

**SPEAKING NOTES – HONOURABLE SPEAKER MV SISULU,  
ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION WITH INSTITUTIONS SUPPORTING  
DEMOCRACY, 30 OCTOBER 2013**

Honourable Deputy Speaker, Ms Nomaindia Mfeketo

Honourable House Chairpersons

Honourable Chairpersons of Portfolio Committees

Commissioners of Institutions Supporting Democracy

Ladies and Gentleman

Let me welcome you all to this second meeting between Parliament and the Institutions Supporting Democracy (ISDs). It is indeed an honour for me to welcome you to Parliament for the opportunity to strengthen our relationship and to continue to find ways to improve on the working relations between Parliament and ISDs.

I am pleased to report that since the establishment of the Office on Institutions Supporting Democracy, there is a discernible improvement in the relationship between Parliament and the ISDs. Let me take this opportunity to thank the Deputy Speaker and the team of the Office on Institutions Supporting Democracy for the hard work to improve on our working relationship and to ensure that there is a central point that coordinates the work of the ISDs with Parliament.

Like any other relationship, all of us need to commit and work harder to ensure that the relationship works and works well for all of our benefit.

As we all know, the ISDs complement and support Parliament's oversight function, therefore Parliament is duty bound not only to ensure that the ISDs are effective in their functioning, but that we must strengthen ISDs ability to discharge their primary roles.

This we do not only on the understanding of our Constitutional obligation but because we understand the importance of the ISDs in our democracy. Section 181 subsection 3 of the Constitution demands of the other organs of state to also assist and protect ISDs to ensure their independence, impartiality, dignity and effectiveness. However, differently from other organs of state, this obligation in the case of Parliament is also based on the fact that the ISDs account to the National Assembly.

We therefore have all the reasons to ensure that the relationship between us is strengthened and works well. We have to do this together not only for us but also for those whom we represent and serve to *heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights* as dictated by the Preamble of the Constitution.

Our work must be guided by the aspirations of those whom we represent and serve. The Constitution, which is the supreme law, binds all of us, Parliament, the Executive, the Judiciary and all organs of state, not only to ensure promotion of rights as enshrined in Chapter 2 of our Constitution but also not to negatively infringe them.

The ISDs have an important role to play in this regard by ensuring that democracy is realised by all our people and they do so by ensuring that government delivers on its responsibilities. This role is based on the understanding of section 181 subsection 1 of Chapter 9 of our Constitution that the ISDs are established to strengthen constitutional democracy.

Parliament and the ISDs must therefore work together to deepen democracy in our country and give meaning to the achievement of substantive equality. Human dignity, the advancement of human rights and freedoms, non-racism and non-sexism, a democratic system of governance and the rule of law are core values that together we must promote to assist and support our government to address the unrelenting problems of inequality and poverty in our society.

All of us work to serve the same person, the South African citizen. We should therefore work together, not against each other or in competition to each other, to serve our people.

We need to use the limited resources of our country to ensure that we reach and impact all the people of our country particularly the poor and the most vulnerable in our society.

Lately there have been comments in the media that Parliament seems to be interfering in the work of certain ISDs and that we intend to prescribe to them on how to carry out their mandates. Let me take this opportunity to clarify this matter. Parliament's involvement with the functioning of any organ of state is based on fulfillment of our oversight function which is based on section 55 subsection 2 (b) which empowers the National Assembly to maintain oversight of any organ of state.

It may not be easy for many commentators to understand this role of Parliament because the ISDs must, in terms of section 181 subsection 2 of the Constitution, be independent and subject only to the Constitution and the law. However, the reading of section 55 subsection 2 (b) and section 181 subsection 5 should clearly explain that the ISDs are required to report to Parliament on the implementation of their mandates and their expenditure of public funds. Therefore what is considered by others as interference is really the performance by Parliament of its constitutional obligation and we do so without interfering in their day-to-day running to respect their independence.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the ISD for having established a forum where they share information and work together. It is always necessary and important to work together in any other environment, not only to stretch the limited resources of our country, but because it enriches that which you do and provides an opportunity to learn from others.

Parliament is fully aware of the challenges the ISDs are currently experiencing such as inadequate financial resources to effectively execute their mandates. The discussion today will also focus on the funding models for the ISDs.

I trust that our discussions will result in recommendations to address this problem to ensure sufficient funding to enable ISDs to carry out their constitutional mandates.

I urge you to take advantage of this platform to raise all your challenges for us together to find the solutions. We owe to our people to work together to deepen and entrench democracy in our country and to ensure that those we represent and serve realise the fruits of our freedom.

Let me conclude by quoting former President Nelson Mandela when he said and I quote: “Where men and women and children go burdened with hunger, talk of democracy and freedom that does not recognise those material aspects can ring hollow and erode confidence exactly in those values we seek to promote”.

I thank you.