



04

NCOP, provincial legislatures and Salga map out work



08

Special Appropriations Bill scrutinised by committee



10

Tourism and Police Portfolio Committee host workshop

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# in session



ENOUGH IS ENOUGH: Activists demand safety of women from the government

## Violence against women in SA comparable to countries that are at war – Ramaphosa

*South Africa's ongoing problem of violent crime and gender-based violence resulted in President Cyril Ramaphosa calling a Joint Sitting of the National Assembly (NA) and the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) in Parliament recently; writes Mava Lukani.*

Addressing the Joint Sitting, President Ramaphosa told Members of Parliament (MPs) that he called the special Joint Sitting of the Houses of Parliament because of the "dark and heavy shadow" that hovers above South Africa, where women and children are under siege. He described it as a very violent and brutal

war under way in South Africa against women and children. In the last year alone, he said, 2 700 women and more than 1 000 children died at the hands of other people.

Every day over 100 cases of rape are reported to the police. Hence, South Africa is one of the most unsafe places in the

world to be a woman, "with levels of violence that are comparable to countries at war", said Mr Ramaphosa.

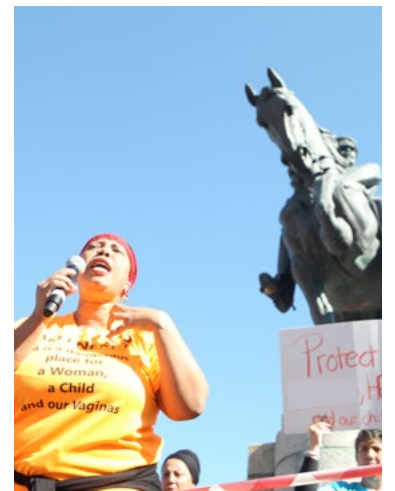
South Africans have also recently inflicted violence on foreign nationals and this situation is worsened by fake, incendiary messages designed to sow panic, he said.



Lawlessness is corroding the fabric of South African society and manifests itself through violent crime, destruction of property and the hijacking and destruction of vehicles.

"There are many in our country

who have increasingly shown scant regard for the state, for the police and the rule of law, for the community and religious leaders and institutions, for our elders, and for each other," President Ramaphosa emphasised. He



**ENOUGH IS ENOUGH: Activists say Uyinene is the last victim, below – ASSURANCE OF HOPE: Speaker Thandi Modise assures activists that Parliament will aid their cause.**

called on MPs and political parties to come together to signify the magnitude of the challenge and the importance Parliament should attach to it. "Confronted with this bad situation, the women of our country are demanding that we should have a 'state of emergency', which perhaps will enable us to deal more effectively with this scourge."

President Ramaphosa said he would be approaching Parliament to determine what emergency measures could be put in place to address this crisis more effectively. "Now it is time for all political parties to place violence against women at the centre of their concerns. I am looking forward today to hearing concrete proposals from political parties on how we can tackle these challenges together."

He urged Parliament to make the necessary amendments to the current laws and policies to ensure that perpetrators of gender-based violence are brought to book as a matter of urgency.

President Ramaphosa promised to make substantial additional funding available for a comprehensive package of interventions to make an immediate and lasting

difference. "We will complete the implementation of the decisions of last year's Presidential Summit on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide. In line with those decisions, and following consultation between government, business,



traditional leaders, the media, Chapter 9 institutions and civil society, we have developed a draft National Strategic Plan, which will be finalised shortly," he said.

In addition, an emergency action plan will be implemented over the next six months. This plan will strengthen existing measures and introduce new interventions: the prevention of gender-based violence; strengthening the criminal justice system; and enhancing the legal and policy framework.

The action plan will be

driven by an interim steering committee that will be located in the Presidency and co-chaired by government and civil society organisations. He reminded MPs that the government has enacted laws and undertaken programmes to tackle gender inequality

in South Africa, to promote human rights, and to enable effective action against gender-based violence.

The Deputy Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces, Ms Sylvia Lucas, said in spite of the advances made on women's rights, South African women face an onslaught from an oppressor "with a different face". She said in the old dispensation the oppressor was the system of apartheid where oppression was on the basis of laws of discrimination. "Today the face of the oppressor is patriarchy and violence, which is meted out in our homes,

in our streets and in our communities."

She pointed out that the debate on violence and gender-based violence occurred shortly after the Women's Parliament, hosted by Parliament at the end of August. Some of the resolutions of the Women's Parliament will be carried over into committee oversight programmes.

All parliamentarians' oversight roles must be strengthened by building strategic partnerships across party political lines and with civil society movements. She urged women in leadership positions to use their leadership advantage to take specific action in response to the challenges faced by other women whose voices are not taken into account.

Ms Liezl van der Merwe of the Inkatha Freedom Party, pledged the support of the party for the government's emergency plan

outlined by President Ramaphosa. She said her party commends President Ramaphosa for the initiative. "We pledge our full support and commit our focused attention to this fight," said Ms van der Merwe.

She said millions of South Africans do not sleep at night. They fear for their lives "as you admitted that you lead a lawless country. A country which now resembles a war zone where our lives mean nothing. Where women face war on our streets, at home, in the workplace, at school, even at the post office".

Rev Kenneth Meshoe of the African Christian Democratic Party suggested that the government must ban all forms of pornography as he believes it leads to rape. "There must be harsher punishment for rape and rapists must not be granted bail. The government must remove all the corrupt police officers from the South African Police Service," he said. 🇷🇵





ACCOUNTING: Minister Bheki Cele (right) before the Portfolio Committee on Police

# Police committee calls for cutting-edge strategies to fight crime

*The Portfolio Committee on Police has called for a relook at the way policing is done in South Africa to stop rising crime levels. This was after the Minister of Police, Mr Bheki Cele, presented the latest crime statistics before the Portfolio Committee on Police at Parliament recently, writes Malatswa Molepo.*

The committee views it as unacceptable that every year there is an increase in crime, yet there are no effective strategies in place to fight it. “The committee is of the view that the trajectory of crime cannot continue at the current rate and requires a shift in the way we view policing, from being responsive to being more preventative. This can be achieved through the intensification of collaboration with local communities,” said the Chairperson of the committee, Ms Tina Joemat-Pettersson.

The committee has also suggested that the police should look at increasing deployment of police in the communities on weekends, when more dangerous crime is committed. The police must work hard to regain their credibility and public trust. This will be achieved by being responsive to the concerns of the communities and removing the corrupt among them.



The committee also calls on communities to work closely with the police and play an active role in fighting crime. This cooperation cannot inadvertently remove the crime-fighting responsibility away from the South African Police Service (Saps). The police, at station level, must constantly improve relations with the communities they service to ensure the existence of trust to push back the frontiers of crime.

Also, the committee views it as unacceptable that there has



been an increase in a number of violent crime indicators, from murder and assault to sexual offences. There is cause for serious concern about the 1.4% increase in murder, 4.6% increase in sexual offences, 4.1% increase in attempted murder and 2.2% in assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm.

The committee acknowledges that the increase in visible policing will go a long way in reducing acts of crime, and has called on Saps senior management to move with speed to implement the recruitment drive announced by the President during the State of the Nation Address.

There is also a need to deal with the socio-economic factors that lead to crime. This includes substance abuse and unemployment. The committee believes that there must be a social compact involving all sectors of society to deal with the fundamental ills that are

affecting the country and that are manifesting themselves in crime.

“We have to accept that police alone cannot fight crime as they are at the far end of the cycle, and solutions must be directed towards the root causes of criminal behaviour,” emphasised Ms Joemat-Pettersson.

Regarding gender-based violence, the committee reiterates its call for the strengthening of the Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit in order to have a focused approach to the current scourge. 🇷🇺



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NCOP Chairperson: Mr Amos Masondo

## NCOP, provincial legislatures and Salga map out work for sixth parliamentary term

*The National Council of Provinces (NCOP) successfully held a two-day planning session with the provincial legislatures, as well as the South African Local Government Association (Salga) and other relevant stakeholders at Parliament recently, to draft a road map on inter-governmental relations for the duration of the sixth parliamentary term, reports Sakhile Mokoena.*

Delivering the keynote address where he outlined the objectives of the workshop, the Chairperson of the NCOP, Mr Amos Masondo, said the planning session was aimed at setting the strategic agenda for legislatures during the sixth NCOP. It also provided an opportunity to deliberate on the key issues that will inform the NCOP and provincial legislatures' strategic plan for the sixth Parliament for the period 2019 – 2024.

Mr Masondo said the session also sought to identify challenges emanating from previous workings of the NCOP and legislatures and come up with programmes to address them in this term. "Another objective is to identify priority programmes, systems and processes that will improve on how we fulfil our constitutional mandate for the benefit of our people on the ground, and come up with a coordinated process for developing and completing the final strategy in a manner that allows for extensive consultation, coordination and cooperation," he said.

He also advised the representatives in the planning session that in developing the strategy, they should take into account lessons coming from the recent Auditor-General report and other studies that show massive capacity challenges in local government.

Mr Masondo emphasised the importance of public consultation, which he said is one of the key

constitutional requirements in the legislation-making process. "We must collectively facilitate effective public involvement to ensure the laws we make are informed by the views of the public. In doing so, we must be acutely aware that our democracy is representative. We must be bold enough to inform the public that comments consistent with the Constitution and objectives of the Bill in question reinforce progressive efforts to advance our freedom and democracy," he added.

He called on the legislative sector to take advantage of the opportunities that came with the fourth industrial revolution, to expand public participation and involve as many people as possible in the business of the sector.

"We must maximise the use of technology to achieve as much as we possibly can, to reach as many people as possible, to disseminate as much information as possible in our facilitation of public involvement efforts to take the legislative sector to the people.

"Given the technological advances, it cannot be that people are unable to participate in our processes because they do not have the means to reach the seat of our legislatures. While technology may minimise travelling time and costs, it must maximise our reach and impact on performing our constitutional functions," he said.

## SYMBOL OF AUTHORITY:

Back Rod, a symbol of the authority of the Chairperson of the NCOP



# NCOP House Chair calls for the implementation of HLP recommendations

*The House Chairperson for Committees, Oversight and Intergovernmental Relations (IGR) in the NCOP, Mr Jomo Nyambi, told the delegates to the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) and South African Local Government Association (Salga) representatives who attended a planning session that the latest statistics on rising unemployment and the Auditor-General's report on the audit outcomes of municipalities present a strong case for robust oversight and the enhancement of executive accountability; writes Sakhile Mokoena.*

Mr Masondo urged representatives never to betray "the very covenant" they entered into with the people who elected them. He said the planning session must take seriously the inputs and expectations of the people, as expressed through the national and provincial elections, very seriously.

"The 8 May general elections, as well as Parliament's legacy report, have given us an insight into what the masses of our people demand of us as their representatives. In the process of making laws, we should always take their input seriously, instead of just consulting them for the sake of compliance. These demands should guide our strategic thinking as we go into this planning session," said Mr Masondo.

"This planning session must be located within the constitutional mandate of the NCOP. This relationship must be predicated on consultation, cooperation and coordination of common programmes [and the] planning session should serve to lay the basis of our future relationship in the three spheres of government," he said.

Mr Masondo detailed the three main objectives of the planning session as: 1) to identify priority programming systems and

processes that will improve how the constitutional mandate is fulfilled to the benefit of the people 2) to pursue a coordinated process for developing and completing the final strategy in a manner that allows for extensive consultation, coordination and cooperation 3) to identifying challenges emanating from previous work of the NCOP and provincial legislatures and come up with programmes to address such challenges

The Deputy Chairperson of the NCOP, Ms Sylvia Lucas, who also spoke during the opening part of the session, stressed the importance of public participation and made reference to the Lamosa judgment, where the Constitutional Court found that the NCOP failed to conduct adequate public participation on the Land Restitution Amendment Bill. This legislation was set aside.

After Parliament passed the Restitution of Land Rights in 2014 to reopen the lodgement of land claims for a period of five years, the Land Access Movement of South Africa (Lamosa) took the matter to the Constitutional Court. The court declared that the Act was invalid, because "Parliament failed to satisfy its obligation to facilitate public involvement in accordance with section 72 (1) (a) of the Constitution".

Leading a discussion on the topic: "Overseeing cooperative governance and intergovernmental relationships" during the planning session, Mr Nyambi added that together with the widening gap of inequality and poverty levels affecting many people, the audit outcomes point to a dire situation requiring immediate intervention.

"There exists a strong case for effective oversight and the enhancement of executive accountability, and such a case is made even stronger by the latest statistics indicating that unemployment is on the rise.

Parliament is better placed to intervene and heighten executive accountability through various oversight activities. Coordination at different levels between the National Assembly (NA) and NCOP in Parliament, and between Parliament and the provincial legislatures and Salga needs to be enhanced," he said.

Mr Nyambi also said the NCOP must continue engaging with the Office of the Auditor-General, which provides a critical analysis on the national and local audit outcomes for the purposes of reporting, monitoring and evaluation.

He urged delegates to the NCOP, provincial legislatures and Salga representatives to the planning session that efforts must be made to implement the recommendations of the High Level Panel (HLP) on the Assessment of Key Legislation and Acceleration of Fundamental Change, which was instituted by the legislative sector.

The panel made recommendations on a wide range of issues, including public participation, where it recommended that "Parliament should consider identifying and reviewing all legislation that includes a



HOUSE CHAIRPERSON: Mr Jomo Nyambi

public participation component, including that which relates to Parliament's interaction with citizens. Parliament should also ensure that adequate resources for the implementation of these provisions, such that where provision is made for the public to be consulted, this consultation is meaningful and effective."

The HLP's report, where these recommendations are contained, is available on Legislative Sector Support's website: [www.sals.gov](http://www.sals.gov)

The Deputy Chairperson of the NCOP, Ms Sylvia Lucas, who facilitated the opening session of the planning session said: "All of us gathered here today agree that our mission is to build a developmental state that provides effective basic services and with capabilities to take forward a far-reaching agenda of the national economic development, whilst at the same time placing people and their involvement at the centre of this process."

Furthermore, Ms Lucas said the building of a capable and developmental state at all three spheres of government must be achieved through strengthening political institutions to deliver on their mandates and building effective, integrated planning

and service delivery systems. The NCOP Chief Whip, Mr Seiso Mohai, raised concerns about the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality, which he said continued to deepen in the third decade of South Africa's democracy. He felt that this has diminished the confidence of the electorate in the capacity of the democratic project and its institutions to address these contradictions.

"Our absence in the public space, especially during violent community protests triggered by poor service delivery, is a serious indictment of our claim that we are an activist people's Parliament. Often we select areas of focus on the basis of their being topical, without measuring our capacity to resolve them in the immediate, medium- and long-term.

"This has the unintended consequences of generating unrealistic expectations in our people. We need to ensure that we select focus areas that are measurable and within the capacity and mandate of the NCOP to resolve. A case in point is the approach that we have taken in the current Provincial Week, which focuses on the financial state of local government," emphasised Mr Mohai. 🇿🇦



SALGA PRESIDENT:  
Ms Thembi Nkadimeng

## Salga President calls for reflection on implementation of section 139

*The South African Local Government Association (Salga) raised concerns about the high number of section 139 interventions in municipalities at a planning session to assess the effectiveness of these mechanisms, reports Sakhile Mokoena.*

The President of Salga, Ms Thembi Nkadimeng, who participated in the planning session, said there was a need to reflect on the efficiency of the process of placing struggling municipalities under administration through section 139 of the Constitution. Municipalities are placed under administration in an effort to restore good governance and sound financial management.

Section 139 of the

Constitution empowers a provincial government to intervene when a municipality cannot or does not fulfil an executive obligation in terms of the Constitution or legislation. And as part of the support system in terms of intergovernmental relations, the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) has to be notified about any intentions by a province to implement section 139.

Ms Nkadimeng said: "We remain concerned about the rising tide of section 139 interventions and court judgments against national and provincial governments that are encroaching increasingly into the powers and functions of local government. It is something that we would like to highlight as part of the programme for this year, to ensure that the institutional integrity of local government is not only preserved, but strengthened to expedite our developmental mandate."

Ms Nkadimeng, who is also the Executive Mayor of

Polokwane Local Municipality, said Salga, in partnership with the NCOP, wants to sustain the gains made in the last term of office by improving oversight in municipalities through building the capacity of the Municipal Public Accounts Committees (MPACs).

"As you may be aware, all provinces have MPACs for their municipalities, with Salga providing capacity-building support to MPACs' members, with our emphasis now shifting to the quality of oversight and accountability. The impact of the work of MPACs continues to show positive results though improved audit outcomes for the sector. The only outstanding issue remaining is to formalise MPACs through legislation.

"I'm sure that the sixth NCOP will be seized with the Amendments to the Structures Act, which include a chapter on the establishment of MPACs, but also that of Whips at local government level," she said.

Other delegates in the workshop also supported the call to review the section 139 interventions, saying currently there are over 40 interventions across the country. Dissenting voices argued that some municipalities are left worse off after the interventions.

The Select Committee on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs recently resolved to recommend to the NCOP that it approves the interventions instituted by provincial executives of the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal in Amahlathi Local Municipality and Richmond Local Municipality, as per section 139 (1)(b) and (5) of the Constitution, respectively.

The committee visited the two municipalities recently and the observations made confirmed

the need for the interventions. Some of the challenges that contributed to the committee's recommendation to approve the interventions are deteriorating financial management in both municipalities, which has led to the non-payment of creditors; the ballooning of unauthorised, irregular and fruitless and wasteful expenditure, which increased by 501% year-on-year in Richmond; as well as the need to bring stability and curb service delivery protests within the municipalities.

"Local government is at the coalface of service delivery and it is untenable to have municipalities that are unable to perform their constitutional functions. We need viable and working municipalities that deliver services to the people," said Mr China Dodovu,

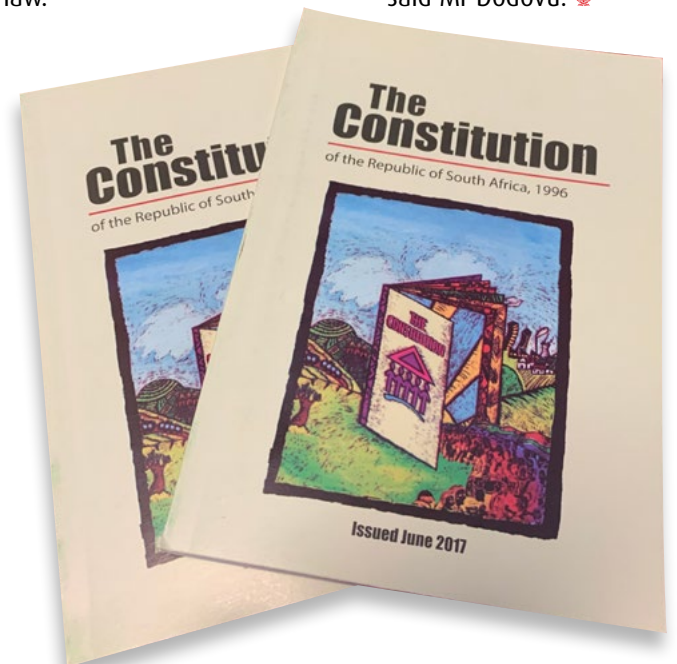
the Chairperson of the committee.

The committee raised a concern that instability within these municipalities has impaired the abilities of both municipalities to spend the Municipal Infrastructure Grant, which is essential for eradicating infrastructure challenges, especially in rural municipalities. The committee is of the view that the interventions will add the impetus necessary to implement infrastructure programmes.

Regarding skills transfer and human resources development, the committee resolved that as part of the interventions, both provincial executives must ensure that skills transfer occurs, to ensure that when the interventions are lifted,

the municipalities are in an improved position. The committee has called on both provincial MECs to speedily conclude any investigation currently under way into the roots of the challenges facing the municipalities. People who are found to be directly responsible for the challenges must face the full might of the law.

It was also resolved that the committee, in conjunction with committees from the provincial legislatures, will do continuous visits to these municipalities to assess the impact of the intervention. "It is upon us as legislators to properly monitor the extent to which these interventions are making a difference in people's lives," said Mr Dodovu. 🇷🇺



## NHI Bill is before the committee



*The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Health, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, has welcomed the National Health Insurance (NHI) Bill, which was tabled by the Minister of Health, Dr Zweli Mkhize in the National Assembly recently; writes Yoliswa Landu.*

Under the NHI, the government will provide a package of comprehensive health services for free at private and public health facilities, as part of its bid to provide more equitable access to quality healthcare.

"We are extremely happy

about this move. This is one of the equalisers of society, where those who are poor can get access to good healthcare. It is a public good and addresses issues of social solidarity. We cannot wait to deliberate on the NHI Bill and have it before the committee,

so that those who are down-trodden can comment," he said.

"We are confident that our people can see NHI as a great benefit. It would be extremely important to compare the life expectancy before and after the NHI has

been implemented. South Africa is learning from those who came before us and who have implemented NHI. NHI is a vehicle for making sure every citizen has access to healthcare.

"We are not aware of any

country in the world that completed everything else before it started with NHI, either fixing clinics, rebuilding hospitals, employing adequate staff and getting ambulances and everything else that they need," said Dr Dhlomo.

The Bill has now been referred to the committee and will undergo an extensive public consultation process.

In his recent State of the Nation Address, President Cyril Ramaphosa assured the nation of the government's intention to improve access to quality healthcare for all South Africans. Among other things, he said the government will attend to the capacity of hospitals and clinics.

"An 80-year-old grandmother cannot spend an entire day in a queue waiting for her medication. An ill patient cannot be turned away because there is a shortage of doctors and nurses. A woman in labour cannot have her unborn child's life put in danger because the ambulance has taken too long to come" emphasised President Ramaphosa.

"We are finalising the Presidential Health Summit Compact, which draws on

the insights and will mobilise the capabilities of all key stakeholders to address the crisis in our clinics and hospitals," the President said.

The government is far advanced in revising the NHI's detailed plan of implementation, including accelerating quality of care initiatives in public facilities, building human resource capacity, establishment of the NHI funding structure, and costing the administration of the NHI Fund.

In signing the Presidential Health Compact at Dr George Mukhari Hospital in Gauteng in June this year, President Ramaphosa said there is nothing that reinforces the Thuma Mina spirit as much as seeing government, health and allied professionals, labour, business, communities, academia, statutory councils, traditional health practitioners and public health entities collaborating in pursuit of a common goal.

He said the signing of the Presidential Health Compact is the culmination of a long journey "we have travelled together since we convened the Presidential Health Summit last year to find solutions to the crisis facing our health system".



President Ramaphosa said it is fitting that the government and the health stakeholders are signing the historic accord at the Dr George Mukhari Hospital. This hospital was the site of a ground-breaking and difficult operation to separate conjoined twins in 2017 in

collaboration with staff from the Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital and a number of private sector doctors.

The Budget Debate Vote speech for the 2019/20 financial that was delivered by the Minister of Health, Dr Zweli Mkhize, recently in the NA, hinged on the Department of Health's commitment to effect universal health coverage. He told Members of Parliament that much still needs to be done before it becomes a reality.

Dr Mkhize said, at the heart of this initiative is the National Health Insurance, which seeks to make quality health care accessible to all South Africans. "We will use health as one of the critical levers to narrow the gaps and bring about the resolution of the country's woes of low economic growth, inequality, poverty and unemployment, and prevent the recurrence of human rights violations such as the Life Esidimeni tragedy."

According to Dr Mkhize, the health initiatives stem from the National Development Plan. However, a major challenge for the health system is the "increasing burden of diseases and the twin epidemics of communicable and non-communicable diseases".

He also mentioned that the department does not have adequate capacity or funding. "Serious concerns have been raised about the public health sector, that is significantly underfunded. The current baseline is below the expected level," Dr Mkhize said.

The quality of health care in government-run facilities must improve to make it a service of choice and to comply with the standards set by the Office of Health Standards Compliance, the minister said. He made a commitment that "within the year, 25% of our facilities will undergo interventions that will prepare their readiness for accreditation for National Health Insurance".

## Special Appropriations Bill scrutinised by committee

*The National Treasury appeared before the Standing Committee on Appropriations to give details about the Special Appropriations Bill that is currently before Parliament. This Bill was brought to effect when it was realised that Eskom will be able to service its debt through the normal appropriation process announced by the Finance Minister in February this year (2019), who allocated R23 billion to Eskom, writes Abel Mputing:*







This Bill has been put before Parliament urgently because Eskom needs R26 billion injection. This is, according to the Director-General of the National Treasury, Mr Dondo Mogajane, a result of “low tariffs determinations by the National Energy Regulator of South Africa, and a decline in sales volumes, continuing cost escalations of the new build programme due to its persistent delays.”

In his view, this special Bill was triggered by Eskom’s annual financial results, which illustrated acute financial challenges that could bring it to its knees. As a result, something had to be done, because a well-functioning and financially stable Eskom is vital to sustaining the South African economy and to support efforts to revive the country’s economic growth trajectory.

“Without any financial assistance from government, the company would be unable to meet obligations through the 2019/2020 financial year. And that would have adverse effects on our economy and our attempts to resuscitate it,” said Mr Mogajane.

One of National Treasury’s main considerations is that Eskom’s “projected revenues will not be adequate enough to cover its interest payment, debt repayments and capital expenditure requirements”. What worried the treasury even more, Mr Mogajane said, was the fact that Eskom could not honour its obligations. He said: “The failure to meet

its obligations could have had a negative consequence for Eskom and the fiscus. Hence, the minister had to intervene and invoke the Special Appropriations Bill, which requested Parliament to appropriate R26 billion to Eskom to enable it to meet the financial obligations of its lenders and investors.”

This Appropriation Bill, which was tabled in February 2019 by the Minister of Finance, was assented to by President Cyril Ramaphosa in August.

The timing of this special Bill is crucial, according to Mr Mogajane, because “failure to execute the funding plan may result in Eskom experiencing liquidity shortfalls at 31 March 2020 and would require additional funding in addition to the R26 billion provide through the Special Appropriation Bill.”

In keeping with the government’s undertaking to streamline Eskom, Mr Freeman Nomvalo has been appointed as the Chief Restructuring Officer. He is charged with the task of making Eskom manageable and profitable. There is also now a Special Paper on Eskom’s Road Map that will “outline a more detailed transformation journey that Eskom will undertake as well as clarity on measures to resolve its financial challenges”, According to Mr Nomvalo.

The members of the committee criticised unanimously the fact that they had to consider a

special appropriation bill that had no conditions. In their view, it would be better for Eskom to appear before them to explain the finer details of its turn-around strategy and to determine whether the conditions of its bail-out set by the National Treasury are feasible.

What they would not agree to, said members of the committee, is to be pressurised to pass a Special Appropriation Bill without set conditions.

The Chairperson of the Committee, Mr Sfiso Buthelezi, said it was crucial for Eskom to appear before the committee to account for “what has happened in the last financial year, when a new board and governance structure were installed, and why losses are still recurring. We need to find out if there is a strategy to curb these losses and bring about financial stability. We need this information first while we wait for the grand plan.”

He cautioned against an over-reliance on the Chief Restructuring Officer. “I don’t want to sound pessimist, but the high hopes that are pinned on this office are, to an extent, burdensome to its incumbent,” he said.

He further explained his view: “Eskom is a complex company that no single person can turn around alone. The officer will need time to understand how it works. He will not come up with a one-solution-fits-all approach. That will not work in such a multi-layered company.”

## SCOPA to give Eskom special focus

*The Standing Committee on Public Accounts (Scopa) has resolved to give special attention to Eskom in light of its extensive challenges. As part of this commitment, the committee visited the Medupi and Kusile power stations in August to understand fully the challenges at these stations, which led to countrywide power outages early this year, reports Faith Ndenze.*

Another reason for the visits was the cost escalations that contributed to Eskom’s poor performance over the past few years, which has had a negative impact in the country. Mr Mkhuleko Hlengwa, the Chairperson of Scopa, indicated that the committee will have an opportunity to look at Eskom’s financials when the committee deals with Eskom’s annual report.

“Scopa has committed to closely monitoring Eskom while it works to overcome the challenges plaguing it and to rooting out corruption. In line with Scopa’s mandate, this will include scrutinising Eskom’s financial statements when they are submitted to Parliament,” he said.

The committee meet with the management of both Medupi and Kusile power

stations. The committee heard that Eskom had undertaken feasibility studies to determine the most viable plant location for Medupi power station. The study considered the availability and accessibility of primary resources, such as coal and water; the ability of the new power station to connect to the existing network/grid; environmental impact; and the cost of production.

The committee also heard that the defects and delays in Medupi’s construction have had major financial implications. “Medupi was initially budgeted for R79 billion. However, due to delays and other defects identified during and post-construction, the estimated cost at completion is approximately R146 billion. The construction costs to date as at August 2019 is at



R117 billion, the cost escalation is more than 84.8 per cent of the initial budgeted costs," said Mr Hlengwa.

The committee was informed that the project is funded mainly through loans from various financial institutions including the World Bank, African Development Bank and a loan from the China Development Bank, amongst others.

When Scopa visited the Kusile power station, it heard that construction began in August 2008, and it was expected to be completed by 2018. As with Medupi, insufficient time was allocated for the design and this has consequently resulted in construction delays and cost escalations. The project was initially budgeted at R81 billion. However, it is expected to be completed at a cost of R161 billion.

Currently, construction costs stand at R138 billion, mainly funded through loans. The committee was informed that the maintenance costs to address the defects have been estimated at R285 million.

When Scopa met with Eskom's Board the committee appreciated Eskom's understanding of the importance of the committee's work in laying out a programme of interaction in an effort to find a solution to the current problems. "This understanding is significant, particularly because of Eskom's performance for the past few years. Eskom incurred a loss of almost R21 billion and a debt of R441 billion in 2018/19. Scopa wants to see this situation turned around. This is why it saw it fit to start this journey with Eskom," said Mr Hlengwa. 🌟



SITE VISIT: Members of Scopa visiting Medupi and Kusile

## Tourism and Police Portfolio Committees host workshop to address crime against tourists

*The Portfolio Committees on Tourism and on Police jointly hosted a consultative workshop at Parliament on tourist safety and security. The workshop, attended by a host of tourism experts and practitioners, was called in an attempt to mitigate the negative perceptions caused by recent incidents of crime against tourists, writes Abel Mputing:*

Several tourists have been subjected to violent crime and murder in some tourist hotspots, such as Cape Town and the Kruger National Park in Mpumalanga. As a result of these incidents, pre-bookings by international tourism companies in Europe were cancelled and some tourists are currently wary of coming to South Africa.

In her opening remarks, the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Police, Ms Tina Joemat-Pettersson, stated the need for a swift intervention because of the positive effect that the tourism industry has on our economy. "We believe that tourism is a catalyst for economic growth. As such, crime constitutes a threat to our country's endeavour to resuscitate economic growth."

Given the significance of tourism in our economy "due diligence should be taken when media report about crime on tourists to ensure that such reportages don't have adverse effect on the South African tourism industry as a whole", she said.

Emphasising the significance of the workshop, the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Tourism, Mr Supra Mahumapelo, emphasised the need for joint action. "If the tourism stakeholders don't take a joint action to fight crime, we are not going to succeed."



TOURING AROUND

Nor would we achieve the 20 million tourist mark envisaged by the National Development Plan (NDP), he said. "Our response to tourist crime requires better planning. If not, we won't realise the goals set in the NDP and this will have an adverse effect on our country's economic growth, which will lead to anxiety."

South Africans should pull together and as such "some tourist crimes should not be over-exaggerated by the media. It should report them case by case, as isolated incidents. We can do that only when we pull together."

In his presentation, Dr Guy Lamb, Director of the Safety and Violence Initiative at the University of Cape Town said tourist crime is not only a South African phenomenon. It is "a prevalent occurrence in many tourist's destinations,

such as Thailand, Brazil and Canada. It should not be treated as an exception."

He believes that the long-term strategy to combat tourist crime is to ensure that tourism benefits the communities that live near tourist hotspots. "This could reduce crime in these areas significantly."

The Statistician-General, Mr Resinga Maluleke, gave a broad overview of the significance of this industry to the economy and the need to have a coordinated approach combat tourist crimes.

A South African Tourism delegation travelled to Europe to assure the tourism industry there that despite recent incidents, South Africa remains a favourable destination, with plans in place to deal with crime. This was the view of Mr Blacky Komani, Chairperson of the Tourism Business Council of

South Africa. "If we don't tell our stories, someone will on our behalf. And in the minds of international tourists if Table Mountain and Kruger National Park are not safe, South Africa is not safe."

A safety app is in the offing to mitigate this perception and to ensure that the sector responds to crime on tourists more swiftly, he added: "Very soon when tourists are in distress they will have someone to immediately come to their rescue."

A representative from the South African Police Service (Saps), Lieutenant-General Sharon Jephta, confirmed that there is now a Memorandum of Understanding between the police and the tourism industry to quell crime on tourists. This is to "ensure that there is a joint implementation of an optimised policing and

safety strategy in the tourism environment. And to create a platform for information sharing between Saps and the National Tourism Safety Forum," he said.

This will include "the identification of hotspot areas, data collection, the establishment of Provincial Tourist Safety Committees and a dedicated hotline for tourists."

Mr Rachid Toefy, the Deputy Director-General of Economic Operations, Western Cape Department of Economic Development and Tourism, said the province is now discussing a dedicated tourist police. "If Rio can do it, why not Cape Town? We looking at a budget model to implement this plan."

Part of the province's plan going forward includes "an ecosystem of technological

responses such as drones, social media apps, one telephone line to provide tourists with a basket of safety services linked to armed responses and to neighbourhood watch groupings," Mr Toefy explained.

According to Mr Tim Harris, CEO of Wesgro, the Official Tourism, Trade & Investment Promotion Agency for Cape Town and the Western Cape, Cape Town is in 53th spot in the international safety tourist index, while Chicago is at 49. "There is much to be learnt from Chicago, which also has a gang problem like Cape Town. But ironically Chicago has managed its tourists' perception because it is still a leisure and business destination despite its rating."

If Cape Town were to emerge from its current negative perception, "we need to



D: International tourists on tour around Cape Town in red Hop-On, Hop-Off buses.

explain gang crime in our city as Chicago does. As such, Chicago remains a best practice in managing perception," he said.

The Deputy Director-General in the Department of Tourism, Ms Morongoe Ramphele, said a strategy has been developed to "foster public and private sector partnership in addressing issues of tourism safety in a more coordinated manner in order to provide an enhanced visitor experience."

In addition, the object of the strategy is to "identify effective joint preventative approaches aimed at reducing opportunities for crime on tourist facilities and operations and to facilitate integrated implementation and support of safety programmes," Ms Ramphele said.

This will be supported by a communication protocol that will determine "how the industry is communicating among itself when an incident occurs. And who is monitoring and who is in the WhatsApp group for incident report," she said.

This will be supplemented by "a low- and high-level response protocol, which will include positive communication campaigns that we are open for business," she stated. 🌍



## Committee on tourism calls on all spheres of government to prioritise tourism

*The Portfolio Committee on Tourism visited Howick in KwaZulu-Natal recently where it visited Howick Falls, which are an entrance to the Gorge Walk and the Mpophomeni Cultural Village, as part of its oversight visit ahead of the World Tourism Day celebrations that took place on 27 September in the area, writes Sureshinee Govender.*

Many people around the world celebrate the United Nations' (UN's) World Tourism Day, which is on 27 September each year. The day aims to foster awareness among the international community of the importance of tourism and its social, cultural, political and economic values.

The United Nations' World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) invites people worldwide to participate in World Tourism Day on 27 September every year. The UNWTO Secretary-General annually sends out a message to the general public to mark the occasion. Many tourism enterprises and organisations, as well as government agencies with a special interest in tourism, celebrate the event with various special events

and festivities.

The committee held a meeting with about 60 stakeholders in the tourism industry who came to present their views on how to revive the once bustling Howick Falls.

The challenges experience by some of the stakeholders were first brought to the attention of the committee and were considered by the committee in one of its recent meetings in Parliament. In order to address the challenges and to familiarise itself with some of them, the committee decided to visit the area as part of its oversight programme.

The Chairperson of the committee, Mr Supra Mahumapelo, said that "as tourism role players we must

create opportunities for all the people and remove barriers that hinder the growth and development of the sector". Furthermore, Mr Mahumapelo said: "More importantly, we must create an avenue where cultures meet to understand and accept each other, to ensure inclusive tourism growth that benefits all the local communities. We must pursue the ideal of a non-racist, non-sexist, free and prosperous South Africa where the wealth of the country benefits all the people." According to the committee, tourism has the ability to create jobs and entrepreneurs which will allow previously disadvantaged people to enter into the market. Whilst the focus of the committee is on the development and sustainability

of tourist destinations in villages, townships and small towns, this will come with the transformation of the private sector allowing for new entrants.

The committee called on all role players to ensure optimisation of the development and marketing of the existing rural and township tourism.

"We have found at both destinations we have visited that they have a huge untapped potential to maximise the participation of both domestic and international tourists. However, to unleash this potential, private/public partnerships and improved inter-governmental relations were identified as key drivers to make this a reality,"

said Mr Mahumapelo.

The committee has secured a commitment from the Mayor of Umgeni Municipality, Mr Sizwe Sokhela, to develop an action plan with timelines of implementation to deal with all matters. The municipality will provide monthly progress reports on the development of the Howick Falls precinct and Mpophomeni Cultural Centre and has committed to table quarterly consolidated reports to the committee. The committee will monitor this closely.

The committee called on all spheres of government to work together to prioritise tourism in pursuit of 21 million arrivals by 2030, as outlined in President Cyril Ramaphosa's June 2019 State of the Nation Address. 🌍

# Committee Chair warns financial sector to plan for fourth industrial revolution-related job losses

*The Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Finance, Mr Joe Maswanganyi, has warned the banking sector to guard against massive job losses as a result of the inevitable effects of the fourth industrial revolution (4IR), which could see robotics and digitalisation replacing humans in the workplace, reports Sakhile Mokoena.*

Mr Maswanganyi was speaking after the Standing and Select Committees on Finance completed an induction process, where they were briefed on the responsibilities of the entities reporting to the National Treasury.

“The decision for us to get inducted was taken at the beginning of the term of the sixth parliament, so that when we do oversight we are informed of the task ... The exercise we have been going through has really enhanced our knowledge and understanding of the National Treasury and its entities,” said Mr Maswanganyi.

“While we welcome the 4IR and the developments and opportunities that it brings to our society, we cannot accept a situation where robots will replace people at the workplace. That will be against our efforts of creating jobs and fighting poverty,” he said.

Mr Maswanganyi was reacting to reports about looming retrenchments in the banking sector. Banks have closed a number of their branches throughout the country as a result of digitalisation, which encourages self-service, with clients using their cell phones and computers, rather than walking into a branch.

Mr Maswanganyi also raised a concern about transformation in the financial sector, saying this important issue needed to be debated. “The issue of

transformation is very crucial. The ownership of the banking sector is not a matter that can be swept under the carpet. We will continue to debate the matter. We want to see it represent the demographics of the country. Transformation is not only about having four black members of the board without tempering with ownership.”

Also speaking after the workshop, the Deputy Minister of Finance Dr David Masedo said he believed the objectives of the induction have been achieved.

“We also identified gaps where we need to improve to continue building the country, to make sure the economy grows, create jobs and collect

income taxes,” said the Deputy Minister.

After meeting the South African Revenue Service, the Public Investment Corporation, the Government Employees Pension Fund and the Government Pensions Administration Agency, among others, the committees concluded the induction programme with a visit to the South African Reserve Bank.

As expected, one of the matters that dominated the discussions was the governance and mandate of the South African Reserve Bank (SARB), which has been a subject of public debate following resolutions by the African National Congress (ANC) and the Economic

Freedom Fighters (EFF) to end private shareholding in the bank.

“SARB must be publicly owned and have no private shareholders. There must be a debate on the discontinuation of private shareholding in the SARB,” said committee member Mr Floyd Shivambu (EFF), adding that nationalisation was not a threat to the independence of the bank as that was guaranteed by the law.

Mr Yunus Carrim, the Chairperson of the Select Committee, supported calls for a debate on the ownership of the bank. “Yes, the markets might get jittery, but there is nothing in discussing the matter,

it is already in the public domain.”

The Deputy Minister of Finance said it was true that the ANC and the EFF have a resolution on buying out private shareholders, “... but the question is how do we make sure it doesn’t disrupt the economy”.

Reserve Bank Governor Mr Lesetja Kganyago told the committees that private shareholding at the central bank is an historical legacy. These shareholders do not own the SARB and their rights are limited. “They play no role whatsoever in setting or influencing the key mandates of the SARB, like monetary policy or financial stability policy,” said Mr Kganyago. 🇷🇵





## Waterkloof Air Force Base must be safe for use by the President

*The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Public Works and Infrastructure, Ms Nolitha Ntobongwana, has called on the South African Air Force, the Independent Development Trust (IDT) and the appointed service provider to ensure that sinkholes do not impact negatively on the functionality, effectiveness and safety of the Air Force Base near Pretoria. The Waterkloof Air Force Base (WAFB), a national key point used by President Cyril Ramaphosa and government ministers, must be made safe for usage by political principles, writes **Brent Simons**.*

Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Public Works and Infrastructure, on an oversight visit to the base, was informed that the base has a high-risk classification due to dolomitic soil conditions. To date, several buildings on the 640-hectare base have been demolished as a result of ground movement brought about by water.

The committee was in Gauteng on official oversight visits to various government entities reporting to the Ministry and

Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI).

During a visit to the IDT, the committee was informed that the DPWI had appointed the IDT as the implementing agent for the rehabilitation and maintenance of sinkholes and dolomite at the WAFB. Committee members were informed that the base was safe for use and that it was constantly being monitored for the development of sinkholes.

Visiting the Waterkloof Air

Force Base, Ms Ntobongwana cautioned that: "We can't have a national key point used by the President and Ministers declared as a high risk area because of the development of sinkholes." She called on all stakeholders to "work together to ensure that the base is fully safe for usage by members of the executive".

Committee members welcomed the appointment of a contractor to ensure that the base is made safe. The contractor will report, among

other things, on progress made in relation to:

- Construction and/or replacement of water, sewer and storm water pipes
- Upgrading of dolomite non-compliant internal building wet services
- Water booster pump station and pump sets
- Joint sealing of canals and related valves, manholes and inlet structures
- Rehabilitation of sinkholes; and
- Demolishing of identified buildings abandoned due to

ground movement evident by sinkhole formation on the base.

Clearance of various sinkholes commenced on 23 August 2019. The contract is expected to last for 36 months. Ms Ntobongwana said the committee intends to do a follow-up visit to check on the completion of the process to secure the Waterkloof Air Force Base as a national key point within this five-year term. The committee will be provided with regular progress reports. 🌹

## Committee told of imminent energy crisis if nothing is done to turn things around

*South Africa could soon face an energy crisis, if nothing is done, as a matter of urgency, to turn things around between the Central Energy Fund (CEF) group of companies and one of its subsidiaries, PetroSA. This is the view of the Central Energy Fund group of companies, writes **Justice Molafo**.*

The CEF briefed the Portfolio Committee on Minerals and Energy about the depleting indigenous feedstock by 2020 at PetroSA when the committee was in Gauteng on a week-long oversight programme.

The committee met with the board and management of the CEF at their Sandton-based

offices during its oversight. The purpose of the visit was to gain an understanding of the legislative mandates and challenges faced by entities under the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy.

The CEF's Acting Group Chief Executive Officer, Mr Kholly Zono, briefed the committee about the group's low market

share which impacts negatively on overall turnover. Subsidiaries of the group are PetroSA, Petroleum Agency of South Africa, Energy Projects Division, African Exploration Mining and Finance Corporation, iGas and Strategic Fuel Fund. According to him, a low state investment in capital projects remained a common challenge across all subsidiaries.

Mr Zono further informed members of the committee that each subsidiary of the CEF consists of an independent board, which accounts to the main board of the CEF. The Chairperson of the committee, Mr Sahlulele Luzipo, regards this arrangement as problematic. He said that many boards could slow down decision-making processes, which is not a competitive practice in the world of business. However, he believes that subsidiaries like PetroSA should be empowered by legislation to become a strategic and standalone oil and gas company.

Another issue of great concern to the committee with regard to the presentation of the CEF and its subsidiaries, as well as other entities of the department, is the fact that many senior officials are appointed in an acting capacity. This, according to the committee, is dangerous because there is a limit to the decisions a person can make in an acting capacity.

The committee further observed with concern, during the oversight visit, a number of issues affecting the department's entities, including misalignment of mandates and legislation, lack of transformation in the diamond and precious metal trading space, and major financial shortfalls which could lead to retrenchment of workers at the South African Nuclear Energy Corporation (Necsa). The committee wants to meet

with the department in order to establish how fast it could address these challenges.

Mr Ayanda Myoli, who is the Acting Group Chief Executive Officer of Necsa, briefed members of the committee about a cash shortfall of R463 million in the 2018/19 financial year and projected a further R325 million cash shortfall by the end of the current financial year.

Mr Luzipo said: "Although a turnaround strategy will be finalised by October 2019, in the meantime the committee should be provided with a written plan that will be implemented urgently to prevent imminent job losses."

Mr Cecil Khosa, who is the Chief Executive Officer of the South African Diamond and Precious Metal Regulator, on the other hand, also briefed members of the committee about 881 072 carats of rough diamonds produced in 2017/18 financial year, in which only 284 212 carats were locally benefited.

He further said that the sector is still untransformed, which prompted Mr Luzipo to call for the regulator to capacitate its existing transformation office in order to ensure that the sector reflects the demographics of the country. He said: "Although we applaud the regulator for a clean bill of health with regard to finances, its effort to transform the sector still remains a major concern for us." 🇷🇵

# Committee concerned about slow pace of transformation in the built environment

*The Public Works and Infrastructure Portfolio Committee has expressed concern over the slow pace of transformation within the built environment, writes Brent Simons.*



As part of Parliament's oversight week, the committee met with the Council for the Built Environment (CBE), the Independent Development Trust (IDT), Agrément South Africa, the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) and various other stakeholders who report to the Ministry and Department of Public Works and Infrastructure.

Following a week of meetings with these institutions, Committee Chairperson Ms Nolitha Ntobongwana expressed her concern and disappointment with overall transformation in the built environment industry. Committee members further questioned why the CBE had not seen major progress with registration of candidates and the overall transformation of the industry since reporting during the last financial year.

Acknowledging the lack of transformation, the CBE

informed the committee that it is developing a broad-based social and economic transformation strategy for the entire built environment industry. The CBE is also working closely with industry players to ensure that more graduates are registered as candidates and become recognised and registered professionals.

The CBE management also informed the committee that they will work more strategically with all relevant departments and Public Works and Infrastructure to improve the skills of professionals while transforming the built environment. To this end, they will encourage workplace learning in the built environment that bridges the gap between theory and actual practice and is aimed at students already pursuing studies, and unemployed graduates.

Committee members probed why entities within the same

department were working in silos. They proposed that the CBE works more closely with the CIDB to promote the hire of unemployed graduates by both big and small contractors working on public projects. Entities were also encouraged to make use of government communication outlets to promote and market themselves, and to raise awareness of their roles and functions among South Africans.

Presidents of the various councils in the built environment also raised concerns regarding government policies not facilitating transformation in the industry. They informed committee members that policies within the built environment were anti-transformation. Acknowledging a skills shortage in the industry, committee members were told that government policies do not prohibit engineers from working in the industry



without them being registered with a relevant council.

CBE board members called for these policies to be reviewed in order to facilitate progress in transforming the industry. The Public Works and Infrastructure Department also acknowledged that despite excellent work done, players in the built environment industry also needed to be more progressive about transformation.

Ms Ntobongwana confirmed that the committee will discuss and introduce measures to ensure that entities reporting to Public Works drive the transformation agenda in the industry. The CBE will also be hosting a transformation indaba in October with all industry stakeholders.

The committee also met with the Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure, Ms Patricia de Lille, who informed them that she had delegated the Deputy Minister, Ms Noxolo Kiviet, to deal with all inter-governmental relations matters, including working with the entities, boards of entities, and oversight over them as implementing agencies of the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure.

Minister De Lille also took the opportunity to inform committee members that the review of the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure's White Paper of 1999 will be accelerated, and that her department will soon present the development of a new policy and dispensation for the Expanded Public Works Programme to the committee.

Once back at Parliament, a formal report will be drafted and submitted for discussion and approval by committee members. Once approved, within the next two weeks, it will be submitted for further debate in the National Assembly. 🌟



## National Assembly Speaker calls for MPs to unite and serve citizens at planning session

*The National Assembly Speaker, Ms Thandi Modise, says MPs must unite in the fight against corruption, while improving oversight and ensuring citizens enjoy a better quality of life.*

Addressing a strategic planning session of the National Assembly (NA) held in Parliament recently, Ms Modise, called on MPs to reflect honestly on Parliament's performance and its contribution towards achieving the goals of the National Development Plan. She noted several areas in which Parliament could improve in the sixth term.

One such area is enhanced competency in drafting legislation and using information and communication technologies to enhance Parliament's research capabilities towards better oversight. Another area for improvement is better adoption and implementation of conventions and resolutions of multilateral parliamentary institutions, such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union. She also noted that the capacity and competency of Parliament's administration needed to be improved in the areas of budget oversight, financial

management and the role of institutions supporting democracy. A more equitable budget and allocation of resources is also needed for the NA and the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) to carry out their work.

Members of political parties represented in the NA raised various issues to pursue in the sixth Parliament. These included strengthening Parliament's role so that people are not forced to resort to the courts so often; better coordination between the NA and the NCOP in their engagements with communities; improved tracking of committee findings and resolutions to ensure departmental accountability. They also called for improved consequence management at Parliament through budget amendments and naming and shaming poorly performing executive members when other avenues have been exhausted.

The Acting Secretary to

Parliament, Ms Baby Tyawa, presented a report on various aspects of Parliament's administration, including restructuring, institutional performance and plans for execution during the sixth Parliament. She also reported on Parliament's performance, which improved from 46% in 2015 to 78% in the 2018/19 financial year; improved public awareness of Parliament from 9,75% to 27% over three years; and citizens' awareness about how to participate in parliamentary processes, which has doubled from 7% in 2014 to 15%.

Ms Tyawa also reported that Parliament had achieved five consecutive clean audits during the fifth Parliament. Legislation-making declined from 137 bills in 1998 to 23 in 2018, while oversight is being strengthened to effectively track implementation and impact. Parliamentary diplomacy is also being strengthened, particularly in relation to the development

of free-trade agreements and relationships with regional and other alliances, such as Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (Brics), the Southern African Development Community (Sadc) and the Pan Africa Parliament, with clear targets for the sixth Parliament.

The planning session also discussed challenges that needed to be addressed by the sixth Parliament, including improving public education and participation in Parliament's work; appropriate funding; tracking and acting on petitions; and the information asymmetry between the executive and the legislature and also within various parts of Parliament.

MPs also heard about worsening trends on key NDP indicators, such as poverty which grew to 55%; unemployment at 29%; and inequality, which measures 0.68 on the Gini coefficient. 🌟