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Minister Tito Mboweni delivers adjusted budget.

Covid-19 healthcare receives bigger slice

“The government’s Covid-19 economic support package directs R500 billion straight at the problem. This is one of the largest economic response packages in the developing world.”

Outlining the updated fiscal and economic forecasts for the current fiscal year, Mr Tito Mboweni said Covid-19 has turned the global economy upside down. He said: “In the February Budget, we expected that the global economy will expand by 3.3% in 2020. We now expect a global contraction of 5.2% this year. This will bring about the broadest collapse in per capita incomes since 1870.”

Mava Lukani reports.

Throughout the world, tens of

millions of workers have lost their jobs, and here in South Africa, said Mr Mboweni, unemployment increased by one percentage point, reaching 30.1% in the first three months of this year. The South African economy is now expected to contract by 7.2% in 2020, the largest contraction in nearly 90 years. “Inflation will likely register 3% in 2020, in line with the outcome of this morning. Commodity price increases and a weaker oil price have softened the blow, but as a small open

economy reliant on exports, we have been hit hard by both the collapse in global demand and the restrictions to economic activity.”

“Mr Mboweni told members of the National Assembly that South Africa has responded to this economic shock with an

unprecedented set of measures. Never before, he said, has the government worked together so closely with the private sector, organised labour, community and the central bank.

“Standing as a united people, it

is clear we can achieve anything. The government’s Covid-19 economic support package directs R500 billion straight at the problem. This is one of the largest economic response packages in the developing world.” The South African Reserve Bank (Sarb) has reduced interest rates and made it easier for banks to lend money. Furthermore, the bank has supported liquidity in the domestic bond market and stands ready to take additional action, should the need arise. “More than two

million customers have received around R30 billion in relief from their commercial banks. Insurers and medical aid schemes have provided premium holidays. Landlords have provided rental relief, all in 100 days. This is indeed a remarkable achievement," he added.

Turning to the emerging fiscal framework for 2021/22, Mr Mboweni said projected total consolidated budget spending, including debt service costs, will exceed R2 trillion for the first

time ever. "Gross tax revenue collected during the first two months of 2020/21 was R142 billion, compared to our initial forecast for the same period of R177.3 billion. Put another way, we are already R35.3 billion behind on our 2020/21 target."

As a consequence, gross tax revenue for the 2020/21 fiscal year is revised down from R1.43 trillion to R1.12 trillion. "That means that we expect to miss our tax target for this year by more than R300 billion. Part

of this revision is because the measures announced earlier this year give taxpayers outright relief of R26 billion and delays in tax collection of approximately R44 billion.

These proposals are contained in the Disaster Management Tax Relief Bill and the Disaster Management Tax Relief Administration Bill tabled before the hybrid plenary sitting today. Taken together, the measures and adjustments Mr Mboweni presented translate into a

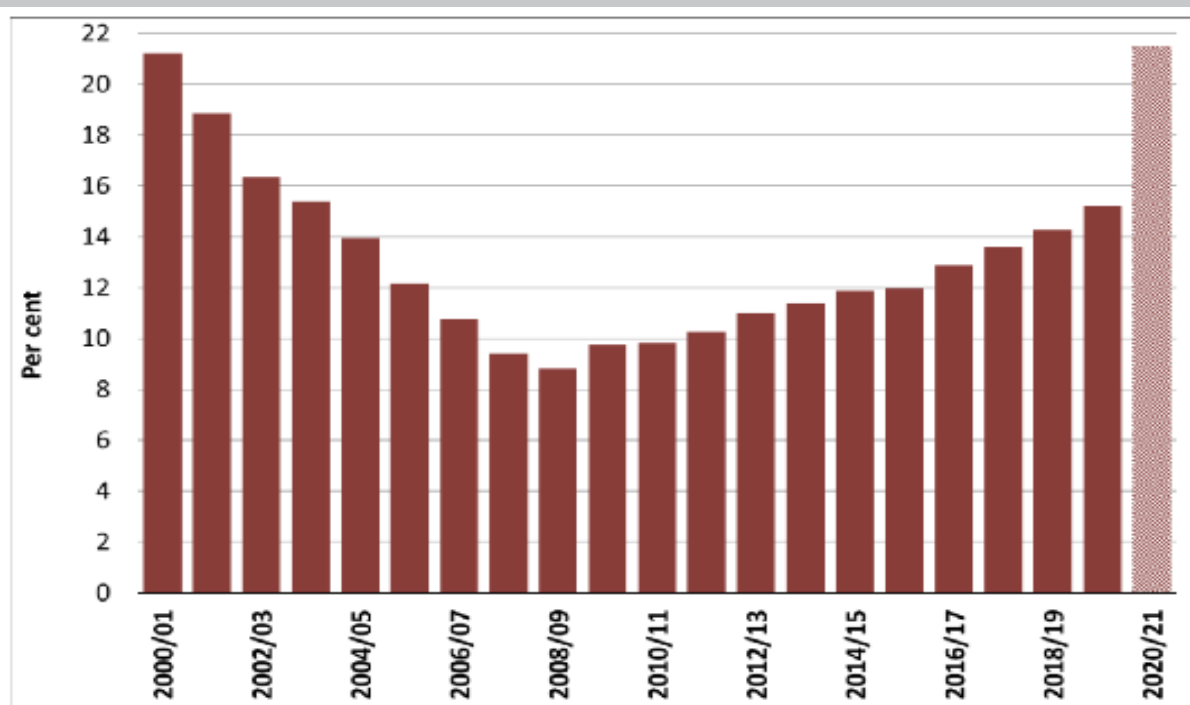
consolidated budget deficit of R761.7 billion, or 15.7% of the gross domestic product (GDP) in the 2020/21 financial year.

National Treasury's early projection is that the gross national debt will be close to R4 trillion, or 81.8% of the GDP by the end of this fiscal year. "This is compared to an estimate of R3.56 trillion or 65.6% of the GDP projected in February. Without external support, these borrowings will almost entirely consume all of

our annual domestic savings, leaving no scope for investment or borrowing by anyone else." Given that situation, the government needs to access new sources of funding and intends to borrow money from international financial institutions to support its response to the pandemic. "We must make no mistake; these are still borrowings. They are not a source of revenue, they must be paid back," he emphasised. 🇷🇷

Reducing SA's Debt will unleash investment and growth, says Mboweni

"We have accumulated far too much debt. This downturn will add more. This year, out of every rand that we pay in tax, 21 cents goes to paying the interest on our past debts." This indebtedness condemns South Africa to ever higher interest rates.



Debt-service costs as a proportion of main budget revenue: Source - National Treasury.

When the Minister of Finance, Mr Tito Mboweni, delivered the supplementary budget before the hybrid sitting of the National Assembly (NA) recently, he said the Public Finance Management Act, together with the Money Bills Amendment Procedure and Related Matters Act, empowers him as the Minister of Finance, to table an adjustment budget when necessary, **writes Mava Lukani.**

"The historic nature of this pandemic and economic downturn has made it necessary to table such an adjustment. We will table a second adjustment budget in October together with the Medium-Term Budget Policy Statement." The supplementary budget does two things. Firstly, it brings an Adjustments Appropriation Bill and a Division of Revenue Amendment Bill to the House. Secondly, it formalises the two tax Bills to give

effect to the government's response. The Bills ask Parliament to approve the response package for Covid-19, not merely return the economy to where it was before the coronavirus, but to forge a new economy in a new global reality. "This supplementary budget sets out a roadmap to stabilise debt, by improving our spending patterns, and creating a foundation for economic revival," Mr Mboweni told the House.

Most of the government's energies and resources have been focused on the Covid - 19 pandemic. "We have quickly adopted temporary counter-cyclical fiscal and monetary policy measures." However, after the storm of Covid-19, "we must work just as quickly to emerge with a sustainable fiscus".

South Africa has many strengths, including, Mr Mboweni pointed out, its young and ambitious people, strong institutions, a robust and vibrant democracy, an independent judiciary and our commitment to social justice progress. Our economic strengths include a diverse industrial base, a flexible exchange rate, stable inflation, and deep domestic capital markets that allow us to borrow mainly in rands.

However, debt is our weakness. "We have accumulated far too much debt. This downturn will add more. This year, out of every rand that we pay in tax, 21 cents goes to paying the interest on our past debts." This indebtedness condemns South Africa to ever higher interest rates.

"If we reduce debt, we will reduce interest rates for everyone and we will unleash investment and growth."

He told NA MPs that he tabled the supplementary budget with an eye on the future: "We set out a strategy to build a bridge to recovery. Our herculean task is to close the mouth of the hippopotamus. It is eating our children's inheritance. We need to stop it now. Our herculean task is to stabilise debt." 🇷🇷

Presiding Officers call for action against gender-based violence

“The Presiding Officers extended their heartfelt condolences to the Pule and Phangindawo families, and all those victims of femicide whose names may never be known publicly.”



The Presiding Officers of Parliament, led by National Assembly Speaker Ms Thandi Modise, and National Council of Provinces Chairperson Mr Amos Masondo, joined the mounting public outrage over the increase in gender-based violence and femicide.

Bold and resolute action, rather than outrage, however, is what our nation needs to change this shocking state of affairs in our country. We know it has festered for too long, shielded by the veil of silence and fuelled by patriarchy and sexism. We know that ending it needs an effort from all sections of society, particularly men as perpetrators – in the areas where we live, the places where we work, and from all private and state institutions, including our criminal justice systems.

The wheels of justice must turn and be seen to turn swiftly to bring the alleged perpetrators to book, and instituting proper punishment to discourage the occurrence of similar offences. But even more importantly, is ensuring an environment where these heinous crimes against women do not take place in the first place.

The brutal and senseless killing of Ms Tshegofatso Pule, a 28-year-old woman whose body was found hanging from a tree with multiple stab wounds, and Ms Naledi Phangindawo, a 26-year-old woman stabbed to death, and many others whose names are not known, underscores the urgency in which perpetrators must receive a fitting sentence that will demonstrate that such heinous crimes have no place in our society.

We welcome the commitment that members of the executive, deployed across the country as part of the national effort to combat Covid-19, will also engage communities about the increase in gender-based violence.

Parliament will continue to intensify its oversight to ensure that all interventions against the scourge are realised. These include the implementation of the decisions of the Presidential Summit on Gender-Based Violence; to overhaul and modernise the national register of gender-based violence offenders; to resolve challenges in addressing the backlog of cases and delays in DNA testing; as well as to ensure the availability of rape test kits in police stations.

As with the global cooperation to combat the Covid-19 pandemic, so, too, let us work together as humanity to fight gender-based violence and femicide still stalking our nation. Together, we can build that better world to which so many aspire, for which so many have struggled and died.

The Presiding Officers extended their heartfelt condolences to the Pule and Phangindawo families, and all those victims of femicide whose names may never be known publicly. 🇷🇺



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National Assembly considers two landmark Bills

“The NGOs are yet to receive the R50 million set aside by government to fight gender-based violence, contested Ms Liezl van der Merwe for the Inkatha Freedom Party.”



Two landmark Bills meant to give women an unfettered legal recourse to justice and bring about gender equality came before the National Assembly in a recent hybrid plenary sitting. The Bills are the Criminal Procedure Amendment Bill and the Customary Marriages Amendment Bill. Both were brought back to Parliament for amendments after they were deemed unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court, **writes Abel Mputing.**

The Criminal Procedure Amendment Bill seeks to do away with the 20-year prescription of the prosecution of sexual offences other than rape, while the Customary Marriages Amendment Bill seeks to afford property rights to women in customary marriages.

Introducing the Criminal Procedure Amendment Bill for the African National Congress, Adv Hisamodien Mohamed said the Committee on Justice and Correctional Services has amended section 7.1 of the Act, which prescribed the tenure of prosecution to 20 years, because it did not comply with the Bill of Rights as prescribed by the Constitution. This would now

ensure that there is no time limit for prosecution for all sexual offences.

“This section was harmful to the victims of sexual offences because the effects of sexual violence have deep-seated physiological and psychological trauma not bound by time. In some instances, these effects affect the victims for the rest of their lives,” said Mr Werner Horn, representing the Democratic Alliance. The only solution to gender-based violence, he believes, is the institution of “stricter laws and tougher sentences”.

He further decried the absence of the Steering Committee on Gender-Based Violence as promised by the President, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa. He urged that it must be set up immediately to provide relief to victims of this scourge.

The need to deal with the material manifestation of this scourge is long overdue, said Mr Mbuyiseni Ndlozi, representing the Economic Freedom Fighters. He asked: “But what good will such laws serve if a grown-up man who goes to a police station today to report a case of rape that happened when he was

still a boy, is laughed at and ridiculed by the police?

“What good would such laws serve if young boys are still raped in prison under the stewardship of the state? What is the state doing to investigate such acts, hold those responsible accountable and ensure they are prosecuted? The state should be held accountable for all these sexual offences atrocities,” he recommended.

The NGOs are yet to receive

the R50 million set aside by government to fight gender-based violence, contested Ms Liezl van der Merwe, representing the Inkatha Freedom Party. “The government needs to invest more to curb this scourge than it spends for the upkeep of sexual offenders. “The government spends R350 a day for the upkeep of sexual offenders, and R50 for the victims of gender-based violence, women and children. That is unacceptable. The government needs to move

away from rhetoric and fortify its fight against gender-based violence.”

The gender-based violence epidemic is reflective of the inadequacies of our justice system, that needs to be proactive than reactive, to safeguard the rights and dignity of women and children, Mr Frederik Mulder of the Freedom Front Plus, pointed out.

The rationale in supporting this Bill is that it seeks to



remedy the psychological effects gender-based violence has on victims of sexual abuse. Before this amendment, many would have kept their ordeal a secret, and would have led their lives in shame without any recourse to justice," claimed Mr Steven Swart, representing the African Christian Democratic Party.

The only lasting recourse to this scourge is not the promulgation of laws, but the determination to get to the root causes of these abuses, argued Mr Ahmed Shaik-Emam, representing the National Freedom Party. "As long as we are beset with grave socio-economic challenges, the victims of sexual offences will always be at the mercy of offenders."

This amendment must not be seen as a thunder without lightning, commented Mr Ganief Hendricks of Al Jama-ah. "Justice to victims of sexual offences will only be realised only when these Bills bring lightning to the offenders."

The struggle for gender equality continues, that is the view of Ms Susan Newhoudt,

also representing the African National Congress. "The amendment of this Bill is a realisation that we live in a dangerous society in which women are still objectified. Before this amendment, many women were excluded from exercising their recourse to justice. Now, women will not die quietly, having no recourse to disclose injustices perpetrated on them," she

claimed.

The Bills will now be sent to the National Council of Provinces for concurrence. 🇷🇸

Women's Charter - government must fast-track interventions to empower women

"Consultations have taken place in the ZF Mgcawu, Frances Baard, John Taolo Gaetsewe and Pixley ka Seme districts. In the Pixley ka Seme District, Ms Lucas said: "We all know that women and children in this region have suffered the most with the closing of the rail manufacturing yard, which led to high prevalence of the foetal alcohol syndrome because of joblessness and poverty:"



Women in the Northern Cape Province's Pixley ka Seme District who participated in the review of the Women's Charter have called for help for rural women, as they often bear the brunt of the worst inequalities and suffering due to poverty and underdevelopment in their areas, **writes Sakhile Mokoena.**

The Deputy Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces, Ms Sylvia Lucas is the chairperson for the consultations in the provinces. She said the consultations were an opportunity for the public to directly engage with public representatives, as well as government agencies in order to find lasting solutions for qualitative

gender transformation and to translate the Charter from theory into reality.

Consultations have taken place in the ZF Mgcawu, Frances Baard, John Taolo Gaetsewe and Pixley ka Seme districts. In the Pixley ka Seme District, Ms Lucas said: "We all know that women and children in this region have suffered the most with the closing of the rail manufacturing yard, which led to high prevalence of the foetal alcohol syndrome because of joblessness and poverty. So, use this opportunity to arm us, as your representatives, with strategies, information and tactics to make the charter a reality." She also reminded the participants that Parliament's

constitutional mandate requires that it provides meaningful opportunities for the involvement of the public in its legislative and other processes.

Ms Luca said beyond the euphoria of 1994, when the Women's Charter for Effective Equality was adopted, concerns have mounted at the widening gap between the country's lofty constitutional commitments and policy affirmations around gender equality. "Women continue to bear the brunt of inequality, trapped by poverty, economic exclusion, violence and femicide. The disjuncture between public endorsement of gender equality and actual institutional practice is, however, particularly

poignant in South Africa, in part, because many of the indicators of policy failure are so stark.

"Hence, as a people-centred Parliament, we took a resolution at the 2019 Women's Parliament to embark on a 25-Year review of the entire women's rights regime in order to take stock of the progress made since the adoption of the 1994 Women's Charter for Effective Equality. Through this exercise, we will also assess the systematic weaknesses that continue to impede the realisation of gender equality in South Africa."

One of the participants, Ms Asanda Ngonyama, suggested that the government must fast-track interventions to empower women in entrepreneurship, as they have been "traditionally excluded from economic activities". She also said there is an urgent need to develop rural areas and provide basic services, such as the provision of water and proper sanitation facilities.

"In our rural areas if there is no water in the house, it is mainly the woman who has to make sure that there

is water in the house. These services must be provided by the state to rescue our women from the distress that comes with travelling long distances to fetch water," Ms Ngonyama argued. Other suggestions included the call for the free provision of sanitary products, the establishment of more support centres for victims of abuse, as well as training in entrepreneurship to empower women to start their own businesses.

"We are still far behind in realising the objectives of the charter. As we review the charter, we must make sure it provides an opportunity to uplift women in rural areas, as they often face the worst inequalities," said Ms Jane Mafilika.

The summit also heard that gender inequality was one of the key drivers of the debate for the skewed access to health care between men and women, and that equality in other sectors, as experienced by women, does not always arise naturally. 🇷🇸

Policy gaps lead to lack of gender budgeting and mainstreaming in Northern Cape

“Ms Ansuyah Maharaj from the FFC said the commission has also found poor translation of the National Agenda on Women Empowerment and Gender Equity into local programmes. The FFC also noted that personnel in management have limited knowledge of gender mainstreaming, and that gender equality indicators and the collection of gender disaggregated information is limited.”



A virtual summit on the review of the Women’s Charter in the Northern Cape Province has heard that the absence of approved gender policies and municipal gender mainstreaming strategies in Northern Cape municipalities is part of the reason for the lack of gender budgeting and gender mainstreaming in the province. This works against the charter’s objectives to empower women, **writes Sakhile Mokoena.**

The Deputy Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces (NCOP), Ms Sylvia Lucas, is leading the consultation process, which aims to collect data in all the country’s districts on the status of women, and efficiency of laws and policies aimed at uplifting women.

In this session, the consultation focused on the Frances Baard and John Taolo Gaetsewe districts in the Northern Cape. Participants and contributors included the Financial and Fiscal Commission (FFC) Auditor-General (AG) and the

Statistician-General, as well as civil society organisations.

The meeting, which took place at the beginning of June, heard that despite government’s commitment to gender equality through various policies and legislative measures, including anti-discrimination legislation and employment equity policies, unacceptable gender inequalities still persist.

Ms Ansuyah Maharaj from the FFC said the commission has also found poor translation of the National Agenda on Women Empowerment and Gender Equity into local programmes. The FFC also noted that personnel in management have limited knowledge of gender mainstreaming, and that gender equality indicators and the collection of gender disaggregated information is limited. “National and provincial government should run gender budgeting pilots in a few municipalities first, and evaluate results before wider application. These pilots could be linked to ensuring gender

disaggregated data for key conditional grants as part of the grant framework in the Division of Revenue Act,” Ms Maharaj recommended.

The Chairperson of the Commission of Gender Equality, Ms Tamara Mathebula, called for the evaluation of the draft Gender Policy Framework for Local Government against national, provincial and international instruments, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the National Development Plan’s Vision 2030.

Statistician-General Mr Risenga Maluleke said that while the Northern Cape has “generally done well in flattening the curve of poverty and inequality”, households headed by women were poorer than those headed by men. In addition, women in the province were more susceptible to abuse than in all other provinces. “We need to address the issue of education. There is evidence that education plays a huge role in getting people out of

poverty,” Mr Maluleke said.

The Deputy AG, Ms Tsakani Maluleke, added:

“There were major financial concerns throughout the province, including uncollectable debts in municipalities and non-compliance.”

She further warned that “as long as we continue tolerating non-compliance, the laws and policies will remain unimplemented”.

The NCOP Deputy Chairperson Ms Lucas echoed the concern that although great strides have been made since the advent of democracy in South Africa, gender discrimination still occurs in the workplace, and that while there are notable exceptions, women are as yet poorly represented in top managerial and executive posts countrywide.

“Reflecting on these deep challenges, the 25-Year Milestone of the Women’s Charter for Effective Equality provides both scope and context for the review and analysis of the entire women’s rights regime. This review process is intended to activate strategic discussions in the sixth dispensation, particularly around matters of policy, legislation and structural arrangements that still prove to be ineffective in advancing women’s rights in South Africa,” Ms Lucas said.

“Today,” she added, “we are here to assess and to review how far we have come in advancing the implementation of Article 2 of the Charter, as well as various other challenges women are facing in the two districts. We are here because we want to give a voice to women across the length and breadth of South Africa.” 🇿🇦

President Ramaphosa: putting township and rural enterprises at the centre of economic growth in a post Covid-19 era



“The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa states that the President and the Deputy President must appear before the Houses of Parliament to answer oral and written questions from Members of Parliament,” writes Sakhile Mokoena.

Ms Lusizo Makhubela-Mashele (African National Congress, ANC) asked the President:

In light of the fact that the South African economy and the economies of other African countries have been severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, (a) what measures has the government put in place to accelerate the recovery of the South African economy, and (b) how is the President coordinating the economic recovery in Africa as the Chair of the African Union?

President’s response: The global coronavirus pandemic is both a national crisis and an economic crisis, as we have acted to protect the health and the lives of all our people.

We have also had to limit the severe economic impact. Our economic response can be divided into three phases. The first phase began in mid-March, when we declared the coronavirus pandemic as a national disaster. What we did included a broad range of measures to mitigate the worst effects of the pandemic on businesses, on communities and individuals.

The measures included tax relief, the release of disaster relief funds, emergency procurement processes, wage support through the Unemployment Insurance Fund and funding to small businesses.

Towards the end of April, we realised that this pandemic was having a much deeper negative effect. This led us to embark on the second phase of our economic response, which was both economic as well as social, and this included a R500 billion support package to stabilise the economy and protect jobs. But it was also meant to support our people, who through their various economic activities were no longer earning an income, and this had to do with people in informal businesses but also included people who were getting social grants but the social grants had become insufficient. It also included unemployed people in our country. And to that



Ms Lusizo Makhubela-Mashele (ANC)

end, the measures that we implemented came up with temporary payments to social grant beneficiaries, a special Covid-19 grant of R350 a month for six months to the unemployed, and a loan guarantee scheme of R200 billion to support small and medium-sized enterprises.

It is worth noting that the R500 billion support package is worth around 10

economic landscape as being equivalent to a post-war economic landscape. So we have to do the extraordinary, and we will do this by embarking on a number of initiatives that will be aimed at creating jobs, and some of those will be expanding public employment, increasing investment in public infrastructure and services, and enabling greater job creation by the private sector.

This pandemic has highlighted the vital importance of the informal sector and of small businesses in meeting the basic needs of our people. This informal sector, which other people describe as the second economy, in many ways has come to the fore in supporting the lives and livelihoods of our people during the lockdown. And we now have a much better view of the landscape of the small and medium-

Chairperson of the African Union (AU), I have held several engagements with the leaders and institutions in the international community, to call for a comprehensive economic package to provide economic relief to African economies.

This package would need to include debt cancellation, "debt standstill" as well as interest waivers, which will

Control and Prevention.

It will take a long time to recover from the economic loss due to this virus, and although we do not know yet what the full impact of the pandemic is, we are starting that recovery now. It is important that we approach this recovery through the balanced strategy that we have decided on, to save lives on the one hand, and also to



Mr John Steenhuisen (DA)

and 11% of gross domestic product, which is larger than equivalent support measures announced by other emerging markets, and those countries that are in the G20. (The G20 is an international forum for the governments and central bank governors from 19 countries and the European Union.)

The third phase is a comprehensive economic strategy that will be aimed at driving the recovery of our economy as we emerge from the pandemic.

Given the massive impact that coronavirus is expected to have on jobs, our immediate task is to create employment. I've often said that we need to look at the post-Covid-19

Progress is being made within government to increase investment infrastructure with several major projects that are ready for implementation. The Presidency will be convening the Sustainable Infrastructure Development Symposium, which will bring together funders, policy makers, state-owned enterprises, academics and private sector people to look at the investment opportunities in infrastructure. We should be seeing infrastructure investment as a mobiliser of growth, and we want to source money, that is, significant investments from a number of sources, both private and public. And we see this as a significant part of the stimulus that our economy needs.

sized enterprise sector, and the more informal part of it.

Our programme of economic recovery needs to provide greater support to these enterprises, which provide income and employment for many young people, and at the same time we will implement key reforms that support long-term growth, these include measures to support the building of energy capacity reforms to improve our ports capacity, as well as efficiency and the licensing of high demand spectrum. We will also focus on measures to protect African economies and ensure that they also recover from the effects of the pandemic.

In my capacity as the

provide poorer countries the much-needed fiscal space to deal with the economic ramifications of the virus. (A debt standstill is an agreement between the creditor and the debtor for a temporary pause on debt repayments.)

We have also appointed six AU envoys to solicit financial support for the continent from a number of financial support centres, G20 countries, international organisations and many others. They've also made significant progress in mobilising material support for African countries to respond to the pandemic. To date, a total of US\$61 million (R1.079 billion) has been pledged for both the AU Covid-19 response and the AU Centre for Disease

preserve livelihoods on the other hand. It becomes a very delicate balance, but it is a balance that has to be struck, because in the end, we cannot overemphasise one at the expense of the other.

The Leader of the Opposition (Democratic Alliance), Mr John Steenhuisen, asked the President:

What are the relevant details of the scientific risk assessment that the government's National Coronavirus Command Council (NCCC) allegedly relied on for the modelling used to predict the number of deaths and the projected number of deaths, which led to the announcement of the hard lockdown on 23 March? He

also asked how scientific evidence since March, in respect of the modelling with regard to any changes in the projected number of deaths, has influenced the decisions of the NCCC pertaining to the institution of the national hard lockdown?

President's reply:
In determining the appropriate response to the global coronavirus pandemic, the government has formed, on the basis of the advice of scientists, by observing the experiences of other countries, and from the guidance of the World Health Organisation (WHO), as well as from the Africa Centre for Disease Control and Prevention.

The decision to institute a nationwide lockdown was informed by, among other things, epidemiological analysis based on the available evidence of the rate at which the number of coronavirus cases were increasing.

This provided modelled estimates of more than one million infections at peak. Recently, the country's Covid-19 modelling consortium has generated optimistic, as well as pessimistic estimates of between 3.4 million, and 3.7 million cases, respectively, of infections by the 1st of November this year.

The initial estimates pointed to the need to act quickly and decisively before the epidemic curve reached what scientists call the "inflection point". The

"inflection point" is when the curve changes from a slow and steady increase in cases, to one with an exponential growth, almost an explosive growth. South Africa had an opportunity to act early before its inflection point has been reached. We made the decision to implement a lockdown when there were 274 confirmed cases in the country. At that point scientists estimated that South Africa already had more than 1 000 cases, many of which had not been identified yet due to limited screening and stringent testing criteria.

By the time I announced the lockdown on Monday, 23 March, the number of confirmed cases had risen to 402, and by the time the lockdown took effect, on Friday 27 March, there were already 1 170 cases, in other words, we had seen an explosion.

A prolonged delay in implementing stringent measures would have meant that South Africa would have missed the wind of opportunity to achieve a significant flattening of the curve, this could have led to a runaway epidemic with potentially catastrophic consequences for our healthcare services. In the three weeks before the nationwide lockdown, the number of coronavirus cases were doubling every two days. During the course of the level 5 lockdown, cases were on average doubling only every 15 days.

Since we began the easing of the lockdown, during alert levels 4 and 3, the doubling time has been around 12 days. In other words, the lockdown enabled the country to start to flatten the curve, delaying community transmission for long enough to prepare our health facilities, and implement public health responses.

Mr Julius Malema (Economic Freedom Fighters) asked the President:

(1) Whether his decision to ease the lockdown from alert level 5 to level 4 and level 3 within a short space of time was informed by scientific evidence. If so, how did the President find the specified scientific evidence presented to him different from the scientifically-based recommendation by the World Health Organisation, which advised that numbers of infections must be visibly declining before a lockdown could be eased.

If not, (2) whether he had been lobbied by any persons to ease the lockdown for businesses to resume operations, despite the lack of preparedness by employers of their workplaces, and the public health care services. If so, what are the names of the people who lobbied him, and on whose account he will have to take personal responsibility for the hundreds who will die of Covid-19 due to the premature opening of the economy?

President's reply: As I indicated in the earlier reply, our response to the coronavirus pandemic has been informed by the advice of our scientists, the experiences of other countries, and the guidance from bodies like the WHO, and the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. Much of the scientific input we have received has come from the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Covid-19, which was established by the Minister of Health.

Through the course of the pandemic, the Ministerial Advisory Committee, which brings together scientists, clinicians and researchers from a range of relevant disciplines, has assisted the government in various areas of the response. The committee helped develop the country's eight-phase strategy, in which a strict lockdown was just one phase, with specific objectives and a finite time frame.

In deciding on when to begin the gradual and systematic

easing of the lockdown, the government was guided by the views of the scientists, the experiences of other countries, and wide-ranging consultations. It also took into account the economic and social disruption caused by the lockdown, and the devastating impact it was having on people's incomes and livelihoods. In providing guidance, the Ministerial Advisory Committee used the level of community transmission as the basis for determining the state of the pandemic in the country.

At that time, the proportion of coronavirus tests that were positive had been consistently low for a long time, and had remained in a narrow range of 1.5% to 3.5% for several weeks in all parts of the country, except in the Western Cape. In arriving at this decision, due consideration was given to the criteria suggested by the WHO for countries to transition from lockdown to the re-opening of normal social activities. These criteria are:

are minimised in vulnerable places, such as nursing homes.

Fourthly, that schools, workplaces and other essential places have established preventive measures. Fifthly, that the risk of importing new cases "can be managed".

Lastly, that communities are fully educated, engaged and empowered to live under a new normal.

In an advisory to the Minister, the Ministerial Advisory Committee noted that some of the World Health Organisation's criteria might not be appropriate for South Africa. Unlike several other countries, South Africa deliberately implemented a lockdown early in the progression of the disease as a strategy to delay transmission.

We did this knowing that we would not be able to bring transmission under control by the time we had to ease the lockdown, but that it would give us the time we needed to strengthen our health system



Mr Julius Malema (EFF)

Firstly, that disease transmission is under control.

Secondly, that health systems are able to "detect, test, isolate and treat every case and trace every contact".

Thirdly, that hotspot risks

and put a comprehensive public health response in place. The WHO has supported South Africa in this approach.

In considering the transition from alert level 5 to alert level 4 and subsequently

to alert level 3, I engaged with numerous stakeholders, including business, labour, community representatives, political party leaders, premiers, mayors, traditional leaders, and the religious sector, among others, as part of the government's consultation process.

will constitute 90% of all new jobs by 2030?

President's response: Just before the coronavirus outbreak in South Africa, Cabinet had approved the Township and Rural Entrepreneurship Programme. This programme is aimed at

areas into the mainstream economy.

As part of our package of responses to the pandemic, we have been providing financial and non-financial assistance to the informal sector to cushion workers from the economic effects

opportunities.

The Department of Small Business Development has introduced programmes targeted at specific sub-sectors of the informal economy. To cite some examples, over the medium-term these programmes aim to support

Mr Narend Singh (Inkatha Freedom Party) asked the President:

Whether, with reference to the President's reply to oral question 2 on 7 March 2019, in which he welcomed as refreshing the idea of establishing an independent



Mr Narend Singh (IFP)

As the National Coronavirus Command Council, we remain committed to consult widely with diverse stakeholders in taking decisions that will both protect the lives of our people, and support their livelihoods.

Mr Faiez Jacobs (ANC) asked the President:

In light of the United Nations' survey that had found that approximately three million workers who work in the informal sector will require assistance to compensate for loss of income due to the impact of Covid-19, and given the efforts of the government, what will be the President's policy directives to the Department of Small Business Development and small, medium and micro-enterprises (SMMEs) that will strike a balance between saving lives and livelihoods in achieving the National Development Plan's target of creating 9.9million new jobs, which

putting township and rural enterprises at the centre of economic growth.

According to research commissioned by **the Department of Small Business Development, the informal sector has a central role to play in the South African economy as it accounts for 18% of total employment, and contributes towards the livelihoods of millions of people.**

The pandemic has assisted the implementation of this critical intervention, which seeks to bring marginalised people and

of Covid-19. We have also taken measures to support households that rely on income from informal businesses by topping up social grants over a six-month period, and by introducing a special Covid-19 grant of R350 a month over six months for unemployed people.

Financial assistance to informal businesses has taken the form of grants, loans and credit facilities that owners of informal businesses can access to sustain their livelihoods. The non-financial interventions include business development support services that help informal businesses to improve their business management capabilities. This will assist informal businesses, should they wish, to make the transition to SMME businesses in the formal sector. This would make it easier for them to benefit from government incentives, SMME programmes and procurement

about 100 000 spaza shops and general dealers, 50 000 artisans' businesses, 15 000 hairdressers, beauticians and other personal care businesses, 50 000 vegetable street vendors and butcheries, and 10 000 informal restaurants.

Other programmes include the Small-Scale Automotive Aftermarket Support Scheme to support 5 000 informal businesses over a period of 12 months, and the Bakeries and Confectioneries Support Programme, targeting 3 500 businesses over 12 months. Some of these programmes have already been implemented and are gaining traction.

Through these programmes, which prioritise black-owned, youth-owned and female-owned SMMEs, thousands of jobs have been saved and a significant number of SMMEs have been kept in business.

Chapter 9 institution, which will explicitly deal with the prevention, combating, investigation and prosecution of grand corruption, and given the challenging and uncertain times the Republic is under, the billions of rands allocated for government spending in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and the opportunities for corruption this creates for criminal elements in the public service, has the President found that it is now more important than ever to establish such a Chapter 9 institution? If not, what is the President's position in this regard? If so, what are the further relevant details?

President's response: There are sufficient law enforcement agencies to deal with incidents of corruption. These include institutions like the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation

in the South African Police Service and the Special Investigating Unit.

The Office of the Auditor-General and the Financial Intelligence Centre also play important roles in detecting instances of corruption.

The Auditor-General will be taking additional measures, including proactive auditing, to ensure the proper use of Covid-19 funding.

We have also established the NPA's Investigating Directorate to focus on corruption cases arising from the Zondo Commission of Inquiry into State Capture and other commissions. We also have a progressive legislative framework for addressing the escalating number of investigations, prosecution and trials of serious forms of corruption. These include the Prevention of Organised Crime Act and the Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act.

I am advised that the Justice, Crime Prevention and Security Cluster is undertaking work to revamp the criminal justice system, which will include the strengthening of the governance arrangements, intelligence-driven and prosecution-led investigations and mechanisms for the recovery of ill-gotten proceeds.

We therefore take the view that the establishment of a new independent Chapter 9 institution to focus on grand corruption is not necessary at this stage. However, we should continue to consider all available options to ensure that we eradicate corruption across society.

Dr Pieter Groenewald (Freedom Front Plus) asked the President:
With reference to the

President meeting with the SA National Editors' Forum on 31 May 2020, during which he stated that the Covid-19 pandemic offers the Republic a golden opportunity to restructure the economy, how does he intend to (a) restructure the economy in order to be more inclusive, and open up the economy to alleviate poverty, and (b) expedite the land reform process for a more productive economy without weakening the fiscal position of the Republic?

President's response: Even before the coronavirus pandemic, South Africa's economy has been experiencing low growth over a number of years. Despite significant progress since the advent of democracy, our country remains characterised by high levels of poverty, inequality and unemployment. The pandemic has exposed some of the structural fault lines in our economy, including the vulnerability of small businesses and those in the informal economy.

Therefore, as we repair the damage caused by the pandemic, we will be implementing measures to address the key structural constraints in the economy. These include the mismatch between skills produced and the new skills required in a 21st century economy, and the spatial patterns of development that keep millions of workers far away from workplaces.

We will also need to address the reality of a poorly developed small and medium business sector within an economy that has large concentration of market share and ownership in too few hands. We will need to provide access to capital for many young entrepreneurs, women-owned enterprises and black industrialists.

As we rebuild the economy after coronavirus, we will speed up structural reforms that can unleash enterprise and capitalise on the



Mr Faiez Jacobs (ANC)

digital economy and the larger markets that are possible through the African Continental Free Trade Area.

Already, steps have been taken in a number of areas to address these challenges. These include the industry masterplans that have been developed in sectors such as automobile manufacturing, clothing and textiles, poultry production and the sugar industry. They include the reforms in energy policy and the decision to release spectrum in the market; and the competition market inquiries that are beginning to have an impact on data prices, access to trading

spaces and health care provision.

If we are to achieve an inclusive economy, we need to deal with the historical injustices in relation to land ownership, access and use.

Expediting land reform for a more productive economy without weakening our fiscal position will require, among other things, a social compact between the state and private landowners on how to release more land.


The initiative by Anglo American to donate land to the state is an indication of what is possible if we share a common vision as a country.

Another example is the Partners in Agri Land Solutions (Pals) initiative in the Witzenberg valley, where commercial farmers have been working with local communities and farm workers to promote land reform. The government is

working with the agricultural industry to develop a sector plan, which will focus on growth areas such as the livestock, wool and grain industries. Recent auctions have highlighted livestock wealth among black farmers, which indicate that an inclusive, targeted initiative has the potential to transform the livestock value chain.

The release of state-owned land and post-settlement support has commenced. More than 100 000 hectares have already been allocated to successful beneficiaries, and the intention is to release all the remaining 700 000 hectares by the end of the financial year.

Transformation must be pursued with greater vigour so that we have more equitable outcomes and a greater number of jobs.

Above all, building a more inclusive economy will enhance long-term growth, productivity and development for all South Africans. 



Dr Pieter Groenewald (FF Plus)

Covid-19 has laid bare the inequalities of South African society – Mohai



NCOP Chief Whip Mr Seiso Mohai



“Ms S’lindile Luthuli alleged during the debate that the government failed to respond to the communities of Mtubatuba in KwaZulu-Natal, Khayelitsha, in the Western Cape, and Matatiele in the Eastern Cape. It has prioritised economic gains before people’s lives,” she claimed.

The government’s integrated response to the coronavirus pandemic came under scrutiny at the National Council of Provinces’ (NCOP’s) plenary debate that was held recently. This was a motion raised by the Chief Whip of the NCOP, Mr Seiso Mohai, **writes Abel Mputing.**

The debate occurred in the same month as celebrations commemorating the Freedom Charter and the 1976 Soweto Youth Uprisings. In keeping with the significance of these events, Mr Mohai noted that Covid-19 has laid bare the inequalities of South African society and has highlighted the importance of the state’s role in supporting the most vulnerable.

The African National Congress, as the governing party, believes that it is now more urgent than ever to realise the principles of the Freedom Charter “that there is no

government which can claim authority unless it is based on the will of the people. And all shall share in the wealth if the country”.

This vision has been articulated in the National Development Plan (NDP) and Vision 2030, which proclaim that **“no democratic process can flourish if the masses of the people remain in poverty, without land and without tangible prospects of a better life”**.

This is the case, “because as much as Covid-19 is a health challenge, it has a far-reaching social and economic impact.”

Covid-19 “happened within a context in which our country was faced by

multiple economic and social challenges, which include the densely populated informal settlements of our country, with no decent water, sanitation and public health infrastructure”. These conditions make the majority of South Africans vulnerable to the pandemic, he claimed, “but the government’s integrated approach has taken cognisance of these realities”. Participating in the debate, the Minister of the Department of

Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (Cogta), Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, said: “We have been flexible with our regulations and they have been amended where we deemed fit.” However, the state is grappling with the problem of non-payment of services. “Currently, municipalities are unable to collect the revenue due to the outbreak of the pandemic.”

She mentioned the City of Johannesburg as a case in point: “It used to collect 80% of its revenue, but now it struggles to reach such levels. The government’s R20 billion relief fund for local government will assist, but it

will probably not be enough.” Litigation is another major challenge and the government is dealing with 90 challenges to the lockdown regulations.

Also participating in the debate, the Minister of Trade and Industry, Mr Ibrahim Patel spoke of the government’s economic interventions and the scale of their measures to slow down the economic impact of the pandemic. “Economic relief sought to bring about greater protection to our citizens, and laid down the foundation for measures to address the economic reconstruction of our country.” He pointed out that the government has collaborated



with the private sector to secure stocks of medications. “We developed a health stocks database and worked with local industries to repurpose their production machines for the purpose of making hand sanitisers, face and surgical masks.”

In addition, the government ensured that there is basic food supplies and stock of basic food to avoid food shortages. This was necessary because the pandemic created unprecedented demand and supply challenges.

The permanent delegate to the NCOP, Mr Dennis Ryder, said 90 days after the outbreak of the pandemic, the nation is united. However, unilateral decisions were made.

“The President was overridden by a minister and alarming regulations were decreed. As a result, the credibility of the government was lost.”

Mr Ryder alleged that the renewed lockdown regulations affected company taxes and other related taxes. “Now the demand for products is way, way down. Currently, seven million more people are unemployed and this will drastically affect the economy,” he said.

According to Ms Maurencia Gillion, another permanent delegate to the NCOP, saving lives and livelihood is critical to ensure that there is a balance between the capacitation of the health and the needs of the economy. She commended the government for its interventions to mitigate the pandemic’s effect on the people.

Ms S’lindile Luthuli alleged during the debate that the government failed to respond to the communities of Mtubatuba in KwaZulu-Natal, Khayelitsha, in the Western Cape, and Matatiele in the Eastern Cape. It has prioritised economic gains before people’s lives, she claimed.

“This follows the opening of restaurants and movie theatres, and just now the government will allow people to go to music concerts and to church in big numbers, and it will also open up contact sport.”

Mr Stephanus du Toit said the government failed to provide healthcare for people suffering from TB and HIV, and it has done so again to those infected with coronavirus.

“Since the lockdown, radical economic transformation is regarded as a new norm, not an ideology. The governing party realised it was losing political ground due to fraud and corruption amounting to billions of rands, and used the pandemic to gain political mileage that further decided South Africans along racial lines,” he said. 🇿🇦

Electoral Act found to be unconstitutional because it does not allow individual candidates to run for political office

“Parliament’s Legal Services also recommended that there should be a clear and coordinated division of labour and roles between the executive and Parliament, bearing in mind that the deadline is imposed on Parliament, even though the development of policy and the development of a Bill will rest with the executive.”

The Constitutional Court has given Parliament 24 months in which to pass the required legislation, following its finding that the Electoral Act is unconstitutional because it does not allow individual candidates to run for political office, Insession writer, **Mava Lukani**, talked to Parliament’s Legal Services to find out about the process Parliament will follow to meet the Constitutional Court’s deadline.

According to Parliament’s Legal Services, the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), together with the executive, must urgently put together a team to research and consider the policy changes required to include independent candidates into the South African electoral system, which may require a review of the whole electoral system.

Only once that policy position is clear, can consideration be given to whether to amend the existing electoral laws, or to develop a new Electoral Bill. Besides, the courts have confirmed that the constitutional design envisages that policy development is the domain of the executive. Because of the expertise and the extent of the policy development required, the electoral commission would have to play a major role in the process.

Parliament’s Legal Services said making provision for independent candidates under the current electoral system is not a matter that can be executed by simply adding the phrase “independent candidate” to wherever the Electoral Act refers to a party.

The entire existing electoral system will have to be reconsidered: making provision for an independent candidate will entail among other things, considering how they are nominated; how they are registered; who would be responsible for compiling the list of independent candidates; how ballot papers are drawn up and whether there should be separate ballot papers for independent candidates; how the allocation of seats in the National Assembly and Provincial Legislatures will work.

Importantly, depending on the new system, many other statutes such as the Electoral Commission Act, 51 of 1996, and the Political Party Funding Act, 6 of 2018, will require amendments. This can only be done once a policy decision is made.

The Department of Home Affairs has briefed the Portfolio Committee on Home Affairs on the steps that the department proposes to take

in order to correct the defects that rendered the Act to be found to be unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court.

Parliament’s Legal Services has recommended that the executive and Parliament collaborate on a timeline for the development of the Bill and the subsequent processing of the Bill in Parliament in order to ensure that the Bill is sent for assent prior to the 10 June 2022 deadline.

Furthermore, Parliament’s Legal Services also recommended that there should be a clear and coordinated division of labour and roles between the executive and Parliament, bearing in mind that the deadline is imposed on Parliament, even though the development of policy and the development of a Bill will rest with the executive.

The Minister of Home Affairs has assured the committee in a meeting that the process is already underway. 🇿🇦



Committees in Brief – “Following up on our commitments to the people”

“The committee also told the Mayors to present detailed plans from both cities on the enforcement of the regulations and social distancing recommendations.”

The Select Committee on Security and Justice received a request from the South African Police Service (SAPS) for a new six months’ firearms amnesty, commencing from August this year.

The SAPS told the committee that a total of 27 336 firearms were surrendered during the 2019/2020 amnesty period, which is far below the number of firearms surrendered during the 2005 amnesty, declared for the same period of six months. Last month, the final month of that amnesty period, more than 11 000 firearms were surrendered. This includes illegal firearms and those voluntarily surrendered.

The committee heard that granting another amnesty period will afford the communities another opportunity to surrender illegal and unwanted firearms and/or ammunition, in an effort to curb the proliferation of illegal firearms in circulation. It is believed that another amnesty, if declared, will be in the interest of the public since many people have shown a willingness to participate.

The aim of the amnesty was to reduce the number of illegally possessed firearms in circulation in South Africa, to provide firearm owners the opportunity to hand in unwanted firearms, to prevent crime and violence and to promote safety, to address the fundamental causes of crime in order to effectively protect our communities, and to ensure people living in South Africa feel safe and have no fear of crime.

The Portfolio Committee on Small Business Development, together with the Select Committee on Trade

and Industry, Economic Development, Small Business Development, Tourism, Employment and Labour, expressed a concern on the number of Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) that are assisted by the department through debt-relief programme..

The committees heard that the department received 35 865 applications from the SMMEs who applied for the debt-relief, and only 14 451 were found to be complete and the incomplete ones were referred to SEDA for assistance. Those SMMEs that acquired loans from SEFA also qualify for a repayment holiday.

The department has disbursed R530 million debt-relief funds by 28 May 2020 to only 1 501 SMMEs. It is against this backdrop that the committees raised a serious concern with the department. A total of 13 000 SMMEs whose applications were found to be complete remain unfunded.

The Select Committee on Transport, Public Service and Administration and Public Works and Infrastructure received a briefing from Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (Prasa) on its Annual Performance Plan.

The briefing formed part of the budget vote process of deliberating and approving the five-year strategic and annual performance plans as required by the Money Bills Act of 2009.

The administrator reported that Prasa is operating on a R2.8 billion deficit which is increasing due to an additional R750 million required for COVID-19 interventions.

The committee urged Prasa

to ensure that maximum attention is given to the Corridor Recovery Programme as the Cape Town Mainline and the Mabopane line in Gauteng are central in the transportation of workers to work, and the fact that they are not working has inconvenienced and added financial burden to already stressed people in disadvantaged communities who rely heavily on the lines for transport.

The Select Committee on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Water and Sanitation and Human Settlements has urged the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (Cogta) to offer improved support mechanisms to municipalities that continue to struggle, despite the invocation of Section 139 (1)(b) of the Constitution.

The committee welcomed the information that of the eight municipalities under Section 139 (1)(b), three have achieved an unqualified audit opinion for the 2018/2019 financial year. Furthermore, six of the eight municipalities are operating with a funded budget for the 2019/2020 financial year. “This signifies commendable progress towards making municipalities functional, which will translate into improved service delivery to the people of KwaZulu-Natal. The improvements can be used as best practice to guide us in ensuring Section 139 interventions bear fruit,” said Mr China Dodovu, the Chairperson of the committee. The reduction of Eskom debt is also commendable in the context of the financial challenges faced by the entity and the threat to our economy if it fails. For example, it is

commendable that Inkosi Langalibalele Local Municipality was able to reduce its debt by 67% while Abaqulusi Local Municipality reduced its debt by 34%.

The Portfolio Committee on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (Cogta) wanted answers from the Mayors of the City of Cape Town and the Buffalo City Municipality on the enforcement of social distancing and lockdown regulations in communities experiencing high Covid-19 infection rates.

The committee also told the Mayors to present detailed plans from both cities on the enforcement of the regulations and social distancing recommendations. To the Mayor of the City of Cape Town, the committee also wanted details about the number of City police officers deployed per area, along with the other material resources deployed to curb the spread of Covid-19.

The Chairperson of the committee, Ms Faith Muthambi, asked the Mayor of the City of Cape Town to list the Covid-19 hotspots in the City and in response heard that these included Khayelitsha, Imizamo Yethu, Guguletu and Klipfontein. Ms Muthambi also wanted confirmation about any privately-owned quarantine facilities.

The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, Ms Nonhlanhla Ncube-Ndaba, said she is troubled by recent incidents reflecting an increase in gender-based violence (GBV) and femicide.

Recently, the country awoke to

the news of the brutal murder of 28-year-old Ms Tshogofatso Pule, who was eight months pregnant, who had been stabbed multiple times and then hung in a tree. The latest shocking incident is the double murder of Ms Altecia Kortjie (27) and her seven-year-old daughter, Raynecia. As a result, South African women live in fear for their lives, Ms Ncube-Ndaba said.

Last year, President Cyril Ramaphosa declared GBV a national crisis and outlined an emergency plan to stop the scourge. The plan aims to address the systemic failure of the state and society more broadly to respond to GBV, by preventing the violent behaviour and social norms that give rise to it.

Ms Ncube-Ndaba has questioned the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities’ progress with this plan and asked the department to indicate its work done to date so that women feel safer. “The announcement by the President that GBV is a national crisis is correct. Every day we wake to the news of women killed at the hands of their intimate partners. Many of these cases go unreported in the media.” 🇷🇺

