



PARLIAMENT
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OPENING REMARKS BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES, HONOURABLE N. A. MASONDO, ON THE OCCASION OF THE MINISTERIAL BRIEFING SESSION ON THE SCALE AND IMPACT OF THE DESTRUCTION, THEFT AND VANDALISM OF PUBLIC PROPERTY AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

VENUE: VIRTUAL **DATE:** 11 OCTOBER 2022 **TIME:** 10H00

Greetings to Everyone!

Programme Director, the House Chairperson for Committees and Oversight, Honourable Jomo Nyambi

Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure, Honourable Patricia de Lille

Minister of Police, Honourable Bheki Cele

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

Chief Whip of the NCOP, Honourable Seiso Mohai

Honourable Permanent and Special Delegates

Members of the Provincial Executive Councils

Representatives of organised local governments, the South African Local Government Association (SALGA)

Ladies and gentlemen

1. INTRODUCTION

Programme Director, allow me to begin by extending a word of appreciation to you for the opportunity to make these opening remarks, as we consider the vexing question of the scale and impact of the destruction, theft and vandalism of public property and community facilities.

Today's Ministerial Briefing Session seeks to focus our attention on the *Measures to Protect Infrastructure and Community Facilities from Destruction, Theft and Vandalism*.

Our Constitution identifies 'public work' as a function of government that is implemented by all the three spheres of our government.

In November 2021, on the occasion of the *Ministerial Briefing Session on the Economic and Fiscal Impact of the July 2021 Public Violence, Looting and Destruction of Property*, we made the point that:

- 1) There is a creeping but very wrong notion that government listens better when people destroy property;
- 2) That we should intensify efforts to de-escalate public violence as a means of expressing anger or disappointment by some citizens;
- 3) That nothing is gained by destroying public or commercial infrastructure; and
- 4) That instead, such regressive acts only serve to worsen the conditions we seek to change.

In addition, in the book “Voices of Liberation” by Frantz Fanon, Hamza Hamouchene says:

“We must take a rapid step from national consciousness to political and social consciousness if we really wish our countries to avoid regression and uncertainties.

“That the national bourgeoisie dispenses with POPULAR LEGITIMACY and increasingly turns its back on the interior and the realities of uneven development, with its only interest in EXPORTING the enormous profits it derives from the EXPLOITATION of the people to foreign countries. Current events confirm this assertion as we see the scandalous and endemic corruption and legalised robbery in countries such as South Africa”.

Of course Bain & Company and McKinsey come to mind when one talks about these issues.

Programme Director, the conditions that are facing our nation and which we seek to change include:

- 1) Sustained low levels of investment and growth;
- 2) Deepening unemployment and inequality;
- 3) Resultant poverty;

- 4) The effect of corruption, and the narratives about state capture, on the mindset of citizens; and
- 5) The need for sustainable recovery from the destruction caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Public property and community facilities constitute a significant base and thus contribute significantly to our ability to tackle these and other national pressing matters.

2. ON THE DESTRUCTION OF PUBLIC PROPERTY

Programme Director, it is common knowledge that each public property and community facility occupies a particular space in a municipality. Thus our municipalities bear the brunt of the destruction, theft and vandalism of facilities intended for public use. They incur costs in the form of emergency and other related services, and sometimes restoration costs. In all this, national and provincial governments are not spared.

In the study conducted in 2019 by the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), on Violence in Local Government, they found, among other things:

- 1) That exposure to threats and violence is a common experience among local government officials and Councillors and has increased over time, most disturbingly with a high number of assassinations of Ward Councillors;

- 2) That the failure to implement appropriate security procedures, reporting methods and remedial mechanisms will have devastating effects on the human resource capacity of municipalities and thus further compound their ongoing struggle to deliver effective services to citizens.

As the Permanent and Special Delegates would recall, the issue of creating a conducive environment for the delivery of services and the exercise of oversight and accountability, are some of the key issues that were sharply raised during our Local Government Week programme a few weeks ago.

Noting the recent increases of intimidation and killing of Councillors and municipal officials, and the damage to municipal property during service delivery protests, as a matter of grave concern, the conference put forward the following set of recommendations:

- 1) That we should urgently request the South African Police Service (SAPS) and the National Prosecuting Authority to ensure that reported cases are investigated and prosecuted;
- 2) To request the SAPS to adopt an approach similar to other spheres of government in conducting risk assessments for Councillors and municipal officials; and
- 3) That the NCOP should convene a special plenary debate on the attacks on Councillors and municipal officials.

Part of the effort that we need in order to deal with violence and destruction of infrastructure, is to improve communication with citizens so that proper interventions are made before disagreements, or acts of criminality, gather momentum and result in the destruction, theft and vandalism of property and community facilities.

Communities must work with the law enforcement agencies to provide the necessary information, in order for these agencies to improve their capacity to deal proactively with violence. For example, the common early morning blockades of public roads, including national roads, as a form of putting some pressure on government to provide services, are planned within communities and are thus known before they occur.

On its part, our Parliament has passed a range of laws:

- 1) To protect our constitutional democracy;
- 2) To provide for measures to improve communication with citizens, in each ward;
- 3) To improve procedures to deal with acts of criminality;
- 4) To protect people who make disclosures (what we call 'The Whistleblower Act'); and
- 5) To apprehend and prosecute people engaged in property destruction, theft and vandalism.

The November 2021 *Report of the Expert Panel into the July 2021 Civil Unrest*, recommends that one of the steps to be taken to deal with the

issue of community violence, is the promotion of co-operation between the police and communities.

In this regard, and in order to improve the delivery of services in fulfilling the needs of the community regarding policing, the report recommends that the Provincial Commissioners of Police must establish community police forums at police stations, as provided for in the SAPS Act. This means that both communities and the police must work together.

3. INCULCATING THE SPIRIT OF PATRIOTISM

Programme Director, the destruction, theft and vandalism of public property and community facilities are examples of acts that are devoid of patriotism. As a consequence, our interventions must also be channeled towards instilling a sense of patriotism among citizens, in a way that will promote their devotion to and vigorous support for their country.

Hamza Hamouchene, quoting Fanon, in “Studies in a Dying Colonialism” says:

“There are only Algerians. From the onset, therefore, every individual living in Algeria is an Algerian. We have an Algeria open to all, in which every kind of genius can grow.”

Our society can derive benefits from a renewed spirit of patriotism among the citizens. According to experts, the benefits would include the building of

national unity, the promotion of the well-being of the country, inclusivity, public sacrifice and selflessness.

However, as leaders we must also lead by example. Our actions must align with our national aspirations which include building “a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by law”.

4. IN CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Programme Director, our capacity to deal with the destruction, theft and vandalism of public property and community facilities requires co-operation between communities and the law enforcement agencies. As leaders we must also set the right tone for the people to embrace the spirit of patriotism so as to guide their actions.

Today’s sharing of the measures to protect public infrastructure from destruction, theft and vandalism by the national, provincial and local government representatives, should enable us to make the necessary interventions including through enhancing oversight in this area.

Please allow me to go back to Hamouchene on Fanon’s conclusion on ‘The Wretched of the Earth’:

“We have to work out new concepts of liberation and philosophical thought through an ongoing political education that gets enriched

through mass struggle. Political education for him is not merely about political speeches; instead it is about ‘opening the minds’ of the people, ‘awakening them and allowing the birth of their intelligence”.

Programme Director, I am looking forward to the presentations, and the interactive and thought-provoking deliberations that characterise our Ministerial Briefing Sessions.

I thank you!