

in session



Parliament 2023 – Following up on our commitments to the people

Parliament showing commitment to its constitutional mandate in 2023

The Parliament of the Republic of South Africa has consistently shown a steadfast commitment to its constitutional mandates, navigating a year characterised by significant advancements and challenges amid complex domestic and global socio-economic scenarios, as well as intricate geopolitical dynamics.

In its rigorous pursuit of effective oversight, its engagement in comprehensive legislative work, robust public participation, and strategic international collaborations, Parliament has not only advanced but also enriched the democratic tenets fundamental to our constitutional democracy. This report highlights the key performance areas of Parliament's constitutional functions and showcases its proactive role in shaping a responsive and accountable government that resonates with the aspirations and needs of South Africans.

Oversight

Parliament exercises oversight over the executive through various



means including, posing questions on service delivery issues to the President and Cabinet, undertaking physical oversight visits to assess progress on government programmes, and summoning government officials to Parliament to account on the work they do.

The bulk of the work that Parliament undertakes is conducted by the various committees of the two Houses, regarded collectively as the engine that propels the work of Parliament. Committees are where bills are processed, and oversight visits are undertaken and reports on government programmes

are discussed extensively. Here, Members of Parliament have an opportunity to dissect matters that affect citizens in depth. A total of 898 physical, virtual and hybrid committee meetings were held from April to November.

Oversight visits

A total of 19 oversight visits were conducted by various parliamentary committees from April to November.

These oversight visits undertaken by parliamentary committees underscore the crucial role they play in addressing key issues that impact

the advancement of the National Development Plan's priorities, as well as in alleviating poverty, unemployment, and inequality. By identifying challenges, promoting transparency, and fostering cooperation, these visits serve as indispensable tools in advancing the nation's development goals and enhancing the well-being of its citizens.

Through these oversight visits, committees diligently monitored the government's progress in meeting service delivery imperatives. Following each oversight visit, a comprehensive report was generated, recommending corrective measures to expedite implementation.

Questions on service delivery issues

Quantifying the executive's responsiveness, including their rate of response to questions in both Houses, is vital for the functioning of democratic governance and Parliament's mission to exercise effective oversight. The tracking of replies to questions is essential to ensure that the





PARLIAMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Editor

Brent Simons

Production editor

Mava Lukani

Design and layout

Vishaal Lalla

Copy editors

Jane Henshall and Alicestine October

Writers

Mava Lukani, Jabulani Majozi, Sibongile Maputi, Malatswa Molepo, Abel Mputing, Rajaa Azzakani, Sakhile Mokoena and Alicestine October

Photography

Phandulwazi Jikelo

Distribution & subscriptions

Jacqueline Zils

Publisher

Parliament of the Republic of South Africa

Acting Section Manager

Brent Simons

Copyright

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

EDITORIAL ENQUIRIES

Telephone 021 403 8738

Fax 021 403 8096

E-mail

insession@parliament.gov.za

Subscriptions

jzils@parliament.gov.za

Post

PO Box 15, Cape Town, 8000

OUR IDEALS

Vision

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

Strategic Objectives

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

BOOK A TOUR

To tour Parliament

Telephone 021 403 2266

Fax 021 403 3817

E-mail tours@parliament.gov.za

President and his Cabinet remain accountable to Parliament and the citizens they serve. This process also allows Parliament to assess the effectiveness of its mechanisms in bringing about positive changes in the lives of South Africans. The parliamentary question procedure stands as one of the key tools of oversight, providing a means to hold the executive branch accountable.

In the National Council of Provinces (NCOP), a total of 845 questions, including both oral and written, were directed to the executive during the review period. All oral questions have received responses, with only 17 questions awaiting replies, and these are still within the prescribed response period according to the Council rules.

In the National Assembly (NA) this year, out of a total of 4 226 written questions directed at the executive, 3 671 had received responses by 7 December. An additional 323 questions were due for reply by the end of business on 8 December. It's worth noting that questions left unanswered after 9 January 2024 will lapse according to NA Rule 135. Regarding the 380 oral questions directed at the executive, 320 have been responded to.

To address the issue of unanswered questions, the Speaker has written to the Leader of Government Business, requesting a meeting to discuss the number of outstanding questions and strategies to ensure that Cabinet members comply with Rule 143(1) for oral questions and Rule 145(5) for written questions specifying response times.

This request follows quarterly letters to Ministers, as part of the system established by Rule 136, which informs the Leader of Government Business of any Cabinet members who delay in answering parliamentary questions. The Speaker's communications on this matter have been published in the Announcements Tablings and Committee (ATC) Reports.

Debates

Parliamentary debates are an essential part of scrutinising government actions, proposing solutions, and holding the executive to account, thereby ensuring that legislation and policies are well-informed, responsive to societal challenges, and aligned with the aspirations of the nation.

This year, the National Assembly held a total of 118 debates in either hybrid plenary sessions, hybrid mini-plenary sessions, or fully virtual mini-plenary sessions. These plenaries dealt with, among other matters, budget vote debates in respect of the Appropriation Bill, bills for first and second reading, matters of urgent national importance, members' motions, and reports emanating from committees.

House Resolutions

As part of exercising its legislative and oversight function, the National Assembly approved several reports containing proposed resolutions requiring responses from the executive. The resolutions deal with a range of service delivery issues investigated and witnessed by members in the communities they visited.

These resolutions have been communicated to the executive to act, and such action is followed up consistently in oversight engagement between the committee and the relevant department.

Five petitions processed

Parliament is committed to being responsive to the needs of the

public. Any person, group of persons or organisation has the right to petition Parliament or submit an unsolicited public submission seeking redress or relief of some kind. While petitions must be lodged by a Member of Parliament, unsolicited public submissions do not need to be lodged by a member. In both instances, these are referred to a relevant portfolio committee for consideration and report to the NA or the NCOP. Five petitions were received and concluded in both Houses from April to 30 November.

NCOP Provincial Week

The NCOP successfully held its flagship Provincial Week from 11 to 15 September and members engaged in extensive inspection of service delivery points across all nine provinces. The theme for the week-long oversight programme was "Building Viable Provincial and Municipal Infrastructure for Effective Delivery of Services to Communities".

The NCOP delegates, together with their provincial legislature counterparts, spent the week conducting oversight visits to infrastructure projects, including bulk water supply plants, road upgrades, and water treatment plants.

Law-making

Parliament's legislative work undertaken this year is indicative of ongoing efforts to meet the aspirations and address the challenges faced by the people of South Africa.

Over this year, Parliament introduced a total of 43 bills (up from 34 in the





previous year), increasing the total number of bills under Parliament's consideration to 56. These legislative proposals span a wide range of issues, reflecting the responsive nature of our legislative process to the evolving needs of our country, including addressing issues raised in the State Capture Commission report.

As of December, 24 of these bills have successfully gone through rigorous parliamentary procedures and have been passed by Parliament. Furthermore, a total of 10 bills have been assented to and signed into law by the President during this year.

Public participation

65 public hearings held

Parliament continued to offer opportunities for meaningful public involvement in law-making through public hearings.

Several committees held about 65 public hearings across the nine provinces (between July and September alone) on key pieces of legislation, including the Preservation and Development of Agricultural Land Bill, the Climate Change Bill, the Older Persons Amendment Bill, the South African Post Office Amendment Bill, the Independent Municipal Demarcation Bill, the Tobacco Products and Electronic Delivery Systems Control Bill and the Judicial Matters Amendment Bill.

The number of public hearings held during this term serves as an indication of Parliament's commitment to democracy, transparency and inclusivity in the law-making process. These hearings play a critical role in enabling Parliament to be more responsive to the needs of the people and, in turn, enhance its oversight role. By actively engaging South Africans in the law-making process, Parliament is ensuring that the pieces of legislation it passes are representative and aligned with the aspirations of the people parliamentarians represent and serve.

Other bills that went through a public participation process this year include the Railway Safety Bill, the Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill, the Upstream Petroleum Bill, the

Electricity Regulation Amendment Bill, the National Small Enterprise Amendment Bill, and the Older Persons Amendment Bill.

Progress with restoration of Parliament buildings

Significant milestones have been achieved in the Parliament restoration project following the 2022 fire incident that devastated the chamber of the National Assembly and hundreds of offices along with their contents. To date, 155 new offices on the 4th and 5th floors at 90 Plein Street have been created through the intensive refurbishment project, ensuring the physical return of Members of Parliament to Parliament.

In the damaged buildings, rubble

removal, asset verification, and the removal of office contents are now complete after months of intensive work. To ensure the restoration of the damaged buildings proceeds without weather disruptions, the contractors have finished installing a temporary roof on the Old Assembly building.

The actual rebuilding work is scheduled to commence in early 2024, preceded by the demolition of severely fire-affected sections of the damaged building. Stage 2 design concepts have been finalized to ensure compliance with National Building Regulations and to introduce green building concepts beyond restoration work.

The process for the heritage permit application is underway, including stakeholder engagements.



The pre-qualification of contractors has commenced, which will expedite the procurement process once detailed designs and documentation are complete. These designs will seize the opportunity to promote open and easy access to the Parliament Precinct, create an environment conducive to professionalism and teamwork, and integrate the rich diversity of South African culture.

International engagements

Participation in bilateral and multilateral engagements plays a pivotal role in Parliament's commitment to international cooperation while simultaneously advancing its objectives of oversight, parliamentary diplomacy, and the promotion of national interests on the global stage.

Parliament has achieved significant milestones in this regard, through active involvement in a range of international engagements, including hosting the 9th BRICS Parliamentary Forum, participation in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), engagements in the Pan-African Parliament (PAP), contributing in the SADC Parliamentary Forum, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Assembly, the COP28, and study tours.

We are confident that the BRICS Parliamentary Forum discussions and agreements, which followed the successful hosting of the BRICS in Sandton, have opened doors to economic opportunities, increased trade and investment, potentially boosting economic growth and



creating job opportunities for the people.

Our participation in the SADC Parliamentary Forum is important to regional stability and security. By actively participating in discussions on food security and youth unemployment, Parliament influenced policies that address these critical issues, fostering stability and prosperity within the region.

Through participation in international forums like the IPU and COP28, Parliament had a platform to address global challenges such as conflicts, climate change, and humanitarian crises. Parliament played a role in shaping global solutions to these pressing issues, including the Palestine-Israel and Ukraine-Russia issues. Parliament's involvement in international organisations reinforced its commitment to democratic principles and human rights, and

promoted democracy, transparency, and accountability in the global community.

Parliament continued to participate in the IPU Assemblies, including contributing essential insights and proposed solutions to the Russia/Ukraine conflict and the humanitarian crisis in Gaza amid the Israel/Palestine conflict. Parliament's active participation in the IPU, including through the Speaker's role in the IPU Task Force on Ukraine and Russia, demonstrated its dedication to addressing global challenges through diplomacy and cooperation.

The study tours have provided Parliament with valuable insights and best practices, which it can use to improve its oversight functions. By learning from global experiences, Parliament is enabled to hold the executive accountable more effectively, ensuring that government actions align with the needs of the citizens.

Year ahead

President Cyril Ramaphosa has officially requested the Speaker of the National Assembly (NA) and the Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) to convene a Joint Sitting of the two Houses for the State of the Nation Address, scheduled for Thursday, 8 February 2024 at 19:00.

As preparations for this key event on the parliamentary calendar progress, the significance of the upcoming year resonates deeply within the

nation's collective memory.

Parliament is poised to host two significant State of the Nation Addresses (SONA), with the second one scheduled after the elections. This occasion will be particularly momentous as South Africa celebrates the 30th anniversary of its democracy, commemorating three decades since the historic first democratic elections of 1994. This landmark year symbolises the South African people's triumph over centuries of colonialism and apartheid, marking a significant shift in the nation's history.

The year 2024 also marks the 30th anniversary of our democratically-elected Parliament, underscoring the resilience and evolution of South Africa's legislative body. As we prepare to inaugurate the 7th democratically elected Parliament following the elections, efforts are being made to welcome new Members of Parliament. This includes adjusting and aligning our internal procedures, processes and systems, where appropriate, with the Electoral Amendment Act of 2023.

As we approach the end of the current year and look towards these significant milestones, Parliament extends heartfelt wishes for a peaceful and joyous festive season to all South Africans. The anniversary year ahead serves as a reminder of our journey toward a more inclusive and democratic society, celebrating the achievements of the past while forging ahead toward a future of continued progress and unity. 🇿🇦





National Assembly Debates 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence

Members of the National Assembly took the opportunity provided by the debate on 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence (GBV) to give their party's perspective on what ought to be done to uproot this scourge, which blights South Africa's constitutional democracy and threatens the lives of every woman and girl living here. Abel Mputing reports from the debate.



South Africa's high rate of gender-based violence is a blight on our society.

Starting the debate, the Deputy Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development, Mr John Jeffery, said the tragic effects of GBV and femicide are a painful indictment of South African society. "The high levels of gender and sexual violence are tearing our communities apart. Sadly, they are often committed by people who are known to the victim – a teacher, a friend or a neighbour," he said. Gender-based violence is a man's problem, he said, one that is perpetrated by men who

embrace patriarchy and a version of masculinity that harms women.

The solution, in the Minister's view, is to talk to men and boys to uproot these dominant patriarchal practices and perspectives. He was optimistic that the new legislation recently passed into law will change the architectural framework of law and justice that deals with GBV. Among other things, he welcomed

the National Council against Gender Violence and Femicide Bill, recently passed by the National Assembly. The council is tasked with finding preventative measures and a strategic framework to bring a holistic approach to the problem.

Ms Nazley Sharif of the Democratic Alliance was clear that as perpetrators, it is men who bear responsibility for finding solutions

to the problem of GBV. Ironically, women continue to be at the forefront of the fight while men play a supportive role, she pointed out. "This is so absurd, because if men could stop GBV, we wouldn't be a country with the highest levels of GBV in the world," she said.

Ms Sibongile Khawula of the Economic Freedom Fighters questioned the limit of 16 days

of activism against gender-based violence, saying that women suffer its effects 365 days a year. She also complained about the shortcomings of the police and justice clusters' response to acts of GBV. She pointed out that the victims of GBV are often subjected to further ill-treatment at the hands of the police and the justice system. Ms Khawula also cited examples. "Many perpetrators of GBV are often not persecuted due to police inexperience in dealing with these cases. Or they get bail only to cause more trauma to their victims."

Mr Mkakazeleni Buthelezi of the Inkatha Freedom Party also considered the 16-day timeframe too short. He pointed to recent statistics that suggest that we should have "365 days of activism against GBV". He added, "This scourge of violence is a stain on our society and demands urgent attention."

According to Mr Frederik Mulder of the Freedom Front Plus, it is not enough to only fight individual acts of GBV. "We should also fight systematic acts of GBV," he said. "Men must take into cognisance how much power they have, how much influential space they occupy in society, and they should be wary of their actions and behaviours in this regard if they are to play a critical role in ending the violence against women," he cautioned.

Any intervention in this fight should realise the public health crisis caused by pornography and its contribution to this scourge, said Ms Marie Sukers of the African Christian Democratic Party. It has been proven that certain cases of GBV are the result of men watching pornography. This addiction should be addressed and be given the stigma it deserves," she said.

Mr Nqabayomzi Kwankwa of the United Democratic Movement called for men to take collective responsibility for GBV. Men also need to be educated about its negative impact on society, our human rights culture and our constitutional order for which so many fought and sacrificed their lives, he said.

What is most saddening, according to Mr Brett Herron of the GOOD Party, is the police's inability to bring the perpetrators of GBV to book. He cited the Krugersdorp incident in which many young women were raped, as a case in point. "Police made



During the debate, many MPs blamed South Africa's highly patriarchal society for allowing gender-based violence to flourish.

hurried arrests, but there was no DNA evidence to persecute those implicated in this barbaric act of rape," he said.

Ms Sthembile Hlongo of the African National Congress again pointed to patriarchy as the societal architecture that allows GBV to flourish in our society. "It perpetuates male domination in various facets of life. This is due to traditional attributes linked to being a man or a boy which is associated with high economic rewards and political influence. Worst of all," she stressed, "there are societal stigmas when women deviate from traditional gender norms."

In our modern political setting, Ms Hlongo said, male domination has been fortified by the division of labour along gender lines. This has resulted in "... the association of low-status domestic work with femininity and the association of high-status work with high economic rewards, public leadership roles and high political power with masculinity," she pointed out. These gender inequalities support and enable gender imbalances, she said. 🇿🇦





President Cyril Ramaphosa faced questions from MPs on budget cuts and their impact on service delivery.

Finances Take Centre Stage in President's Last Question-and-Answer Session

In November, President Cyril Ramaphosa had to field several questions relating to the Reserve Bank's independence and the impact of the government's cost-containment measures on service delivery during his last question-and-answer session for the year in the National Assembly, writes Alicestine October. These question-and-answer sessions are one tool MPs have to hold the executive arm of state to account.

The first question for the President – a day after the Minister of Finance, Mr Enoch Godongwana, delivered the Medium-Term Budget Policy Statement (MTBPS) – concerned the methods he considered appropriate to expand the Reserve Bank's mandate to include economic development and job creation through managing interest rate hikes. Another part of the same question asked if the President has had engagements with stakeholders to discuss how the Reserve Bank should be made more accountable to Parliament.

In response, President Ramaphosa

stressed that the Reserve Bank's mandate is to protect the value of the currency. "South Africa faces a structural growth and unemployment problem that cannot be addressed by a mere monetary policy stance," the President said. "We must focus on structural factors constraining our growth."

No need to deviate

He explained that high inflation stifles economic growth and erodes people's purchasing power and living standards, especially those of the poor because as inflation rises, the cost of living goes up pushing many purchases beyond the reach of many. The President also said that he sees no need to deviate from the government's current inflation-targeting policy approach.

The President also stressed that the government has no intention of reviewing the mandate of the Reserve Bank, adding that in terms of the Constitution, the Bank must operate independently. However, in terms of the law, the Bank does publish monthly statements on assets and liabilities as well as its annual report and present those to Parliament. "The Bank is, therefore, accountable to Parliament," he said.

In follow-up questions, the President was reminded of the Minister



Several questions from MPs concerned Finance Minister Godongwana's (above) recent Medium-Term Budget Policy Statement, in which he said that South Africa's economic growth is lower than expected.

of Finance's statement on gross domestic product (GDP) growth and was asked if a more accommodating monetary stance is now necessary, given the poor economic growth prospects. President Ramaphosa acknowledged that growth levels have not lived up to the government's expectations but stressed that various reforms are underway to address this.

All these policy instruments should be used interactively, he told MPs, and monetary policy has a role to play. "As I said, section 224 of our Constitution sets our clear objects of the central bank and while it addresses the issue of the value

of our currency, it has to be looked at in broader contexts." South Africa must use all the fiscal and monetary macroeconomic policies at our disposal to foster growth, he continued. "The focus on the value of our currency should not be looked at in isolation but as part of a whole of all the instruments we have to foster growth. If we use this approach – a multidisciplinary one – we will be able to continue to ensure that growth is encouraged," he said.

Cost containment

Referring to the cost-containment measures government has in place and their impact on service delivery,

MPs also raised questions about the extent and impact of this fiscal discipline within government. The President referred to the MTBPS, which outlines South Africa's fiscal position and the government's spending priorities over the next three years. The Finance Minister made it clear that the government has resolved to "... stabilise public finances while maintaining support for the most vulnerable and protecting frontline services," the President elaborated.

"At the same time," he continued, "we are fast-tracking growth-enhancing reforms, which include a new financing mechanism for large, big-ticket infrastructure projects. Work is underway to reconfigure the structure and size of the state while strengthening its capacity to deliver quality basic services. The cost-containment guidelines issued by the National Treasury give advice and guidance to government departments to ensure a sound and prudent management of public finances in the context of significant constraints." He said the increase in fiscal strain is mainly due to reduced revenue and the cost-containment guidelines target non-critical spending items such as travel, catering, accommodation and capital items.

MPs also asked about the recently published Statistics South Africa census findings. According to the President, the census results are much more than just statistics and give the government a toolbox that shows the areas where progress is needed.

The President also gave an update on the various commissions of inquiry currently underway, stating that the government has "learnt many lessons" and is making progress. He singled out the Nugent Commission of Inquiry into the South African Revenue Service and the Commission of Inquiry into allegations of impropriety at the Public Investment Corporation, headed by Judge Lex Mpati. "They've tabled their reports and those reports are being analysed, and proposals and recommendations are being turned into regulations or legislation. And this will be put forward to Parliament for legislation because they've come up with very important recommendations," he told MPs. 🇿

NA Speaker Urges SADC Parliaments to Domesticate Disaster Risk Reduction Framework



The Speaker of the National Assembly (NA), Ms Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, has urged Southern African Development Community (SADC) parliamentarians to domesticate the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Speaker Mapisa-Nqakula was speaking at the opening symposium of the 54th Plenary Assembly of the SADC Parliamentary Forum (SADC PF). The Plenary Assembly session was held in Port Louis, Mauritius, and concluded on 26 November. The theme of the four-day session was: "The Role of Parliaments in Promoting Coordination for Enhanced Disaster Risk Reduction and Recovery Planning in the SADC Region."

The Speaker said the theme recognises the pivotal role parliaments play in ensuring disaster risk reduction and preparedness within the SADC region. "By domesticating the framework, parliaments can advocate for legislative action, oversight and the allocation of resources to strengthen disaster risk reduction recovery planning initiatives," said Ms Mapisa-Nqakula.

She added that parliamentarians have the responsibility to champion policies and mechanisms that empower local communities (particularly communities of women and the youth), enhance early warning systems, and facilitate international cooperation to build resilience in the region to ensure collective preparedness in the face of disasters.

The 2019 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (or IPCC) Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius identified southern Africa as a climate change hotspot. The report projected a concerning trend towards drier and substantially warmer conditions, even under the thresholds of 1.5 or 2 degrees Celsius of global warming.

"This situation is anticipated to further jeopardise the region's food security, particularly in relation to cattle and maize production. It has become clear that no country in our region will remain untouched by the risks and disasters associated with climate change," she said.

The Speaker assured her counterparts that South Africa stands ready to collaborate with regional partners and parliamentarians to enhance disaster risk reduction. "By fostering

coordination, legislative action and resource allocation, parliaments in the region can significantly contribute to building a more resilient and secure future for our communities and the environment," she said.

The Sendai Framework focuses on the adoption of measures that address the three dimensions of disaster risk (exposure to hazards, vulnerability and capacity, and hazards' characteristics) to prevent the creation of new risk, reduce existing risk and increase resilience. The Sendai Framework outlines seven global targets to guide and against which to assess progress. 🇿

'... parliaments can advocate for legislative action, oversight and the allocation of resources to strengthen disaster risk reduction recovery planning initiatives'



Let's coordinate our Response to Climate Change in Southern Africa, says NCOP Chief Whip

National Council of Provinces Chief Whip Mr Seiso Mohai has urged the Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADC PF) to champion the development of a Model Law on Climate Change to harmonise the region's legislative response to climate change.

Chief Whip Mohai was speaking at the 54th SADC PF Plenary Assembly that took place in Port Louis, Mauritius. The Assembly's theme is "The Role of Parliaments in Promoting Coordination for Enhanced Disaster Risk Reduction and Recovery Planning in the SADC Region". South Africa supported the adoption of the report of the Standing Committee on Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources, which emphasises the importance of addressing the impending challenges brought about by climate change.

"I urge the SADC PF to champion the development of a regional Model Law on Climate Change, uniting our legislative response to the climate crisis in a harmonised and impactful manner," Mr Mohai said.

Looking ahead, he added, it has become evident that the region will face unprecedented challenges due to climate change. "It is projected that we will experience higher land and ocean surface temperatures,

which will undoubtedly affect rainfall patterns, wind dynamics and the timing and intensity of weather events," Mr Mohai said. These changes will undoubtedly impact the region's agricultural sector, natural resources and the well-being of communities, he warned.

Mr Mohai commended SADC's efforts to foster a harmonised regional response to climate change, such as the adoption of the SADC Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan. However, he cautioned that legislators' roles do not end there. "It is imperative that we use our influence and responsibility to urge our respective governments to set more ambitious emissions reduction targets, develop sustainable long-term adaptation strategies and establish credible financing plans to support these efforts," he said.

The Chief Whip also called upon the SADC PF to take a step forward in this crucial journey by facilitating the development of a regional parliamentary oversight toolkit based on the outcomes of the COP28, thus enabling SADC member parliaments to bolster their domestic oversight strategies effectively.

"It falls upon us as parliamentarians to take proactive measures in securing the future of our region, fortifying a comprehensive and effective response to the climate crisis. It is through our collective will and determination that we pave the way for a resilient, sustainable future for generations to come," he concluded. 🌱

National Assembly Debates Job Creation and Poverty Alleviation

The National Assembly recently held a debate on "The role of national government policy in job creation and poverty alleviation", which was proposed by Democratic Alliance Member of Parliament, Dr Michael Cardo. Sakhile Mokoena reports on the debate.

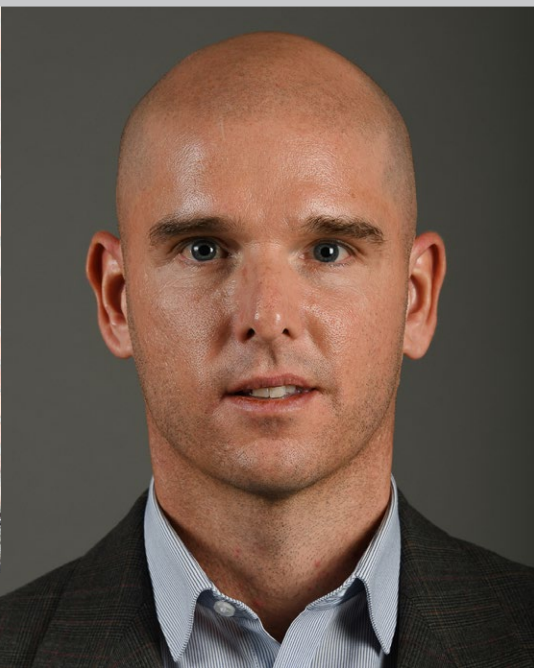
According to Dr Cardo, who serves on the Portfolio Committee on Employment and Labour, government has a responsibility to improve the quality of life of all citizens and to free the potential of each person. Where people are unable to support themselves and their dependents, he said, the state must put in place legislative measures to ensure citizens are able to access social security, along with other socio-economic rights.

"Government policy should be geared towards creating and expanding opportunities. It is the government's responsibility to provide an enabling environment for job creation for economic growth. The government itself cannot create jobs at scale – that's the private sector's role – but for this to happen, certain building blocks need to be in place. The government must see to it that there is a stable fiscal framework, infrastructure, safety and security, and an education system that produces a skilled labour force to propel the economy forward," Dr Cardo said.

Mr Mncedisi Nontsele of the African National Congress accused the DA of speaking from a point of privilege, saying that its members are beneficiaries of the apartheid system. "The ANC government has taken a variety of measures aimed at reforming the apartheid labour market to boost economic growth," he said. Mr Nontsele also serves on the Portfolio Committee on Employment and Labour.

"The new labour laws were modelled on the International Labour Organisation standards for labour and decent work agenda," Mr Nontsele pointed out. He told members of the National Assembly that the Employment Equity Act plays an essential role in rectifying historical imbalances. "It is a sign of government's commitment to addressing historical inequalities in the workplace. The affirmative action policy liberated not only Africans but also a majority of white women who were previously considered as second-class citizens," Mr Nontsele said. However, despite the government's achievements in transforming the workplace, women in senior positions were still underrepresented, notably in the private sector, he said.

The Economic Freedom Fighters' Mr Mzwanele Manyi said unemployment in South Africa is excessively high and threatens the country's stability. He further said it is the government's primary responsibility to prevent the approaching social and economic "Armageddon" and position the country on a sustainable



Dr Michael Cardo.

development path. "Poverty is a symptom of a deeply unequal economic structure and to address this we need policies targeting the

root causes, including progressive taxation and the nationalisation of key industries to prevent wealth concentration among the privileged few," he said.

"Large-scale industrialisation is pivotal and central to generating employment on a massive scale. A comprehensive job creation programme focusing on infrastructure development, sustainable agriculture and an expanded public works programme is the way to go, laying the foundation for sustained long-term economic growth," Mr Manyi said. He also suggested that the education system needs to be revamped to focus on technical skills to align with the dynamic needs of the job market.

Mr Siphosethu Ngcobo of the Inkatha Freedom Party said, "For years, the IFP has been a passionate advocate for sustainable and long-term job creation as a vital step towards restoring dignity to all South Africans. Central to achieving this vision is the imperative role of government policies, meticulously crafted not only to secure income for the impoverished but also to economically empower them."

Freedom Front Plus Member of Parliament Ms Heloise Denner blamed the high unemployment rate on government policies such as employment equity and black economic empowerment (BEE). "A merit-based appointment system means that the best person for the job, regardless of race, should be

appointed. In that way, appointment processes will be fair, and the best possible work will be delivered, which, in turn, will contribute to economic growth and create more jobs.

"Policies such as BEE are too often used to defraud the state, enabling cadre deployment and nepotism. Instead of levelling the playing field, it merely stacks the odds against the millions of unemployed, impoverished South Africans," she said. Ms Denner further argued that government's education policy severely impacts job creation, as there is a substantial gap between the skills produced by the education system and the skills required by the job market. 🇿🇦

MPs Debate Water Provision Crises in National Assembly



Mr Floyd Shivambu.

Members of the National Assembly recently debated what has been called a water provision crisis in South Africa in a mini-plenary in the National Assembly, writes Alicestine October. The Chief Whip of the Economic Freedom Fighters, Mr Floyd Shivambu, proposed this subject for debate.

Leading the debate, Mr Shivambu stressed the importance of water for sustainable human development. "The crisis of water provision in South Africa is a man-made crisis. It is not a result of some unforeseen natural disasters," he told the plenary, adding that there is no



justification that there are still areas in South Africa where people do not have access to potable water.

Mr Shivambu cited the National State of Water Report of 2022 and said it was clear from the report that part of the crisis in water provision is that water infrastructure is aging and becoming dysfunctional. Aging infrastructure results in water losses, he said.

He also referred to the National Water and Sanitation Master Plan, which he said shows the poor state of the country's wastewater treatment systems. Mr Shivambu also expressed concern that the country may face a water deficit come 2030, given the prevailing water losses in ailing municipalities and the lack of skills and

mismanagement of water resources, problems he placed firmly at the ruling party's door.

Interventions underway

Also participating in the debate was the Deputy Minister of Water and Sanitation, Mr David Mahlobo, who was frank about the challenges and who outlined interventions underway. "Our country remains a water-scarce country, but as the ANC, we want to assure South Africans that our water balance in terms of the existing demand and on a national scale – we don't have a problem of water scarcity. But we must admit," he said, "that there are localised deficits due to climate change that we have seen in Nelson Mandela Bay and some parts of Gauteng, where there has been an increased demand on the basis that

the Lesotho Highlands Water Project was delayed."

Mr Mahlobo told members that statistics show that 90% of South Africans have access to water. "Nobody can deny the fact that access to water has improved and that the issues of the burden of disease, like waterborne diseases, hunger and poverty have been improved."

Referring to women who historically have often borne the brunt of having to fetch and carry water over long distances, he said, "Nobody can deny that there was a burden that was actually given to women that had to walk long distances and children that were denied the right to go to school and participate in all these economic activities – the ANC has reversed that."

Nonetheless, he acknowledged that there are still issues around municipal water distribution systems that the government is addressing. He also flagged the deterioration of water quality "due to human activity – whether it is industrial or whether it is domestic use – that impacts on water quality". Other challenges, he said, include water losses and the impact of climate change. "Most of the delays around the implementation of water supply development projects have been unlocked," he said, referring to the Lesotho Highlands Phase 2 Project.

Toward solutions

NA member Ms Mookgo Matuba

(ANC) also reminded members that since 1994 there have been massive water infrastructure projects to address unequal access to this resource. “[These water infrastructure projects] have been delivered for the benefit of communities but what is lacking is that communities must take ownership of this important asset. Communities must be made to understand that the government is a government for the people by the people, so government property is community property,” she said.

According to Mr Leon Basson (DA), South Africans must become water wise, and government must create public awareness of the reality of the effect of climate change. “We must use less water,” he said. While stressing that South Africa is a water-scarce country, Mr Basson noted that the lack of infrastructure maintenance and the failure of infrastructure is a major contributor to the water crisis.

IFP MP Ms Sbuyiselwe Buthelezi bemoaned the cuts to municipal conditional grants and the impact this will have on addressing the water crisis. She also stressed that the unpredictability of climate change shows the need for proper planning. “Currently, government’s efforts stand miniscule to the needs and demands of the country,” she said. “Unfortunately, there is no hope for this crisis to be resolved, as almost 6% of municipal conditional grants have been cut by National Treasury. And while climate change adds to the crisis, poor planning and underfunding remain the biggest culprits.” Ms Buthelezi said the government keeps telling people to save water. “But it is impossible to save something that is not there.”

Freedom Front Plus member Mr Pieter Mey also warned that droughts will only get worse and ageing infrastructure, urbanisation and inadequate water storage facilities are all increasing pressure on water resources and infrastructure. He too pleaded for better planning and management that should include measures such as desalination, treating and recycling wastewater, among others. 🌱



Big Steps Underway to Fast-track Issuing of Water-use Licences



Ms Machweme Semanya

During a briefing in November from the Department of Water and Sanitation on its 2023/24 second quarter results, the Portfolio Committee on Water and Sanitation welcomed the news that 94 skilled employees have joined the provincial offices of the department’s water authorisation units in this quarter. These officers are employed to process water-use licences and complete the process within the stipulated 90 days, as announced by President Cyril Ramaphosa

during the 2021 State of the Nation Address, writes Malatswa Molepo.

President Ramaphosa’s announcement was one of the pillars of Operation Vulindlela, which intended to fast-track service delivery and remove impediments blocking economic recovery. When the announcement was made, it took more than 300 days for the department to issue water-use licences and this was identified as an impediment to economic growth and job creation.

“The appointment of the 94 officials at water authorisation units at the department’s provincial offices will ensure that the department has the requisite skills base to process the applications timeously. The committee appreciates the resourcing of provincial offices coupled with revised application templates and addressing connectivity challenges to enhance the online application process, as this will ensure achievement of the 90-day target,” Mr Robert Mashego, the Chairperson of the committee, said during the briefing.

The department also announced that it has re-designed its systems so that applications now take 90 days and still comply with the relevant sections of the National Water Act.

The department also reconfigured the E-WULAAS online application portal to align it with the revised process and to reduce downtime. E-WULAAS is the online web portal for the submission, processing and authorisation of water use applications.

The department has also committed to enhancing the application process by improving communication with applicants to familiarise them with the new online application platform. These communication initiatives will also provide applicants with information about which documentation is required to apply for a water-use licence to ensure that applications are not delayed.

According to the National Water Act 36 of 1998, the following activities require water use licences – taking water from a water resource; storing water; impeding or diverting the flow of water in a watercourse; discharging water containing waste into a water resource; disposing of waste that may detrimentally impact on water resources; and altering the bed, banks, course, or characteristics of a watercourse.

The committee has committed to continue monitoring progress to ensure that applications for water-use licences are not delayed, which will help to ensure that water resources play an enabling role in growing South Africa’s economy. 🌱

National Assembly Adopts Motion to Suspend Diplomatic Relations with Israel



The National Assembly has adopted a motion calling for the South African government to close the Israeli Embassy in South Africa and suspend all diplomatic relations with Israel. The move was in response to the ongoing human rights violations in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Members debated the motion in the National Assembly last Thursday.

The motion, proposed by the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), highlighted the continuous construction of settler houses on Palestinian land, an action that contravenes numerous United Nations resolutions. It emphasised that the expansionist policies and construction of settler houses on Palestinian territories are major obstacles to achieving a peaceful resolution in the longstanding Israel-Palestine conflict.

In adopting the motion, the National Assembly has acknowledged that the Israeli government's annexation of Palestinian land and the subsequent harm to Palestinian civilians,

including children, are actions that not only violate international law but also perpetuate a cycle of violence. Such actions undermine the fundamental humanity of the Palestinian people and stand as a barrier to peace in the Middle East.

This decision by the National Assembly is a call to action for all freedom-loving people worldwide. It also is a stand against the injustices faced by Palestinians and an affirmation of South Africa's commitment to international law, human rights, and the pursuit of peace. The motion condemned the egregious acts of violence against defenceless civilians in Gaza, including the bombing of hospitals, and recognises that lasting peace in the Middle East is unattainable as long as Palestinian lands remain occupied.

The motion reflected South Africa's stance regarding its own history in overcoming apartheid and its ongoing commitment to fight against oppression and for human rights globally. The National Assembly's resolution urged other nations and international bodies to join in solidarity with the Palestinian cause and to support their rights to self-determination and sovereignty.

*Explanatory note on motions adopted by the National Assembly:

When the National Assembly adopts a motion, it becomes a resolution of the House. Resolutions adopted by Parliament play a crucial role in the functioning of a democratic government. They are a means by which the legislature, representing the will of the people, expresses its views, concerns, and recommendations on various matters.

Once a resolution is adopted by the House, it becomes an official expression of the will of Parliament. The Speaker of the House has the responsibility to formally bring this resolution to the attention of the President and the relevant or affected government department. This serves as a formal communication channel between the legislative and executive branches of government.

Resolutions adopted by Parliament are generally not binding on the government and this is rooted in the doctrine of the separation of powers. Parliament, as the legislative branch, may express its views through resolutions, but it cannot dictate executive decisions. The only way its resolutions may be binding, in this context is through a piece of legislation.

While resolutions are not legally binding, they hold significant importance in the democratic process. They represent the collective voice of the elected representatives of the people and reflect the concerns and aspirations of the citizenry. The government, therefore, must take resolutions seriously, considering them as valuable input into policy-making and governance.

Although resolutions may not be binding, they should not be ignored by the government without reasonable justification. Ignoring a resolution without justification can lead to serious concerns about accountability and transparency in government actions. Parliament's role includes overseeing the executive branch, and resolutions are one of the tools used for this purpose. For the government to ignore a parliamentary resolution, there must be compelling justification. Such justifications may include constitutional or legal constraints, national security concerns, or practical reasons that make it infeasible to implement the resolution. It is essential for the government to account on these justifications transparently to maintain trust and accountability. 🇿🇦

International Relations Minister Calls for Reform of Global Governance System Amid Ongoing Conflict in Gaza



Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Dr Naledi Pandor (pictured above centre, with President Ramaphosa) delivered a statement in the National Assembly (NA) explaining the South African government's position on the current Israel/Palestine crisis. Dr Pandor reiterated South Africa's call for reform of international governance bodies such as the United Nations (UN), writes Alicestine October.

In the statement, which preceded a debate by Members of Parliament from both Houses of Parliament on the issue, she referred to the "frustration throughout the world that people are attacked and losing their lives with little or no action to stop these atrocities".

Thousands of people have died since 7 October when over a thousand Israelis were killed in a bombing carried out by the Palestinian Islamist militant group Hamas. Over 200 people living in Israel were reportedly taken hostage. Israel

retaliated by bombing Gaza, leaving thousands of Palestinians dead, wounded and displaced. "The collective punishment that Israel is exacting on all Palestinian people is an affront that has gone on for too long," Dr Pandor said.

Reiterating the South African government's position, the Minister said the country "remains steadfast in calling for an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire and the full – as well as complete – opening of all military corridors to ensure much-needed aid and basic services reach those in need". Cabinet has also since announced that South Africa is recalling its diplomatic representatives in Israel – a decision some opposition MPs criticised during the debate.

South Africa was among UN member states calling for a ceasefire in the UN General Assembly but, Dr Pandor told MPs, this call was ignored. "It is impossible for us to continue to proclaim the importance of international law and the importance of the UN Charter for some situations and not for others," she said, adding that the rule of law seemingly only applies to a select few. "For international law to be credible, it should be uniformly applied and not be selective."

Dr Pandor said, "The notion of Israel's right to defend itself through military means has been used erroneously in international law by many and deliberately by others to justify the unlawful use of force by Israel on the people of Palestine in Gaza and the West Bank. The crime of genocide," she said, "sadly looms large in the current situation in Gaza."

The Minister accused Israel of violating international law and called on the International Criminal Court to issue an arrest warrant for Israeli top leadership, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Dr Pandor also drew parallels with Africa's own genocide that occurred in Rwanda in 1994. Then too, she said, the world watched as innocent people were massacred, despite an international system established after the Second World War to ensure that these types of atrocities are not repeated. After the Rwandan genocide, various international judicial mechanisms were created to once more ensure that history does not repeat itself, but the selective application of these international instruments – often for own narrow self-interests – call into question the credibility and effectiveness of this system, the Minister said.

"It is a system that has failed the people of Gaza, as it did in 1994 the people of Rwanda. What is needed now, more than ever before, is reforming the system of global governance so that it is fair, equitable and has the capacity to respond to the needs of all persons in situations of threat and harm," Dr Pandor said. "The system that is needed should not just be a tool for the most powerful country in the world, but one that provides protection for the most vulnerable."

"The inadequacy of the UN Security Council, which we pointed to many times – a council that has a mandate derived from the UN Charter for maintaining international peace and security – has become an affront," Dr Pandor continued. And, due to the politicisation of this body, it has until now been unable to call for a much-needed ceasefire to get humanitarian aid to those who need it. "This one to once again illustrates the urgent need for the reform of this body," Dr Pandor said. 🇷🇺

'The collective punishment that Israel is exacting on all Palestinian people is an affront that has gone on too long.'



The Department of Home Affairs is putting several new initiatives in place to ease the long queues that are a common sight outside Home Affairs offices around the country.

Steps Underway to Address Long Queues at Home Affairs, NCOP Delegates Told

During an oral question and reply session with Ministers in the Peace and Security Cluster 1C in the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) recently, the Minister of Home Affairs, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, fielded questions from permanent delegates on his department's plans to address long queues at Home Affairs offices, writes Alicestine October.

Dr Motsoaledi said that the department is introducing a virtual interactive self-service machine, which he also called a kiosk. These kiosks, he said, will be introduced in the nine provinces, especially in rural areas that are not connected currently.

The minister explained to delegates that with this system, people will be able to serve themselves, like using a bank ATM.

"They will be able to get their IDs. It also depends on the facial recognition system that we are already piloting," he said. The department had already ordered and piloted these kiosks but the minister stresses that they will not be able to process first-time ID applications, only reissuing of IDs.

Doing what we can

Dr Motsoaledi told delegates that finding solutions for long queues only addresses the symptoms of the problem. "The heart of long queues is the SITA system that is always down," he said. Dr Motsoaledi said his department depends on the State Information Technology Agency (or SITA) for connectivity, especially in rural villages. He said that while SITA has its own plans for revamping its system and addressing its challenges, long queues at the Department of Home Affairs offices remain a big headache.

"So, in the meantime, we are doing what we can," he said, referring to the BAPS system and the new kiosks. The BAPS system, Dr Motsoaledi explained, is a branch appointment booking system for the live capture of IDs and passports. The system means people only arrive at the Home Affairs offices at the time given to them. "And most people who are using this system spend no more than 15 minutes in Home Affairs, obviating the problem of long queues," he said.

One EFF delegate from the Northern Cape asked the Minister why his department is not partnering with other departments to have permanent offices in communities – like taking Home Affairs to the people. She asked what the department is doing to ensure that people receive the documents they

need, since many in rural areas cannot afford to travel elsewhere to get documents such as death certificates.

According to Dr Motsoaledi, his department uses mobile units that have all the equipment and even generators to provide services in more remote areas. He said the department already has about 100 of these units and is expecting 100 more soon that will help provide services to more rural communities. The Minister also provided an update on the progress of the Border Management Authority and explained the measures his department has put in place to prevent the "possible abuse of the new e-visa system by some foreign nationals" and how the department intends to modernise the immigration services.

SA's push for UN reform

Deputy Minister of International Relations Mr Alvin Botes was second in line to respond to delegates' questions. While the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Dr Naledi Pandor, had earlier in the National Assembly called for the reform of global governance systems amid the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza, Mr Botes also told delegates that the South African government will continue to advance its UN reform agenda.

He was asked by permanent delegate Ms Shahidabibi Shaikh whether South Africa has influenced the United Nations to start discussions on ways the international body could transform to better serve its role, cognisant of the current global dynamics.

"The South African government has been a consistent, ardent and vocal advocate for the reform of the United Nations in particular the UN Security Council, which has the final mandate to provide the stewardship as it relates to the peace and security architecture," Mr Botes replied. In fact, over the years, South Africa has been arguing for the need to reform the Security Council so that it reflects the diversity of the member states of the United Nations, he said.

"We do so, understanding that the Security Council, established in 1945 of course, can no longer constitute a summary reflection 78 years later in 2023." Mr Botes said that the current configuration, where you have five permanent members with veto powers, too often results in a stalemate in the balance of forces, rendering the UN unable to resolve peace and security issues. Mr Botes explained that South Africa believes that if the Security Council is not reformed, it will continue to lack legitimacy in the eyes of those member states and regions of the world that are not represented there. 🌍



Justice and Correctional Services Committee Recommends Judges be Removed from Office

The Portfolio Committee on Justice and Correctional Services resolved in November to recommend that the National Assembly (NA) remove suspended Western Cape Judge President John Hlophe (pictured above, second from left, arriving in Parliament for State of the Nation address) and retired Judge Nkola Motata from office, writes Rajaa Azzakani.

The resolution follows the decision by most members serving on the committee that the findings of gross misconduct against both judges were procedurally fair and warranted removal from office.

The African National Congress and Democratic Alliance agreed that both judges, who have been found guilty of gross misconduct by the Judicial Service Commission (JSC), should be removed. The Economic Freedom Fighters' Adv Busisiwe Mkhwebane, however, vehemently opposed their removal.

Committee Chairperson Mr Bulelani Magwanishe said the committee

processes relating to both judges were undertaken in terms of Section 177 of the Constitution after the Judicial Services Commission's (JSC) findings of gross misconduct were referred to the NA for further consideration and possible removal.

The committee previously heard from Dr Barbara Loots of Parliament's Constitutional and Legal Services regarding the process followed so far and the committee's role. The committee heard that its role is limited and does not include conducting an inquiry or repeating the work of the JSC. Parliament's responsibility is to deliberate on the consequences of the JSC findings and indicate whether removal should follow.

The committee gave both judges an opportunity to provide extenuating circumstances to ensure a fair process for the purposes of its deliberations. Mr Magwanishe said both took up the opportunity to do so comprehensively. "An extension was granted when a request for more time was made," Mr Magwanishe said.

A defence "lacking integrity"

The JSC findings relate to two complaints against Judge Motata. One concerned his defence in his criminal trial and the other was

'Most members serving on the committee resolved that the findings of gross misconduct against both judges were procedurally fair and warranted removal from office.'

a charge of racism. In the first matter, when conducting a trial, the accused's lawyer is obliged to present a defence based on instructions received from the accused. In Judge Motata's case, he instructed his lawyer to inform the court that he was not drunk at the scene of a motor accident. A JSC tribunal thereafter concluded that Judge Motata had conducted a defence that he knew lacked integrity.

On the complaint of racism, the tribunal held that the judge's conduct and remarks at the scene of the car accident were racist. They thus impinged on and prejudiced the impartiality and dignity of the courts. The tribunal's decision of gross misconduct was later overturned by the JSC to one of misconduct.

Judge Motata indicated to the committee that he was found

guilty of misconduct only by the JSC and consequently fined R1 152 650.40, which he has already paid. He argued that no JSC decision of gross misconduct was properly referred to the committee. In correspondence to the committee, the "small" JSC (which excludes Members of Parliament serving on the JSC) confirmed the committee's position, namely that the JSC's decision of misconduct was set aside and replaced by the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA) with one of gross misconduct, as per the initial finding of the JSC's Judicial Conduct Tribunal. The JSC indicated that the issue of the fine already paid should be addressed by the JSC and Judge Motata and does not influence the current parliamentary process.

Allegation of improper influence

Judge President Hlophe, whose JSC finding of gross misconduct relates to a complaint of attempted improper

influence brought by two Justices of the Constitutional Court, alleged that undue political pressure was applied to remove him from office. Those who disliked him allegedly actively pursued the JSC process until it amounted to a finding of gross misconduct. He further claimed it was in the public interest for the committee not to proceed with its deliberations on possible removal.

He further noted that until his December 2022 suspension, he was the most senior judge (serving 28 years) and has 23 years of service as Judge President. He is also a well-respected academic having published and presented numerous papers and chapters in books nationally and internationally. He served as a member of the South African Law Commission, delivered many reported judgments, some which were referred to with authority in SCA and Constitutional Court judgments, and is still held in high esteem by many jurists and scholars.

No legal impediment

Committee member Mr Werner Horn said MPs all swore allegiance to the Constitution, which includes non-racialism. He said that Adv Mkhwebane's suggestion that an African judge should be treated differently flies in the face of that. Another member, Ms Nomathemba Maseko-Jele, while expressing sympathy with Judge Motata's family, said ubuntu cannot be used "loosely". She said the committee has looked at the facts and the circumstances of the matter. The decision was also supported by committee member Mr Steve Swart. Adv Mkhwebane urged the committee to come to a different conclusion.

Committee member Mr Qubudile Dyantyi was also not persuaded by her argument and said there was no legal impediment for the committee to continue with its work. Judge Hlophe was free to attempt to obtain an interdict but, in the meantime, Parliament was constitutionally obligated to deal with this matter, which has dragged on for 15 years already.

The committee will recommend to the NA that both judges be removed. If such a motion is adopted with a two-thirds majority, the President must then remove the judges. 🇿🇦



NCOP adopts Division of Revenue Amendment and the Correctional Services Amendment Bills

The National Council of Provinces (NCOP) recently passed two Bills – the Division of Revenue Amendment Bill and the Correctional Services Amendment Bill. The two Bills were previously passed by the National Assembly (NA) and were sent to the NCOP for concurrence.

The Minister of Finance, Mr Enoch Godongwana, tabled the Division of Revenue Amendment Bill in Parliament on Wednesday, 1 November, when he presented the Medium-Term Budget Policy (MTBPS) statement.

The Money Bills Amendment Procedure and Related Matters Act No 9 of 2009 (as amended by the

Money Bills Amendment Procedure and Related Matters Amendment Act, No 13 of 2018) requires the Minister of Finance to table a Division of Revenue Amendment Bill with a revised fiscal framework if the adjustments budget affects changes to the Division of Revenue Act for the relevant year.

The Bill and its annexures address changes to schedules; provincial allocations; local government allocations; and gazetted conditional grant frameworks and allocations. Following a debate during its plenary, the NCOP adopted the Select Committee on Appropriation's report with its recommendations and passed the Division of Revenue Amendment Bill.

Also, during a recent plenary, the NCOP passed the Correctional Services Amendment Bill. The Bill was introduced in Parliament in

June 2023 to rectify unconstitutional sections of the Correctional Services Act of 1998. A December 2020 Constitutional Court ruling declared sections 88A(1)(b) and 91 of the Act constitutionally invalid to the extent that they fail to provide an adequate level of independence to the Judicial Inspectorate for Correctional Services.

The Bill further gives effect to provisions in the Act for community participation in the parole system. Among other things, it also compels the Department of Correctional Services to provide, as far as possible, measures to accommodate disabled prisoners. Taking into consideration the impending Constitutional Court deadline of 3 December 2023, the NCOP Plenary agreed to the Bill.

The Bills will now be sent to the President for assent, as required by the Constitution. 🇿🇦



We Must do More to Educate Citizens on Draft Bills Before They Attend Public Hearings

The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Mineral Resources and Energy, Mr Sahlulele Luzipo, has called on municipalities, provincial government and provincial legislatures to work with Parliament to better inform and educate citizens on proposed legislation. This, according to Mr Luzipo, will help citizens participate more effectively in public hearings on draft legislation held in their communities.

Mr Luzipo was responding to several complaints raised by residents who attended the Electricity Regulation Amendment Bill public hearings in Mogale City, Soweto, Benoni and Shoshanguve in Gauteng.

Many residents claimed that they were not formerly informed or educated about the content of the Bill. Several residents claimed that they had only seen the Bill for the first time on the eve of the public hearings. Residents also complained that they were not provided with information or educational workshops on the Bill. As a result, they were not confident in supporting the Bill.

Addressing the complaints,

Mr Luzipo said, "Municipalities formally received the Bill and its summary on 19 October. We also sent it to the provincial legislatures. They are then expected to assist Parliament to educate and inform citizens on why we are coming and what we are coming to do.

"However, we will raise with our own principals how people complained about the inconsistency between the three spheres of government. We will raise this with our own parliamentary leaders, provincial governments, provincial legislatures and municipalities. In future, we must also try to go into areas where our people live. As we move forward, we will ask municipalities to give us a venue closer to where their residents live," he said.

Mr Luzipo thanked the residents for bringing their complaints to the committee and urged them to go back to their councillors and municipality, who will implement the Bill eventually, to demand that they improve people's understanding of the Bill by conducting workshops with residents on the content of the Bill.

The Electricity Regulation Amendment Bill seeks to Amend the Electricity Regulation Act of 2006 (Act No. 4 of 2006). Its main purpose is to amend the Act to improve the administration of the Act; to provide for additional electricity, new

generation capacity and electricity infrastructure; and to provide for the establishment, duties, powers, and functions of the Transmission System Operator SOC Ltd.

Residents' proposals
Gauteng residents attending the public hearing proposed that the Bill be amended to ensure that only South African citizens are employed on future electricity infrastructure development projects and that only local companies secure tenders. They further proposed that electricity tariffs be capped in the final amended Bill, as this will benefit the poor, people with disabilities and the elderly.

Both those supporting and opposing the Bill agreed that it will open the energy market to allow competition for Eskom, which could result in cheaper electricity in the long term. This, they argued, would benefit all South Africans who are "currently being abused by the state-owned enterprise".

Residents across Gauteng proposed that the Bill include limits on electricity price increases. They want the Bill to reflect a pro-poor character. They also want the final Bill to include skills transfer and training programmes aimed at empowering youth and people between the ages of 35 and 45. These trained residents can then be used to manage and to protect

electricity infrastructure from criminals.

Many of the residents participating hearings also called for harsher prison sentences and penalties for those arrested and convicted of stealing or damaging electricity infrastructure. In Benoni, residents called for cable thieves and scrapyards owners who buy from them to be charged with treason. Together with the residents of Shoshanguve, they called for the minimum prison term for these acts to be increased from five to 10 years. They also proposed that the minimum fine increase from R1 million to between R5 and R10 million.

Several residents indicated that although the proposed amendments were good and would improve the Bill, they could not support it as they had been without electricity for almost six years. Many residents in the Mogale Local Municipality rejected the Bill after a dispute with national electricity service provider Eskom. Residents also expressed their displeasure that both Eskom and the National Energy Regulator of SA were not present at the hearing.

Mr Luzipo called on South Africans to use the opportunity provided by Parliament's public participation processes to influence the Electricity Regulation Amendment Bill that is currently subject to a nationwide public consultation process. 🙏



Social Development Committee Concludes Public Hearings on Older Persons Amendment Bill

The Portfolio Committee on Social Development recently concluded nationwide public hearings on the Older Persons Amendment Bill. Older people and other residents in every district and province where public hearings on the Bill were held shared common problems, including the abuse they suffer at the hands of young people, even their own grandchildren, who take their old age grants, writes Mava Lukani.

The committee heard how older people believe their human rights are ignored as they grow older. They may be referred to as senior citizens, they said, but this does not translate into care or love. Ms Nonkanyiso Ngxulu of Lusikisiki in the OR Tambo District in the Eastern Cape told the committee that elderly people, especially frail ones, are often regarded as witches and are brutally killed in their villages.

Lack of care

Most elderly people who participated in the public hearings also complained about the lack of care and respect they experienced at healthcare facilities and police stations. They said they stand in

long queues and are not attended to. Health facilities are also far away from where they live, adding to their challenges. What is more, police officials do not investigate reported cases of older person abuse and sometimes cases of older person abuse are not reported because police officials are notorious for demanding bribes (known as brown envelopes).

In some hearings, participants proposed that the Bill should include traditional authorities as stakeholders because they have a significant role in their districts in upholding the rights and alleviating the plight of older people. They also called for the Bill to give social workers the right to monitor residential facilities for older people to ensure they meet the norms and standards of caring for older persons.

Older Persons' Desk

Participants in the public hearings in North West Province appealed to the government to employ more social workers to conduct home visits. They said older people, especially the frail, live alone in their homes, which makes them vulnerable to abuse.

In other hearings in the North West, in the Bojanala District, residents called for older people to be represented in Parliament through an Older Persons' Desk, similar to the one located in Premiers' offices in the provinces. They also

called for the means test to be removed from the Old Age Grant and asked that the Bill recognise the significance of recreational activities because this keeps older people mentally and physically stimulated. Some residents also called on the Department of Social Development to revive the Age in Action and Golden Games in the province.

Local representation

Some participants in the hearings called for a post in municipal offices dedicated to the issues of older people. They suggested that this post should be staffed by a capable older person who understands their challenges. This, they hope, will ensure that their healthcare and other concerns become part of municipalities' integrated development plans.

There was also a view that the Rights Charter of Older Persons should be made readily available to older people and be accessible in public institutions. It should also be enforced and there should be consequences for those who violate its principles.

Participants in public hearings on the Bill also noted that police forums should be capacitated to be more effective in preventing older person abuse in their communities. The committee also heard that there is still a gap between the quality of the services provided to white care

facility residents and black residents. They suggested that one possible intervention to close the gap would be to ensure transparency in the allocation and appropriation of local municipalities' budgets for older people.

Way forward

Outlining the process that will follow the conclusion of the public hearings, the committee Chairperson, Ms Nonkosi Mvana, said that all the views and submissions received during public hearings will be collated and discussed. The committee will then compile a report on the Bill, and the Bill and the report will be submitted to the National Assembly (NA) for deliberation. Once the Bill has been approved in the NA, it will pass to the National Council of Provinces for concurrence and thereafter to the President for assent and signing into law.

The Older Persons Amendment Bill seeks, among other things, to strengthen the protection and prevention of abuse of older persons; eliminate harmful traditional practices including witchcraft accusations against older persons; and recognise the responsibilities of older persons in passing on inter-generational knowledge and wisdom. The Bill also provides for the removal of older persons to temporary safe care without a court order. 🌟



Festive Season Road Safety Plan Gets Green Light From Transport Committee

The Portfolio Committee on Transport has given the green light to the Festive Season Road Safety Plan for December 2023/January 2024, but called for documents presented to the committee to be coordinated, writes Sibongile Maputi.

The Department of Transport and its entities briefed the Portfolio Committee on Transport on the Festive Season Road Safety Plan for December 2023/January 2024. The entities that worked on the plan include the South African Road Agency, the Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC), the Road Traffic Infringement Agency, the Road Accident Fund, and the Cross Border Road Transport Agency.

RTMC CEO, Adv Makhosini Msibi said the plan was informed by the lessons learnt over the past five years and includes various milestones that will help the entities achieve the targets set out in the plan.

Adv Msibi said much of the focus will be on five provinces: the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng, Limpopo and the Western Cape, as past experience has shown that these provinces are hotspots for road travel problems during

holiday periods. "From the 15 to 28 December, we will then intensify deployment of law enforcement, particularly on the weekends and between 3 pm to midnight," he said. Pedestrians will also receive attention, as they have accounted for a significant number of fatalities in the past.

"We realised that we needed to have a theme and work towards the attainment of that theme. There will be some pre-festive messaging done via the media. We will leave no one behind and when we come out of the festive we should record no fatality," Adv Msibi assured the committee. He emphasised safety, tolerance and patience on the road.

Committee member Mr Lawrence McDonald said he had concerns, as it seemed that the plan did not consider problems that arise with minibus taxis pulling heavy trailers. "It is still a bit worrying that the use of minibus taxis using trailers during the Easter and festive season is not receiving attention. Those minibuses can take only 400 kg," Mr McDonald said.

Mr McDonald cautioned that if the department does not look at the causes of accidents, it will not be able to stop them. "It is possible that some drivers do not even know the weight limit of the vehicles they are driving," he said. 🙏



Higher Education Committee Meets with Stakeholders to Discuss Readiness for 2024 Academic Year

Stakeholders in the higher education sector briefed the Portfolio Committee on Higher Education Science and Innovation recently on their efforts to ensure that the 2024 academic year begins well, writes Jabulani Majozi.

The National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), Universities South Africa (USAF), the South African Public Colleges Organisation (SAPCO), the South African Union of Students (SAUS), and the South African Technical and Vocational Education and Training Students Association all briefed the committee on their plans, concerns and possible risks in anticipation of the year ahead.

During her opening remarks, committee Chairperson Ms Nompandolo Mkhathshwa said university councils could play a bigger role in supporting accountability by ensuring that universities and TVET colleges are ready for 2024. Members of the committee agreed that honest and transparent stakeholder engagements could ease the turmoil

experienced by many institutions at the beginning of an academic year.

USAF, an umbrella body comprising 26 publicly funded universities, told the committee that 210 000 first-time students are expected to enrol, with total enrolment in the public sector standing at 1.1 million. The addition of the private sector brings the total to 1.3 million students. USAF further said the ratio of female to male enrolments is 60:40. USAF is concerned, meanwhile, that National Senior Certificate results will only be released in the third week of January, but some institutions accept students in early January.

SAPCO, which represents 50 TVET colleges, said TVET students receive less funding than university students, an imbalance that should be rectified, particularly when it comes to living allowances. SAPCO also noted that 40 000 beds have been accredited in 2024 and proposed that NSFAS and service providers enter into direct leases and agreements on rental rates. SAPCO welcomed the fact that returning students' allowances are paid two weeks after their results are released and their registrations confirmed.

However, greater speed in paying tuition fees is also needed.

SAUS pointed out that both university and TVET students have problems securing accommodation every year. SAUS also called on the department to monitor NSFAS, as NSFAS instability has a ripple effect that hits students from poor backgrounds hardest.

The NSFAS board chairperson, Mr Ernest Khosa said the board needs to be firm about consequence management if it wants to stamp out problems related to direct payments.

Mr Khosa also told the committee that after the Board appointed Werksmans Attorneys to investigate allegations against the NSFAS CEO and to review procurement systems and processes, the CEO took the matter to court after his employment contract was terminated.

The committee said it is of paramount importance that NSFAS get its house in order to avoid again calling on the National Treasury to rescue the situation.

Mr Khosa further said budget cuts imposed by the National Treasury on the scheme could have a severe impact on the sector, as NSFAS may not be able to pay allowances on time, especially at the beginning of the academic year.

The Acting CEO of NSFAS, Mr Masile Ramorwesi, said that calculations show that the 10 per cent reduction in university funding will result in 87 712 students left unfunded in the 2024 academic year. This will eventually increase to 120 976 students. The committee agreed that budget cuts could have dire consequences on institutions of higher learning.

The committee noted that loadshedding posed a problem for online applications. Meanwhile, the committee welcomed news that NSFAS is putting measures in place to deal with fraudulent applications such as introducing biometric authentication to address challenges with duplicate registrations.

The committee cautioned stakeholders to resist blaming all the sectors' failures on NSFAS and called on all roleplayers to play their part to ensure students' academic futures. 🍌



Resolve RAF Accounting Issues and Guard Against Litigious Behaviour, says Transport Committee Chair

The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Transport, Ms Mina Lesoma (pictured above, centre), has cautioned the Road Accident Fund (RAF) against pursuing unnecessary litigation that ultimately eats away at the entity's budget. The Chairperson made these remarks during a recent briefing on the department's annual performance plans, along with those of the Drivers Licence Card Account and the Road Accident Fund (RAF), writes Sibongile Maputi.

The committee heard that the RAF spent a significant portion of its budget on litigation in a matter in which it used an accounting standards policy that was not approved by either the South Africa Bureau of Standards, the National Treasury or the Auditor-General (AG). The RAF took this matter to court and lost. It then appealed the ruling. Ms Lesoma said RAF members of staff should refrain from going to court merely because they are not paying the bill for the proceedings from their own pockets. According to the Chairperson, the department's entities should be guided by the

minister on these matters.

Many questions

Other committee members were concerned about the department's performance during the year under review and had many questions about various things in the portfolio, including the accounting policy matter. They also asked about the taxi recapitalisation programme, the impact of a so-called "construction mafia" on road-building projects, the 30-day payment policy, and leadership instability.

Minister of Transport, Ms Sindi Chikunga, said that the matter involving the RAF accounting policy will be heard in court again in early 2024. "Both entities were advised to find an amicable solution and settle out of court, but that did not materialise. There will be no winners in this matter. This matter could be settled out of court and entities agree that they could not find a solution out of court. It has not been resolved," she said.

Ms Chikunga characterised the "construction mafia" as criminals who should not be negotiated with nor paid any money. "Nobody can go to a construction site and demand money. That is criminality and should be treated as such."

Court the last resort

Committee member Mr Mosebenzi Zwane urged the committee to deal with the RAF matter during this

administrative term.

"The matter should be resolved out of court. RAF must give us a progress report and the entity needs to resolve the high percentage of legal costs," he said.

The Chair of the RAF Board, Ms Zanele Lorraine Francois, informed the committee that the RAF is willing to continue the search for alternative ways to settle the matter with the AG. "We are unable to give an absolute answer on the resolution of this matter. We do not have the power to move the hand of the AG in this matter. The previous board tried but failed. The court was the last resort after so many attempts. We could not put a timeline to it as it requires agreements from other parties," she said.

RAF CEO Mr Collins Letsoalo had earlier told the committee that the RAF's actions must be guided by the Act governing its operations. "The current RAF model disadvantages the poor and they are getting the [short] end of the stick. That needs to change. The rich must not benefit from a social benefit, which the RAF is. The system gives more to the rich and less to the poor, and this is what we need to deal with."

Ms Lesoma also asked for an outline of how the department plans to address the Standing Committee on Public Accounts' recommendations and interventions. 🍌



Powers and Privileges Sanctions Six EFF Members

'... each member will be suspended without remuneration in February 2024, which means that they will not be able to attend the State of the Nation Address in 2024.'

The Powers and Privileges Committee recently sanctioned six members of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) found guilty of contravening the Powers, Privileges and Immunities Act.

The six EFF members sanctioned are Mr Julius Malema, Mr Floyd Shivambu, Mr Marshall Dlamini, Mr Sinawo Tambo, Mr Vuyani Pambo, and Dr Mbuyiseni Ndlozi. They were found guilty of being in contempt of Parliament.

The committee deliberated on the sanctions proposed by the initiator, Adv Anton Katz after it held a three-day hearing on the matter. Several committee members proposed additional sanctions, including that each member receive a formal reprimand, be suspended for the month of February 2024,

and lose one month's salary. They also ordered that the six members apologise in person in the House for disrupting the State of the Nation Address in 2023 and placing the country in a bad light.

These sanctions arose from an incident at the City Hall in Cape Town during the 2023 State of the Nation Address in which the six EFF MPs ignored a ruling made by the National Assembly Speaker to leave the Chamber. Instead of leaving, the six crossed the floor and jumped onto the stage where President Cyril Ramaphosa was to deliver his address. The Speaker was forced to suspend proceedings and call on security services to remove them.

The committee later dismissed an EFF application that the hearing on the incident be postponed on the grounds that the committee would be biased against them. Adv Tembeka Ngcukaitobi, representing the EFF members, had argued that

although the individual members of the committee may not be biased, a reasonable person might perceive the committee to be biased based on the fact that it is dominated by the African National Congress, a political opponent of the EFF.

Adv Ngcukaitobi asked the committee to postpone the hearing to appoint an independent chairperson or a retired judge to conduct a fact-finding evaluation of the evidence against the members, as this would allay fears of bias. He requested the hearing be postponed until January or February 2024 to allow the legal team to prepare for the hearing. The time they had been allowed was inadequate, he said.

In a rebuttal, Adv Katz argued that National Assembly rules 154 and 155 are clear on how the Powers and Privileges Committee should be constituted. "And unless and until those particular rules have been declared invalid for whatever reason, this committee is entitled to sit in the capacity it sits in, which is to give effect to Section 12 and 13 of the Powers, Privileges and Immunities Act of 2004," he said.

After the EFF's application was denied, they recused their legal representatives and refused take part in the committee's hearings.

The six members were charged with contempt of Parliament,

as per section 13 of the Powers, Privileges and Immunities Act. Citing provisions in the Act, Adv Katz said that a member is guilty of contempt of Parliament if the member contravenes sections, including sections 7, 8, 10, 19, 21(1), or 26, and commits an act mentioned in these sections.

Adv Katz proposed two possible sanctions, as provided for in section 12 (5) of the Powers, Privileges and Immunities Act. Firstly, he proposed that the committee orders the six members to apologise to Parliament, the Council or any person determined by the House, including the President, the Speaker and the people of South Africa. Secondly, he proposed a 10-day suspension.

The Chairperson of the committee, Ms Violet Siwela, announced the committee's decision on the appropriate penalties. The penalties included that each member will be suspended without remuneration in February 2024, which means that they will not be able to attend the State of the Nation Address that is held in that month. Secondly, each of them must also apologise in person in the House to the President, the Speaker and the people of South Africa. Ms Siwela said the committee will now compile a draft report on the hearing, which will be submitted to the National Assembly for its consideration. 🇿🇦



Deputy President Commends Men's Parliament's Commitment to End Gender-Based Violence and Femicide

Deputy President Paul Mashatile (left, in the blue shirt, at the Men's Parliament) has commended Parliament's collaboration with the National House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders (NHTL), the Department of Social Development, the South African National AIDS Council and the Takuwani Riime Men's Movement that aims to end gender-based violence (GBV) and femicide, writes Sakhile Mokoena.

The Deputy President delivered an address at the recent launch of the third National Men's Parliament: Takuwani Riime Programme of Action in November. The event was held in the Vhembe District Municipality in Limpopo, where representatives from various sectors gathered to pledge their support for the fight against gender-based



violence. The Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Mr Lechesa Tsenoli, represented Parliament at the event. Mr Tsenoli was also the programme director.

Mr Mashatile said the programme is a vital step in the ongoing commitment to fostering positive masculinity in society. "Takuwani Riime is a call for us as men to

stand united in responding to the multiple gendered challenges that exist in our society. This national call is aligned with global calls to end violence against women and girls, as championed by the African Union and the United Nations. It is important that we understand violence against women as a global phenomenon and also appreciate that through concerted efforts we

can bring an end to this scourge," he said.

He also commended traditional leaders, faith-based organisations and non-governmental organisations for their role in fighting GBV in their communities through the Takuwani Riime Programme of Action, under the oversight of the Men's Parliament. "I applaud the work that

has been done and also urge that the resolutions of this year's sitting of the national Men's Parliament should mark an important turning point in the course of the Men's Movement, as we enter a phase of implementation at the grassroots level.

"We encourage all traditional leaders, religious leaders, ward councillors, principals of educational institutions and all men from diverse backgrounds to respond to the call of the Takuwani Riime Men's Movement and unite as engaged citizens in the global expansion of a responsive men's movement," the Deputy President said.

Mr Mashatile condemned the high rate of violence against women, saying it is unacceptable that among the five countries with the highest number of murders, South Africa has the highest female homicide rate. "We cannot continue to be silent when 70 lives will be violently ended by the end of today. Three children

are killed daily, a woman is abused every 63 seconds, and eight women are murdered every day in our country," he said.

The Deputy President called on men to refrain from normalising the culture of GBV through problematic language of sexist jokes, victim blaming and rigid gender stereotypes that devalue girls and women. "As part of our concerted effort to eradicate societal problems, we must specifically target the pervasive problem of rape against vulnerable groups, such as women with disabilities, children, the elderly, and the LGBTQIA+ community," he said.

Mr Mashatile said initiatives such as the Men's Parliament would enhance South Africa's efforts to fight GBV. He also commended the Takuwani Riime Programme of Action for recognising that to end GBV, we must dismantle the culture of violence and the subtle or socially accepted attitudes, beliefs and actions that tolerate, excuse,

and condone violence. The Deputy President told the stakeholders that the Takuwani Riime Programme of Action is critical in facilitating dialogue and positive social change.

Through the Men's Parliament, the underlying principle is to ensure mainstreaming, coordination and implementation of coherent men's movement activities, using the Men Championing Change Programme to address concerns that affect men such as:

- Men lagging in educational attainment, particularly in higher education, which can have long-term economic and social consequences.
- Issues including unemployment, wage gaps and occupational hazards which affect men disproportionately in various sectors.
- Men facing health inequities driven by poor health-seeking behaviour and unique health concerns, including prostate

cancer and heart disease.

- Men confronted by stigma around mental health issues, leading to high rates of depression and suicide.

The Deputy President commended the Takuwani Riime Men's Movement for its efforts to roll out community Men's Parliaments, which is the last tier of the Men's Parliament framework extending from national to community settings. This inclusive community initiative seeks to create a designated platform in traditional councils, wards, institutions of education and any other self-described community for men to convene on Wednesdays around the country.

The platform will provide a consistent and predictable schedule for men in fostering dialogue, collaboration and resolution of issues that affect them and their communities. It will also allow men to be vulnerable in a society which demands that men be tough. 🙏

Parliament Ready for SONA 2024

The Presiding Officers of Parliament have confirmed that the national legislature is ready to host the 2024 State of The Nation Address (SONA) set to take place on Thursday, 8 February 2023.

President Cyril Ramaphosa has written to the National Assembly (NA) Speaker, Ms Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, and the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) Chairperson, Mr Amos Masondo, requesting them to convene a Joint Sitting of the two Houses on 8 February 2024 at 19:00 for SONA 2024.

During this Joint Sitting of the Houses of Parliament, the President will set out government's key policy objectives and deliverables for the year ahead. During SONA the President also highlights achievements, flags challenges, and outlines interventions that government will undertake to unlock development interventions for the coming financial year.

The SONA marks the official start of



the parliamentary programme for the year ahead.

What is the State of the Nation Address (SONA)?

The State of the Nation Address (SONA) is one of the most important

annual events in the parliamentary calendar.

- The President delivers a speech focusing on the plans of government for the coming year.
- The speech is delivered to

Parliament during a Joint Sitting of the National Assembly (NA) and the National Council of Provinces (NCOP).

- SONA is commonly known as the "Opening of Parliament".

- All three arms of the state, namely the legislature, the executive and the judiciary attend SONA.

When and where does SONA take place?

The President called for a Joint Sitting of the NA and the NCOP in terms of Section 84 (2)(d) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 read with Rule 7 (1)(a) of the Joint Rules of Parliament.

- The venue for SONA is usually the NA Chamber. After the chamber caught fire on 2 January 2022 and while renovations and rebuilding are underway, SONA takes place at the Cape Town City Hall.

- The Speaker of the NA and the Chairperson of the NCOP jointly preside over SONA.

Public involvement and participation in SONA

During the State of the Nation Address, members of the public are informed about government's planned priorities for the year ahead. Members of the public can:

- Watch SONA live on Parliament TV (DSTV channel 408)
- View SONA on [YouTube](#)

SONA and Parliament's oversight function

One of Parliament's key functions is to monitor and oversee the

actions of government.

SONA forms part of Parliament's oversight (monitoring) function to improve service delivery and to achieve a better quality of life for all living in South Africa.

What happens during SONA?

The President uses the occasion to address the nation as both Head of State and Government to:

- Set out the government's priorities for the coming year.
- Highlight the achievements and challenges of the previous year.
- The full SONA ceremony comprises a ceremonial Military Guard of Honour; a military band; a 21-gun salute and a South

African Air Force fly-past while the President takes the national salute.

Why is SONA important?

It grants government (the executive) an opportunity to account to Parliament and the South African public.

It is also about celebrating our nation and nation-building.

SONA and the Budget

- Two weeks after SONA, the Minister of Finance introduces the Budget for the coming year.
- The budget speech is based on government's priorities set out by the President in his speech. 🇿🇦

Parliament extends condolences to the family of Mr Luwellyn Landers

The Speaker of the National Assembly, Ms Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, and the Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces, Mr Amos Masondo, expressed Parliament's deep sadness on the passing of the Member of Parliament and former Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Mr Luwellyn Landers.

Mr Landers was among the first generation of African National Congress (ANC) Members of Parliament elected to serve in the National Assembly in 1994.

He made significant contributions as a member of various parliamentary portfolio committees, including the National Assembly Rules Committee, the Portfolio Committee on Justice and Constitutional Development, several ad hoc committees, the Joint Standing Committee on Intelligence, and the Joint Rules Committee, among others.

From 2014 to 2019, he held the position of Deputy Minister of International Relations and Co-operation.

Ms Mapisa-Nqakula and Mr Masondo said that Parliament deeply mourns the loss of Mr Landers, who was an esteemed veteran politician and a distinguished ambassador who served the nation and the world with unwavering dedication.

They also emphasised that Mr Landers will be remembered for his composed demeanour and his exceptional legislative expertise. In particular, he will be remembered for the crucial role he played in the negotiating council responsible for shaping South Africa's final Constitution.

Meanwhile, as the Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Mr Landers displayed his negotiation skills on the global stage, ensuring that South Africa's interests were well-represented on the international agenda. His profound love for South Africa's people, his commitment to social justice and his unwavering dedication to a just and equitable South Africa leave an indelible mark on our country's history.

Parliament extends its deepest condolences to Mr Landers' family, friends, the international community, his political home – the ANC – and all South Africans. May Mr Landers rest in eternal peace. 🇿🇦

