review and planning session we pointed out the need for Committees to prioritise, keeping in mind what they would like to achieve by the end of the term. As I have said, our collective goal is to have increased government's responsiveness and accountability by the end of this 6th term of Parliament.

Last year we said that the District Development Model (DDM), which was launched to give effect to the vision of a Joined-Up government, provides us with an opportunity to proactively interrogate, for instance, the cooperation and collaboration of the different spheres of government and organs to attend to the challenges that impact service provision. As such, I made the proposal that in this context we need to look at, for example:

1. The challenges in the OR Tambo District Municipality - where the DDM was launched by the President in 2019. The challenges there had led to the decision by the Eastern Cape government to dissolve the municipality in terms of section 139 (1)(c) of the Constitution in 2021, a decision that was subsequently set aside by the court.
2. Assessment of the progress in the implementation of the DDM in eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality, and Waterberg District Municipality, which were launched as DDM pilot municipalities together with OR Tambo District Municipality; and,
3. Added the City of Johannesburg, particularly in Soweto, which had faced a challenge of power supply and general electricity problems due to a number of reasons including the failure to pay for services. As we heard last week, the government announced incentives to encourage the culture of payment for electricity.

As part of this session, one would appreciate Programme Director to get a sense of the extent to which the relevant Committees have been able to think about or act on these issues that we raised in the previous year.

5. ON KEY ISSUES FROM SONA 2023

Programme Director, in his State of the Nation Address earlier this month, the President of the Republic, Honourable Cyril Matamela Ramaphosa, committed that government would concentrate on the issues that concern South Africans the most. These are:

- 1) Loadshedding
- 2) Unemployment
- 3) Poverty and rising cost of living
- 4) Crime and corruption.

Accordingly, he laid out plans on how government is to respond to the above challenges, building on the work that has been done so far. For example, with regard to the energy crisis, he mentioned the five key interventions announced by government last year, which are:

- 1) One, fix Eskom's coal-fired power stations and improve the availability of existing supply;
- 2) Two, enable and accelerate private investment in generation capacity;
- 3) Three, accelerate procurement of new capacity from renewables, gas and battery storage;
- 4) Four, unleash businesses and households to invest in rooftop solar; and
- 5) Five, fundamentally transform the electricity sector to achieve long-term energy security.

Following the State of the Nation Address, the Minister of Finance outlined in the Budget Speech how these interventions would be resourced, including the announcement of two tax measures to encourage businesses and individuals to invest in renewable energy and increase electricity generation. With regard to non-payment for electricity he said that the measures, which include the installation of prepaid meters, would seek to correct the underlying behavior of non-payment and operational practices in the municipalities which together owed Eskom R56.3 billion by the end of last year.

6. ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Programme Director, we are already seeing or experiencing the effects of climate change, such as in the form of drought, the recent heatwaves in some of our provinces, and floods.

As we said when addressing the review and planning session for the Committees last year, we have a duty to monitor how our own government is responding to the global commitments to address the urgent current climate challenges. This is important given the commitment by the Minister of Finance last week that through the Just Energy Transition Investment Plan, launched by the President in the year 2022, the country will make significant investments in our economy over the next five years, supported by a coherent industrial policy to enable innovation and economic diversification.

Therefore, as part of following up on these commitments, we ought to be guided by the principle that all these interventions must place the people at the centre as the ultimate beneficiaries, thereby helping us to address the challenges of poverty and unemployment. Accordingly, we must intensify our attempts, especially through our Parliamentary Constituency Offices, to create more awareness among our people about climate change and what they can do to contribute to global efforts as individuals and as communities.

7. IN CONCLUSION

Programme Director, we have a very limited time to wrap up the work we set ourselves at the beginning of the 6th Parliament. This review and planning session should provide guidance with regard to how we conclude the work of the past years, which unfortunately was interfered with by the restrictions occasioned by the Covid-19 pandemic and the natural disasters that occurred in the various provinces. Also, in our case, the disruptions caused by the fire which destroyed some of our buildings.

In reviewing the work done and planning for the year, we need to look at some of the key areas of intervention which I have highlighted. These include:

- 1) The issues identified by the President of the Republic in his State of the Nation Address earlier this month;

- 2) The policy details provided by the Minister of Finance to support the implementation of the commitments made by the President of the Republic in the State of the Nation Address; and
- 3) The issues we raised last year which include strengthening the implementation of the District Development Model approach through oversight and the need to look at the challenge of climate change.

In addition to these issues, we need to create space to follow up on the issues raised during the Provincial Week, the Local Government Week and the Taking Parliament of the People Programme held last year.

With these words Programme Director, I would like to thank you once again for the opportunity to sketch some of the issues that are critical to the fulfilment of the mandate of the NCOP in particular and the Parliament of the Republic in general.

Thank you