



PARLIAMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES
OFFICE OF THE CHAIRPERSON

PO Box 15 Cape Town 8000 Republic of South Africa
Tel: 27 (21) 403 2321/3126 Fax: 27 (21) 461 9460
www.parliament.gov.za

OPENING REMARKS BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES, HONOURABLE N. A. MASONDO, ON THE OCCASION OF THE THREE SPHERE PLANNING SESSION HOSTED BY THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES

VENUE: HYBRID

DATE: 29 MARCH 2023

TIME: 10h00

Programme Director, Deputy Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces, Honourable Sylvia Lucas

NCOP House Chairperson for Committees and Oversight, Honourable Jomo Nyambi

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

NCOP Chief Whip, Honourable Seiso Mohai

Provincial Premiers

Chairpersons of Committees from the Provincial Legislatures

Members of Parliament and Provincial Legislatures

Representatives of the South African Local Government Association

Representatives of Governmental and Non-Governmental Organisations

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. INTRODUCTION

Programme Director, let me start by expressing appreciation at the opportunity to make the opening remarks at this year's Three Sphere Planning Session, which is held under the theme *Delineating key priorities for consolidation and implementation during the final year of the sixth Parliament.*

It is worth noting that this session seeks to promote co-operation in planning and implementation processes especially in light of the fact that we are in the penultimate year of the sixth administration.

In the main, the three sphere planning approach, which was launched in October 2020, is necessitated by the cross-cutting nature of the issues that fall under the legislative sector programme for sector parliaments.

As many would know, the legislative sector saw it fit to implement sector activities to give designated groups an opportunity to directly interact with public representatives and government agencies. The aim behind these activities is to unlock opportunities for socio-economic advancement.

2. THE IMPERATIVE OF CO-OPERATIVE GOVERNMENT

Programme Director, our Constitution identifies three spheres of government which make up the government of the Republic. These are

national, provincial and local spheres of government. It defines these spheres as distinctive, interdependent and interrelated.

In terms of our constitutional scheme, the national government is responsible for formulating policies and regulatory frameworks, setting national norms and standards, and providing the requisite funding and overseeing implementation. The provincial government is responsible for implementation in accordance with national frameworks and standards. Whereas a municipality has the right to govern, on its own initiative, the local government affairs of its community, subject to national and provincial legislation.

Taking this into account, proper planning and coordination are critical in assisting the three spheres of government to tackle the current challenges we face as society, chief among them poverty, unemployment, and inequality. Unfortunately, at the present moment the energy crisis is constraining our recovery and growth prospects in the context of a difficult domestic and global economic environment.

In the face of this reality, our legislative institutions have the responsibility to contribute to the process of fast tracking the transformation of our society. They ought to do so in a manner which promotes co-operation, co-ordination and collaboration as the key ingredients for ensuring accountable, coherent and effective government.

As the participants would recall, Chapter 3 of the Constitution states that all the spheres of government and all organs of state within each sphere must, among other things, provide effective, transparent, accountable and coherent government. Further, it states that they must co-ordinate with one another in mutual trust and good faith by, among others, co-ordinating their actions and legislation with one another.

It is against this background, Programme Director, that we appreciate the positioning and role of the National Council of Provinces, a House of Parliament which has the constitutional authority to bring the representatives of the different spheres of government under one roof. The Constitution locates the NCOP at the cutting edge of our system of co-operative government. In so doing, it creates, through the NCOP, the possibility to oversee governance issues in a harmonised manner.

3. KEY FOCAL AREAS FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE TERM

Programme Director, at the beginning of the 6th Parliament we made a commitment that by the end of this term in 2024 we shall have increased government's responsiveness and accountability. This means that come the end of the term, we ought to be able to produce evidence that clearly demonstrates our achievement of that outcome.

Therefore, in whatever we plan to do, we must ensure that we promote public accountability and a government that responds to the needs of the

people. One way of achieving this is by following up on the commitments that government itself has made and will be resourcing.

In his State of the Nation Address earlier in February this year, the President of the Republic made a commitment that government would concentrate on the issues that concern South Africans the most. He said that these are:

- 1) Loadshedding
- 2) Unemployment
- 3) Poverty and rising cost of living
- 4) Crime and corruption.

Accordingly, he laid out plans on how government is to respond to these challenges, building on the work that has been done so far. For example, with regard to the energy crisis, he mentioned the five key interventions announced by government last year, which are:

- 1) One, fix Eskom's coal-fired power stations and improve the availability of existing supply;
- 2) Two, enable and accelerate private investment in generation capacity;

- 3) Three, accelerate procurement of new capacity from renewables, gas and battery storage;
- 4) Four, unleash businesses and households to invest in rooftop solar; and
- 5) Five, fundamentally transform the electricity sector to achieve long-term energy security.

As we know, following the State of the Nation Address, the Minister of Finance outlined in his Budget Speech how these interventions would be resourced, including the announcement of two tax measures to encourage businesses and individuals to invest in renewable energy and increase electricity generation.

Importantly, with regard to non-payment for electricity he said that the measures, which include the installation of prepaid meters, would seek to correct the underlying behaviour of non-payment and operational practices in the municipalities.

Programme Director, it is important to note that according to National Treasury, municipalities owed Eskom R56.3 billion by the end of the last quarter (that is December 2022). However, around the same time the municipalities themselves were owed about R140 billion by residents in

services rendered. The issue of payment for services is therefore important.

The availability of electricity is crucial if we are to power our economy to the point where we are able to create more opportunities for South Africans who are currently not participating in the economy. It is also important in dealing with crime. Already, crime syndicates take advantage of the electricity downtime to commit crime including stealing the cables we rely on for the provision of electricity, thus escalating the cost to government of fixing the energy problem.

Therefore, it is key that we remain seized with the issues that have been identified as requiring national effort, so that through our integrated oversight approach we can be able to support the goals that government has set itself in this regard. This is important because even the budget we will be processing as Parliament in the next quarter will be geared towards addressing the challenges that government has placed high on the agenda.

4. IN CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Programme Director, this session seeks to promote co-operation in planning and implementation processes from the point of view of the legislative sector. This is against the backdrop of the serious

challenges that continue to face us, which include poverty and unemployment.

The legislative sector's role in this regard is to ensure that government is kept accountable and that in the final analysis the interests of the people are met and their needs are addressed. However, we are facing a conundrum in that some of the key agents for the resolution of the challenges we have are crippled by debt, and we should factor this in the conversations we have with them.

Programme Director, I appreciate the opportunity to make these remarks and I am happy to be part of today's deliberations.

Thank you.