

**ADDRESS BY THE DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES HONOURABLE S E LUCAS ON THE OCCASION OF THE NCOP COMMITTEE STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION**

**03-04 MARCH 2020**

**Clarifying political priorities for the NCOP in the 6<sup>th</sup> Parliament and the year ahead**

House Chairperson of Committees and IGR

House Chairperson of International Relations and Members Support

Chief Whip of the National Council of Provinces

Honourable Members of the NCOP

Acting Secretary to Parliament

Secretary to the NCOP

Members of staff

Ladies and Gentlemen

I want to open my address with this contextual phrase: **“Every Strategy must be based on the Concrete Analysis of a Concrete Situation”**

**Honourable Members**

I am very pleased and honoured to have been given an opportunity to speak on this momentous event of planning of NCOP Committees. One of the reasons why organisations revisit their plans annually is that the review process places fundamental values and objectives within the reach of everyone involved, ensuring that they are aligned with institutional priorities.

It's an important way to reflect on achievements and shortcomings, and it is also useful for re-examining our priorities, which may have been set at a different time, under different circumstances.

The process we are embarking upon today, is a process of strategic evaluation, which starts immediately after the State of the Nation Address. In the State of the Nation address the President informed the nation about plans for inclusive growth, about building a capable state, as well as plans to place our economy on a path towards recovery.

The President further reiterated the importance of pursuing critical areas of growth and ensuring excellence in the planning and the execution of government work.

What this means is that we need to gear our Committees to follow-up on all commitments made during **SONA, SOPA and the Budget Speech**. We should conduct Oversight over the introduction of the three-stream curriculum model which the President is saying would enable a fundamental shift in focus, towards a more vocational and technical education.

We must be ready to embark on intensive public participation process when the Procurement Bill is presented to Parliament, as part of efforts to empower our people, emerging businesses, so as to advance radical economic empowerment.

### **Honourable Members**

In August 2019, at the NCOP Planning Session we summarised our Political priorities as follows:

- To improve law –making processes in order to make quality laws that will withstand constitutional scrutiny;

- To improve public involvement in order to give the public meaningful opportunity to participate in the law-making and other processes;
- To strengthen oversight and accountability which will improve how we oversee the implementation of government objectives that are geared towards improving the quality of lives of our people;
- To improve international relations processes and to ensure that provincial interests are taken into consideration in the approval of international agreements;
- To improve the capacity of members to enable them to perform their constitutional obligation; and
- To improve research and other capacities of administration, so as to support members in the performance of their constitutional obligations

**From August 2019 to date, we have managed to do the following in responding to our Political priorities:**

- We have changed the programme of the NCOP to include dedicated weeks for Committee and Plenary work. We have made sure we optimise the available time at our disposal, enabling targeted focus on specific work. We can further proceed to adjust Sitting Times, in order to significantly increase committee activities.
- We are also encouraging the use of joint public hearings, where possible. Members of the public are also encouraged to make submissions, representations and petitions.
- What we still need to emphasise is the use of technology and social media to mobilise participation. The Facebook and Instagram page of Parliament it's still not widely popular.

- We are also not adequately using community radio stations and broadcasting effectively. Hopefully after the media training for Members, this will change.
- We agree that greater access to participation in Parliament will require more joint public hearings, e-hearings, online petitions/submissions and greater use of constituency offices.
- We also have to respond to the need to improve International Relations processes. At the beginning of this year on the 29 January 2020, the Parliamentary Group on International Relations (PGIR) convened a members training workshop. The objectives of this engagement was to orientate Members on Parliament's role in international relations. The intention was also to brief Members on the role of Parliament in international participation, particularly in the context of complementing the role of the Executive in promoting South Africa's Foreign Policy.
- The office of the Secretary to the NCOP continues to roll-out programmes to capacitate members on law making processes in order to make quality laws. We already had one session at the beginning of the term.
- Moving forward, we should make an effort to facilitate twice per year, briefing workshops with the Financial and Fiscal Commission, as well as the Parliamentary Budget office. This will ensure that Members of Committees are adequately equipped to oversee the budget and to ensure that provincial and municipal interests are properly accommodated in the budget and that the division is equitable.

To do this the house will have to review past divisions of revenue, consider recommendations of the Financial and Fiscal Commission

and draw on the experience and expertise of the Budget Office. This therefore calls for the Budget Office to be properly staffed.

**Conclusion:**

In the beginning I started by saying “**every strategy must be based on concrete analysis of a concrete situation**”. We must bear in mind that our Budget is half of what we used to receive. Meaning we have to work smarter as we strive to do more, with lesser resources.