



PARLIAMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES
OFFICE OF THE CHAIRPERSON

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OPENING ADDRESS BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES, HONOURABLE N. A. MASONDO, ON THE OCCASION OF THE MEMBERS TRAINING SESSION

VENUE: HYBRID **DATE:** 31 JANUARY 2023 **TIME:** 10H00

Honourable Programme Director, Hon. Winnie Ngwenya
Honourable Deputy Chairperson, Hon. Sylvia Lucas
Honourable House Chairperson, Hon. Jomo Nyambi
Honourable Chief Whip, Hon. Seiso Mohai
Honourable Delegates and Presenters
Representatives of the South African Local Government Association
Secretary to Parliament
Secretary to the National Council of Provinces
Ladies and gentlemen

1. INTRODUCTION

Programme Director, let me start by formally welcoming back all the Delegates to the National Council of Provinces after the festive period and constituency break. I wish you a good start to the year.

The year 2023 is an important year in the 6th Parliament. It sits at the confluence of the limitations introduced and imposed by the Covid-19

pandemic, which was followed by the fire incident at Parliament at the beginning of last year, and the possibilities brought about by how we innovate the way we work. In order to maximise our efforts as we near the end of the term, we need to continue to explore these possibilities.

While we may all have come back safe, it is true that some of us have experienced grief. In this regard, I wish to take this opportunity to express our deepest condolences to Honourable Zoyisile Njadu who recently lost his wife of 32 years. May our Programme Whip and his family find strength during this difficult moment.

We also lost one of the founding leaders of the democratic Parliament, Dr Frene Ginwala, who served as the first Speaker of the National Assembly of our democratic Parliament from 1994 to 2004. This is the period during which Parliament focused on legislation, directing its efforts at repealing apartheid legislation and introducing transformational laws to create an environment that is conducive to the entrenchment of democracy. May her soul rest in eternal peace.

2. 6TH PARLIAMENT'S TRAINING INTERVENTION

Programme Director, the 6th Parliament's capacity-building exercise commenced with the orientation and induction programme for MPs, which was organised in June 2019. Over the years, this was followed by further interventions to enhance experiential learning of MPs. Since then, the interventions have covered areas that are critical to the work of Members of Parliament. These include the following:

- 1) Constitutional mandate and responsibilities;
- 2) Rules of debate, including in the era of virtual and hybrid sittings;
- 3) Law-making;
- 4) Oversight;
- 5) Services offered by the Parliamentary Budget Office;
- 6) Members Facilities and Benefits;
- 7) Motions;
- 8) Responsibilities of the Whippers; and,
- 9) Committee business.

This time around we will be revisiting some of the items from previous years, and also deal with, amongst others:

- 1) The usage and interpretation of laws and policies for effective and robust oversight;
- 2) Developing an effective municipal support and intervention mechanisms;
- 3) Parliamentary support systems; and
- 4) Building a training and development curricula.

The training takes place a year after we launched the Parliamentary Institute in order to, amongst other things, design, develop and implement capacity building programmes for staff and Members. This initiative, the first of its kind for our Legislative Sector, was in response to the need for a sustainable approach to capacity enhancement for Members and officials.

3. PURPOSE OF THE TRAINING INTERVENTION

It is established practice for us to start the year with the facilitation of continuous learning and sharing of experiences with a view to develop greater capacities for the work we do. It is a way of preparing us for the year ahead, its rigours, and indeed beyond.

It is key that we understand this training intervention in the context of our national and institutional imperatives. In this regard:

- 1) The National Development Plan directs us to improve the performance of our institutions through, amongst others, a commitment to high performance and a willingness to learn from experience; and
- 2) In line with this, the 6th Parliament has over the years sought to ensure that public representatives are empowered to facilitate the effective and efficient functioning of Parliament.

The capacitation of Members and officials, and the improvement of the overall support system, are the necessary interventions we need to increase Parliament's contribution to the improvement of the quality of life of all citizens through:

- 1) Enhanced parliamentary oversight; and
- 2) Deeper scrutiny by public representatives.

It is clear that in order for our capacity building initiatives to work and be effective, they must attend to the needs of the Members of Parliament.

Programme Director, MPs need to be supported in order to carry out their responsibilities. It is through MPs that Parliament is able to fulfil its role and outcomes which are to represent the people and ensure government by the people under the Constitution, as well as to represent the provinces and be the voice of local government in the national sphere of government. Such representation takes place in the activities of passing legislation, overseeing and scrutinising executive action, and the facilitation of public involvement, co-operative government and international participation.

Therefore, Parliament plays a great role in strengthening the creation of a society where human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms are realised. It is thus incumbent upon Parliament to provide the necessary support to the public representatives as well as the officials who support them.

Of course, the role of external parties and subject matter experts is crucial in this process as it broadens our perspectives and deepens our understanding of the nuances occasioned by the task of legislating for, and overseeing, the provision of public goods and services.

The domain of policy making and implementation is increasingly challenging. More than ever, policy makers are now expected to anticipate

wicked interruptions in the attainment of policy goals. They are also expected to innovate to improve the positive impact of policy. All these have an impact on Parliament's functions.

As stated in the programme, the purpose of this week's training and development session is to ensure a Member-centric integrated personal development and informative session that is aimed at empowering Members of Parliament to undertake their constitutional function of holding the Executive accountable.

4. IN CONCLUSION

Programme Director, our work as public representatives requires that we constantly improve our capacity to act in the interest of the people and the spheres that we represent. To achieve this, we need to harvest our own experience and knowledge and that of subject matter experts. This week's session constitutes part of this effort, on which we must continue to improve.

I am looking forward to a lively session for the sharing of ideas, perspectives, experience and knowledge.

Thank you!