

in session



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that improves the quality of life of
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- enhancing public involvement;
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Parliament marks Freedom Day

In marking the 29th anniversary of freedom in South Africa, the Presiding Officers of Parliament, the Speaker of the National Assembly, Ms Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula and the Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces, Mr Amos Masondo, said the day is celebrated to mark South Africa's first non-racial democratic elections in 1994.

They said the historic elections, which saw the election of the country's first black President, were a culmination of centuries of struggle and sacrifice by South Africans who fought against the injustices of apartheid and colonialism. Freedom Day has become a day of celebration, reflection and renewal for the people of South Africa, as we continue to strive towards building a more inclusive, equitable, peaceful, non-racial and prosperous society.

South Africa's journey towards democracy has been long and difficult, but significant progress has been made since the end of apartheid in 1994.

The amended Electoral Act is another important step towards ensuring that our democracy continues to evolve and become more inclusive. The changes to the Act, which were made in response to an order from

the Constitutional Court, are a great step in ensuring that the Act meets the constitutional requirements and broadens the choices available to South Africans when electing their representatives in the national and provincial legislatures.

For the first time since the beginning of our democratic dispensation, individuals who are not linked or associated with political parties will be able to stand for election as candidates in the National Assembly and the provincial legislatures. This is a significant step towards ensuring that more diverse voices and opinions are accommodated in the democratic processes of the country.

The introduction of independent candidates in the electoral system will hopefully assist in improving voter turnout, which has been on a steady decline since 1994. The amended Electoral Act will bring major changes to the way South Africans will vote in next year's General Elections. It amends the electoral formula for allocation of seats, which will have a bearing on how the Independent Election Commission will allocate seats in the National Assembly.

In the new electoral system in the Act, provinces are defined as distinct constituencies (called regions). The National Assembly is divided into 200 regional seats and 200 compensatory seats drawn from proportional representation lists. Independent candidates can compete for the 200

regional seats.

As we celebrate Freedom Day, it is important to remember that our democracy is not just about elections. Regular democratic elections promote accountability, transparency, and peaceful transfer of power while also promoting political stability, civic engagement, and the protection of individual rights and freedoms.

While we celebrate our freedom, we must also renew our commitment to the ongoing transformation of our society. We must continue to work together to tackle the social ills that are still afflicting so many of our people today. This requires unity of purpose and cooperation from us all.

Parliament, as the legislative arm of our democratic state, has a special role to play in achieving the South Africa for which so many sacrificed their lives. High levels of unemployment, inequality, poverty, corruption, crime and violence – including violence against women and children – are challenges that Parliament will continue to tackle through oversight and legislative interventions to ensure that all South Africans enjoy the fruits of our liberation.

In commemorating Freedom Day, South Africans from all walks of life and backgrounds must remember that we all have a role to play in building a better future for ourselves and our children. May this year's Freedom Day inspire hope, progress and change in the lives of South Africans. 🇿🇦

“Freedom is a gift of immense sacrifice that we should not take for granted”



National Assembly debates Freedom Day

The National Assembly (NA) held a debate on Freedom Day to reflect on the gains of freedom since 1994 and the challenges that still lie ahead amid innumerable socio-economic challenges that beset South Africa. Some stood to testify that there is a cause to celebrate freedom, while others vehemently disputed such inclination with countless qualifications, writes Abel Mputing.

Ms Judy Hermans, who is the member of the ANC, said freedom is a gift of immense sacrifice that we should not take for granted. In her view, South Africans should on Freedom Day pay tribute to the heroes and heroines who passed away and who through their untold sacrifices rewarded us with freedom.

Ms Hermans added that this freedom feeds the black majority who suffered poverty and were subjected to destitution through the institutionalised system of racism. A system, she said dehumanised the black population. General elections that included all South Africans in 1994 ended centuries of racial oppression and set us all of the political path to reconciliation, freedom, democracy, equality and laid the foundation for the culture of human rights in our country.

She said: “All government policies are

designed to achieve these ideals and the vision of better life for all through the provision of basic services such as water and sanitation, access to healthcare services, and education.”

Ms Karabo Khakhau of the Democratic Alliance contended that there’s no freedom when school children still die in pit toilets and when seven out of ten young South Africans wake up to a distant dream of ever finding a job. To her, freedom is still an elusive ideal when getting access to water and sanitation remains a pipe dream to this day.

Ms Natasha Sangwerni said there is absolutely nothing worth talking about on Freedom Day. He said the ruling party has done nothing for the millions of oppressed and exploited black majority in this country. “When we attained our freedom, the ruling elite replaced the white oppressive regime with the black oppressive regime.” In supporting her view she said: “When the ruling party took over power, unemployment was at 20%, now it is well over 40%.”

Mr Mkhuleko Hlengwa of the Inkatha Freedom Party said our political freedom is an island in a sea of economic injustices. It’s this contradictory state of affairs that characterises our freedom, as many still experience great hardship. Even the Bill of Rights promulgated by our



Constitution is not worth the paper it is written on it if there’s no political commitment to fulfil these rights.

Mr Wouter Wessels of the FF plus said the ruling party is a formidable force of destruction. It destroyed everything it touched. “They destroyed our economy, our state-owned enterprises, our sense of safety and security and in so doing they have destroyed our freedom.” How can we be free when we are imprisoned by crime, poverty and corruption, he asked.

Mr Steve Swart of the African Christian Democratic Party said South Africa was once a beacon of hope and aspired to high moral and ethical standards that were envied by many throughout the world, but these elements are now lacking. “Criminal syndicates, GBV, and corruption seems to permeate all

sectors of our society including the law enforcement agencies,” he said. Regrettably, he added: “State officials enrich themselves at the expense of the poor. Let us recommit ourselves to the fundamental values of integrity.”

Mr Brett Herron of the GOOD Party said: “Our liberation struggle is well worth celebrating, but in the same breath, South Africans have many reasons to feel disappointed. The extent to which we have fallen short on achieving our objectives is all around us to see.” He asked: “What kind of freedom is it when we are immersed in crime and violence? What kind of freedom is it when our education system does not enable our children to read for meaning and when there’s no social security to protect the dignity of all citizens?”

Legislatures must be Activist Institutions for Service Delivery, says NCOP Chairperson



The Speakers' Forum of South Africa (SFSA) convened its two-day meeting in the Eastern Cape in East London to consider a number of critical measures intended to strengthen the oversight and public participation function of the legislative sector.

National Council of Provinces Chairperson (NCOP) Mr Amos Masondo said the forum is currently assessing outstanding projects from the sixth administration so as to lay a firm foundation for the seventh administration to hit the ground running after the general elections

next year. He said the forum seeks to synergise the work of both the national and provincial legislatures to ensure collaboration and coordination within the sector.

Mr Masondo is co-chair of Speakers' Forum meetings with the Speaker of the National Assembly (NA), Ms Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula. They urged the 10 legislatures to have a common voice on the country's position on current geopolitical dynamics in their respective international multilateral engagements. They said the discussions and commitments of the legislative sector may have serious implications on the country's diplomatic policies and posture.

As part of strengthening the sector's

impact, the forum resolved to officially register the Legislative Employer's Organisation to facilitate a collective bargaining process for the sector, and to ensure uniformity in the conditions of employment and service.

Ms Mapisa-Nqakula said the sector needs to accelerate the execution of the key projects to enable the sixth Parliament to conclude on a high note while setting a higher bar as a new foundation for the seventh Parliament.

The forum also engaged the Independent Electoral Commission to explore modalities concerning the possibility of reconfiguring the seat allocation within legislatures. A similar exercise was last performed in 1999 and needs reconfiguration considering the growth of population and other factors.

The Speakers' Forum meets quarterly to concretise numerous measures aimed at heightening cooperation, coordination and alignment of work across the country's 10 legislatures as well as at local government level. Speakers and Deputy Speakers of the nine provincial legislatures are members of the National Speakers' Forum, while the Provincial Speakers' Forums that include local governments get convened by Provincial Legislature Speakers. 🌱



Standing Committee on Appropriations adopts report on Eskom Debt Relief Bill

The Standing Committee on Appropriations has welcomed briefings it received from the Department of Public Enterprises and from Eskom on the Eskom Debt Relief arrangement which guarantees that government will provide Eskom with recapitalisation amounting to R254 billion, writes Jabulani Majozi.

The Bill was tabled by the Minister of Finance on 22 February 2023 during the presentation of the national budget in Parliament and later referred to the Standing Committee on Appropriations for consideration. The 2023 Eskom Debt Relief Bill provides for a direct charge against the National Revenue Fund for debt relief for Eskom.

The government will provide Eskom with advances to be used solely to address Eskom's debt obligations. These amount to R78 billion for the financial year 2023/24, R66 billion for the 2024/25 financial year and R40 billion for the 2025/26 respectively. Eskom said the funds from the government will strengthen its balance sheet and financial position by reducing debts and



**Sfiso Buthelezi –
Chairperson of the Standing
Committee on Appropriations**

increasing equity. This in turn will free up cash from operations to be invested in infrastructure. Some of the benefits to Eskom under the debt relief arrangement are that the power utility will be able to improve its liquidity and avoid debt or borrowing to settle debts.

According to Eskom, as part of the conditions, it is required to prove compliance with conditions to National Treasury on a quarterly basis. Conditions accompanying the debt relief are that funds must only be used to settle debt and interest payments under pre-identified instruments.

Other conditions are that Eskom may not use proceeds from the sale of non-core assets for capital and operating needs or implement remuneration adjustments that can adversely affect its overall financial sustainability.

The committee raised concerns about whether the power utility will be able to meet the conditions of the debt relief interventions after failing to meet the previous government bail-outs in the past five years. In response, Eskom said under the condition of the new debt relief, Eskom will be allowed to convert National Treasury loans to equity.

The committee recommended that there must be clear measurable targets emanating from Eskom on how it will meet the conditions such as reduced load-shedding stages.

The Chairperson of the committee, Mr Sfiso Buthelezi, said: “Interventions by government in providing R254 billion means that there are other priorities that the government has had to postpone to assist Eskom.” Mr Buthelezi further emphasised that there is a need for economic inclusion and emancipation of economically marginalised communities who also need to benefit from doing business with Eskom.

The committee adopted its report on the Eskom Debt Relief Bill in compliance with the Money Bills Amendment Procedure and Related Matters Amendment Act, Act No 13 of 2018, which requires Parliament to conduct public hearings and to report on all Bills.

The committee held deliberations with the Financial and Fiscal Commission, National Treasury the Parliamentary Budget Office and Eskom for their comments on the Bill. The committee also held public hearings on the Bill and received several written submissions and comments from organisations such as the Minerals Council of South Africa, Congress of South African Trade Unions, and Dear South Africa.

The committee hopes the Bill will go a long way in assisting to provide more reliable electricity. This is critical for economic growth and the creation of employment opportunities needed by many South Africans, especially young people.

The committee referred the Bill to the National Assembly for debate. 🇿🇦



Scopa Invites Parties Cited in De Ruyter’s Submission

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts (SCOPA) met with the former Eskom Chief Executive Officer, Mr Andre de Ruyter, to discuss his recent submission to the committee following the committee’s request for Mr de Ruyter to elaborate on his television interview in which he made allegations of corruption and malfeasance at Eskom. The committee resolved to invite all the parties mentioned in Mr de Ruyter’s submission.

The committee indicated that it plans to invite the Minister of Public Enterprises, Mr Pravin Gordhan, and the Eskom Board. It also plans to invite the Advisor to President Cyril Ramaphosa, Dr Sydney Mufamadi, the State Security Agency, the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigations, the National Prosecuting Authority, the Special Investigating Unit and the South African Police Service.

Mr de Ruyter told SCOPA to contact the Directorate of Priority Crime Investigations, Mr Gordhan and Dr Mufamadi for further details on the allegations he made in the interview. He also indicated that he reported the identity of a high-ranking politician as well as individuals he referred to in his interview to them.

The committee informed Mr de Ruyter that Parliament is able to offer him protection against any legal action through the Powers and Privileges provision, but he indicated that he does not want to jeopardise any investigation into Eskom by law enforcement agencies. The committee believes that Mr de Ruyter missed an opportunity to take the nation into his confidence on these matters.

The committee also plans to find out from law enforcement agencies what progress has been made in the cases that Mr de Ruyter says he reported in April last year. The committee will then proceed with the correct parliamentary processes after it has engaged with all these parties. 🇿🇦

Committees Welcome Withdrawal of Eskom's Exemption Notice

The standing committees on Appropriations, on Finance, on Public Accounts, on the Auditor-General and Portfolio Committee on Public Enterprises have welcomed the Minister of Finance's withdrawal of the exemption notice granted to Eskom in terms of section 92 of the Public Finance Management Act, 1999 (Act No. 1 of 1999).

The Minister appeared before the committees to brief them on the exemption granted to Eskom in terms of Section 92 of the Public Finance Management Amendment Act (PFMA). The committees asked the Minister about how he had reached this decision and its implications. The Minister replied saying that the withdrawal was aimed at allowing adequate consultation with the Auditor-General (AG) and Eskom's auditors, Deloitte, in order to ensure that checks and balances on corruption are tightened.

The Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Finance, Mr Joe Maswanganyi, said that although acknowledging the Minister's decision to withdraw the exemption, the committees will continue to play oversight to make sure that all entities, including Eskom, have risk management strategies, turnaround plans and audit action plans, and that they stick to the National Government Accountability Ecosystem (NGAE), as designed by the Auditor-General.

Mr Maswanganyi said that all departments and entities are supposed to abide by the standards set out in the NGAE, in terms of the Constitution. "We acknowledge the decision taken by the Minister to withdraw the exemption and, if ever there will be any development in the future, we will deal with them when we come to that point," he said. 🌟

Parliament's Presiding Officers call on South Africans to promote culture of human rights



On Human Rights Day on 21 March, the Presiding Officers of Parliament, the Speaker of the National Assembly, Ms Nosiwe Mapisa-Nqakula, and the Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces, Mr Amos Masondo, called on all South Africans to reflect, protect and defend all human rights enshrined in the Bill of Rights in Constitution.

The Bill of Rights enshrined in Chapter two of our Constitution embeds the rights of all people in our country and addresses South Africa's past of oppression, colonialism, slavery, racism and sexism and other forms of human violations. This day should also serve as a stark reminder of the sacrifice and cost paid through bloodshed for the freedom and democracy we today enjoy.

March 21 is linked historically to the 1961 Sharpeville Massacre, where 69 people lost their lives and 180 were wounded when police fired on a peaceful crowd that had gathered in protest against unjust laws. The great majority of South Africans stood together to fight against the atrocities and cruelty of the apartheid government that sought to deprive the majority basic rights in the land of their birth.

Since the dawn of democracy peaceful protests by every person or under political formations are guaranteed in the provisions of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. However, it is the responsibility of those who participate as well as the law enforcement officers to ensure that no one infringes on the rights of others when they exercise theirs.

Said the Presiding Officers, "Parliament promotes and supports the right to peaceful protest and demonstration and urges all South Africans, at all times, to act responsibly and ensure that no one's right to safety is violated and intimidated."

Parliament continues to be at the forefront of ensuring that the protection of human rights is rooted in our society. The recent passing of the Prevention of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill is an exhibition of our continued commitment to the protection of human dignity. This Bill seeks to address the conduct of persons, sometimes violent, motivated by prejudices, in the form of hate crimes and hate speech and to assist those who are victims of these. The Bill creates the offences of hate crimes and hate speech and puts in place measures to prevent and combat these offences.

"Ours is a democracy attained through blood and sweat, and it remains everyone's responsibility to ensure that we become the defenders of

democracy and protectors of human rights and dignity," said the Presiding Officer.

Parliament cannot overlook the fact that there are challenges that continue to threaten the progress made as a country. Chief amongst these challenges are unemployment, poverty and inequality, a great socio-economic burden that is borne mostly by young people who constitute the majority in this country.

We also live in a society where the right to life is constantly threatened. The threat is evident in the high rates of murder. According to the recent crime statistics announced by the Minister of Police, Mr Bheki Cele, in the last quarter of October 2022 and December 2022, 7 555 people were murdered.

These harrowing statistics are shocking and paint a gruesome picture of the kind of society we live in. The fight against such crimes is a collective effort that our government cannot win alone. If we jointly take responsibility as citizens of this country by reporting these crimes and culprits, then we will win this fight.

Parliament will continue to do all that is in its legislative power to ensure that human rights are always protected through the passing of laws, vigorous oversight and continuous public participation in the affairs of Parliament. Safeguarding human rights is an essential component in the making up of our country and Parliament encourages each South African to reflect, safeguard, treasure and protect their rights and the rights of others from violation, irrespective of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation or nationality. Human rights are there for the provision of dignity, peaceful existence, equality and freedom.

May we use this day as a country to reflect on how far we have come and recommit ourselves to building a South Africa that is united. 🌟



NCOP Invites Seminar Participants to Identify Priorities in Final Year of Sixth Parliament

The National Council of Provinces (NCOP) invited a wide range of participants to its two-day Three Spheres Planning: Delineating Key Priorities for Consideration and Implementation during the final year of the sixth dispensation seminar. One such participants was the Deputy Chairperson of the National Planning Commission (NPC), Prof Tinyiko Maluleke, reports Abel Mputing.

Speaking about how the objectives of the National Development Plan (NDP) have been undermined, Prof Maluleke pointed to intergovernmental inefficiencies in planning and implementation. Long-term planning needs to become law, he argued, and the NPC should be made more authoritative and accountable. In addition, state capacity to coordinate infrastructure planning and investment, along with interventions to mitigate climate change need to improve. These weaknesses hamper the NDP's developmental objectives.

"There is a need to facilitate the implementation of capabilities across government and social sectors that would professionalise public service," Prof Maluleke recommended. He also called for a stakeholder mapping session to create coherent coordination across all spheres of government to achieve the NDP's priorities in a holistic and integrated manner.

Also participating in the session, the Chairperson of the Fiscal and Financial Commission, Dr Nombeko Mbava, said stronger and sustainable fiscal and governance frameworks are needed to attain service delivery outcomes, efficiency and accountability. This should be complemented by ensuring symmetric financial and institutional human capacity to establish a single capacity building and development framework and programmes.

She blamed political interference and a lack of consequence management in government for the increase in irregular and wasteful expenditure. Credible financial reporting, political stability, capacity building and the recruitment of skilled personnel would combat this and promote a culture of good financial and consequence management, she concluded.

The Deputy Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Mr Parks Tau, who also participated in the session, said in his view a streamlined and efficient District Development Model would help to align policy in all local municipalities and would have a big impact on the ground. "This will address the multiple-prong approach currently in place, root out incompetency and come up with sound fiscal discipline."

He also pointed out that R6 billion is allocated to municipalities to optimise fiscal management each year, but sadly South Africa is yet to see value for money for this allocation. However, his department will soon gazette a code of conduct and regulations aimed at instilling ethical leadership. The department is also drafting amendments to the Local Government Structure Act to instil stability and regulations governing coalitions, so that rules and regulations governing coalitions are put in place to ensure unstable coalitions do not impact negatively on service delivery. 🌱



Premiers Participate in NCOP's Planning Session

The Premiers of Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal provinces also took part in the NCOP's two-day Three Spheres planning programme. The Premier of Gauteng, Mr Panyaza Lesufi, did not mince his words when he declared his province's war on crime as one of its priorities of the sixth administration, reports Abel Mputing.

He vowed that they would do all they could to take the fight against crime back to the criminals. "We have enlisted 6 000 youth who are fit for purpose, who will be deployed in Soweto in May to be part of the community police forums to ensure that there is visible policing to each and every wards," he said.

The province has also procured 400 more police vehicles and six new helicopters to ensure the fight against crime is adequately resourced. This will be complemented by face recognition CCTVs in Johannesburg central business district.

The Premier of KwaZulu-Natal, Ms Nomusa Dube Ncube, pointed out the devastating effects of the recent floods and civil unrest in her province, which have reversed any recent gains the province had recorded in line with the objectives of the National Development Plan and that of the province.

The greatest challenge facing the province, is water and sanitation, she said. The province has established war rooms in every district to deal with this challenge and almost all districts have functional war rooms meant to reverse the negative effects this has on indigent communities. The province has also prioritized infrastructure development to ensure that the province's economic and social activities and service delivery get back on track.



The Premier of KwaZulu-Natal Nomusa Dube Ncube

“We have all the information needed, we know what are the needs of our people”

Ms Dube Ncube also reported that KwaZulu-Natal is forging ahead with its smart province initiative that seeks to put digital technology at the centre of the peoples’ daily lives. “As a province, we have increased our hotspots from 8 000 to 13 000 to ensure that schools, health care centres and community hubs have access to wifi.” These are some of the priorities that the province will consolidate in this financial year, she stated.

The Deputy Chairperson of the NCOP, Ms Sylvia Lucas, then spoke and said that the planning programme sessions have laid bare the weaknesses of the intergovernmental mandate. “We have all the information needed, we know what the needs of our people are. The challenge is how do we implement and address that which we know.”

The NCOP is responsible for coordinating the three spheres of government, “But unfortunately, we take resolutions in the house and write oversight reports but often the executive is not responsive,” Ms Lucas claimed. Referring to the newly appointed deputy president, she declared, “As a leader of government business at parliament, we put this on your table.”

In his concluding remarks, the Chairperson of the NCOP, Mr Amos Masondo, proclaimed that a detailed report on these deliberations would be made available. “It will ensure that the key issues raised during the interactions and engagements we had during these planning sessions are delineated.”

He reminded members of the NCOP that in November last year they were part of a debate on how to facilitate growth of the township economy. Parliament’s task in this regard is to capacitate small businesses to ensure they have access to relevant markets. It must also promulgate legislation to that effect. “Our search and identification of young, emerging entrepreneurs is one of the priorities that will be high on the NCOP’s agenda in this financial year to ensure that township economy and the young entrepreneurs are the bedrocks of our agitations for inclusive economy,” he concluded. 🇿🇦



Deputy President Paul Mashatile

Deputy President Contributes in NCOP’s Planning Session

The second day of the National Council of Provinces’ (NCOP’s) planning session commenced with inputs from Deputy President Paul Mashatile, who gave a broad outline of government’s undertakings in the remaining year of the sixth administration, writes Abel Mputing.

He remarked that the National Assembly and the NCOP should consider whether they have provided sufficient oversight or ensured that the executive is accountable for the findings of Parliament’s oversight and recommendations. “We are interested to hear your response on that,” he said.

He welcomed the ongoing relationship between the NCOP and the South African Local Government Association, which has facilitated the delivery of basic services to the people. This synergy, he pointed out, has been replicated by government through its inception of cluster systems meant to harmonise coordination and collaboration in critical areas of service delivery.

But another question to be asked, he added, is whether government has improved the quality of people’s lives. The task at hand is far greater than government can do alone. For instance, in dealing with the land issue one has to balance the imperatives of property rights with the right to land for the landless majority, the Deputy President said.

The deputy president is also convinced that the District Development Model can help the government to respond rapidly to service delivery demands, drive development and ensure that government commits resources in a more coordinated manner. 🇿🇦



Also participating in the session, the Deputy Minister for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, Ms Maropene Ramokgopa, highlighted the role Covid-19 has played in emphasising the importance of coordination between government departments, entities, the private sector and civil society. As per the National Development Plan, co-ordination would improve the functioning of public institutions through coherent alignment in planning and implementation of fiscal management policies. This would also address problems arising from political interference in the running of municipalities, misalignment of budgets and fragmented learning across all spheres of government.

She went on to blame loadshedding on a lack of coherent and coordinated planning and timely implementation of critical interventions meant to sustain economic infrastructure. "Loadshedding has led to a 20% increase of food prices. This shows the significance of planning and timely implementation of maintenance to our critical economic infrastructure."

She urged the NCOP to play its role in exercising oversight over government planning and implementation of critical projects and policies in line with the objectives of the NDP.

One of government's priorities in this Medium-Term Strategic Framework is to ensure that "credit finance and economic start-ups are made available for small businesses in the digital economy to facilitate inclusive economic growth, said the Minister of Small Business Development, Ms Stella Ndabeni, who also participated in the session. Her department will also ensure that such businesses are linked with their relevant markets, she vowed.

Part of her department's resolve is to engage provinces to cut red tape to enable small businesses to form business forums aimed at localising their content and to develop cooperatives. The District Development Model would be one of the vehicles to shoulder these initiatives. A pilot project is currently underway in KwaZulu-Natal to determine the operability of these initiatives, she said. 🌱

National Assembly congratulates IPU for successful general assembly

The leader of the South African multiparty parliamentary delegation to the 146th Assembly of the IPU, and the Speaker of the National Assembly, Ms Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, congratulated both the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) for a successful General Assembly and Angola for being chosen as the next host for the 147th IPU Assembly in October 2023.

Speaker Mapisa-Nqakula described the choice of Angola after Rwanda's hosting of the 145th assembly as an acknowledgement of Africa's growing and valued contribution to global parliamentary diplomacy and building of stable constitutional democracies across the world.

The 146th Assembly of the IPU held in Manama, Bahrain, wrapped up its business with clear commitments as over 140 parliaments adopted the Manama Declaration. The declaration is a statement of intent and commitment to multiply IPU's efforts to build peace and promote co-existence and inclusive societies.

The delegates pledged to fight the source of strife and conflicts, including inequality, by putting people instead of profits first and ensuring that no one is

left behind. Delegates also undertook to introduce and accelerate legislative changes that would criminalise all hate-motivated talk and actions, including cyberspace, where these incidents of religious, xenophobic, racist and related intolerances thrive, and contributing to the lowest levels of global peace in 15 years. The IPU plans to ensure that the inputs of world parliamentarians would be included in the UN Convention on cybercrime scheduled for 2024.

Various statutory structures and committees of the IPU tabled reports and recommendations for adoption by the Assembly on the last day of the five-day conference.

Speaker Mapisa-Nqakula presented a report of the IPU Task Force for Peaceful Resolution of the War in Ukraine to the General Assembly, after high-level discussions held with the parliamentary delegations of both Ukraine and Russia on the sidelines of the IPU Assembly.

The Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights also held 14-country hearings on the sidelines of the assembly, where it dealt with a range of complaints. In their report submitted to the plenary, they highlighted some shocking cases of violation of parliamentarians' human rights including killings and detentions without trial for over six years.

Meanwhile, the Human Rights Committee announced that a

complaint submitted by the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) on 9 February 2023 incident, was inadmissible. A number of political parties welcomed the committee's "inadmissibility" ruling. Mr Cedric Frolick of the African National Congress, who serves as the House Chairperson for Committees, Oversight and ICT in the National Assembly, said the dismissal of the complaint as "inadmissible", is good news for South Africa.

Also remarking on this IPU ruling, the Chief Whip of the Inkatha Freedom Party, Mr Narend Singh, said although any party is welcome to raise matters with the IPU, parties need to fully explore internal processes before rushing to international jurisdictions.

The United Democratic Movement Chief Whip, Mr Nqabayomzi Kwankwa, added his voice in condemning as premature the submission of the complaint to international bodies while national and domestic remedies had not been used.

The Democratic Alliance member of the IPU multiparty delegation, Dr Annelie Lotriet, said the South African delegation is satisfied with the acceptance of its recommended changes to the resolution on sustainable development

The IPU General Assembly also witnessed the signing ceremony between its leadership and the Angolan parliamentary delegation, as the Parliament of Angola will be hosting the 147th IPU General Assembly scheduled for October 2023. Angola's hosting of the bi-annual conference of this august body of world parliamentarians, a mere 12 months since the 2022 October IPU General Assembly in Rwanda, is testimony to the growing significance of the African voice in the evolution of global parliamentary diplomacy. The South African Parliamentary delegation congratulated Angola for its achievement. 🌱

NA Speaker calls for introspection in face of global rise in intolerance, violence and conflict



Speaking at the General Assembly of the 146th Session of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) on the theme of promoting peaceful coexistence and inclusive societies, the Speaker of the National Assembly, Ms Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula called for introspection on the IPU's role in this challenge.

We know very well that peaceful coexistence in societies is fundamental for human development, progress and prosperity, and therefore, must hold ourselves accountable for these outcomes, and seek ways to arrest and reverse these trends," she said.

Ms Mapisa-Nqakula emphasised the need for parliaments to appreciate fully their role as strategic institutions of their respective societies that carry on their shoulders the hopes and aspirations of all the people of that society in their diversity.

therefore, parliamentarians must hold themselves accountable for these outcomes, and seek ways to arrest and reverse these trends.

The Speaker urged parliaments to fight intolerance by creating platforms for dialogue and negotiation. Parliaments should also establish mechanisms for truth and reconciliation, and amend or abolish legislation that promotes intolerance through a democratically elected parliamentary assembly. They should also ensure that parliaments serve as a platform for public debate and holds governments accountable for implementing international human rights agreements, related laws and policies. She said although South Africa may not have solved all these challenges, it has put in place useful interventions that could be considered and emulated.

Meanwhile, the Assembly welcomed back into its ranks Liberia, which was one of the founding members of the 133-year body of world parliaments, after many years of isolation, increasing the IPU membership to 179. The session also endorsed the recommendations of its executive committee to approve Angola as the October 2023 hosts of the bi-annual IPU General Assembly. Foremost on the programme of the 146th Assembly of the IPU are the following issues: peace and international security, sustainable development and democracy and human rights .🌍



Independent studies have reported a sustained decline in global peace and tolerance over the past 15 years. "In respect of peaceful co-existence in the world, we must speak truth to ourselves by asking the unpalatable question: how could this undesirable trend emerge and grow right under our noses as world parliamentarians?

She highlighted the need for parliaments across the globe to fight intolerance and to shoulder the responsibility of being teachers of love in their respective countries.

She believes this kind of approach is important for human development, progress and prosperity, and

South Africa set to establish Young Parliamentarians Caucus to fulfil IPU request



South African Member of Parliament Ms Fikile Masiko has informed the Forum of Young Parliamentarians that the South African Parliament is in the process of establishing a young Parliamentarians' caucus, as per the request of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), writes Faith Ndenze.

"We are at the conceptualisation phase of the establishment of this youth caucus. We have developed the concept document. We are circulating it currently to the different political parties and within the youth cohort to start discussions and to take the process forward," she said.

Ms Masiko has also detailed how the South African Parliament has adopted the Electoral Amendment Bill, which paves a way for young independent candidates who wish to participate in national and provincial elections.

The Forum of Young Parliamentarians met on the sidelines of the 146th IPU Assembly to provide a youth perspective on the assembly's theme, along with the two draft resolutions to be adopted. These resolutions are: Parliamentary efforts in

achieving negative carbon balances of forests; and Cyberattacks and cybercrimes: The new risks to global security.

The Standing Committee on Peace and International Security and the Standing Committee on Sustainable Development considered the resolutions clause by clause. The inputs made by the forum were submitted to the committees for consideration before the final resolutions were tabled before the Assembly for adoption.

Ms Masiko stated that although the Bill provides for the requirements and qualifications that must be met by persons who wish to be registered as independent candidates, it is too early to speculate on whether the Bill will be able to attract young people to involve themselves in the democratic discourse. "Though we know that we should be running campaigns that will allow young people to be able to stand as independent candidates for elections," she acknowledged.

Ms Masiko informed the forum that currently in the South African Parliament, young people constitute just under five per cent of parliamentarians in both the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces. As for parliamentary committees, she said, "... only four are being chaired by young people under the age of forty-five. Male parliamentarians outnumber the female counterparts in every age group," she said.

Arising from the lack of constitutional or legislative youth quotas in terms of South Africa's Constitution, any person who is qualified to vote during the national elections is eligible to be a Member of Parliament. "This means the responsibility therefore lies with the respective political parties to nominate young people to serve in the South African Parliament," Ms Masiko explained.

The Youth Forum also appointed its new President, Mr Dan Carden, a delegate from the United Kingdom's Parliament. Ms Masiko congratulated Mr Carden on behalf of all the young people of South Africa and young parliamentarians. "We wish to send our words of congratulations to you, wishing you well for your term of office. We are willing and ready as the young parliamentarians of South Africa to give you our support wherever it is needed," she said. 🌟

NCOP Deputy Chairperson advocates for women in post-Covid recovery strategies



The South African Parliamentary delegation to the IPU assembly appealed to parliamentarians across the globe to mainstream women in the execution of their recovery strategies from the economic meltdown and the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

That was said by the Deputy Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces, Ms Sylvia Lucas, while

addressing a conference of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) convened on the sidelines of the IPU 146th Assembly in Bahrain. Ms Lucas said recovery strategies can only achieve sustainability if they are inclusive and utilise energies of over 50% of nations' populations, women.

The IPU is the oldest and biggest gathering of parliamentarians. Its twice-yearly general assemblies provide the opportunity for a series of sideline multilateral and individual parliamentary diplomacy initiatives and engagements.

The NAM Parliamentary Network held in Manama, Bahrain, was convened by its current leader, the Speaker of the Azerbaijan Parliament. The NAM movement established a new frontier for addressing global challenges when the Parliamentary Network was launched at an elective conference in Azerbaijan last year.

The NAM Parliamentary Network session adopted a number of resolutions, including the granting of observer status to the International

Parliamentary Union. These NAM initiatives and the establishment of the NAM Parliamentary Network follow growing world conflicts and polarisation of nations that have negatively affected many non-aligned nations. The NAM Parliamentary Network seeks to respond as a united block to challenges to peace, security and sustainable development.

Deputy Chairperson Lucas said South Africa is grappling with a number of challenges, including an energy crisis and historical structural disparities that threaten peace and stability, such as inequality, unemployment and poverty. These were all exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

She said parliamentarians must now arrest the spread and growth of these country challenges by strengthening oversight. Economic reconstruction and recovery plans would not only preserve lives through supporting livelihoods, financial systems and health care, Ms Lucas said, but will also stimulate equitable and inclusive growth with women at the centre of these changes. 🌟

Greater oversight and public participation will close the gap between Parliament and citizens

The key drivers of Parliament's work are vigilant oversight and enhanced public participation, where citizens are provided with extensive opportunities to influence South Africa's legislative and policy direction.

Opening the recent strategic planning session attended by the committee chairpersons of both the National Assembly (NA) and National Council



of Provinces (NCOP), NA Speaker Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula commended them for being the backbone of Parliament's work and for their

resilience in the face of unprecedented challenges posed by both the fire in 2022 and the Covid-19 pandemic. The joint workshop was convened by the



House Chairpersons for Committees for the NA and NCOP, Mr Cedric Frolick and Jomo Nyambi, to evaluate progress made towards achieving the targets of the sixth Parliament. It also covered discussion on the Oversight and Accountability Model, and the effectiveness of Parliament's public participation model.

During her opening address, Speaker Mapisa-Nqakula called on all Members of Parliament to make it their responsibility to provide proper leadership and ensure greater interaction between Parliament and the citizens they represent. She also instructed MPs to hold cabinet members accountable and to do so properly. Ministers should be invited well in advance and summonses to appear in front of committees should only be a last resort, after all other efforts had failed.

Ms Mapisa-Nqakula urged parliamentary committees to sharpen their planning and improve their communication with members of the executive. She noted that the NA has some 40 bills scheduled for processing and finalisation before the end of the sixth Parliament. She appealed to the chairpersons to be realistic in evaluating progress made and confirming targets that could be achieved during the remaining months of the term.

Ms Mapisa-Nqakula affirmed the important role played by Parliament in providing a qualitative assessment of the outcomes of the government's Medium Term Strategic Framework. She called for a qualitative monitoring and evaluation tool, including the creation of synergy with the government's own monitoring mechanisms and feedback from the public.

Also addressing the workshop, the Chairperson of the NCOP Mr Amos Masondo, called on committee chairpersons to play a leading role in promoting synergy in the work of

the committees of both Houses by ensuring cooperation, coordination and collaboration. Through synergy and collaboration, unnecessary duplications of efforts will be eliminated, he promised.

He urged chairpersons to carefully plan for the next election year, as it required an improvement in the coordination of legislation with the executive. He asked them to prioritise legislation that must be concluded by the sixth Parliament and constantly monitor the pace at which Parliament processes the draft legislation. This will ensure that each House gets the appropriate time needed to process the draft legislations.

Mr Masondo also asked them to keep a sharp focus on the government's progress in dealing with the issues highlighted by the President in the State of the Nation Address in February.

The NCOP House Chairperson for committees, Mr Jomo Nyambi, hailed the planning session as a resounding success and said the presence of both Presiding Officers was highly appreciated, as they were able to answer questions raised by committee chairpersons.

Mr Nyambi further welcomed the presence of the Secretary to Parliament, Mr Xolile George, who addressed the chairpersons for the first time since his appointment to the role. Mr George presented an update on Parliament's reviewed strategic plan and the reconstruction plans. He was accompanied by the secretaries of both houses, and division and unit managers in the committee section, who will play a crucial role in the formulation of the sixth Parliament's legacy reports. He further confirmed that the manner in which the select and portfolio committees conduct oversight, interact with people and do constituency work is set to change.

Also making concluding remarks, the NA House Chairperson for committees, Mr Frolick noted the new Secretary to Parliament's excellent understanding of the issues that need to be addressed to ensure the institution functions more effectively, including the filing of outstanding vacancies and restructuring the administration of Parliament. The workshop also provided chairpersons with the necessary guidance to identify the legislation they need to prioritise in the coming months. 🌟

Eastern Cape's new forensic lab is a shot in the arm in the fight against GBV

The intensifying fight against the gender-based violence and other violent crimes has received a boost with the completion of a state-of-the-art forensic science laboratory in Gqeberha, in the Eastern Cape. The Portfolio Committee on Police visited the laboratory recently as part of its oversight work over the executive and was impressed with what has been accomplished, writes Malatswa Molepo.



Ms Tina Joemat Pettersson:
Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Police.

The committee highlighted that every effort must be made to ensure that the laboratory is managed optimally to improve the DNA and other scientific analysis that is central to the drive against crime.

The information that the infrastructure development project cost some R84 million of the budgeted R89 million is testament to the fact that government has the capacity to plan and execute such plans. "We are of the view that the model used to revamp the property to international standard should be replicated across the entire state

apparatus. Also, the completion of the project within 18 months of the planned 24 months attests to the benefits of good project management," said Ms Tina Joemat-Pettersson, the Chairperson of the committee. The committee meanwhile welcomed the assurance that despite the upgrades, docket analysis completion rates exceeded targets. Convictions are dependent on having water-tight cases that are evidence-based and timely.

Nonetheless, the committee raised its alarm at the high crime rates in the New Brighton policing area and suggested that collaboration between stakeholders could stop the tide. "We note the efforts to strengthen the collaboration between the South African Police Service (SAPS), faith-based organisations, civil society and the general community in efforts to fight crime. The committee encouraged this collaboration as it is of the view that partnerships are central to the fight against crime," Ms Joemat-Pettersson emphasised.

The growing number of taverns in the New Brighton area is a worrying situation that is creating a breeding ground for crime. The committee was informed that the area has 81 taverns that services the 98 849 population. The SAPS noted that this proliferation made it difficult to police the area and emphasised the strong correlation between violent and gender-based crime with substance abuse. "We have as a result instructed the SAPS to engage the Eastern Cape Liquor Board to strengthen its licensing processes in order to prevent further proliferation. Also, the municipality must enhance the policing of its by-laws to ensure adherence to licensing prescripts," said Ms Tina Joemat-Pettersson.

The committee was also concerned about the case load each detective is expected to handle, as it considers an average of 44 cases per detective as unsustainable. This load will also result in poor investigation and low conviction rates. The committee is aware of SAPS' financial constraints, but has emphasised the need for detectives to be capacitated, along with visible policing in order to first prevent crimes from happening in the first place. Meanwhile, the committee has highlighted concerns with the continuing challenge posed by the Department of Public Works' (DPW's) inadequate support for SAPS. The committee has highlighted that the failure to give the necessary infrastructure support impacts negatively on SAPS' productivity. The committee will in its legacy report propose the devolution of some function from the DPW to the SAPS to ensure timely maintenance and development of essential infrastructure. 🌟



Home Affairs committee calls for interaction with citizens to find solutions to long queues and other problems

The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Home Affairs, Mr Mosa Chabane, has called on government officials to listen to and accommodate the views of citizens in the search to improve service delivery, writes Brent Simons.

The committee recently interacted with citizens during an oversight visit to the newly opened Home Affairs office situated at Menlyn Mall. Both the Deputy Minister of Home Affairs, Mr Njabulo Nzuza, and Mr Chabane called on officials serving Home Affairs offices throughout the country to interact with and listen to citizens, as this may result in improved service delivery.

Their call follows interaction with citizens who visited the Menlyn Home Affairs office where some people complained about sitting in the queues for hours. One person informed the committee that he had received his passport within seven days of applying. Although he was happy to receive his passport, he had to endure long queues waiting to be served.

Another resident informed the parliamentary delegation that he had used the online booking system, which allocated him a service number and time slot of 12 noon today to renew his passport and apply for a new identity card. However, by 2 pm he had still not been helped. He informed the delegation that the department was using two systems and this negatively impacted people who made bookings online. Departmental officials confirmed that the two systems were not yet integrated and could lead to problems.

Earlier, the parliamentary delegation visited the Department of Home Affairs' head office in Pretoria to see first-hand why there was a backlog with permanent and residency applications. They called on the department to eradicate the backlogs and eliminate the long queues citizens experience throughout the country.

Mr Chabane added: "Today we heard from citizens who experienced problems but who also provided us with possible solutions. Officials must interact with citizens more progressively, as this may lead to finding solutions to the problems experienced by them." Mr Chabane welcomed the overall progress reported to the committee and appreciates the interaction with citizens. 🌟

MPs call for plan from Home Affairs department to combat corruption

The recent dismissal of two senior Department of Home Affairs officials must be seen as part of the department's anti-corruption strategy. The Portfolio Committee on Home Affairs has been assured by the Deputy Minister of Home Affairs, Mr Njabulo Nzuza, and the Department's Director General, Mr Livhuwani Mkhode, that the department is effective in dealing with corruption and working towards eliminating the long queues citizens are experiencing throughout the country, writes Brent Simons.

Presenting his department's annual performance plan at the committee's recent strategic planning session, Mr Mkhode said the dismissal of the two senior managers is a clear sign that the department is on the right path towards effectively dealing with corruption and corrupt officials.

Although welcoming the dismissals, members of the committee cautioned that more needed to be done. They requested that the department produces and presents a clear and implementable plan to eradicate corruption within the department.

Members of the committee also asked the department to deal more efficiently with long queues at their provincial, district, local and border crossing offices. Committee Chairperson Mr Mosa Chabane told the department's delegation, led by Deputy Minister Nzuza, that Members of Parliament were aware of what was happening on the ground. "We represent the citizens and know that queues are still prevalent throughout the country."

Deputy Minister Nzuza supported the DG's report that the department was not only focussing on major cities, but was constitutionally bound to serve all South Africans, no matter where they lived. The department is actively prioritizing the provision of services to remote rural communities, he said.

To this end, he added that the department had prioritised the establishment of new modernised offices for areas like Umthatha, KwaDukuza and Lusikisiki. In addition, office managers have also been appointed at most offices throughout the country. The committee heard that offices like the one in East London also amended its working hours to

accommodate the demands of the people who live in the area.

Deputy Minister Nzuza also reiterated the department's commitment to reduce the backlog for permanent and temporary residency permits. The department also confirmed that 99% of invoices received were paid within the allocated 30-day period and committed to provide the committee with documented evidence.

The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) also attended the strategic workshop. It informed the committee that they are ready for the 2024 general election and will embark on an extensive educational campaign to reach all South Africans in the run-up to the 2024 general election.

Two registration weekends are scheduled to provide unregistered citizens with an opportunity to register and participate in the elections. Citizens are also encouraged to visit the IEC website to see if they are registered. The IEC also requested the committee to ensure amendments to the Political Party Funding Act are completed to bring independent candidates within the scope of the Bill.

Committee members welcomed and appreciated presentations made by the Border Management Authority, the Government Printing Works and National Treasury in relation to their cooperation with the Department of Home Affairs and the IEC.

Mr Chabane welcomed the overall progress reported to the committee and assured the Deputy Minister that the committee is committed to ensuring the smooth functioning of all stakeholders under its watch while implementing their constitutional oversight responsibility. 🌟

Small business development committee calls for support and mentoring for new entrepreneurs



The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Small Business Development, Ms Violet Siwela, has called on the Department of Small Development and its agencies to ensure that small and medium-sized entrepreneurs who have received funding from government receive post-investment support and mentorship, writes Sakhile Mokoena.

She made these comments during the committee's oversight visits to small businesses in North West that have received support from the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA) and the Small Enterprise Funding Agency (SEFA).

A SEFA beneficiary who runs a bakery in Itsoseng township in Lichtenburg in the Ditsobotla Local Municipality told the committee that he has not started servicing the R300 000 loan because the business was not making enough profits yet, due to a lack of transport to deliver their products.

Another vegetable farming, egg production and meat distribution beneficiary said he was paying less than the required monthly repayment fee because his business was also not making enough profits.

The committee emphasised the importance of post-investment support from various

agencies for the beneficiaries of the government's small development programmes. "We want these small businesses to grow in order to contribute to the fight against unemployment and poverty in our country. We cannot establish them and let them fail. We need to baby-sit them. We cannot be happy with a business when there is no profit," Ms Siwela said.

Meanwhile, the committee was unhappy with how spaza shop owners, informal traders and cooperatives are treated, especially by SEFA. In that regard, the committee resolved

to invite the department, SEDA and SEFA to Parliament to provide clarity on their programmes and funding models, particularly on the wholesale finance and Khula Credit Guarantee programmes.

Meanwhile, the committee noted what appear to be discrepancies in the start-up funding of the tuck shop sector in the province. Officials from the Department of Small Development and its entities earlier told the committee that spaza shops received funding of R10 500 each. However, during visits to the beneficiaries, the committee discovered this is not the case. Tuck shop owners told the committee that they only received R3 500.

The committee warned against the use of intermediaries to distribute funding to small businesses on behalf of the department agencies. One intermediary distributing funding to small traders on behalf of SEFA, who paid five per cent interest, was reportedly charging the beneficiaries over 29 per cent in interest. The committee warned that this exploits the small traders. The committee also wants these agencies to be more visible in the communities they serve, especially in rural areas. 🇿🇦

Stakeholders in Sol Plaatjie Local Municipality Call for Parliament to Intervene in Municipality

Stakeholders in the Sol Plaatjie Local Municipality have appealed to the Portfolio Committee on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs to ask Parliament to intervene in the municipality, as it is dysfunctional and unable to serve the people, writes Mava Lukani.

The committee had an engagement with Sol Plaatjie Local Municipality stakeholders in Kimberley as part of its week-long oversight programme in the Northern Cape. The visit aimed to assess progress in improving service delivery in Sol Plaatjie and Phokwane

local municipalities.

The stakeholders participating in the engagement included the Sol Plaatjie Ratepayers Association, Beef Masters, the Frances Baard Business Forum, the Northern Cape Chamber of Business and representatives from wards 4 and 23. The municipality was represented by the Mayor, the Speaker, chairpersons of different committees in the Sol Plaatjie Municipal Council and senior municipal managers.

A representative of Beef Masters told the committee that it is very expensive and difficult to operate a business in the Sol Plaatjie Local Municipality and the municipality therefore struggles to attract investors. The municipality has big outstanding debts owed to it, the

representative said, and has no cash flow, which makes it difficult for the municipality to operate.

Representatives from the Chamber of Business said the municipality has abandoned the principle of equal access to opportunities. Procurement and tender policies to determine selection of suitable competitors are superseded by friendship or close proximity to decision-makers. A representative of the ratepayers association urged the committee to intervene in the municipality.

During the engagement, committee Members advised the municipality to communicate its turnaround strategies to the people. The municipality will never be successful in improving



its fortunes if its plans are unclear and lack time frames. Plans should specify when the potholes in a specific area will be fixed and there must be consequences if these deadlines are not met, they said.

The committee called for closer and meaningful collaboration between the municipality, stakeholders and all other role players to return the municipality to full functioning and deliver quality services to the people.

The committee also visited Phokwane Local Municipality, which was placed under Section 139 in 2019, after infighting rendered it unable to deliver services to the people. In its engagement with the new Mayor, the Speaker, the municipality's senior management and the MEC for COGTA in the province, the committee heard that stability at both political and administrative levels has been restored and is gaining momentum.

The Mayor and the Acting Municipal Manager told the committee that the municipality is moving towards a better position to meet its constitutional responsibility of delivering basic services to the people.

The committee appealed to the municipality's new leadership to uphold the commitment it made to serving the people and being the servants of the people of the communities that constitute Phokwane Local Municipality. The Chairperson of the committee, Mr Fikile Xasa, said this commitment will translate into an attitude of passion to serve the people. "Once you are driven by an attitude like that, a spirit of unity in action will prevail and no infighting will ever take place," he added.

The committee also had an engagement session with the municipality's stakeholders, including the South African National Civic Organisation, the Agricultural Union, AfriForum SA, and the taxpayers and taxi associations. The stakeholders complained about poor service delivery, crumbling infrastructure, poor water quality, loadshedding and incorrect accounts for services rendered.

The committee urged the stakeholders to work together with the municipality, as not one challenge is beyond their capacity as a collective force. It told them that solutions to all the problems they raised will be discharged by their close collaboration. The committee advised the Mayor to promote public participation in the municipality by, among other things, convening open days for stakeholders with structured agendas at ward and at municipal levels. 🌱

Public Service Committee Welcomes Free State's Commitment to Improve Service Delivery



Meeting with the Office of the Premier represented by Honourable Premier Dr Zamani Saul



Updates on the 30-day payment window to service providers, disciplinary cases and the filling of vacancies all came up for discussion during the Portfolio Committee on Public Service and Administration's week-long oversight visit programme in the Northern Cape and Free State, writes Mava Lukani.

On the stipulated 30 days within which invoices should be paid to service providers, the committee heard that both provinces are still sitting with invoices amounting to billions of rands. However, provincial treasuries working with other provincial departments have now reduced the amount owed. The departments of Health and Education continue to be main transgressors of the 30-day payment period.

The committee was assured by the Premier of the Northern Cape, Dr

Zamani Saul, about the provincial government's commitment to building a capable, ethical and professional public service in the province. The Premier also reiterated his commitment to filling vacant heads of division (HOD) vacancies within two weeks in the departments of Health, Social Development and Agriculture, Environmental Affairs, Rural Development and Land Reform.

The Northern Cape's Department of Health came in for scrutiny for its late payment of invoices and because its disciplinary cases take more than 90 days to complete, which is longer than in other provincial departments. Meanwhile, the committee was pleased with the Office of the Premier for its time keeping when paying invoices and conducting disciplinary cases.

The Acting Chairperson of the committee, Ms Merriam Kibi, raised an issue emanating from an earlier meeting about the provincial government's approach to law enforcement agencies for assistance in conducting lifestyle audits of public servants. The Premier together with the Director-General highlighted their dissatisfaction with the manner in which the Department of Public Service and Administration lifestyle audits framework mimics the Financial Disclosure Framework. The province is of the view that the framework defeats the entire purpose of the audits.

In Free State, the committee was welcomed by the newly appointed Acting MEC of Education, Mr Makalo

Mohale. The Free State provincial government has ensured stability in most departments by filling almost all HOD vacant posts. The province is in the process of filling the remaining three such vacancies.

However, the committee was puzzled by the province's lack of commitment to undertaking lifestyle audits, as announced by the President Cyril Ramaphosa. The province currently relies only on the financial disclosure framework for preventing unethical conduct.

In conducting an inspection at the Department of Home Affairs' facility and Pelonomi Tertiary Hospital, the committee witnessed long queues at 15h30 in the Home Affairs offices. Members of the public complained about the time it took to receive service, as most of them had arrived in the early morning. The National Department of Home Affairs office will be encouraged to expand its services based on population sizes.

As for Pelonomi Tertiary Hospital, the hospital has improved immensely from what the committee witnessed during a 2018 oversight visit to the hospital. However, there are still challenges, such as leadership instability, staffing problems, shortage of space in the maternity ward, safety concerns and aging infrastructure. The Acting Chairperson of the committee, Ms Miriam Kibi, expressed her satisfaction with the work achieved in managing the hospital, as it used to be in the news for all the wrong reasons, she said. 🌱



Inkosi Mandla Mandela – Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development

Committee Chair describes oversight programme as a huge success

The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Mr Mandla Mandela, described the committee's oversight visit to Mpumalanga as a huge success, writes Nolizwi Magwagwa.

"As the committee, we've done our work. We wanted to see and understand what the department is doing on the ground," Mandela said on the last day of the visit. The week-long visit held from 29 to 31 March was aimed at assessing the implementation and impact of the Presidential Employment Stimulus (PES) on the agricultural sector.

It also aimed to oversee interventions intended to improve surveillance and control of foot and mouth disease (FMD), which has a negative impact on the export of cloven-hoofed animals and their products; to assess the impact of climate change and related disasters on agricultural production and farming communities; and to assess government's development of agricultural infrastructure that will enable market access for emerging farmers.

The committee received presentations on these issues from the national Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development and the Mpumalanga Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs. The committee also met with farmers and visited various sites to better understand the department's work.

Briefing the committee in Mbombela on the implementation of PES, Dr Jemina Moeng said the initiative provided support to 9 133 subsistence farmers in Mpumalanga during its first year during the 2020/2021 financial year. "Subsistence farmers from all three districts in the province, Ehlanzeni, Nkangala and Gert Sibande, have benefited from PES. The number of Mpumalanga farmers supported in the 2021/2022 financial year increased to 12 552 beneficiaries, and included farmers from the Solidarity Fund," Dr Moeg said.

Dr Moeg further explained that the support is aimed at emerging farmers, particularly vulnerable individuals, such as women, young people and people with disabilities. The specific targeted commodities include, among others, fruit and vegetables, poultry, grains, and small and large stock.

PESI is a national initiative announced by President Cyril Ramaphosa following the challenges various sectors of the economy faced during and after the Covid-19 pandemic. It aims to revive the economy and address increasing unemployment. The national Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development received R1 billion in order to assist and provide relief to distressed farmers affected by the pandemic.

The committee conducted visits to four PES beneficiaries to better understand its impact in communities. It expressed its unhappiness as it found a dry field during its site visit to a Barberton vegetable farmer, who received R8 000 worth of vouchers. The committee was shocked to learn that part of the field was only prepared for ploughing on Monday, 27 March 2023. The farmer, Ms Ntombifuthi Khoza, told the committee that she harvested 40 crates of chillies and 10 bags of butternut from her initial produce and never ploughed again due to inadequate water supply.

The committee also visited three successful subsistence farmers who produce ground nuts, vegetables and broiler chickens. The committee urged the department to assist the farmers, as they have water and space challenges that will impede the growth of their projects.

Regarding the interventions intended to improve surveillance and control of FMD, the committee was satisfied that controls have been put in place to curb its spread in Mpumalanga. These interventions follow the 2022 outbreak of the disease at Victor Khanye Local Municipality, in the Nkangala District Municipality.

The committee also received a briefing from the Chief Director of the Mpumalanga Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs, Dr Bheki Cele, who informed them that the province has been divided into three zones, as part of the interventions and response to improve surveillance and control of FMD. The zones are:

- Infected zone (vaccinations once in four months, weekly inspections, movement controls, quarantine)
- Protection zone (Protection zone with vaccination and protection zone without vaccination)
- Free zone (no vaccinations practiced: entire Nkangala and Gert Sibande); regular inspections practised at borderline areas and farms)

Mpumalanga is one of the three provinces endemically infected with FMD due to the presence of infected buffalo in Kruger National Park. These buffalo also have a high prevalence of corridor disease, TB and brucellosis. Other infected provinces are KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo.

The committee commended the department for the implementation of routine vaccinations in designated high-risk areas bordering Eswatini, Mozambique, Limpopo province and Kruger National Park and its adjacent farms. The committee conducted a visit to the gate and to the Salubanza dip tank to assess the vaccination, inspections, control measures and surveillance put in place to curb the crossing of both buffalo and domestic cattle. It also applauded the department for upgrading the FMD red-line fence at Numbi Gate in Kruger National Park.

The committee was also briefed on the impact of and interventions related to flooding in farming communities, particularly in Ehlanzeni District Municipality. The province experienced torrential rains, which began in early February 2023. The committee was informed that most areas are still inaccessible and critical and basic agricultural infrastructure was badly affected. It is expected that the floods will have an impact on food supply, job losses, increased pests and diseases, decreased sucrose level of the sugarcane by 15-43 per cent and secondary diseases like anthrax and blackleg in livestock. The department undertook to attend to all the damaged infrastructure.

Mr Mandela said the committee will continue to conduct oversight over the work of the department. The oversight visit gives effect to Section 55(2) of the Constitution (1996), which tasks the National Assembly to provide for mechanisms to ensure that all executive organs of the state in the national sphere of government are accountable to it. 🌱



Committee Chairperson emphasises importance of public participation in climate change bill



Parliament committee practice of inviting members of the public to make inputs on legislation and other matters is not just a tick-box exercise, but a constitutional obligation, said the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Forestry, Fisheries and Environment, Mr Pogiso Modise. The Constitution states that Parliament must facilitate public involvement in its legislative and other processes.

Mr Modise was speaking during the North West public hearings on the Climate Change Bill, which is currently a subject of a nationwide public consultation process hosted by the committee. North West is the fifth province to have such public hearings, following Mpumalanga, Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng. The committee will also hold public consultations in other provinces to give every citizen an opportunity to participate in the process. People who missed out on making oral submissions can send their comments in writing. Details are available on Parliament's website.

During the North West oversight, the bill received overwhelming support

coal, and assured the public that the introduction of renewables will happen in a just process.

In Mafikeng, the residents told the committee that the bill must help municipalities to strengthen the enforcement of bylaws to discourage pollution and other practices, such as illegal sand mining, which can cause erosion and floods. Residents also called for dumping sites to be provided in rural areas in order to avoid the current situation where residents burn their garbage, which includes plastic and old clothes.

Some suggested that the Climate Change Bill must complement existing legislation such as the National Environmental Management Act, along with water and veld fire laws and other related pieces of legislation.

The Climate Change Bill seeks to enable the development of an effective climate change response and a long-term, just transition to a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy and society for South Africa in the context of sustainable development. 🌱

from members of the public who were concerned about a severe change in climate conditions, which they said is a threat to human life and food security. The residents of Matlosana Local Municipality believe there is a need for extensive public education about the impact of climate change and the just energy transition initiative. Some proposed that this campaign should incorporate the use of indigenous knowledge systems, arguing indigenous

knowledge can be used to mitigate climate change and take care of the environment.

People were also concerned about the slow pace at which people are taught about the importance of saving the planet and the effects climate change will have on their lives. There were, however, reservations about the possible discontinuation of coal, especially in electricity generation. Citizens advised that South Africa must not move too fast to renewables at the expense of the economy, and that renewable energy generation should be phased in gradually in a way that will not disrupt the economy. Mr Modise dismissed fears that there were plans to discontinue the use of

“The institution states that Parliament must facilitate public involvement in its legislative and other processes”

West Coast, Beaufort West and Khayelitsha residents support Railway Safety Bill

The nationwide public hearings on the Railway Safety Bill have completed the penultimate leg in Vredenburg, Beaufort West and Khayelitsha municipal districts in the Western Cape recently. The safety of railway commuters has been an ongoing concern, but it is now hoped that this Bill will rectify the problem, reports Abel Mputing.

The Bill repeals the National Railway Safety Regulator Act of 2002, sets out its legal framework and outlines the penalties for transgressions. The Bill aims to facilitate modern, flexible and efficient safety regulations to secure the well-being of the people by providing effective, transparent and accountable governance of the new safety regime.

The Railway Safety Regulator will be the juristic person charged with the task of ensuring compliance with the new Act and assessing its effectiveness over time. On the whole, the Bill aims to make passenger trains efficient, affordable and the preferred mode of transport for all.

The Portfolio Committee on Transport was in the Western Cape to give members of the public an opportunity to contribute to the drafting of the Bill and to share their views on it. In general, they supported it, but had one or two concerns. One of the Khoisan leaders in Vredenburg, Chief Khuesen Maart, was concerned that the Bill speaks about public stakeholder forums, but it does not stipulate the form and role of such forums.

In his view, this needs to be addressed to ensure that the public is the key stakeholder of railway safety. He further added that for the Bill's objectives to be realised, safety signals

at level crossings are needed to avoid the accidents at level crossings that are a regular occurrence in many communities.

Mr Norman van Wyk, a member of the South African National Community Organisation (SANCO), speaking of level crossing accidents, called for the Bill to be more specific on this issue. He suggested that affected communities could be trained as incident commanders to conduct oversight over freight trains as a means to reduce the number of accidents at level crossings. He also wanted clarity on the penalties that will be imposed on those who transgress the conditions of their safety permits. He stated that given the prevalence of iron ore freight train in some communities, he would like the Bill to specify how freight train emission standards will be enforced, so that affected communities could be protected from the effects of iron ore.

Chief Ludewyk Markus, another Khoisan leader, was also concerned about the effects of the iron ore transported by trains in the area. He mentioned that research has established that three millimetres of iron ore is enough to have a devastating effect on human health. He hopes this Bill will address that.

Mr Maxwell Moss agreed with this sentiment and called for the Bill to monitor freight trains' use of coal and diesel to mitigate the effects of climate change and respiratory health risks. He also believes the Bill should ensure that trains are accessible to the disabled and built to accommodate disabled communities. For the Bill to be effective, community member Mr Mziwamadoda Bhixa called for the public, farmers and taxi owners to become involved in its drafting, because they will all be affected in one way or another by the resurgence of passenger trains along the West Coast of South Africa. 🇿🇦

Servant of the people, a heroine passes on

The Presiding Officers of Parliament, the Speaker of the National Assembly, Ms Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, and the Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces (NCOP), Mr Amos Masondo, described the former Chairperson of the Select Committee on Health and Social Services, Ms Maurencia Gillion, who passed away on 28 February 2023, as a selfless patriot and an outstanding servant of the people who was always driven by deep love for all South Africans.

She passed away during a Members' annual training workshop organised by the NCOP for all its members. Ms Gillion was a member of the African National Congress who represented the Western Cape Province in the NCOP.

The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, Ms Nonhlanhla Ncube-Ndaba, said Ms Gillion was an activist Member of Parliament in an activist Parliament, who understood the purpose and mandate of Parliament in the South African system of constitutional democracy. She said Ms Gillion was a constituency-based MP and always ensured that she correctly represented her constituency in Parliament.

Ms Gillion was the Executive Mayor of the Overberg District Municipality between 2006 and 2010. She then served as a Member of the Western Cape Provincial Legislature from 2014 to 2019 where she was also the Chairperson of the Select Committee on Health and Social Services. Her party, the ANC, deployed her to the NCOP after the 2019 general elections.

Her imprint and her intellectual contribution are part of the shining legacy the sixth Parliament leaves behind. 🇿🇦



Ms Maurencia Gillion – former Chairperson of the Select Committee on Health and Social Services