**UNREVISED HANSARD**

# MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

# THURSDAY, 19 NOVEMBER 2020

***PROCEEDINGS OF MINI-PLENARY SESSION OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY***

Members of the mini-plenary session met on the virtual platform at 14:00.

The House Chairperson Mr C T Frolick took the Chair and requested members to observe a moment of silence for prayer or meditation.

# RULES OF A VIRTUAL MINI-PLENARY SESSION

(Announcement)

The House Chairperson (Mr C T Frolick): ... when recognised to speak, mute your microphone and connect your video. Members may make use of the icons on the bar at the bottom of their screen which has an option that allows a member to put his or her hand up to raise a point of order. The Secretary will assist me in identifying those members. When using the virtual system, members are urged to refrain or desist from unnecessary points of order or interjections. Lastly, I wish to remind you that we are meeting in

a mini-plenary session and therefore, any decisions will be taken in a full-plenary session of the National Assembly.

# NON-RACIALISM AND SOCIAL COHESION FOR A PROSPEROUS SOUTH AFRICA.

(Subject for Discussion)

Mr M GUNGUBELE: Before I begin my address to you, good afternoon hon members. Let me take the opportunity to remind the nation that President Ramaphosa, His Excellency, has asked us to wear a black armband or other signs of mourning in the upcoming week. This is to signify our respect for those who have departed due to either COVID-19 or gender-based violence and femicide.

In 1985 in Harare during an interview with Julie Frederikse for her book *The unbreakable truth: Non-racialism in South Africa,* former Judge Albie Sachs profoundly asserted that,

Non-racialism is not just a bland thing. It is not just an absence of racism — that’s empty. In fact, the reality of developing a non-racial culture in South Africa is much richer than that. It is much more active, more dynamic. Non- racialism doesn’t mean that it is a society of non-something. It means you are eliminating all the apartheid barriers, in

terms of access to government, in terms of freedom to move, and then you feel that this is your country. But it doesn’t describe the quality and personality of the country and people. That is not a non-something — that is a something, and that is a South African personality that is being constructed.

In line with this view expressed by Judge Sachs, the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, OECD, defines a cohesive society as that society which works towards the wellbeing of all its members; fights exclusion and marginalisation; creates a sense of belonging and promote trust; and offers its members the opportunity of upward mobility that is rising from a lower to a higher class of status.

We remain concern about the pace of the progressive realisation of social cohesion in our country as defined by Judge Sachs and OECD. Hon Chairperson, the delay today underscores the fact that we are a country confronted by a myriad of challenges. These challenges are human development related and we will not be able to address these without the theme of today’s debate.

The time at which we are having this debate is not only opportune but is also relevant because it affords us an opportunity to

pause, analyse, reflect and grapple with the meaning of [Inaudible] and seeks to delay our nation building and social cohesion project.

We need to learn to be an engaging nation instead of being one that is confrontational, misunderstanding and violent. Hon members, we can all agree that what transpired in Senekal and Brackenfell can never happen again — we hope so. Neither should we shy away from condemning how some leaders amongst ourselves responded to both incidents.

It cannot be correct that a delicate process of constructing a South African personality as aptly described by Judge Albie Sachs is undermined by some amongst us. We cannot have leaders in society undermining a process that is so sacrosanct and is underpinned by values as set out in the Constitution. A Constitution which enjoins each and every one of us to build, unite and foster prosperity amongst South Africans. We must be able to rise above as leaders in this country and engage on the prevalent conditions which have led to this debate today.

We must be solution-oriented and not fall into a trap of polarising and sowing disunity amongst our people. We must, as a nation, elevate a level of discussion and unite in our fullness

and diversity. We must commit to the progressive transformation of our country as prescribed in our Constitution.

Our Constitution is underpinned by values of human dignity, non- sexism, non-racialism and the rule of law. All of these are important tenets that demonstrate that we cannot separate our prosperity from our nation building pursuit and social cohesion project.

Hon Chairperson, with your permission, I would like to refer to a famous aphorism written in the 1930s by Antonio Gramsci which he penned down in his prison notebook that “The crisis precisely consists in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum, a great variety of morbid symptoms appear.”

This quote was recently used by Jane Kelsey, a professor of law, into her submission at the Fourth People’s Health Assembly contextualised this and argued that our modern day morbid symptoms include huge inequality, poverty and instability amongst others.

Hon members, let me bring the above mentioned into context. Former President Thabo Mbeki once noted that there are three strategic tasks to execute in pursuit of our national democratic evolution.

These are: Political freedom which we realised in 1994; dealing with the legacy of apartheid; and building a new South Africa. Over the past 26 years this is the society that the ANC has been tirelessly working towards.

We hope that the debate today will help us work together amongst ourselves and the entire South Africa to pursue this noble cause. However, the dialectical relationship of struggle and progress, as underpinned by Antonio Gramsci of the old dying and the new struggling to be born, is relevant to the current debate. The vestige of our colonial apartheid past as stubborn as they are, are dying and our national democratic society is struggling to be born.

Hon members, in addition to what Professor Jane Kelsey said in identified as modern day morbid symptoms, the interregnum cause by the persistent nature of the vestige of our colonial and apartheid past and the building of national democratic society has motivated today’s debate. These modern day morbid symptoms in our country find expression in stubborn biggest inequality gap in the world, rising levels of poverty and unemployment and a culture of violence.

We need to free ourselves from all forms of racial, tribal and ethnic mistrusts and lean on the enduring phenomenon of human triumph. It is the freedom from all the above morbid symptoms that a coherent, consistent, predictable societal environment can unleash our human potential.

We need to get to the root of the obsolete factors which continue to sustain our divisions, and not just deal with the symptoms we have recently seen in Senekal and Brackenfell. The unity of this country cannot be an exclusive task of a particular race; it is a task that belongs to all of us as South Africans.

Hon members, we need to understand why according to South African Human Rights Commission that most of the reports that it received last year were race related. This report indicates that the majority of complaints are 38% from Gauteng, 15% from Western Cape and 14% from KwaZulu-Natal. We need to interrogate why according to the baseline survey conducted by the Foundation for Human Rights that 44% of adults had no trust in people of other race groups while 45% felt that they had been discriminated against based on race.

Against this work by South African Human Rights Commission, we need to understand how we can take forward the positive revelation

by the South African Institute of Race Relations that racial goodwill amongst our people remains strong. It is our task, as South Africans, to ensure that we effectively fight what Gramsci calls the morbid symptoms if we are to remain true to that which bind us as a nation, our Constitution.

It is our collective responsibility to ensure that we work towards that which is envisioned in the National Development Plan, NDP, that is transforming society and uniting the country; that we work towards being South Africans who are more conscious of the things we have in common than our differences; that we inculcate broad based knowledge that spot our shared values that will build an inclusive society; that we increase our interactions amongst each other across social and racial groups; and that we truly and passionately develop capabilities of the historically disadvantaged and we use our Constitution to transform South Africa into a more equitable, integrated and just society.

Hon members, all of this requires of us to work together, demonstrate strong leadership across society and encourage an active and responsible citizen. I call upon all South Africans to imprison themselves in a dream of a South Africa that works towards the wellbeing of its citizens which is a conqueror of exclusion and marginalisation. A South Africa that would have

secured all its people a sense of belonging that will be grounded on the backdrop of trust within itself and that will be offering all its people opportunities of upward mobility.

In closing, our Constitution is an upward ladder to the dream nation which our forebears laid their lives for. I am calling upon all those who are at the top to hold tight the ladder and not kick it, and those at the bottom to climb the ladder and not mock it.

The future must be constructed now not in future. Thank you, hon Chair.

Mr Z N MBHELE: House Chair, it is ironic that today subject for discussion, on non-racialism and social cohesion for a prosperous South Africa, should take place the day before what is anticipated to be a racially charged and tense standoff in Brackenfell, Cape Town, tomorrow.

It is a very sad day in our country when schools become the sights of such racial hostility and [Inaudible.] displays. A scenario that echoes similar and equally apparent clash points in the early 1990s when there were also racially charged standoffs sights at some [Inaudible.] whites only schools as they started to desegregate.

Our schools are supposed to places where children learn the basic skills, knowledge and impart positive values to become contributing and outstanding members of society. They are meant to be a springboard into a productive future, not a boomerang back to our divided past.

Our responsibility as leaders is not to stalk and intensify animosities, but rather set the example, dialogue and respectful engagements that promote understanding and broad commitment to each solution for the many problems that we face.

In a country with the divisions and inequalities inherited from our colonial and apartheid past, it is all too easy to exploit the fault lines in our society. Conflict is easy, divisiveness is easy, retrobalisation and scapegoating is easy; but that is not what South Africa needs, especially at this time of economic hardship and dwindling prospects for a better future for many households.

Many South Africans still carry in their hearts and minds emotional scars of our past in the same way that much our landscape carries the special scars inherited from our past. But then the question is: Whether we simmer and stew in racial resentments and zero some thinking that some must lose in order

for others to gain or do we pursue a more productive path, a higher road under enlightened leadership that would promote broad- based prosperity?

The fundamental question, Chairperson, is: Are we seeking to relieve our divided past or are we seeking to build a common future?

The contours and contents of that common future are clearly contained in the preamble and founding provisions of our Constitution as a vision of our desired destination. It is a common future in which South Africa belongs to all who live in it united in our diversity; a common future we will all recognise the injustices of our past, but have also healed the divisions of that past; a common future where we uphold human dignity, freedom in an open society and non-racialism and non-sexism.

Our responsibility as leaders is to draw the roadmap to achieve that vision, to build the vehicle that will take our country to that destination and to bring South Africans along on that journey. But we must be under no illusions; it is a long and difficult journey, and thus, it is imperative to draw from the wisdom of the African proverb that “If we want to walk far, then we have to walk together”.

In order to achieve social cohesion we first have to achieve social inclusion, and in order to achieve that we need to achieve economic inclusion. Colonialism and apartheid weaponized the contrived constructs of race to engineer our society’s current socioeconomic conditions of racial disparities in wealth and income. Our responsibility is to undo that material legacy and the paradigm of racialism which underpin it. Where they operated through asset stripping and land dispossession, we must heal the scars through small business developments, sustainable land reform and the issuing of title deeds. Where they operated through providing inferior education and the deprivation of economic opportunities, we must heal those scars through providing quality education, especially to learners from our poorest communities as well as creating and broadening skills development and job opportunities in the context of a growing and labour absorbing economy.

This massive endeavour requires implementing good governance to build a capable state with no corruption or mismanagement. A capable state that is clean, that is efficient and effective is the primary vehicle to get us to our destination of social cohesion and inclusion.

Furthermore, we need improved service delivery and economic growth that results in shared prosperity; and it’s that shared prosperity which will be the foundation for meaningful and lasting social cohesion. But we can only achieve that social cohesion through a non-racialism that celebrates our diversity, upholds our individuality and does not turn people against each other. I thank you.

Mr S TAMBO: House Chair, allow us to first register our expectation that a motion of this nature has been brought to this House by the hon Gungubele and of course endorsed by the DA.

As a member of the House who has with great skill exhibited his lack of understanding complex subjects and his submissions have been characterised by emptiness and the nauseating desire to sing for his supper.

Nevertheless, it remains the duty of the EFF to rise above the shallow understanding of political concepts and place them in their correct contexts; this is in order to dismiss attempts to suppress the genuine descent of our people by calling on them to subscribe to a non-racialism that is not a product of equality and justice.

As a starting point we must impress on the hon Gungubele that one cannot simply speak non-racialism into existence. It is this very mistake of thinking that the hopeful wishes in one’s head constitute objective reality that has recently led to many black people being humbled to the fact that we have forgiven a race of people who have no remorse for the exploitation they have subjected our people to.

House Chair, non-racialism and social cohesion are not possible without changing the ownership patterns of our economy and confronting the arrogance that underpin racists who have turned black identity to one of subservient and servitude.

To break drown in simple terms the concept of dialectics, non- racialism is only possible as the end product of a direct confrontation with the primary contradiction of African society. It will take a radical development and central policy perspectives to diffuse contradiction and give birth to what the great Pan Africanist, Robert Sobukwe, did, a world with a modulate face.

The primary contradiction facing South African society today, which gives birth to various social ills, is white supremacy and its economic and cultural dominance over the majority black people.

It is the failure of this government to distribute wealth equally that makes non-racialism impossible. It is the control of over 80% of this country’s land by a white minority that makes non- racialism impossible and social cohesion impossible. It is the fact that our mothers and grandmothers clean flushing toilets in the day and go home to use pit toilets at night that makes social cohesion impossible. It is the white racists of this country who remind us day after day that non-racialism is impossible; they do this by killing our children because they regard them as monkeys and by storming our courts with guns and by paying farm workers with alcohol. It is the presence of *Die Stem* in our National Anthem which sung as the flesh of black people burned [Inaudible.] during apartheid that makes social cohesion impossible. It is the very arrogant white minority that spits on the face of this regime’s naïve attempts at non-racialism by declaring that there are no-go areas for black people in this country and celebrating schools who have exclusively white teachers and organise exclusively white matric parties. All of this is possible because racists are emboldened under this regime, which makes superficial attempts at uniting a country that is characterised by a racial separate development. It is tiptoeing around these painful realities that makes the rhetoric of social cohesion a mere dummy to forced down the throats of the millions of black people in this

country whose quality of life is less than that of a dog of a white person.

The hon Gungubele, therefore, represents the most liberal and reactionary element of the ANC. He represents the core of what was known as the South African Native Congress; an arrangement, the likes of Anton Lembede, condemned to be a collaboration of gentlemen who pleaded for a seat at the table of colonialists in their own land.

We must follow in the footsteps of those [Inaudible.] Africanists who used [Inaudible.] unity which is at the expense of justice.

As a generation we must forge our own path and this path must [Inaudible.] to create a journey on non-racialism. This non- racialism will only be possible should we correct the original sin against our people; this is through the expropriation of land without compensation.

Social cohesion can only be achieved once we remove the symbols and statues that glorify white racists whose legacies are that of bloodshed and dispossession of the land of our people. We can only achieve non-racialism once we allow capable and radical state to nationalise the mines, the banks and the strategic sectors of our

economy and allow meaningful participation in the economy by those who constitute the majority in our country.

Therefore, we must not be led by the likes of hon Gungubele who simply do not comprehend the concepts they speak about. Our posture must be that social cohesion is only possible through justice and equality, and this can only be achieved if those who currently control the means of production subject themselves to the will of African majority and share the wealth of our land.

Thank you very much.

Mr N SINGH: House Chairperson, let me start off by saying nothing is impossible. If it was possible to defeat apartheid, which was so abhorrent in our country, then anything is possible, it going to take will from all of us, it going to take changing hearts and minds. We are constantly being inundated by reports of racial polarisation in our country. Now more than ever we need to talk as South Africans about social cohesion. All South Africans need to join this discussion and we need to be prepared to listen to each other. No matter how difficult this conversation may be. Hon members, in inviting everyone to this discussion, to have an honest conversation.

We cannot solve further racial tension, stigmatised and stereotype cultural groups by referring to some cultural minorities as visitors to this country, we exclude them from the outset to the discussion. We create further barriers in reaching respect and celebrating our diverse society. This matter lies very near to my heart, because my family and I never have believed in seclusion or exclusion. In my oral follow up question to President Ramaphosa on

11 November, on the topic of social cohesion, I emphasized that we talk a lot on the subject but action to lulu us. I emphasize to the President, that the community by numbers, a cultural minority group in South Africa contributed immensely to the social fabric of our country, all minorities.

I specifically asked the President his views on prominent leaders referring to cultural minorities as visitors rather than citizens of this country and he said and I quote:

We are all South Africans. If we say others are minorities, who are the majorities?

Once you begin that notion you begin having a sense, that the other are less important. He emphasised that he would like us to see one another as South Africans first and embrace one another as South Africans.

The IFP strongly believes we have to find a way to unite in our diversity. This is not an easy task. The reality is that there will always be smaller and larger cultural groups by numbers and diversity in viewpoints. This, however, cannot be used to stigmatise, dominate and exclude certain groups from the conversation. Yes, we should fight against racialism and sexism in all its undertones, but we can do this together.

It will call on us to look at our own views and those of our family and friends and require each of us to reach out to someone from a different cultural or linguistic group. It means each of us needs to be willing to listen and respect each other. It’s going to be an event it’s going to a process that starts at our schools.

I am reminded of the Sanskrit; a Sanskrit is the Sanskrit world oldest language, a word *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* - which is a social philosophy capturing the notion that the whole of humanity is one family. Hon members, the COVID-19 global pandemic has shown that more than ever, humanity needs to stand together. Let us all as South Africans stand together in our humanity, let us find our common humanity to embrace one another, it is possible, it will take the will and the commitment to each one of us. I thank you very much House Chairperson.

Dr C P MULDER: House Chairperson, I would like to start off by thanking the hon Gungubele for bringing the subject for discussion to the House. I think it’s a laudable subject and I think unfortunately the debate like today will not be the end of this kind of discussion. I think it is absolutely necessary that we perhaps find different structures or discussion groups to take this further. I think, it’s absolutely essential.

The topic for today deals with non-racialism and social cohesion for a prosperous South Africa. So, if I can argue from the other side. Yes, we all want to create a prosperous South Africa to the benefit of all South Africans. How do we want to achieve that? By having a non-racial state and then through social cohesion.

Now, when I come to non-racialism, I would like to start off with the wholly grail of all documents for the ANC, the *Freedom Charter* itself, as adopted at the Congress of the People in Kliptown on 26 June 1955, I quote:

We, the People of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know: that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people.

Both instances bear strong emphasis on the term ‘all’. There are going to be founding provision of the Constitution, Chapter One, Section 1(b) which clearly says that our state is a sovereign state, founded on certain values and one of those values is the whole idea of non-racialism. I don’t think there is anyone in South Africa that would not be in favour of non-racialism, they maybe some who favour racialism. I have recently read some speeches that [Inaudible.] that says...but I think the majority of South Africans are reasonable people and they do not believe in anything else than non-racialism.

However, when we get to the equality clause, which says equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms, then it goes on to make the exception that certain measures can be taken and that takes us to black economic empowerment, that takes us to affirmative action. My concern is, that we currently we do have a very racialized society, where some people feel excluded and some feel that they are not part and parcel of greater national South Africans.

Both, the President last week during the question time and the hon Gungubele today, referred to a metaphor of a ladder – I understand that, that ladder should be there, it should be held up and allow people who are not on top of the building or on top of the society

to climb the ladder. It shouldn't be pushed back, but there is a fundamental misunderstanding about the situation. It’s not correct to think that people belonging to one group or one racial group are on top and all the other people at the bottom belong to a different racial group. That is not currently the reality of South Africa.

Let me get to social cohesion, it’s very important, but what is the problem, why don’t we have social cohesion. Why do we always talk about that? I believe through nation building and social cohesion will not succeed, if we merely continue to stumble from one spot in an event to the next without successfully creating a sense of belonging amongst all our people. Without numerous sporting events and then there’s a wonderful expectation and everybody is excited about being South African and that dwindles. As long as we do not find really unity in our diversity we will not succeed with nation building. We need to reach out and use that as a building block to form a stable, democratic dispersion, because without that we will not have social cohesion.

My problem is because there is such a vast amount of racism in South Africa and [Interjection.] it comes from different sides... now, it doesn’t come from me, I can assure you, definitely not so, you are completely wrong. I see racism from one side and I don’t

think it’s a good idea. The fact of the matter is; South Africans need to have social cohesion without [Interjection.] [Inaudible.] Thank you very much.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Hon members, I would request the hon [Inaudible.] to mute the microphone please. You are causing a disturbance in the sitting. I now recognise the hon Mkhatswa, she is the next speaker. Thank you.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): I recognise hon Khwatsha. Okay, while we try to find the hon members, let’s continue and proceed to hon Suckers. I will recognise hon Khwatsha when her connection has stabilised. Hon Suckers, are you ready?

Ms N T MKHATSHWA: Hon Chair, I am here actually in Parliament, I am not sure if my connection is stabilised.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Okay. I will request then that hon Khwatsha continues. Continue, hon Khwatsha.

Ms N T MKHATSHWA: Apologies for that, Chair. I am in Parliament’s precinct and I don’t know why my connection is unstable.

Nonetheless, thank you very much, Chair. Hon Chairperson, hon members, but most importantly, to the Minister watching from home,

good afternoon. I come before you as a young, black woman born a year before this nation of people was granted a freedom and democracy that was stripped off her.

When I look into the history of this country and listen to the story of my life, my aunts, my grandmother and when I listen to stories of the main women who were incarcerated at a women’s jail which is now referred to as the Constitutional Hill, it is impossible for me not to have a great sense of gratitude and appreciation, for the times in which I was born. Beneath the St John Cathedral here in Cape Town around the corner from Parliament, I once stumbled in the Parliament exhibition one evening with my mother.

The exhibition included images of various images of in and around 1980s, where thousands of South Africans from different races gathered in the court for the liberation of South Africa. As I walked from one image to the next, and I saw a number of recognisable individuals, amongst them, our beloved President, His Excellency, Cyril Ramaphosa. One was filled with a great sense of emotions, and essentially in that moment, one like in many moments, was reminded of perturbing and vicious journey that we as the people of this nation, had to endure for us to have this freedom that we today have.

But what was of greater pain and continued agitation, is the fact that we have continued to take for granted our history as we perpetually undermine the sweat, blood and rely that this country is founded upon. MaAfrika amahle [beautiful Africans] and hon members, at what point will we begin to unapologetically and ceaselessly defend, protect and fight for our South Africa like our fore mothers, ooMaxeke, ooMadikizela nooMatimela envisaged? At what point will we defend the values enshrined in the Freedom Charter, the Women’s Charter and our world acclaimed Constitution?

Every time I walk in this august House, and look at the history narrated by the walls of this building, and takes everything that surrounds this building and the infrastructure, one is reminded of the fact that, when this building was constructed, one’s present image was never imagined. However, when I see the many women and young people across all benches of the House, I’m encouraged by the sense of hope and faith. But the increase in the representation of this House means nothing, if we are unable to translate it to a truly lived experience of a cohesive, nonracial and nonsexist South Africa.

Hon members, no single one of us in this House can give a room to any tendencies that seeks to undermine the gains of our democracy, by inculcating the regressive behaviour that we have seen at

Brackenfell High School, Pretoria High School for girls at St Mary’s D S G for girls in Pretoria, in Senekal, within the cricket fraternity, recently within the netball fraternity, the Gender- Based Violence, GBV and femicide pandemic, and the brutal treatment of our people, at times, by our very own police.

It is in light of this, that social institutions such as the church, the mosque, school, sports clubs, civil organisations amongst others, must be used to drive the agenda of the socially cohesive and socially connected South Africa, by affirming the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom. But allow me to talk on the wall of social institution in the form of learning institution such as school and the university, and the role they ought to be playing in achieving the above-mentioned agenda.

You see, we need to understand that, basic education in the form of the curriculum and the core curriculum, is not intended to solely provide skills, knowledge and keep the children fit, perhaps. But it is equally intended to shape, form and harness the youth of this country. As such, we must agree with Paulo Ferreira and I paraphrase what he said, when he said: “To transform the experience of educating in to a matter of simple technique, so, in to a matter of technical ability, for example, to develop

software, is to impoverish what is fundamentally human in this experience of teaching and learning.”

He essentially said that to reduce the experience of teaching and learning, to technicalities and assessment, is to deny the journey, is to deny the experiences of teaching and learning from a capacity to form the human person. Hon members and members of the education fraternity, if we have any serious regard for what it is to be human, we would understand that the moral formation of learners cannot be separated from the teaching of content.

Taking into consideration that we want a responsive education in South Africa to address the current social ills and social cohesion in building a social, cohesive South Africa, let us continue to ensure that our education system and the class experience of learners highlights and discusses the concrete reality of their lives. I urge us to continue our efforts on establishing an intimate connection between knowledge considered basic to any school curriculum, and knowledge that bears fruit of the lived experience these learners and students as individuals.

You see, Paulo Ferreira, hon members, challenges the experience of teaching and learning, to discuss theoretical and ideological realities in the society, to raise class related ethical questions

that needs to be looked into. Noting this, I hope that that the hon Chief Whip is sitting now in the mini-plenary, I am mind bogged by individuals who still today uphold optimistic belief that the role of the school is simply to transfer knowledge.

You see, these kind of believes, will bring citizens who, when granted infrastructure opportunities to deliver, for an example, building of student accommodation, there will be chaos and they will collapse, not because they don’t have a skill to build and construct this particular infrastructure, but because they have used the wrong material or materials of lessor quality. Because of this particular internal bleeding and lack of social consciousness in the social world, to build infrastructure that will ultimately contribute to the sustaining of the educational system in ensuring that young people have necessary skills and knowledge to be active participants of our economy.

So, you see, the journey of teaching and learning, is greater than what we think it is. So, it must be protected from racial polarisation and institutional culture that dominated under the mind of diversity of the culture, knowledge and traditions engraved in our diverse nation. We need citizens that are skilled and knowledgeable to be the active participants of our economy,

citizens that are able to locate their existent identity and role in the building and development of South Africa.

We also need citizens that are motivated to solve the problems of South Africa, believing in a share of interventions and innovations that will find meaningful expressions within its existence, citizens that will shape and give direction to political and social direction of South Africa. Thus, we need an education system that will inculcate an understanding among young people and citizens at large, that my role in this world, is not simply that of someone who registers one on third, but someone who would have an input into what happens.

Our education system must teach young people so that when there is lot that is happening, when we don’t see the betterment of our people taking place in their lived experience, we can learn something to advocate for it, and fight for that particular reality. It is as such that as a collective, we must work together to ensure that the content of our education is underpinned by humanism. Let us ensure that the content in our textbooks it has intersectional all the colours of the rainbow as we negate all sexist conduct that discriminate against the Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex, LGBTQI, task community.

Let us embed in our academic content the values of creating a nonracial society, negating patriarchal practices which manifests in the increase of gender-based violence, femicide and in our male dominated economy. You see, learning is a lifelong journey, so perhaps, I want to take this moment to address the issue that has not put me at ease for the last couple of months that I have been on these benches. Identity plays a very critical role in defining the people and their culture.

Therefore, factually accurately, telling people of who they are, where they come from and what they have done, plays a fundamental role in how they locate and positions themselves in the now and in the future. So, hon Boshoff, you know, I want to ease a perception or what I perceive to be a phobia of the FF Plus in saying that, when you speak of inclusion and promotion of indigenous knowledge system, that we equally challenge the colonial and western dominated makeup of knowledge systems and collaborations.

With the better understandings of the importance of broader and dynamic thinking of the ANC, we do not seek to eradicate western history and knowledge system. That would be to our detriment because, history in the manner into which it was taught, should not distort our understanding of reality, such that the pain that it resolves in the nation seeks to address the injustices of the

past, and to curb the reproduction of patriarchy, racial polarisation and economic inequality.

Hon members, what we really seek to say to you as the ANC today is that, as I have mentioned, we seek to engage in critical and social dialogue, which forges social cohesion for social contacting, with the hope and aspiration of creating a prosperous South Africa for all. I say this to all of you this afternoon, in the young lion’s spirit of Thomas Sankara who said that people should build their own rail, in the name of the late President, Oliver Tambo, the name of Nelson Mandela and the living spirit of the former President, Thabo Mbeki, forever forward and never backward. Thank you very much.

Mr W M THRING: Hon House Chair the race has become the political weapon of our time to drive social change. The greatest book ever written provides reconciliation as the antidote to racial division and social in cohesion. The men and women in this room carry the moral responsibility to lead the charge in uniting our people against an enemy that seeks to perpetuate racism and destabilise this nation.

We cannot erect alters of injustice in the name of racial justice. Until we have dealt with our own demons and pain as leaders, it is

impossible for us to drive reconciliation, transformation and unity which are the key elements of building a social cohesive society. Reconciliation does not mean that we deny the pain of millions of our people who have suffered because of segregation and exclusion on the basis of race. However, it means that we recognise the evils of it. That which plummeted generations and into the abase of poverty and stripped our people of their dignity. However, we must not use the past as the political weapon to destabilise and create chaos in our country. Racism is the evil of denying humanity of a person and a signing value on the basis of colour.

The South Africa in which my generation grew up is scared psychological and burned into our memories and classism based on race. The greatest victory is to overcome that pain and the humiliation we have suffered as the people and for us to become champions for the future we hope to create.

True leadership means we must take care to seek for the welfare of all of our people regardless of their race. Today in South Africa more than 18 million people face food insecurity. Here in the Western Cape, families face evictions on farms they have lived on their whole lives. Homelessness and economic abandonment, women and children is at the heart of gender-based violence. It is not

colour that we fight, but it is injustice. Until we recognise the pain of another human being as our own, we will never be able to move to a South Africa that belongs to all who live in her.

There is a call for the Western Cape to be secluded away from the rest of South Africa. That call is because of political expediency and has become a substitute for real leadership. In the absence of moral leadership. We have a nation becoming more fragmented day by day. The ACDP calls on this House today for us to recognise the desperate need for all political leaders to unify this nation.

Our enemy is not our brothers it is the giants of our time, poverty, inequality and other ills that rob our people from having a fair chance at a full and dignified life. I thank you.

Mr A M SHAIK EMAM: Hon House Chair, allow me to start off with a quote. This is the Prophet Mohammad; peace be upon him, in his last sermon on Mount Arafat in 632 AD. He stated:

There is no superiority of an Arab over a non-Arab, or a non- Arab over an Arab, and no superiority of a White person over a Black person or of Black person over a White person, except on the basis of personal piety and righteousness.

House Chair, now the question is not long ago 59 million people in South Africa have been praising the role of our former icon Madiba in uniting South Africa, referring to us as the rainbow nation who fought and suffered 27 years in isolation to liberate us so that we could be one united nation. What has happened to that? Have we not learnt from the oppression of the past based on race and colour? Why is racial intolerance in South Africa increasing at the rate it is? It is because this is fuelled by politicians and political parties, working on the divide and rule policy to become popular. We so what happened with popular votes with Donald Trump in the United States of America. It is only a matter of time when popularity collapses.

Now racism and divide and rule even the apartheid regime, promoted during the days of apartheid seems now to have begun with black South Africans. We are all South African. We all have equal rights and we all belong to this country, whether we were born here or not born here. If our forefathers were here and those who came here went through difficult times. This country was not lived through whites or through coloured’s, no we all came to as one united nation.

Either group we have in South Africa, the different racial groups are being used by politicians and political parties with an agenda to want to get growth and support and this is what it is about.

Let me tell you where this is leading to; eventually it is the Whites, then it is the Indians then it will be the amaXhosa, amaZulu and Basotho and amaNdebele and where are we going to go to. Why are we not able to put our differences aside and come together as one united nation? We have a hard fought fight that is behind us that is put in the struggle. Can we not put our differences aside? Let me tell you what is happening today we have been abused by race groups in South Africa. There is racial abuse on black on blacks in South Africa. Racism exist among all the different racial groups in South Africa among the Indians, Coloureds, Whites and among the Blacks as well. It does exist.

This is something in the system and in the genes. It is not easy to remove, but what should we be doing? We should be taking advantages of the lessons we have learnt from where we come from. What has happened pre1994 so that we can work collectively as one united nation with all the challenges and difficulties, we have in the country. A loss of one person irrespective of their race in South Africa is one too many. Thank you very much, Chair. [Time expired.]

Ms J S MANANISO: House Chairperson, let me start by addressing hon Tambo to say that he has started on a wrong footing. One must say that all of us, when we started in this Parliament, we were given Constitutions so that we must remind ourselves who we are in the Parliament.

Chairperson and hon members, let me congratulate those who have emerged victoriously as our people representative at the local sphere of government. My message to them is that they must never forget the process that made them to be trusted by the masses. I would like them to join the august House in holding to the principle of activist citizens. Our people must not suffer nor lead themselves in resolving issues that need their interventions as servants.

The ANC reaffirms its commitment to building a united cohesive society in our January 8th statement of 2020 which notes the following: The ANC agrees that all of us must work together in terms of bridging the divisions amongst us as Africans, whether economical, social, political or cultural. We must also work to end all forms of racism, sexism, tribalism and chauvinism.

To build a united requires that we recognise the injustices of the past, agree on the task we must undertake to achieve proper redress.

To hon Mbhele, I hope what you said in terms of walking together you’d continuously tell your members of the DA that we will indeed achieve more if we hold each other hand by hand and work together. It means that we must recognise the equal rights of all South Africans to share in the country’s wealth, its land and work to realise the right.

The task of building a nonracial society remains fundamental to work of our movement and the broader society. Through our policies, programmes and practices we need to advance non- racialism in ensuring that every South African appreciates their equal, irrevocal right to call this country a home. All South Africans must feel that they have a future here, nowhere else.

The ANC as the author and the guardian of the Constitution of the Republic will continue to safeguard fundamental freedoms of all South Africans, both black and white. The point is fully expressed in the preamble of our Constitution where it reads as follows: We the people of South Africa recognise the injustices of our past, honour those who suffered for justice and freedom in our land,

respect those who have worked to build and develop our country, and believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity. We, therefore, through our freely elected representatives adopt this Constitution as the supreme law of the Republic, so as to heal the divisions of the past and establish the society.

The ANC is clear on its position of creating a nonracial, nonsexist democratic and prosperous South Africa. As the ANC we have stated firmly that our people must enjoy the benefits of this country, be it from a different class, gender, age, language or geographical location. And it is clearly stipulated on our strategy and tactics 2017.

One must say that whatever that we have experienced in terms of violence on black and white, black on black, gender-based violence, social ills, need to be condemned and reprimanded. It must come to an end that every time people respond to issues on a populist approach when things are on the public domain. But when people are suffering close to their doors, close to their houses, close to their streets, you cannot see them as other members. We want to condemn these mobilised, organised marches that seek to undermine this democracy.

One must say that as the ANC we condemn the issues of farm attacks and it must not happen not in our name and it must not happen while we lead as the governing party. As the ANC we want to tell the country and hon members that for us all lives matter; no black, no white, no coloured, no pink, but all lives matter.

The unfortunate problem with the EFF is the myopic and rhetoric that they display political freedom, yet they expose their intellectual bankruptcy.

On the other hand we have the DA, of which they have a problem of acknowledging the fact that as the ANC we still dealing with the patterns of apartheid.

But the fortunate part of being members of this House is the fact that ours is not to create and discourse but to create an enabling environment where one sees all races, sex, class, with one lens.

We cannot hesitate to underline the importance of the existence of the correct leadership at the moment of revolutionary change.

With the same breath, energy that we used to attend to the recent farm attack in Senekal and Brackenfell High School; we must attend

to those happening in our households, in our streets, in our communities, even if they don’t have publicity.

The ANC wants to reaffirm the fact that our Freedom Charter states clear that South Africa belongs to all who lives in it and it continues to emphasise that people shall share, people are equal before the law and that there shall be peace and security. I want all members of this Parliament and the society at large to note that the Freedom Charter speaks about the people not the few.

Indeed, if we all have South Africans’ interest at heart, we must all forge unity in action for better South Africa and prosperous [Inaudible.] dreaming of, better life for all not for the few.

I like what hon Singh has noted with regard to covid, and one can confirm that covid pandemic has actually indicated that as South Africans, as different races, class and sex, when working together we are able to save lives, we are able to preserve livelihoods.

Social cohesion and community building are unavoidable if all of us commit to be patriotic, constitutionalist and revolutionarist, more especially of us here in this august House; we have taken an oath to represent all South Africans at all times, 24/7, 365 days.

I want to emphasise to the whole country that to deal with this national agenda of non-racialism, nonsexist and prosperous South Africa, all families, street committees, road committees, civil societies and ourselves, hands must be on deck. We must be benefactors and beneficiaries of this particular national agenda.

In closing, I wish to remind ourselves of the ANC 2007 Strategy and Tactics document which mainstream the spiritual philosophy of ubuntu and its inheritance, values of human solidarity, equality, freedom and justice for all. It called for the creation of a truly united, democratic and prosperous South Africa in which the value of all citizens are measured by their humanity without regard to race, gender and social status. We are hoping for a South Africa that all languages can be used as equal where one does not need to switch to any tongue to communicate with other tribes or groups.

The South Africa that we are dreaming of is a South Africa where all we revisit these values and actively and collectively work towards the renewal of South African soul and spearhead on a path of creating our name, national democratic society.

One must say that indeed this particular debate was unavoidable. I thank you, Chairperson.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Hon members, may I request you that when you’re on the virtual platform that you switch off your television sets sounds or also the radios that’s around you, it’s causing a feedback and it’s making it very difficult to follow what is taking place on this platform.

Mr C BRINK: Thank you, Chair. I want to thank the hon Gungubele for raising this issue and commend the statesman-like manner in which he has handled it, despite the differences between our parties.

Today, the meaning of nonracialism is contested but the DA believes that it shouldn’t be. If South Africa is an open society, then nonracialism must mean exactly what it says; that in this society we do not assign rights and duties to people based on race; that the law and the state will not treat people as group representatives; that nobody will be subjected to the degrading practice of racial classification. We are either an open society or we are a tribalistic society. We can’t pretend to be an open society and share in the economic benefits that have historically accrued to such societies, while hanging on to the tenets of tribalism; neither is tribalism a cure for economic injustice and exclusion.

Apartheid was a form of institutionalised tribalism. What Verwoerd tried to do was freeze in time and space the divisions, prejudices and economics of the 19th century, even as the ground was shifting beneath his feet. Not only did the system of racial classification and discrimination deny individual freedom and agency, it also denied the economic interests that people have in common across the colour bar and despite the colour line.

Today, the ANC’s argument is that to undo the harm of apartheid we need to retrace the steps, including the use of racial classification and race-based policy. Many people outside of politics, in business, the professions and academia, have come to accept this idea of racialism while calling it nonracialism, but the contradiction is starting to show. Here in postapartheid South Africa, a Cape Town advocate who happens to be black and female, cannot serve on the Legal Practice Council because the quota for her group has been exceeded. A netball team has to stop playing and forfeit a match because for a moment there were too many black players on the court. Companies that want to do business with government are disqualified from even placing bids because too many of their shareholders come from racial minorities. This happens at a time when municipalities and other organs of state need all the skills and expertise they can procure to keep the lights on and the water flowing.

Other examples of where shared South African interests are undermined by racial policy abound; from purges of engineers at Eskom to an empowerment partner in a state contract being appointed on the recommendation of a Cabinet Minister. These policies and laws don’t achieve redress. They divide South Africans, destroy social capital and in fact, undermine the ability of the state to play a developmental role. They try to freeze in time and space the divisions, the prejudices and the ideology of a bygone era, even as the ground is shifting beneath our feet.

The DA proposes an alternative. We believe that the choice between nonracialism and redress is a false one. We can be a society that rejects race-based policy and a society that fights for economic justice and inclusion. Redress policies do not require people to tick an African box or a coloured box or any other box in order to be effective.

If we look at people’s circumstances, we can get a better impression of actual disadvantage. Using nonracial redress policy, we can measure our progress against human development goals. This will break the exclusionary pattern of a small elite being benefitted over and over again to the exclusion of those who are really in need.

The last point is about cohesion; something we can nurture if leaders stopped treating life in this country as if it were a racial zero-sum game. Broad social cohesion across different groups and classes has significant economic benefits. When people trust each other, care for each other and feel a shared sense of destiny, they sacrifice more and invest more, instead of constantly hedging their bets about the future.

Recently, California, the most diverse of the United States, voted in record numbers for two propositions. First, to elect Joe Biden as president; second, to uphold a constitutional ban on racial discrimination, whether it be positive or negative. We can’t compare ourselves to California in every respect, but maybe, as one open society to another, they send an important message about the meaning of nonracialism.

Mr M GUNGUBELE: Thank you, hon Chairperson. I just want to say ... I want to express my gratitude to the majority of members of this Parliament for acknowledging today, and coming and converging on the undisputed fact that our Constitution is a product of accepting that it’s only through a nonracial, peaceful, nonracist, united society that we can guarantee correcting the iniquities of the past.

Hon Mulder, our movement has always been very clear that there is no mutual exclusivity between correcting the iniquities of the past and building a single nation. The critical thing that all groupings are being called to understand is that what must be uppermost in our minds is the nation we want to build and the factors that undermine the possibility of building that nation. I want to give commendation and thank most of the parties for acknowledging that; for acknowledging that in a chaotic environment, in an environment of fear and in an environment of paranoia, we will never correct the issue of poverty. We will never address productive development that changes the lives of our people. ... for acknowledging that. Of course, I will come somewhere else. I just thought I was addressing hon Mulder on that.

I just want to come to hon Brink. Again, you see the difference. I listened to hon Mbhele. What he actually denies has existed just now. Hon Mbhele has acknowledged the principle of nonracialsm and understands what is being addressed by this country, without attaching any ... [Inaudible.]

... you live in your own world because ... [Inaudible.] I have been to George ... [Inaudible.] ... in the manner articulated both through the Constitution and ... [Inaudible.] However, where you

are ruling, blacks continue to suffer and their services continue to go down, but you preached things in your paper and in the last and recent conference that you don’t live up to. That is the challenge.

If we all agree that nonracialism is the ultimate end, we must correct the iniquities of the past because that end and the past

... correcting the past and building the future ... there is no mutual exclusivity in that. I want to thank all other hon members for acknowledging that.

What made our forebears love unity was because they understood that a successful South Africa is ... when leaders of the highest note understand that you must address the authentic fears, even those of your worst enemy. Your worst enemy must know that the future South Africa is also his home ... by acknowledging what he fears. However, he must be made to understand that without correcting the frustrations and hurt of those who were on the receiving end in the past, that a nonracial South Africa cannot be built.

Now, in moving towards the end, my last point I quickly want to say is that a debate like this cannot pay attention to street kids because if there are street kids there is no ... [Inaudible.] ...

there is no order. Especially ... if you come to this debate having it in programme, you don’t listen to what is being said. We knew about agents provocateurs in the struggle. They pronounced the noble goal of our people but they acted in a manner that disrupted it, because in a violent, intimidating situation there can never be development. It’s only agents provocateurs who accept that.

Again, I want to close by saying ... I call upon all South Africans to imprison themselves in a ... [Inaudible.] ... of a South Africa that works towards the wellbeing of its citizens, which is a conqueror of exclusion and marginalisation; that will have secured all its people’s sense of belonging; that will be grounded on the bedrock of trust within itself; that will offer all its people opportunities of upward mobility.

In closing, our Constitution is an ... [Inaudible.] ... nation which our forebears laid down their lives for. Again, I’m calling upon all those who are at the top to hold tight to the ladder and not to kick it, and those who are at the bottom to climb the ladder and not to mock it. The future must be constructed now. The conditions now must be correct for the future because the future cannot be constructed in the future. Make it now for the future to

be realised. I thank you, hon members ... [Inaudible.] ... members for a very constructive engagement.

# CONSIDERATION OF REPORT OF PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS ON PETITION PERTAINING TO ROLE OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY IN COVID-19 CRISIS.

Mr B M HADEBE: Hon Chair ...

*IsiXhosa*:

... kunzima ukuthetha ...

*English*:

... after such a profound *umrhabulo* from hon Gungubele. It is worth noting from the onset that, this petition has been overtaken by the events. The country is currently on lockdown level one. Be that as it may, we are still duty-bound to unpack issues raised and recommendations as proposed by the portfolio committee then.

On 8 June 2020, the portfolio committee received a petition from Freedom of Religion South Africa, FOR SA on behalf of religious leaders and organisations. The petition called on the committee to facilitate a greater involvement of the religious sector in regulations governing the national government response to COVID-19

pandemic, given that the committee is the custodian of the Disaster Management Act of 2002, its regulations and directions.

In response to the call, the committee requested and received a briefing on this matter from the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Cogta on Wednesday 24 June 2020 including briefing from the petitioners themselves.

FOR SA was grateful for the opportunity to have an audience with the committee. Its submission was as a result of the great uncertainty regarding the application of various regulations directives in respect of religious leaders and its organisation. FOR SA stated that none of the levels of lockdown stages mentioned the role of religious sectors except for food distribution, other social reliefs and presiding over funerals.

Hon Chair, FOR SA also argued that their petition was as a result of lack of response from the President, the Minister of Cogta, the portfolio committee itself and the National Disaster Management Nerve Centre. While issuing the level three regulations and directives, relating to the norms and standards of religious gatherings has since covered the question for clarification as standards of religious gatherings have since covered this matter.

The FOR SA’s request for engagement and involvement in the consultation for the remaining stages of lockdown were still relevant. Furthermore, there were still various ambiguities in some of the clauses in relation to level three regulations, including the status of religious leaders as essential workers, whether the definition of churches includes home, whether the religious gatherings includes drive-in gatherings. These required clarifications in order to avoid dire legal consequences for religious leaders and organisations.

Once again, the petitioners at the time indicated that the Minister of Cogta had not responded to their request for clarity. The outcome of FOR SA seeks to achieve through the petition the phase reopening of religious sectors across the different levels, similar to those of the economic sector. The petition also envisaged an opportunity for senior level representation of the religious community under the FOR SA umbrella, in governments consultative process as the views of the religious structures government is currently engaging with did not necessarily encompass those of religious organisations under the FOR SA umbrella.

The Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Cogta, in its response the department submitted the following:

Government was cognisant of the vital role the religious community in the time of COVID-19 including the distribution of food parcels, social work counselling services, supporting victim of Gender Based Violence as well as care and relief for activism most of them which are vulnerable. The department had [Time Expired.] Thank you so much.

Ms G G OPPERMAN: Thank you House Chair. The committee observations states that FOR SA could have raised their concerns with the President and the Minister of Cogta since the committee was never involved in the drafting of any of the regulation, and was therefore not in the best position to attend to the petition. Yet, the reason why FOR SA approached the committee as the custodians of the Disaster Management Act of 2002 was their last resort, for they did raise their concerns directly to the President and the Minister of Cogta on various occasions without receiving a substantive reply.

The committee in its recommendations resolved that the department must respond to FOR SA queries immediately where it had not done so. In general, the department must cultivate the habit of responsiveness even if it is just acknowledgement of receipt of correspondence.

On 4 August 2020, FOR SA had a meeting with the Minister of Cogta but have to date, and five letters of enquiry later, plus an enquiry letter plus an open letter from senior religious leaders, never received any reply on the issues raised during that meeting. Despite the Cogta Portfolio Committee’s instruction, to immediately respond to FOR SA queries, all five letters to the Minister went wholly unanswered. This is unacceptable given that FOR SA represents 18,5 million people from across the spectrum of churches, denominations and faith groups. The religious community has various burning issues which result in an ongoing limitation of their constitutional rights.

FOR SA once again asked the committee to ensure that the department responds to the questions and feel that, it is clear that the department is not interested in replying or engaging unless pressure is applied on them. As a result, the impression remains that the religious sector is not that important to government, even though this sector has served on the frontline in terms of caring for and providing much needed social relief to vulnerable communities.

The onus thus rests on the Cogta Portfolio Committee to hold government to account and ensure that the religious community is treated with the same level of respect, interest and engagement as

the rest of the economy. Treating casinos and sheebeens better than churches, mosques or temples is unreasonable, disproportional and unjustifiable as the religious organisations has constitutional rights.

The Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities, CRL is a Chapter Nine institution mandated to protect the interests of religious communities in South Africa, should be at the forefront engaging with the religious sector to determine in which way the commission can assist the sector to make sure that their rights are protected during this unpresented time. Yet, they were nowhere to be seen unless being specifically invited to a meeting like when the petition was discussed. This did not just not raise the CRL’s limited credibility in the eyes of the religious sector.

The practise of a person’s faith is of critical importance to the human dignity and overall wellbeing. It is therefore important that the Minister urgently give clarifications on the matters raised by the religious leaders, regarding clarifications on the regulations as applicable to the religious community on alert level one, so that they can understand and start to implement it. Thank you Chair.

Mr K CEZA: Thank you very much, House Chair, the worse mistake that would have been committed during level 3 was to allow more worshippers to gather than it was necessary and government having to succumb to the pressures of inactivity of congregations and to a larger extent religious leaders. Our view, Chairperson, is that people must be allowed to participate in the religious activities in the manner in which they see fit and not be pressured to congregate even at the most crucial and dangerous period such as COVID-19. Religious leaders must play their positive role in society by establishing new platforms where they will safeguard the people and themselves against the spread of the virus, and not rob them of their belongings, including monies in the manner which we have seen lately.

We need religious organisations that must build within their communities the necessary technologies and platforms, which should be able to allow congregants to gather while ensuring safety in line with the regulations where people observe social distances. I thought to wear masks regularly rather than recklessly calling for more defined rules where physical activity is encouraged than prioritising health and safety measures.

We cannot allow for gathering that will endanger the safety of our people. In times of crisis such as COVID-19, religious leaders

should be the ones who must take the communities through the regulations and section 31 of the Constitution, to protect the rights of people, to belong to religious formations while not trapping the vulnerable to more danger.

Furthermore, religious leaders and organisations during this critical period should also allow for the counselling of family members who have been directly affected by the loss of their members where majority come from poor backgrounds and cannot afford professional counselling.

Chairperson, we call on religious leaders as part of the leadership in society broadly to play a positive role to protect our people and still provide spiritual guidance without endangering the lives of our people. Thank you very much.

Mr M N NXUMALO: Thank you very much, House Chair and hon members, can I say that I am delivering these demands on behalf of Inkosi yaseMatholeni. Chair, the recent period of hard lockdown necessitated by the COVID-19 global pandemic was an unprecedented and unexpected one. Therefore, a time of great challenge for our government as it struggled to put into effect legislative precautionary measures in order to ensure the minimisation of the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The petition received from the Freedom of Religion in South Africa, FOR SA, on behalf of approximately 18,5 million people across a broad spectrum of denominations, churches and religious organisations was not only in regard to clarification of the role that the religious centre could play during the time of great national disaster, but could also request to facilitate a greater involvement of the religious sector in the drafting of the lockdown regulations.

Hon Chair, it is a sad day indeed when our religious organisations are ignored by our government. So, as the IFP, we believe that in times like these when there is great national distress, the religion has got a very serious role to play. Thank you very much, hon Chair.

Mr W M THRING: Thank you, House Chair, the ACDP at the outset would like to complement FOR SA for raising this pertinent issues in their petition to the Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Cogta, Committee. The role the FOR SA plays, as an activist and protagonist of freedom of religion, is commendable and must be applauded. Indeed, if the democratic principle of freedom of religion is undermined, suppressed or removed, it will not be long before other freedoms or rights are removed as well.

House Chair, the ACDP is on record for calling for the religious leaders to be declared as essential workers during the stringent lockdown periods. We also agree with FOR SA that various ambiguities existed in some of the clauses at level 3 regulations, such as whether drive-in, the gatherings would flout the regulations at the time. Additionally, it made no sense to limit churches and other religious groups from distributing much-needed food to our communities.

When the President of South Africa himself said that the government lacked capacity to distribute food parcels not forgetting at the time those selfish politicians who stole ordered and sold food parcels meant for the poor. This act in itself could have resulted in more people dying from poverty and hunger than from the virus. When the maximum number of religious gatherings was set at 50 but other sectors were not, the ACDP spoke about this anomaly and hypocrisy. The raising now of the number to 250 while your casinos, supermarkets, shebeens and other institutions have no such restrictions. Again, reveals the ambiguity and hypocrisy of the drafters of the lockdown regulations.

The ACDP calls on the Minister to lift the moratorium on schools renting their facilities to religious groups. These groups in schools can and would comply with the stringent health and hygiene

protocols and hence there would be no need for this discrimination of churches and other religious groups in schools. It is the view of the ACDP that the maximum number of 250 people attending for the church and other religious groups is an overkill reaction from the Minister, as the church has in place stringent sanitation, hygiene and social distancing protocols which your airlines, shebeens and supermarkets don’t necessarily have. Why should the churches and with a capacity to seat 5 000 people, for example be limited to a service with just 250 congregants present while your casinos and others in the business sector can take 50% of their capacity. Is this not hypocritical and discriminatory against the church?

It is the view of the ACDP that the prohibition of the laying on of hands during prayer, baptism and communion is unreasonable, given that there is an opportunity for the use of surgical gloves as well as adhering to the necessary health and hygiene protocols during these religious practices.

The ACDP agrees that the recommendations of the committee for the department to immediately respond to forces queries where it had not done so in order to cultivate a habit of responsiveness. The committee and the Minister must note that the church is not an

enemy of the state do not make it through ambiguous and hypocritical regulations. I thank you.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): The next speaker is the hon Shaik Emam. Hon Shaik Emam, are you on the platform? The next speaker is the hon Shaik Emam. The next speaker is the hon Shaik Emam. If the hon Shaik Emam is not on the platform ... The next speaker is the hon Shaik Emam. If the hon Shaik Emam is not on the platform I will recognise the hon Muthambi.

Mr N SINGH: Hon Chairperson, it’s Singh here.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Hon Singh?

Mr N SINGH: He’s probably having a problem that he discussed at our other fora, of being in two sessions at the same time. Thank you.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Yes, but then they must alert us. The hon Muthambi? Is the hon Muthambi on the platform? If not hon members, then we will continue with the Second Order because that concludes the debate on the First Order.

Mr G G MPUMZA: Chairperson? Chair? Hon Chairperson?

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Yes, hon member? Hon Mpumza?

Mr G G MPUMZA: Chairperson?

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Hon Mpumza?

Mr G G MPUMZA: Yes, Chair, I’m here. I’m standing in for hon Muthambi.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Please proceed, hon member.

Mr G G MPUMZA: Can I proceed, Chair?

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Yes.

Mr G G MPUMZA: Thank you, Chairperson. Hon Chairperson and hon members, firstly, the ANC would like to express its heartfelt condolences to all those who succumbed to the coronavirus pandemic-related illnesses. Currently, in the same vein the ANC commends the National Coronavirus Command Council, chaired by President Cyril Ramaphosa. This gesture goes beyond excluding religious and traditional leaders, and ... the citizens of our

country for the huge role they have played following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Having said that, the ANC notes the petition brought by Freedom of Religion SA, FORSA, relating to the role of the religious community in the COVID-19 crisis. The petition calls for the committee to facilitate the real-time involvement of the religious sector in the regulations governing the national government’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ANC also appreciates the response given by the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs. In the main, the department’s response entails the issuing of permits to religious leaders to perform essential services; food distribution to vulnerable communities; the solemnisation of marriages; the definition of places of worship; drive-in gatherings; the sale of educational material; as well as access to the Unemployment Insurance Fund.

The ANC’s policy broadly allows religious leaders to play a huge role in promoting nation-building and social cohesion ... including schools and ... the early warning for discrimination, and therefore, plays a critical role in moral regeneration, as a

contribution to a democratic society that is nonracial and nonsexist, and that we are ... [Inaudible.] ... we seek to build.

The ANC urges the department to respond to the issues that are still in need of clarification and to address the shortcomings identified in the FORSA petition.

The ANC chair therefore supports the recommendation of the Portfolio Committee on Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs.

# CONSIDERATION OF REPORT OF PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS ON 2020-21 FIRST QUARTER PERFORMANCE AND EXPENDITURE REPORT OF DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Ms P FAKU: Hon Chairperson, hon members, I rise on behalf of the ANC to express our support for the report of the Portfolio Committee on Communication and Digital Technologies on the 2020-21 first quarter performance and expenditure report of the department. As this House considers the report, it is important that we do not lose sight of the context. We are meeting in the week that the national broadcaster, the SABC, has dominated the news and headlines. The SABC was the main story of its own news programmes. As members of the Portfolio Committee on Communication

Digital Technologies, we learned through the news that the SABC news employers at Auckland Park embarked on a go-slow, with some refusing to go on air, as a heated meeting erupted on Tuesday over the threat of retrenchment of 400 staff members. Less than 24 hours earlier, the SABC reported a loss of R511 million for the year 2019-20 financial year.

The public broadcaster has been heavily criticised by the Auditor- General for incurring irregular expenditure of at least R5,4 billion, which led to a qualified audit opinion for the second year running. We must record that the SABC received a disclaimer in the 2017-18 financial year, which is the worst possible audit outcome.

The SABC received a bailout or R3,2 billion during the 2019-20 financial year, where it was tasked to develop a turnaround strategy focusing on revenue generation.

While the SABC matter are worrying and need urgent attention, they report only on the SABC. We are tabling the report of the portfolio committee to make observations about the performance of the department, and the entities over which it maintains oversight. The department and its entities performed very well during that pass financial year, where the Department of

Telecommunications and Postal Services, DTPS obtained a clean audit.

We observed that at the height of Covid-19, a response team was established, which ensured that the temporal spectrum was released by ICASA to ensure the quality of broadband services while South Africans worked at home. This team also proactively responded to fake news on social media.

The committee was pleased with the progress that has been made, most importantly with the project that the department has embarked on since the reconfiguration of the government in the Sixth Administration.

The department is finalising its organisational structure that must be completed by March 2021. The ANC is especially proud of the sterling record that has continued to be led by Sentech in ensuring that South Africans receive signals both on radio and television, whilst the entity maintained a clean audit for five consecutive years.

I wish to conclude by calling on all parties involved in the SABC dispute to seek a negotiated settlement as soon as possible. As the ANC, we are encouraged by the posture of the Minister of

Communication in discouraging retrenchments. We believe everything possible must be done to ensure a successful turnaround of the SABC and save jobs. Thank you.

Mr C MACKENZIE: House Chair, all protocol observed, firstly, allow me to thank all members of this portfolio committee for the spirit of multiparty co-operation, good humour, friendliness and a shared desire to act in the best interest of all the people of this country. It is a pleasure to serve with you all.

After an unfortunate incident in January, I was essentially away from Parliament for nearly three months. Before I got shot, the department and entities appeared mostly to be in robust good health, with sound leadership on all executive levels, strategic plans in place and well on track to meet their respective mandates.

When I returned to work four months later, the three main entities that form the multibillion rand foundation upon which this department rest, namely the South African Post Office, the SABC and the State Information Technology Agency, SITA, were and are making headlines for all the wrong reasons.

There are boardroom shenanigans, with entire boards dissolved and replaced with directors that lack any institutional or continuity knowledge of the entities they lead or chairpersons appointed by the Minister, then fired soon after for refusing to bow to the Minister’s dictates and interference in the day to day operations of the entity by the Minister, seeking to influence direct operations.

In this light, the SABC and the South African Post Office stand out as perfect examples. The question to be asked is: What happened to the entities that used to have sound leadership installed and were moving in the right direction? What was the catalyst for their apparent collapse?

While it is tempting to slip into the Wuhun virus blame game, we really cannot lay this at the feet of Covid-19. The Minister, her ignorance of the law and the extent of her powers, as well as her ill-considered decisions are almost exclusively to blame.

Finally, I would like to address the matter of the Post Bank and the South African Post Office, Sapo, which is not tabled with financial reports so far this year. When I asked the officer of the Auditor-General during a committee meeting why Sapo had not tabled their financial report, the response I got was: Ask them.

Well perhaps the answer lies here. A recent high court judgement showed that Sapo’s year to date loss at 31 July 2020 was R1,066 billion, while only 55 of the Post Office’s 1 416 operational branches are profitable.

Once again, landlords are locking post offices for nonpayment of rent, the latest being Highveld Post Office in Centurion, Parkview Shopping Centre in Menlyn Park, Retail Park also remain shut.

The fact is that the South African Post Office is completely bankrupt. In their haste to start a State Bank on the back of the Post Bank - a very successful business, as it stands at the moment

- the ANC committed a series of cardinal blunders, most of it because they simply did not do their homework. One of these is the realisation that the Post Office without the Post Bank is hopelessly insolvent and cannot continue as a going concern.

The Sapo is broken and what is worse is that the Minister has no idea how to fix it, besides sticking her head in the sand and hoping time flies and her term comes to an end.

Moving to the SABC, the situation of retrenchments at the broadcaster is highly charged, understandably very emotional and mired in confusion and misinformation. The Minister and the ruling

party have known about the impending financial crisis at the broadcaster since at least 2018, in which they have brought no new initiatives to the table and done nothing except pontificating the public around the fact that no one should lose their jobs, but without presenting any alternative solutions, and instead, directly contradicting the board.

It was with this sense of amazement therefore that I heard the Minister telling the portfolio committee yesterday, and I quote: “Come up with alternative solutions to the retrenchment process at the SABC.” This points to the sheer incompetence of an intellectually bankrupt Minister who is paid millions a year with an entire department and a couple of special advisors who are paid over R1 million a year each, as part of a royal revenue. Is this really the best the Minister can do in dealing with the traumatic matter of people’s lives and livelihoods?

R700 million will not come from Treasury to fund these salaries. They just don’t have it. The “goodship” South Africa is flat broke. The heart-wrenching clip of a SABC journalist breaking down in tears just brings home how deeply personal these decisions are that we take that directly impact the lives of our people.

In this time of record employment, do more to disastrous anti- economic policies and useful excuse of Covid-19. In this time of record unemployment, every job that can be saved, must be save. Where retrenchments are unavoidable though, in every step of the process, we will continue to monitor the fairness of these developments very closely.

Minister Ndabeni-Abrahams is well paid to ensure the smooth running of department and the entities that report to it. It is on that record that she must be judged and on that record that she is found wanting. The DA supports the work of the committee and the contents of this report. Thank you.

Mr V PAMBO: House Chair, I would like to take this opportunity to address a matter that this department has failed to deal with, and one which has now captured the attention of the broader public.

Although the matter before us is the Annual Performance Plan of the Department of Communications, it would be foolish of us to ignore the collapse of an entity under this department’s jurisdiction which is explicit proof of a lack of planning and incompetence.

Chairperson, the South African Broadcasting Corporation, SABC, is in the process of retrenching over 400 workers as a result of

gross incompetence by a leadership collective that has no imagination to lead the entity. In what can only be regarded as an emotionally abusive act of terror, the SABC re-enacted on its own commitment yesterday to put an end to the section 189 process which initiates the process of consultations for retrenchments.

The decision has been reached by a board and executive that has, by all means, self-admittedly failed to turn around the financial situation at the SABC. The executive which earns over R42 million annually as a collective, has decided that their salary bills are worth more than the livelihoods of 400 people. However, it does not end there. The high salaries of those who have decided to retrench workers has brought with it R511 million in revenue losses for the financial year 2019-20.

The critical question that should therefore be posed to all of us is: What is the purpose of retaining an executive and a board that has failed to fulfil its mandate? If the leadership of the SABC has exhibited incapacity to turn around the financial situation at the SABC why should they be retained whilst the staff has provided award-winning programmes, quality news coverage and content be retrenched? Why?

The fact of the matter is that this board and its executive has no believable plan of rescuing the SABC and providing strategic leadership to it. The fact that they believe that retrenchments are a solution to the revenue problems of the SABC shows that there are no future prospects of a turnaround strategy and the SABC is doomed for failure under this leadership.

Six months from now when the SABC reports more financial losses, this very same board will come to us and report yet another retrenchment process because their agenda is clearly to collapse the entity and deprive millions of South Africans of a fair objective content from a public broadcaster. We must therefore, as a matter of urgency, disband the board of the SABC for the division it showed yesterday which represents a huge crisis. The CEO and COO of the SABC must be suspended and a commission of inquiry into the structuring of the salary packages of the current board and its executive ought to be established. This must be accompanied by a commission of inquiry into the activities of this board and their attempts to fix the situation at the SABC, if any.

Furthermore, this Parliament must demand of the department to put a complete halt of the section 189 process. It cannot be that the department pleads ignorance and solidarity in the public when it has their oversight and jurisdictional powers to intervene on the

inhumane situation at the SABC. The new leadership at the SABC must be given a decisive mandate on leading the SABC out of a financial ruin, not one that is self-destructive, narrow and will add to the spiralling unemployment crisis in South Africa.

As a matter of national importance, the SABC must put an end to the illegal must-carry obligations it has with subscription broadcast entities, particularly MultiChoice. [Time expired.]

Ms Z MAJOZI: Hon Chairperson, although the report under consideration was drafted to reflect the many achievements of the department, there is not enough emphasis on the fact that the department could not even achieve half of its target during the period under review.

Less than 50% of targets achieved should be a cause for concern in any department, but even more so, one responsible for the nation’s communications and even more so, during a worldwide pandemic when face to face communication was not always possible.

Areas of under achievement of concern to the IFP include, among others, that a performance management system for Independent Communications Authority of South Africa, ICASA, councillors was not conducted as planned. That SABC implementation on the

turnaround plan was not conducted and that detailed analysis of the ICASA’s 5G study report was not concluded.

The SABC and ICASA both have essential roles to play in the communication sector and are mandated to work in the public interest. The department cannot afford to neglect these entities. With regards to budget programme, ICT Enterprise and Public Entity Oversight achieved none of its targets. How then can this programme justify its expenditure of R449 203 million by far the greatest expenditure over the first quarter and have nothing to show for it?

The purpose of this programme is to oversee and manage government’s shareholding interest in the ICT public entities and state-owned companies. If no targets were achieved, can we then assume that no oversight or management took place in a country where none of the greatest threats of our economy is the losses incurred through corrupt practices? Is this not an open invitation for those in an appetite for public funds to take advantage?

Those responsible must be held accountable and would do well to remember that if they are not able to achieve their targets or produce verifiable results such as programmes they might find

themselves out in the cold when the proposed zero-based budgeting is implemented.

The IFP further supports the recommendation pertaining to SA Post Office, SAPO, and will monitor developments in this regard.

Regarding the Universal Service and Access Agency of South Africa, USSASA, I am sure you will agree that much work still needs to be done to ensure all South Africans are able to connect, speak, explore and study using ICT.

With this consideration in mind, the IFP accepts the report. Thank you, Chair.

Mr W M MADISHA: Hon Chairperson, I must indicate that COPE welcomes the report. We support the report that has been given to the meeting here. But then on the issue of the SABC we are extremely disappointed. The SABC belongs to the people of South Africa and owned by the people of South Africa. Ourselves as the representatives of South Africans, we have sent the Deputy Minister to go and represent us on the board of the SABC.

I must acknowledge that she has been doing an excellent work. She goes, comes back to us and reports. On very many occasions, she has been downgraded in her position. Which means that our

positions are not even recognised. The management of the SABC do as they wish. Now, it is not for the first time, for example, that they are expelling people. They have expelled people in the past on very many occasions. We have reasoned ... I mean I have been in the portfolio committee now for more than 10 years and we have seen what they have done.

They have expelled people and the money that Parliament gives them to upgrade and make sure that there is movement forward but they use it to employ lawyers so that they can just deal with the workers in whatever way they want.

They go to all the structures where they can be able to fire workers. This is wrong. Let me indicate that a person, particularly the African people, one person takes care of at least

10 members of a family. Now, if they say they fire 600 people, it means 6000 people are going to go hungry. But now they have gone down to say they will fire 400 which means that 4000 people will be hungry through and through.

I must say that this is nonsense and, ourselves as Parliament, if we do not rise to stop these things then we are not getting anywhere. Those in management get millions, let me emphasise, but those people who carry cameras and move around get about R10 000 a

month and the management does not care about them. We are aware that even the board has not agreed – they differ but then they don’t even care whether the majority of the people — and the majority I am referring to is the almost 60 million people of South Africa — they don’t care about what we say.

My child, our children and the children of people in KwaZulu- Natal, in East London all over the country want to watch *Generations*, want to watch *Muvhango*, or you want to watch the news etc. but then the management there says whether you want that or not, whether the people there are qualified or not they must just be kicked out.

I am therefore saying that if we allow them, ourselves here as Parliament, to go on like that then we shall have failed the people of South Africa. Let us stop that management. They are just out of order or we must fire them ourselves as Parliament. Thank you, Chairperson.

Mr T T GUMBU: Chair, the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies is central to the modernisation of the South African economy and upgrading our network industries. This modernisation is part of the long overdue reforms that are necessary to unleash the potential of our country’s growth and development.

The ANC welcomes the report of the committee which reflects a mixed bag of results. With the fulfilment of our oversight function it is critical that we focus on the commitments of government. Among these is the allocation of high demand spectrum, and we are pleased that this will be completed by March next year.

As the President pointed out in the opening address to the Third Investment Conference, the allocation of spectrum will enable new investments in our telecommunications and infrastructure and open a way for the digital economy. It will contribute towards lowering the cost of data which remains much higher than some of our fellow nations in Africa although we fair better than some developed countries including the United States, Switzerland, New Zealand and Canada.

Chairperson, we commend the entities of the department that have performed well such as USSASA. The entity was exemplary in terms of achieving the target of paying 100% of valid invoices within 30 days from the date of receipt. This is important particularly for small, medium and micro enterprises, SMMEs.

We support the call on the department to ensure that USSASA provides adequate services to rural areas as part of the drive to integrate government. The committee has recommended to government

to make use of State Information Technology Agency, SITA, services for ICT procurement processes to avoid the inflation of prices.

We believe that digital technologies can support economic inclusion by breaking down barriers to information, broadening access and lowering the level of exclusion to participate in the economy.

This does not mean that everyone and everything will be connected or digitalised. However, we know that these technologies are the single most important driver of innovation, competitiveness and growth. They hold a huge potential for entrepreneurs and SMMEs.

Unlike other parties that seek to perpetuate apartheid patterns of exclusion, the ANC members in the committee are unapologetic in our stance that the benefits of the digital economy must reach the entire population particularly the black people, women, youth, people with disabilities and rural areas. I thank you, Chair.

Debate concluded.

The mini-plenary session rose at 16:03.