

in session



WINDLEDA DAY.
NELSON
MANDELA
PARLIAMENT.GOV.ZA

WELCOME TO
PARLIAMENT
"FOLLOWING UP ON OUR COMMITMENTS TO THE PEOPLE,
MAKING YOUR FUTURE WORK BETTER"
PARLIAMENT.GOV.ZA
TV | YouTube | X | f | Instagram | WhatsApp
30 Years
OF DEMOCRATIC PARLIAMENTS

July 2024

Official Opening of the 7th Parliament





President Ramaphosa Unveils GNU Priorities in Opening of Parliament Address

In July, President Cyril Ramaphosa unveiled the key priorities of the Government of National Unity (GNU) in his Opening of Parliament Address at Cape Town City Hall, writes Mava Lukani.

President Ramaphosa said the priorities arise from the GNU's programme and were supported by GNU members during the Cabinet lekgotla. Convened before the OPA, the lekgotla brought together all the newly appointed ministers, deputy ministers and premiers, among others.

President Ramaphosa said the Cabinet will be convening a further strategy session to consider the GNU's medium-term development plan, which will translate the priorities into a detailed plan and interventions that government will implement over the next five years.

"The medium-term development plan will set out a well-defined vision and strategic plan that outlines clear goals and includes specific, measurable objectives and a roadmap for achieving them. These goals

will be properly aligned with the budget, which will support the implementation of these objectives," said President Ramaphosa.

Meanwhile, the National Development Plan Vision 2030 remains the defining blueprint for South Africa's growth and development and the GNU's programme is in line with that vision, the President said. The new government will also draw inspiration for the medium-term development plan from the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

President Ramaphosa told the joint sitting of Parliament that despite the achievements of 30 years of democracy and the work undertaken over the last five years to rebuild the economy, millions of South Africans remain poor and unemployed and live in a highly unequal society. "For a decade and a half, our economy has barely grown. The GNU has resolved to dedicate the next five years to actions that will advance three strategic priorities," he stressed.

These are: to drive inclusive growth and job creation; to reduce poverty and tackle the high cost of living; and to build a capable, ethical and developmental state. President Ramaphosa said

the GNU has decided to place inclusive economic growth at the centre of the national agenda.

President Ramaphosa said the past 30 years have shown that when the economy grows, jobs are created and when it contracts there is no job creation and jobs are lost. He said the GNU will pursue every action that contributes to sustainable, "rapid economic growth and remove every obstacle that stands in the way of growth".

The GNU is determined that growth must be inclusive and transformational and it

must drive the redistribution of wealth and opportunity, the President said. "It must support the empowerment of black South Africans and women, and all those who in the past had been relegated to the fringes of the economy. This is part of the constitutional imperative to redress the imbalances of the past and deal with the slow process of development," he stressed.

He assured the joint sitting of Parliament that the government will continue to pursue programmes that encourage broad-based black economic empowerment

and employment equity and programmes that provide support to small- and medium-sized enterprises.

On the rights of workers, President Ramaphosa said the GNU will continue to protect and uphold the hard-won rights of workers and will continually strive to improve the conditions in which they work and live. He also stressed the government's commitment to ensuring the participation in the economy of women, youth, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups. 🇿🇦





President optimistic about NHI, Transport and SOEs

In his Opening of Parliament Address, President Cyril Ramaphosa, said that one of the important tasks of the Government of National Unity (GNU) in the next five years is to reduce the high cost of living by ensuring that everyone in South Africa has equal access to affordable quality healthcare, writes Mava Lukani.

To this end, the President announced that the GNU will focus on strengthening healthcare infrastructure, improving training of healthcare personnel and using technology to improve healthcare management. He also acknowledged that while there is much contestation around the NHI, there is broad agreement that “we must draw on the resources and capabilities of both the public and private sectors to meet the healthcare needs of all South Africans equally”.

On implementing the NHI, he said: “We are confident that we will be able to

bring stakeholders together, and that we will be able to resolve differences and clarify misunderstandings.”

Transport

The President also noted the many South Africans who live far from economic opportunities and services with transport costs taking up a large part of people’s income.

He said that an immediate priority for the GNU is to complete the recovery of the country’s passenger rail network to enable people to travel from outlying areas to city centres. “Around 80% of commuter rail corridors are now back in operation, and nearly 300 vandalised stations have been refurbished, providing safer and more efficient services to commuters,” he said.

Public administration

The President also announced that building a capable, ethical and developmental state is the third strategic priority of the GNU. “We will proceed with the work already underway to professionalise the public service, ensuring that we attract into the state people with skills, capabilities and integrity,” he said.

State-owned entities

President Ramaphosa said the GNU will continue to fight corruption and prevent undue political interference in the administration of the state. “In this administration, we will complete the work to restore the financial position and operational performance of our state-owned enterprises. We will complete the implementation of a new

centralised ownership model for SOEs. This will improve accountability, transparency, governance, and oversight, while reducing inefficiency and the potential for corruption.”

The establishment of a state-owned SOE holding company will give the state greater capacity to build a sovereign wealth fund. “This has been done successfully by other countries whose sovereign wealth funds have built up capital from the high performance of the state-owned enterprises rather than from the fiscus,” the President said.

Crime fighting

On crime fighting and prevention, President Ramaphosa acknowledged the need for capable, sophisticated and independent law



PARLIAMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Editor
Brent Simons

Production editor
Mava Lukani

Design and layout
Mind Trix Digital

Copy editors
Jane Henshall, Alicestine October

Writers
Abel Mputing, Sakhile Mokoena,
Sibongile Maputi, Justice Molafo,
Mava Lukani

Photography
Phandulwazi Jikelo,
Zwelethemba Kostile

Distribution & subscriptions
Jacqueline Zils

Publisher
Parliament of the Republic of
South Africa

Acting Section Manager
Mado Sefora

Copyright
INSESSION is published by the Information and Content Development Unit of the Parliamentary Communication Services of the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa. All material published is copyrighted and cannot be reproduced without the written permission of the publisher.

EDITORIAL ENQUIRIES
Telephone 021 403 8738
Fax 021 403 8096

E-mail
insession@parliament.gov.za

Subscriptions
jzils@parliament.gov.za

Post
PO Box 15, Cape Town, 8000

OUR IDEALS

Vision

An activist and responsive people’s Parliament that improves the quality of life of South Africans and ensures enduring equality in our society.

Strategic Objectives

- Strengthening oversight and accountability;
- enhancing public involvement; deepening engagement in international fora;
- strengthening cooperative government;
- strengthening legislative capacity.

BOOK A TOUR

To tour Parliament
Telephone 021 403 2266
E-mail tours@parliament.gov.za

enforcement agencies that can fight complex and organised crime.

“We will deploy modern technology to assist crime fighting,” he said. “A data-driven approach will be used to identify violent crime hotspots and inform the allocation of policing resources alongside prevention measures. We will continue to tackle priority crimes like illegal mining, gang violence,

cash-in-transit heists, and construction mafia through specialised police units,” he said.

President Ramaphosa assured Members of Parliament that the GNU will continue to implement the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide and expand victim support services, like the Thuthuzela centres and GBV desks in police stations. 🇿🇦



Infrastructure Investment will Underpin GNU Commitments to Growth



During the Opening of Parliament address, President Cyril Ramaphosa said the Government of National Unity (GNU) has identified several infrastructure initiatives that could stimulate economic growth. In addition, the GNU has plans to simplify the regulations governing public-private partnerships to enable greater investment in both social and economic infrastructure development, writes Sibongile Maputi.

The GNU will pursue every action that will contribute to sustainable, rapid economic growth and remove every obstacle that stands in the way of growth, President Ramaphosa said. In addition, the country will forge a new inclusive growth path by pursuing massive investments in infrastructure.

In his address, the President said that significant projects are underway around the country in areas such as transport, roads, water, energy, and human settlements. “We will massively increase the scale of investment in infrastructure through a more holistic and integrated approach,” he said. “From the largest

metropolitan municipalities to the deepest rural areas, the GNU has a clear intention to turn the country into a construction site as roads, bridges, houses, schools, hospitals, and clinics are built, as broadband fibre is laid, and as new power lines are installed.”

The President said that Infrastructure South Africa will be positioned as the central institution of coordination and planning. He said, in addition, the GNU will simplify the regulations on public-private partnerships “to enable greater investment in both social and economic infrastructure development”.

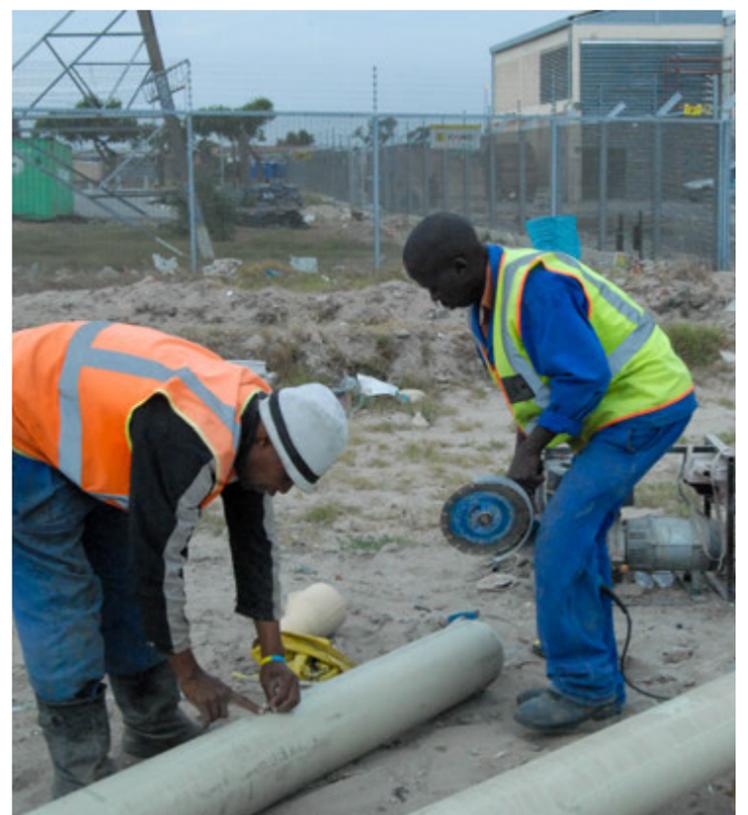
Another pervasive challenge

flagged in service delivery, is the maintenance of public infrastructure. The President said that this is one of the things that will be addressed as the GNU work towards building a maintenance culture for public infrastructure and dedicate resources. He said systems will be established to ensure this. President Ramaphosa, however, acknowledged that the culture of poor maintenance of infrastructure has declined in recent times and has been replaced by one of attending to the infrastructure when it breaks and wears out.

The GNU, he said, also resolved to intensify its investment drive, encouraging and enabling businesses to

invest in productive capacity. These investments will lead to increased employment

opportunities for the unemployed, especially young people in the country. 🇿🇦





GNU will Tackle Poverty and High Cost of Living, President says

On tackling poverty and the high cost of living as a second strategic priority of the Government of National Unity (GNU), President Cyril Ramaphosa during his opening of Parliament Address highlighted the importance of an integrated and comprehensive poverty alleviation strategy to protect and support the most vulnerable in society, writes Mava Lukani.

President Ramaphosa in his OPA highlighted the contradiction inherent in the fact that many companies make large profits in South Africa while millions of its

citizens suffer as a result of rising prices. To address this reality, he said the GNU will look to expand the basket of essential food items exempt from value-added tax (VAT) and undertake a comprehensive review of administered prices, including the fuel price formula, to identify areas where prices can be reduced.

He said the provision of title deeds for land and subsidised housing provides people with assets they can use to improve their economic position. “The best way to deal with poverty is for people to have jobs. We have, however, made interventions to support the unemployed through a variety of interventions, including during COVID, when we introduced the SRD [Social Relief of Distress] Grant.”

President Ramaphosa told the joint sitting of Parliament that the SRD Grant has been a lifeline to millions of unemployed people. It is for this reason that the GNU will retain it as a basis for the introduction of a sustainable

form of income support for unemployed people and to address the challenge of income poverty, he said.

The GNU will also ensure that local governments properly implement the indigent policy so that the old, the infirm and the poor can get assistance with paying for basic services. “Importantly, we will link social assistance with other forms of support to lift people out of poverty. As a country, we need to appreciate the impact that a well-functioning and quality education system has on both reducing poverty and driving inclusive economic growth,” he added.

Drawing hope for the success of the current GNU from the historic GNU of thirty years ago (1994-1999), President Ramaphosa recalled President Mandela’s respect for the various views of the diverse parties represented within that GNU. What brought that unity government together was an overriding commitment to a joint national effort to reconcile “our nation and improve its well-being”,

President Ramaphosa said.

The same may be said of the current GNU, which has now been established by 10 of the parties represented in Parliament. “We share a commitment to reconcile our nation by advancing social justice and equal prosperity for all. We are committed to improving the well-being of our country and its people through inclusive growth, the creation of jobs and the reduction of poverty,” the President said.

On the idea of holding a national dialogue, President Ramaphosa reiterated the

commitment he made during his inauguration, where he said: “We should work together to hold a national dialogue to discuss the critical challenges facing our nation and to agree on what we all need to do to achieve a better future for this great country.”

He told Members of Parliament that across society, people have expressed their support for the national dialogue. “They have said it should involve all key stakeholders in the life of our country, representing civil society, traditional leaders, the faith-based sector, labour, business, cultural workers, sports

“The best way to deal with poverty is for people to have jobs.”

– Pres Cyril Ramaphosa

people, and other formations representing the diverse interests and voices of our citizens.”

Citing the example set by historic events such as the Congress of the People in 1955, the Conference for a Democratic Future in 1989, the CODESA talks in the early 1990s, and drawing on the experience of formulating the country’s democratic Constitution, which was adopted in 1996, it is envisaged that a

national dialogue will involve extensive and inclusive public participation.

“As we have done at many important moments in our history, we will seek to forge a common vision and build a comprehensive social compact with a clear programme of action to realise our aspirations for the country. Through this national dialogue, we are called to be agents of change, to be champions of inclusive growth, to be creators of opportunity,” he said. 🇿🇦



Local Government to Anchor Inclusive Growth and Investment Drives



President Cyril Ramaphosa has called for a functioning local government. Delivering the Opening of Parliament Address (OPA), he told a joint sitting of the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces that functional local government is ideal for investment and inclusive growth, reports Sibongile Maputi.

The President said municipalities must become the providers of social services and the facilitators of inclusive economic growth. Furthermore, they must work to attract investment. This approach can encourage businesses to expand and create more jobs in municipal areas. “Investors are attracted to areas with reliable and modern infrastructure,” he said.

The President delivered the OPA a month after the government of national unity, which he leads, was established. The GNU was established as no party got the constitutionally required majority from the electorate to form a government.

The government, he said, had a constitutional responsibility to help municipalities and that the regulatory processes would be sped up. “We will ensure that the institutional structure and funding model for local government is fit for purpose and that municipalities are financially and operationally sustainable,” he said.

The President also committed to ensuring that systems are in place to increase professionalism. “We will put in place systems to ensure that qualified people are appointed to senior positions in municipalities.”

Meanwhile, an immediate task is to bring about governance stability in

metropolitan municipalities as political infighting has negatively impacted service delivery, the President noted. He cited eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality, where a presidential working group is in place to turn the administration of the municipality around. “We will extend the same approach to other metropolitan cities that face serious challenges so that our cities can be engines of growth and dynamic centres of opportunity.”

In his 2023 Human Rights Day speech, which he delivered in De Aar in the Northern Cape, President Ramaphosa acknowledged lapses in service delivery in municipalities, which he

said is a human rights issue. In that address, he cited the 2022 findings by the Auditor-General, Ms Tsakane Maluleke, which showed rampant corruption and mismanagement in many municipalities, resulting in a lack of funds and increasingly poor service delivery. He pointed out that the deterioration in municipalities is exacerbated by unstable coalitions that have led to a constant change of leadership.

President Ramaphosa told Members of Parliament that for rapid, inclusive growth, the GNU needs to fix struggling municipalities. This is because economic growth happens at a local level, where people live and work. 🇿🇦

President Highlights GNU's Energy Plan

In his Opening of Parliament Address recently, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced the Government of National Unity's (GNU) plan for energy as part of the GNU's priorities in the next five years. He also highlighted the successes of the Energy Action Plan, which was launched in 2022, writes Justice Molafo.

The energy plan includes five key pillars, namely fixing Eskom, accelerating private investment in energy, fast-tracking the procurement of new generation capacity, encouraging households to invest in rooftop solar, and transforming the electricity sector.

The five pillars highlight the centrality of the Electricity Regulation Amendment (ERA) Bill of 2023 in the GNU's energy plan. The Bill has been passed by Parliament and sent to the President to sign into law. However, the President has yet to sign it into law.

Once signed into law, the ERA Bill will provide a

legislative framework for the implementation of the five pillars of the Energy Action Plan. In its current form as passed by Parliament, the Bill provides for the unbundling of Eskom into generation, transmission and distribution entities independent of one another under one holding company. It also provides for the participation of the private sector in the energy generation space.

President Ramaphosa said that the country has made tremendous progress in reducing the severity of loadshedding since the announcement of the Energy Action Plan in July 2022. His statement comes as Eskom marked a momentous milestone of reaching 100 days without loadshedding on 5 July

2024.

President Ramaphosa added that the country is undergoing a renewable energy revolution that is expected to be the most significant driver of growth and job creation in the next decade and beyond. "Over the next five years, government will focus on expanding and strengthening the transmission network. We will seize the enormous opportunity in renewable energy for inclusive growth," he said.

The country's plan to transition into renewable energy will be facilitated through the Just Energy Transition Investment Plan, which sets out a clear path to invest more than R1.5 trillion in the sector, including support for workers and communities in

Mpumalanga and other coal-producing regions. To this effect, President Ramaphosa said: "Work is underway to set up a Special Economic Zone in Boegoebaai to drive investment in green hydrogen energy projects. South Africa has some of the best solar and wind resources in the world."

He further said that as the country undertakes a just transition towards renewable energy, government must create a green manufacturing sector centred on the export of green hydrogen and associated products, electric vehicles and renewable energy components.

He believes that more investments in the renewable energy space will bring about the creation of much-needed jobs.

Meanwhile, President Ramaphosa said that the GNU ought to prioritise the beneficiation of minerals to unlock job opportunities. Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy, Mr Gwede Mantashe, supported this statement during the debate on the OPA. He said that reliable, efficient and affordable energy supply will be central to beneficiation.

His assertion further illustrates the centrality of the ERA Bill in the GNU's energy plan. Once passed into law, the ERA Bill will provide for the transformation of the energy sector to provide for a reliable, efficient and affordable energy supply. 🇿🇦





Second Phase of Operation Vulindlela will Launch Soon, Says President

The government will soon launch the second phase of Operation Vulindlela, a government-wide initiative set up to drive reform, President Cyril Ramaphosa told Members of Parliament when he delivered the Opening of Parliament Address, writes Sibongile Maputi.

He said in its second phase, Operation Vulindlela will focus on reforming the local government system, improving the delivery of basic services and harnessing digital public infrastructure as a driver of growth and inclusion.

"It will also focus on accelerating the release of public land for social housing and redirecting our housing policy to enable people to find affordable homes in areas of their choice," he said.

President Ramaphosa first announced Operation Vulindlela in his 2020 opening of Parliament speech. In that speech, he described the programme as a means "to fast-track the delivery of economic reforms to be implemented as a joint initiative of the Presidency and National Treasury".

The implementation of structural reforms is crucial to sustain economic recovery and to address the underlying causes of low economic growth and high unemployment, the President said. Many of these reforms have been delayed for

a number of reasons, but their urgency is increased by the need to support swift economic growth.

The programme is a government-wide approach through which ministers, departments and entities implement structural reforms. A Vulindlela unit in the Presidency and National Treasury monitors progress and actively supports implementation.

Operation Vulindlela supports the implementation of reforms in three ways, namely monitoring and reporting

on progress to identify challenges, sustain momentum and ensure accountability, facilitating technical support to enable the implementation of reforms, and providing recommendations to the President and Cabinet where a decision or agreement is required. Vulindlela concentrates mostly on infrastructure departments to leverage economic inclusion interventions.

Mr Ramaphosa said that in line with structural reforms, government will ensure that the funding model for local government is fit for purpose

to ensure most municipalities become financially and operationally sustainable.

"As we pursue these new areas of growth, we will continue with the far-reaching reforms that enable growth. Operation Vulindlela will focus on accelerating the release of public land for social housing and redirecting housing policy to enable people to find affordable homes," the President said.

Cabinet will soon convene a strategy session to consider the medium-term development plan, which will provide detailed plans and interventions to be implemented in the next five years. The President also committed to completing the implementation of a new centralised ownership model for state-owned enterprises.

"The establishment of a state-owned SOE holding company will give us greater capacity to build a sovereign wealth fund. In this administration, we will complete the work to restore the financial position and operational performance of the SOEs," he said. 🇿🇦



Cyril Ramaphosa, President of the Republic of South Africa



PARLIAMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MANDELA MONTH

TV | YouTube | Twitter | Facebook | Instagram | Parliament.gov.za

"IT IS IN YOUR HANDS TO
CREATE A BETTER WORLD FOR
ALL WHO LIVE IN IT."

Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela



A First – Opening of Parliament Takes Place on Mandela Day

For the first time in South Africa's democratic political history, the President delivered the Opening of Parliament Address (OPA) on Mandela Day – Thursday, 18 July. Since 2009, the OPA has taken place after national and provincial elections and was usually scheduled in June.

In all the previous democratic administrations, the African National Congress (ANC) won an outright majority and could form a government on its own within a reasonable time and within the constitutionally prescribed timeframe. This year, no political party obtained a simple majority – the threshold of 50+1 – to form the government after the national and provincial elections.

In 2024, the ANC obtained 40% of the vote from the electorate and had to invite other parties with fewer seats in the National Assembly to

form a Government of National Unity (GNU). Consultation between the ANC and other political parties was protracted and cumbersome, but nevertheless the first sittings of Parliament took place within the constitutionally prescribed time.

However, establishing the seventh national executive of the GNU was delayed and hence, for the first time, the OPA was delivered in July – about 50 days after the national and provincial elections. As July is also Mandela Month, President Cyril Ramaphosa asked the Speaker of the National Assembly and the Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces to convene the joint sitting of Parliament on a day that has meaning and significance – the birthday of former President Nelson Mandela.

In delivering the OPA, President Ramaphosa said: "Today, we celebrate the birth of the founding father of our nation and a global icon of peace, justice and reconciliation, President Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela."

President Ramaphosa reminded the gathered guest

that across South Africa and the world, millions of people commemorate Mandela Day with deeds of service and solidarity and, through their actions, give life to a fundamental truth – that we derive our humanity from the humanity of others.

"Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu. Motho ke motho ka batho. Muthu ndi muthu nga vhangwe vhatu. Munhu yi munhu yi vanhu," he said. "We are reminded on this day that we have a responsibility to each other and that our well-being and happiness cannot be separated from those of our fellow woman and man. We are reminded that as we strive to progress and to prosper, we have a responsibility to ensure that no one is left behind."

South Africans are a diverse nation, with different histories, beliefs, cultures, and languages, President Ramaphosa said. Yet we are one people and we share a common destiny. It is this common destiny that the people of South Africa have charged this Parliament and this government to consolidate and advance. 🇿🇦



Residents Share Expectations for OPA 2024



Ms Thobeka Pikini, resident

"The only thing we see from our government is the unemployment. And then [government] can stop this thing to say ages of 18 to 35, because some people don't qualify. Each year, you finish your qualification at the age of 25 and then you wait until you 30. When you are supposed to get a job, they say you need experience. Where should we get this experience without being hired? We also want government to prioritise schools because NSFAS processing takes time... These are simple things we require from our government, because the moment you can secure a job, you can provide for your family. This implies poverty

among black people will come to an end. The reliance of the people on the government to meet their needs will end when jobs and proper education are available. That's it. I would be pleased if the government focused on these matters."



Ms Karen Lipari, entrepreneur

"Mr President, I really would like you to look into the poor people and also help us here at the flower market for more stability. We need more parking and also stop the corruption, please. Don't go along with the corruption. Get the people out that are corrupt and also the ones that come and steal here in Adderley Street. There are a lot

of people that come from all over that rob people's chains (jewellery), pickpockets, but nobody is doing anything about it."



Ms Skye Proctor, lecturer

"I am originally from KZN and really looking forward to the opening of Parliament. I am, I would say, mostly expecting solidarity. I hope that the change brings our leaders together. I think South Africa is working hard on coming together and I just hope to see that replicated in the people that lead us... I think for a long time [and] as I am understanding and coming into my role as a citizen and trying to figure out what my responsibility is in terms of contributing – Mandela would be my foundation of

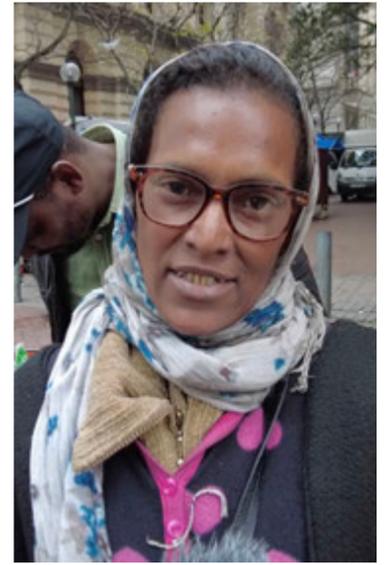
inspiration, I think. I look around at politicians and Parliament right now and there is a lot of confusion and what I would say I draw from Mandela is that feeling of leadership, and I think that is something really exciting. I think that is something that I look forward to again, like identifying it in our Parliament... We have had many presidents, but we are ready for a leader."



Mr Masithule Mamba, entrepreneur

"I sell herbs on the street. I reside in Phillipi, specifically in a neighbourhood known as Ramaphosa. It's Mandela's birthday and we are grateful... Cape Town is always rainy. Houses in the townships are constantly

flooded. We are living in poor conditions, in shacks. We are struggling. We are asking the government to relocate us from the shacks we currently live in the townships. We are asking the government to demolish the shacks and build houses for us."



Ms Abigail Masonga, resident

"And I expect you in these five years – I believe you are president again – [so] I give you another chance. But please just do me one favour – make Cape Town like Cape Town again. And respect Tata Madiba's legacy. If he must see how Cape Town is falling apart – it is very sad. And it is not what Tata wants us to be, and it is not what Tata left us behind. So please make Cape Town, Cape Town again. Please, Mr President." 🇿🇦





President’s Opening of Parliament Address Receives Mixed Reactions from Opposition Parties

President Cyril Ramaphosa’s Opening of Parliament Address received mixed reactions from political parties, writes Sakhile Mokoena.

stability and prosperity for all while ensuring accountability and transparency. “We must renew the commitment to bridge the gap between the people and our Parliament and the government. In this regard we plan to work collaboratively with all political parties represented in this house – recognising that every party carries a legitimate voice and the aspirations of its constituents,” he said.

areas. “I don’t know when it is going to start. He had never done it before. What would make us believe that he would now suddenly focus on rural areas as a priority?”

“We do support infrastructure development in rural areas, but the question is where money is going to come from. We keep borrowing money every day. We need a serious agrarian revolution to turn things around. Rural areas in the main have not been taken seriously,” Dr Hlophe said.

On the establishment of the GNU, Dr Hlophe said this was a cruel joke between the Ramaphosa faction of the ANC and the Democratic Alliance perpetuated against the oppressed and downtrodden masses. “Our people are painfully aware that it will be impossible to create a united nation in South Africa unless the legacy of apartheid and colonialism is addressed.

“Through what magic do you hope to forge unity of the oppressor and the oppressed, the exploiter and the exploited, the rich capitalist and the exploited and toiling working class?” Dr Hlophe asked.



Mr John Steenhuisen

Mr John Steenhuisen, the leader of the Democratic Alliance and Minister of Agriculture in the GNU said the GNU reflects the will of the people, who have clearly stated that they want an end to single-party domination in favour of multiparty cooperation. “This Government of National Unity is South Africa’s chance to free itself from populism, division and economic decline. This is our opportunity to build South Africa into the prosperous country it can be – together,” he said.

“The planned review of sector master plans to identify

obstacles to growth, the emphasis on increasing our focus on exports, and our shared commitment to slashing red tape to crowd-in private sector investment, give us the key ingredients we need to succeed.

“I also welcome the policy interventions to expand the basket of food items exempt from VAT, to review and reduce the fuel price, to prevent undue political interference in the public service, and to set up specialised policing units to fight violent crime and construction mafias,” Mr Steenhuisen said.



Mr Julius Malema

Mr Julius Malema, the leader



Mr Mdumiseni Ntuli

The Chief Whip of the African National Congress, Mr Mdumiseni Ntuli, said the ANC parliamentary caucus was ready to support the seventh administration to ensure



Dr John Hlophe

The leader of the official opposition, uMkhonto weSizwe Party, Dr John Hlophe, said the President’s speech failed on many fronts, including on building infrastructure in rural

of the Economic Freedom Fighters, said the President sounded like a “wounded buffalo” in his speech, and it was uninspiring and “tired”. “All that you said is meaningless – repetition of things said in previous State of the Nation addresses, none of the commitments made have been met,” Mr Malema said.

“The National Development Plan (NDP) target will never be met. The NDP targeted a certain number of jobs, but joblessness has increased [and] poverty has also increased. More people live in poverty under your presidency than any period in the past thirty years.”

Mr Malema said the speech was also silent on international relations. “... on Palestine, because you don’t want to offend your coalition partners. There is instability in the Democratic Republic of Congo where South African soldiers are in that war – you never said anything.”

In addition, Mr Malema pointed out that the speech said nothing about the high levels of crime. He also promised that the EFF would continue to call on government to cancel student debt and introduce free decolonised education.



Mr Velenkosini Hlabisa

Mr Velenkosini Hlabisa, leader of the Inkatha Freedom Party and Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs in the GNU, said the IFP is committed to making the GNU stable and successful, for

it is the result of the will of the people of South Africa.

“The GNU is a bold and necessary step in the right direction. We have repositioned South Africa to embark on a journey of rebuilding herself and the future of our generation and generations to come. The real work of changing the lived reality of every South African must proceed with the utmost haste,” Mr Hlabisa said.

The IFP also welcomed the position taken by the President to review the municipal funding model to ensure that municipalities can become fully functional.

The leader of the Patriotic Alliance and Minister of Sports, Arts and Culture in the GNU, Mr Gayton McKenzie, believes the GNU will take the country forward. He called on parties in Parliament to put their political differences aside and put the country first.



Dr Pieter Groenewald

Dr Pieter Groenewald, Minister of Correctional Services and leader of the Freedom Front Plus said: “We are living in a broken country. We have an economic growth of less than one percent but in Africa, the average economic growth is 3.7%. It means there is a problem.

“People do not feel safe in South Africa and to address that, we will have to look at the criminal justice system, because that plays an important role if we want to build the economy,” Mr Groenewald noted.



Mr Athol Trollip

Mr Athol Trollip of Action SA said the speech sounded promising but, in reality, his party believes it is a fantasy. “We don’t trust you anymore, Mr President. We don’t believe you anymore... We have heard your ‘we will do speeches’ so often, but we have never heard a ‘we have done speech’,” Mr Trollip said.

Mr Trollip further said that the government will need to repair the country’s international

reputation before it can attract the foreign direct investment it needs to grow the economy. The government will have to get South Africa off the international grey list while creating political stability and policy certainty to attract investors. Investors will also look for a government that is stamping out corruption and violent crime before they will invest, he said.



Mr Wayne Thring

Mr Wayne Thring of the African

Christian Democratic Party said the GNU priorities of driving growth and job creation, reducing poverty and tackling the high cost of living will be a mammoth task because South Africa is facing a fiscal crisis. We have a debt to gross domestic product of 74 per cent and a budget deficit of over R300 billion, which will be added to an already accumulated debt of over R5 trillion.

Debt service costs are crowding out key government service delivery programmes and the tax base is shrinking. Meanwhile, budget cuts mean service delivery will be impeded. “Race-based policies are a hindrance to structural reform and economic growth,” Mr Thring said. 🇷🇵





More Parties React to President's Opening of Parliament Address

Participating in the debate on President Cyril Ramaphosa's Opening of Parliament Address, Mr Nqabayomzi Nkwankwa of the United Democratic Movement in the Government of National Unity said Parliament needs to hold government departments accountable where there has been no alignment between the National Development Plan and their annual performance plans, reports Abel Mputing.



Mr Kwankwa

In addition, said Mr Kwankwa, South Africans faces a cost-of-living crisis with rocketing food and fuel prices and interest rate hikes, which erode people's disposable income. Mr Kwankwa said research has shown that the annual cost of a basket of food has increased by 64% from 2019 to 2023. Meanwhile, the 2022 General Household Survey of Statistics South Africa has shown that social grants have become a key source of income for the poor. "The R350 [SRD] social grants fall short of the inflation adjustment of the national food poverty line, which stands at R760 per month.

This shows that there's a need for the introduction of the basic income grant for South African households," Mr Kwankwa said.



Mr Songezo Zibi

Mr Songezo Zibi of Rise Mzansi said there is little disagreement with the President regarding the matters needing urgent attention. "But it's also true that we need a new language that reflects a new attitude on the same issues that are the symptoms of our social ills," he said.

Mr Zibi offered an example. "We are a society in which civil servants live in fear of being killed. He referred to Adv Coreth Naudé who

represents the South African Revenue Services (SARS) and who was critically wounded in KwaZulu-Natal in broad daylight. "This sends a message that our state is weak and is not the centre of our democratic power as it ought to be," Mr Zibi said.

"We, as a nation, have also become numb to the inhumane conditions that South Africans are born in – of South Africans who have lost hope, die poor and never to see the promised land. This is a profound crisis," Mr Zibi said.



Mr Mmusi Maimane

Build One South Africa leader, Mr Mmusi Maimane, said the President's speech defined the

priorities we so desperately need, but his party believes the past 30 years can teach the government useful lessons for the years to come.

Mr Maimane highlighted some of these lessons. "When we prioritise, we must prioritise that which we can deliver. But currently, our priorities are too much. I urge that we bring our priorities down and give South Africans singular and focused priorities that we can achieve collectively."

He also noted lessons that can be learnt from state corruption, the VBS scandal and the Steinhoff scandal. "We urge that all acts of corruption should be arrested. And we urge you, Mr President, that instead of funding VIP protection for state officials, let's fund the National Prosecution Authority and the Special Investigating Unit to pursue wrongdoers.

Mr Maimane also called for the income grant to be converted into a basic income grant so that it can be budgeted for in the medium term.

Mr Vuyolwethu Zungula of the African Transformation Movement warned that South Africa is in a crisis that could lead to a failed state. "At the core of this crisis is that the democratic project of 1994 didn't erode the systemic racial and economic structures of apartheid. As a result, the economy and wealth of this country is still in the hands of a few white families, while the majority of South Africans don't know where their next meal will come from," Mr Zungula said.

"We know of many political leaders who are co-opted by this system – who do not serve the interest of the poor but are there to ensure that the system stays the same. While they claim to be the servants of the people, they oppose the very transformation aimed at benefiting the previously marginalised citizens of our country. Thirty years on, the system is not working nor is it sustainable.

"We now need a government that will drive fundamental – not cosmetic – changes to the economy to address the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality," he said. He also called for South Africa's land and mineral wealth to be returned to the people.

In addition, Mr Zungula said that if the economy is to grow, the government must promote local production to ensure that South Africans consume what they produce and produce what they consume. 🇿🇦



The Road to the Opening of Parliament Address

The different phases of establishing the 7th Parliament culminated in President Cyril Ramaphosa's Opening of Parliament Address on 18 July at Cape Town City Hall before a joint sitting of the National Assembly (NA) and the National Council of Provinces (NCOP).

Establishing the 7th Parliament started with the first sittings of the NA on 14 June and the NCOP on 15 June at the Cape Town International Convention Centre. During these sittings, members of the NA and permanent delegates to the NCOP were sworn in by Chief Justice Raymond Zondo. During the first sittings, members and delegates, respectively, elected the Speaker of the NA, Ms Thoko

Dididza, and the Deputy Speaker, Dr Annelie Lotriet, as well as the Chairperson of the NCOP, Ms Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane. During the same NA sitting, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa was also re-elected as President of the Republic.

The second phase started with a week-long induction programme for the new Members of Parliament (MPs) at the Century City Convention Centre in Cape Town. This orientation was to familiarise MPs with Parliament, its mandate, structures and their roles, and the role of Parliament in South African society.

The third phase was marked by the elections of the parliamentary office bearers, namely the three House Chairpersons of the NA and the two House Chairpersons of the NCOP. Following the President's announcement of his Cabinet, parliamentary committees were established and committee chairpersons elected. Also during this phase, members from both Houses were delegated to represent Parliament in regional, continental and international legislative

structures.

On 18 July, President Ramaphosa delivered the OPA, which is distinct from the annual State of the Nation Address. The OPA occurs once every five years after an election. This year's OPA coincided with the 106th anniversary of the birth of the late former President Nelson Mandela, the first democratically elected President of South Africa.

In the OPA, the President outlines the priorities of the

new government, as President Ramaphosa did when he outlined the priorities of the seventh administration and shared its vision and priorities with the nation. Importantly, the address also sets the tone for the legislative and administrative actions to follow. The address also symbolises the functioning of the new Parliament, reflecting the continuity and stability of governance.

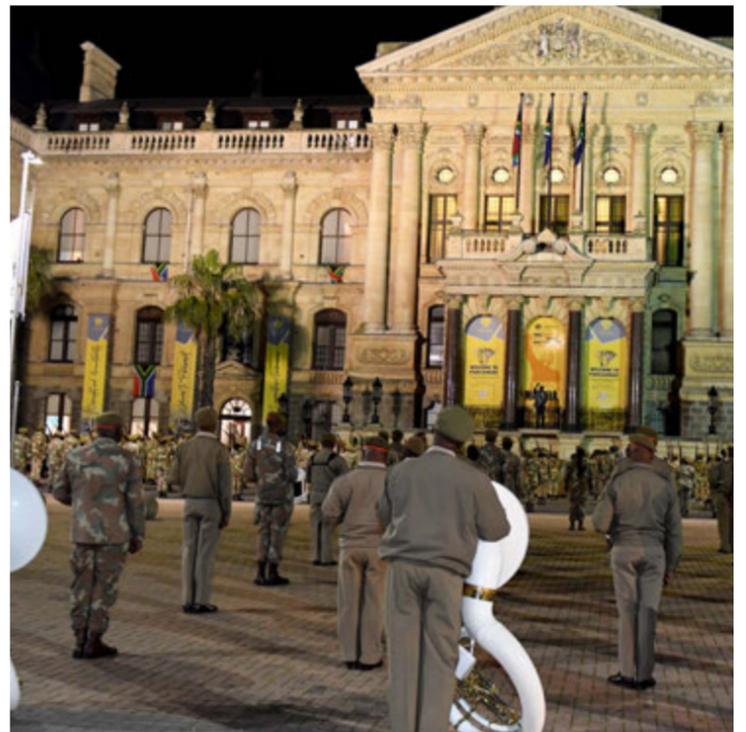
Continuity and stability have been the hallmark of our democracy since 1994, with

each successive administration building on the work of the one before. The incoming administration will be guided by existing plans such as the National Development Plan and agreed-upon government of national unity priorities anchored in respect for the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, a united South Africa, and the rule of law.

The seventh administration, like the ones before, will continue working towards ensuring a better tomorrow for all. 🇿🇦



Through the Lens: Opening of Parliament 2024







“Vendaboy Poet” praises President Cyril Ramaphosa

Mr Lutendo Evens Mugagadeli, widely known as “Vendaboy Poet” praised President Cyril Ramaphosa when he delivered the Opening of Parliament Address. Mava Lukani reports.

This multi-talented artist has made a name for himself as a praise poet, musician, promoter, voice-over artist, writer, and presenter. Mr Mugagadeli’s gift as a poet blossomed in Ha-manyima Nthabalala Village in the Vhembe Municipality in Limpopo where he was born. He first praised locally in the village and grew to participate at regional and provincial levels. He was also praise-singer for the former premier of the Limpopo Province, Mr Stanley Mathabatha.

Mr Mugagadeli rose to national prominence after an impromptu performance of praise poetry for President Cyril Ramaphosa on a domestic flight, showcasing his quick wit and artistic prowess. His unique, raw and homegrown talent has since graced both the domestic and international stages, earning him multiple accolades.

Also among his notable achievements are winning the

Best Poet category at the 2018 South African Traditional Music Awards (SATMA), Best SATMA Tshivenda Album in 2019, and Best SATMA Praise-Singer in 2022. Vendaboy Poet’s versatility and skill have seen him perform at high-profile events, including the BRICS Summit in South Africa, various award ceremonies, festivals, and corporate and government functions.

His selection as the Imbongi

for the Opening of Parliament Address reflects his exceptional talent and the importance of Tshivenda in South Africa’s rich linguistic tapestry. Vendaboy Poet’s performance added a powerful cultural dimension to this significant national event.

Asked about how he feels about being chosen to praise the President before he delivered the Opening of Parliament Address, Mr Mugagadeli said: “I feel

deeply honoured to be chosen to praise President Cyril Ramaphosa during this very important occasion of the joint sitting of Parliament to deliver this Opening of Parliament Address that will unveil the programme of the seventh administration.”

He said being chosen to praise a President who comes from Venda and whose first language is Tshivenda is a remarkable and unprecedented coincidence. “The President is going to understand every Tshivenda word I am going to say. I am extremely delighted and encouraged by that,” he said.

“I am indebted to my spiritual parents for ensuring that I am chosen among capable and gifted praise poets who were considered to praise the President. Every moment I feel empowered to stand in front of the joint sitting of Parliament, an audience of the representatives of the people of South Africa.”





National Assembly Elects House Chairpersons and Members to Serve on International Bodies and JSC

The National Assembly (NA) elected three House Chairpersons as well as members to represent Parliament in the Pan-African Parliament (PAP), the Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADC-PF) and the Judicial Service Commission (JSC), writes Sakhile Mokoena.

Mr Cedric Frolick of the African National Congress, Mr Werner Horn of the Democratic Alliance and Ms Zandile Majazi from the Inkatha Freedom Party were unanimously elected to serve as House

Chairpersons of the NA in the seventh Parliament.

The rules of the NA provide for the election of three House Chairpersons for the duration of the parliamentary term. The rules further provide that the Speaker will in due course allocate functions and responsibilities to each House Chairperson and announces such allocations in the parliamentary publication for Announcements, Tablings and Committee (ATC) Reports. The roles to be divided among the three are internal arrangements, international relations, and committees and oversight.

The House Chairperson for Internal Arrangements will be responsible for the well-being and interests of MPs, for monitoring policies on travel privileges for MPs, for monitoring reports on the implementation of Members' facilities, and for the implementation of policies in respect of Members' leave.

The House Chairperson for Internal Arrangements also oversees the implementation of internal household services for members of the National Assembly and fosters and facilitates a working relationship between the Members of Parliament and the parliamentary administration.

This House Chairperson also sits on various parliamentary committees, such as the National Assembly Programme Committee, the Chief Whips' Forum, the National Assembly Rules Committee, the Joint Rules Committee and the Joint Parliamentary Budget Forum, among others.

The functions of the House Chairperson for International Relations include the implementation and monitoring of Parliament's international relations strategy and the travel policy for parliamentary delegations. This person also attends to parliamentary international

obligations on behalf of the Speaker.

This House Chairperson is also responsible for fostering relations with United Nations' agencies and other international bodies in South Africa, and for upholding South Africa's bilateral agreements in parliamentary committees. This person also determines priorities on multilateral bodies, coordinates South African branches of multilateral bodies, and oversees the development of material and content support for issues to be discussed at multilateral bodies.

The House Chairperson for Committees and Oversight is responsible for implementing and coordinating the parliamentary oversight model and the development and implementation of a public participation model for Parliament.

The duties of this House

Chairperson also include the implementation of the information and communication technology policy, represents Parliament in the Global Centre for Information and Communication Technologies, and also collaborates with other parliaments and international bodies in the pursuit of an e-strategy for parliaments to ensure MPs use ICT effectively when doing their work.

The following members were elected to represent Parliament in the Pan African Parliament (PAP): Mr Mdumiseni Ntuli (the Chief Whip of the African National Congress), Mr Mergan Chetty (Democratic Alliance), Ms Duduzile Zuma-Sambudla (Umkhonto Wesizwe Party), and Mr Vuyani Pambo (Economic Freedom Fighters).

The NA also resolved to elect the Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces, Ms Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane,

as the fifth member to represent Parliament at the PAP.

Speaker Thoko Didiza, Ms Sylvia Lucas, Mr Kenny Mmoiemang, Mr Bonginkosi Madikizela, Mr David Skosana, and Ms Ntombovuyo Mente-Nkuna will represent Parliament at the SADC-PF.

The House also approved the names of Mr Soviet Lekganyane, Ms Fasiha Hassan, Adv Glynnis Breytenbach, Dr Mandlakayise Hlophe, Mr Julius Malema, and Mr Athol Trollip to serve on the JSC.

The House was divided on the nomination of Dr Hlophe,

after the Democratic Alliance raised an objection questioning his suitability to serve on the JSC following his impeachment that led to his removal from his position as Judge President of the Western Cape. Despite this, Dr Hlope will serve on the JSC. 🇿🇦

The rules of the NA provide for the election of three House Chairpersons for the duration of the parliamentary term.

South Africa not a Hopeless Case, says President



President Cyril Ramaphosa labelled the work of the 7th Parliament as “something far bigger, and far more important than mere politics” when he responded to the debate on his Opening of Parliament Address (OPA). He also disputed that South Africa is a hopeless case as some opposition parties suggested during the debate, writes Sibongile Maputi.

In responding to the debate, the President told MPs that the nation’s eyes are on Parliament as the epicentre of the advancement of the will of the people. He also said that the new Government of National Unity (GNU) will be an era of hope and opportunity, as it works with the common purpose of taking the country forward while remaining aware of points of divergence.

This direction is laid out in the medium-term development plan, the President said. The plan will be based on the goals of inclusive growth and job creation, reducing poverty, and improving the capability of a developmental state.

“It is important that whatever social policies the GNU develops are aligned to the social reality on the ground.

What will define the seventh administration’s work is strategic alignment of the priorities set out and greater efficiencies and optimal use of financial resources,” the President said.

He also disputed that South Africa was a hopeless case, as members of the opposition sought to suggest during the debate. He said that government had taken note of the fact “urgency is a currency of the times in which we now live”.

“The GNU is determined to rapidly scale up the pace of our efforts to bring development and shared prosperity to our people by working together. We need to be builders not destroyers. We need to be weavers not vultures. Those who share this

vision will always find the doors of GNU open for collaboration,” said President Ramaphosa.

He said the people expected that leaders work together to chart the way of a better life for all, pulling in one direction. “That is what the people of South Africa expect of this House.”

He assured MPs about the commitment of the GNU to the call that was made by Mr Nqabayomzi Nkwankwa of the United Democratic Movement for the government’s policies and programmes to be aligned with prevailing socio-economic realities.

He also noted that Minister of Basic Education, Ms Siviwe Gwarube and her team will take basic education to new heights, particularly in historically

impoverished communities. Meanwhile, the programme to eliminate pit toilets at village schools is underway to ensure that learners enjoy their constitutionally enshrined dignity. He also congratulated matriculants who achieved an 81% matric pass rate in 2023.

Responding to a call by Mr Musi Maimane that the GNU should ensure that young people are properly empowered as they compete in a world of technological advances, he said the Minister of Science and Technology, Dr Blade Nzimande, and his team are turning the department into a tool of empowerment for young South Africans to compete successfully in this sphere. 🇿🇦



THE GOVERNMENT – THE EXECUTIVE

The executive branch of the state, ensures the quality of the work of South Africa, the effective delivery of public services and builds a united and democratic South Africa, taking its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations.



THE PEOPLE – THE LEGISLATURE

The people, building on the foundation of a democratic and open society based on respect for the dignity and worth of the person, embracing a national spirit for public consideration of issues.



THE JUDICIAL – THE JUDICIARY

The state calls the people's Parliament, the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces, to decide national and provincial issues, ensuring government by the people under the Constitution.



THE CONSTITUTION – THE FOUNDATION

The Constitution is the foundation for a democratic and open society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights. It is the supreme law of the land, and is underpinned by the people.