**FRIDAY, 14 MAY 2021**

***PROCEEDINGS OF MINIPLENARY SESSION – NATIONAL ASSEMBLY CHAMBER***

Members of the mini-plenary session met on the virtual platform at 10:00.

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

The Chairperson announced that the virtual mini-plenary sitting constituted a meeting of the National Assembly.

**APPROPRIATION BILL**

Debate on Vote No 32 – Environment, Forestry and Fisheries:

The MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES: Hon House

Chair, our Deputy Minister Ms Makhotso Sotyu, hon Fikile Xasa, and committee members, chairpersons of the entities, team

forestry, fisheries and environment, including our Director- General, Ms Nomfundo Tshabalala, CEOs of our entities, hon members, I want to start this debate today by quoting President Xi Jinping of China who said, at the World Leaders Climate Summit hosted by President Biden in April:

To protect the environment is to protect productivity, and to improve the environment is to boost productivity - the truth is as simple as that. We must abandon development models that harm or undermine the environment, and must say no to short-sighted approaches of going after near-term development gains at the expense of the environment. Much to the contrary, we need to ride the trend of technological revolution and industrial transformation, seize the enormous opportunity in green transition, and let the power of innovation drive us to upgrade our economic, energy and industrial structures, and make sure that a sound environment is there to buttress sustainable economic and social development worldwide.

This quote because it ably sums up the complex task that faces us as we implement our Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Green Stimulus Recovery Programme forms part of the post Covid-19 recovery programme aims to protect our natural resources while contributing to equitable economic growth, providing employment to marginalised communities and growing economic sectors reliant on the environment without destroying it.

In his weekly letter to the nation on Monday 26 April, President Ramaphosa said “even as we continue to fight the Covid-19 pandemic, tackling climate change is a national priority for South Africa.” The President went on to say that as a country we are committed to contributing our fair share to the global climate effort. He also urged the newly- established Presidential Climate Change Commission to advise government on an ambitious and just transition to a low-carbon economy.

At the beginning of April our government released our revised Nationally Determined Contribution, NDC, for public comment

ahead of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, UNFCCC, in November. The enhanced NDC significantly boosts both mitigation and adaptation ambition. The document proposes emissions decline begin in 2025 — a full 10 years ahead of our previous peak, plateau decline trajectory.

It further proposes that by 2030 our greenhouse gas emissions must decline by 28% compared to the current levels.

Government’s current target in the Integrated Resource Plan, IRP, is installing well over 26 gigawatts of renewables by 2030. Thereby reducing fossil fuels in electricity generation from the current 80% to 51%.

The regulatory architecture to guide our transition processes has advanced over the years. The National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy to co-ordinate adaptation actions at all levels of government was finalised. The long awaited Climate Bill has been certified by the state law advisor and is on its way through the Cabinet system.

Hon members, in the coming weeks and months there will be a tension on the recommendations of the High Level Panel, which reviewed policies, legislation and practices related to the

management, breeding, hunting, trade and handling of elephant, lion, leopard and rhinoceros.

As you are all aware, the panel was appointed after 2018 Colloquium on Captive Lion Breeding which resulted in a resolution by this House that the department initiate a policy and legislative review with a view to putting an end to this practice.

The report of the High Level Panel Report comprising 18 goals and 60 recommendations was tabled in the public domain two weeks ago. The expected outcomes once we implement the recommendations include better balancing our economic, social, cultural and natural heritage needs. It places communities living with wildlife at the centre of our thinking. It demands a renewed focus on benefit sharing for communities living on the edges of conservation areas, and on transforming the ownership and management of the commercial wildlife economy, particularly in the ecotourism and authentic hunting sectors.

Finally, the report recommends the ending of certain inhumane and irresponsible practices that greatly harm the reputation

of South Africa and the position of South Africa as a conservation leader.

There is great interest in the panel’s outcomes, in particular from private rhino owners who feel that the substantial contribution they make to rhino conservation has been ignored. Nothing could be further from the truth. Next week I will be meeting with the Private Rhino Owners Association so we can share full details on how the panel’s recommendations focus on securing the survival of rhino in the wild through recognising the high conservation value that privately owned rhino, including captive ones, hold and their essential role in any conservation strategy.

It should also be noted that the panel identified the potential contribution a legal commercial international trade in rhino horn could make to conservation, provided we meet the conditions set out in the 2016 action plan which include combating poaching, enhance community engagement and demand management in the destination countries. Any future CITES approval for such trade requires us to indicate that we have built this solid foundation and are able to demonstrate that a

legal trade will not endanger wild rhino elsewhere in the world.

Work has already begun on a draft policy position that covers the key areas and recommendations of the panel and this will be published shortly for public participation. The department is also initiating a process to develop a draft White Paper on Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use.

Hon House Chair, in October this year China will host the fifteenth conference of the parties on the Convention on Conservation and Bio-Diversity in Kunming. South Africa as a leading negotiator on behalf of the African region, will advocate that the scope of the Global Biodiversity Framework should adequately and equitably cover the three objective of the convention, namely, the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources.

Hon members, last year Cabinet approved the reviewed National Protected Areas Expansion Strategy, NPAES, for implementation. This strategy aims to achieve cost effective protected areas

expansion for improved ecosystem representation, ecological sustainability and resilience to climate change, while safeguarding more than 418 000 biodiversity-based jobs.

The new strategy, which extends to freshwater and marine components, is framed to ensure that the country contributes to its international obligations on the protection of conservation estates. We can report to this House today that our country is on course to achieve 17% of our land under the conservation estate during this government term.

Work is also being done to secure strategic water sources and wetlands. These areas supply water that sustains 60% of our water needs and more than 90% of urban water users. We are firmly of the view that, as a water scarce country, we cannot afford to compromise any of our strategic water sources for short term gain. And so we have to do ever more with our sister departments to ensure that we protect them for future generation.

Invasive species are also major contributors to biodiversity loss and water scarcity. Our Working for Water programme, not only realises conservation outcomes, but also creates much

needed jobs for youth and women in rural areas where few opportunities are available.

This year we will create 66 000 work opportunities in clearing of alien invasive species and wetland rehabilitation. We intend, through different partnerships, to formalise accredited training for almost 14 000 of these participants so they have a recognised and tradeable skill at the end of the programme.

Hon members, a healthy environment must be one free of waste pollution. And so the implementation of the National Waste Management Strategy 2020 is a top priority. First and foremost, we must change citizen behaviour and encourage everyone to dispose of waste in a responsible manner. We must stop dumping household waste and fast food packaging in the environment. We must refuse single use plastics when buying our favourite take away.

Plastic is the key focus area in terms of managing pollution. Last month we published the new requirements for plastic carrier bags which are required to contain 50% recycled content from 2023, increasing to 100% in 2027. This will not

only ensure circularity, but will see product design taking the environment into consideration.

Marine litter, including plastic litter, is of increasing global and national concern. For the past 18 months, the department has implemented a pilot project in the eThekwini region which focuses on capturing litter in five priority areas. This year we will extend the programme to 16 coastal districts and create a minimum of 1 600 work opportunities.

To ensure all municipalities increase the number of households with regular access to weekly refuse removal. Municipalities can now use a portion of the Municipal Infrastructure Grant, MIG, funding to buy compacted trucks and landfill equipment.

We are supporting local government to develop integrated waste management plans and ensure that these are included for funding into the Integrated Development Plan, IDP, processes. To enhance cleaning efforts across all municipalities in the country, 12 000 unemployed youth will be offered work opportunities in support of the municipal Cleaning and Greening Programme.

To ensure manufacturers and importers of products are responsible for the impact their products have on the environment, Extended Producer Responsibility plans were required for the paper and packaging, electrical and electronic equipment and lighting sectors in 2021. This will divert these waste streams from landfills and increase recycling and up-cycling. In the 2021-22 financial year, the scope of products is broadened to include pesticides, lubricant oils and batteries.

Hon Members, the fisheries sector is worth around R8 billion a year, and the commercial sector directly employs over 28 000 people with many thousands more people depending on fisheries resources to meet basic needs in the small-scale and recreational sectors.

The transformation of the South African fishing industry is a constitutional and legislative imperative. The Fishing Rights Allocation Process, FRAP, and the management of commercial fishing rights are an important site for industry transformation. Twelve sectors are due for reallocation this year.

The FRAP 2021 implementation process aims to be clean, transparent, accountable, transformative and legally defensible. The department has appointed various service providers to bolster its capacity to meet the 31 December deadline.

For the first time in an allocation process, we will be conducting Socio-Economic Impact Assessments, SEIAS. These will shortly be published for comment. The intention is that these studies will be taken into account when reviewing policies and allocations to promote profitability whilst optimising transformation and job creation.

Hon House Chair, a total of 110 small-scale fishing co- operatives were allocated 15-year fishing rights in the Northern Cape, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal prior to lockdown in March 2020. We are currently working with all levels of government to ensure sustained support for these emerging enterprises.

Central to the success of small fishing co-operatives is the basket of species available to them. Earlier this year we published, for public comment, an apportionment split for the

squid, linefish and abalone sectors to enhance the portion of catch available to the small scale sector. The final outcomes of this process will be announced shortly.

Hon members, South Africa is a maritime nation with jurisdiction over one of the largest exclusive economic zones in the world. Our oceans represent a significant asset for current and future generations, with enormous economic potential in aquaculture, bioprospecting, marine ecotourism, extractive industries, and less obvious benefits of healthy ecosystem services such as climate regulation, carbon storage and waste absorption.

The growing ocean economy has thus far contributed R41 billion to South Africa’s gross domestic product, GDP, creating 26 000 jobs. Over the last year we have worked with our sister departments and the respective industries to stabilise the

sub-sectors and sustain jobs. The Department of Trade, Industry and Competition is helping us to address issues around market diversification, both internationally and locally, for the aquaculture and fishing sectors affected by Covid-19 market restrictions. Numerous steps have also been taken to address the challenges in the boatbuilding and the

ship repair sectors, including repairs to infrastructure and dry-docking.

To support regulatory certainty, consultations on the Aquaculture Development Bill are being finalised and will be tabled in Parliament this year. We are also developing a National Freshwater Inland Wild Capture Fisheries Policy.

As we grow our ocean economy, we are mindful of the impact of increasing human activity on the health of our oceans. We must balance economic development with measures to protect ocean ecosystems. Our Marine Spatial Planning Act provides for the development and implementation of a shared marine spatial planning system to facilitate responsible use of the oceans, and to conserve the oceans for present and future generations.

Environmental crimes threaten our natural resources result in significant economic and social loss, and place a financial burden on the state and private owners. In the 2020-21 financial year, the Green Scorpions conducted three and a half thousand inspections, issued 971 administrative enforcement notices, and handed out over 203 criminal investigations to the National Prosecuting Authority for.

Given the organised nature of these crimes, the sector continues to work closely with the various law enforcement role players and intelligence structures. This year we will scale-up Operation Phakisa Initiative Five for interventions against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

I am pleased to inform you today that the removal of the approximately 4 200 tonnes of mercury-containing waste, which was stockpiled in Cato Ridge, Kwazulu-Natal, has begun in earnest. When I was appointed to this portfolio I committed to leaving no stone unturned to have this material removed and to ensure an end to a three-decade pollution legacy issue. To date, 1 211 tonnes of material have been exported in 60 forty- foot sea freight containers. It is anticipated that the repackaging and removal of the rest of this material will be finalised by the middle of next year with final remediation completed in 2023.

I want today to salute Councillor Musa Mkhize from Ward 1 in Ethekwini who waged a tireless battle to highlight the plight of residents living near this dump site and who can now leave this clean-up as a lasting legacy to his term in office.

In conclusion, allow me to thank our Deputy Minister, Ms Makhotso Sotyu, for all your support, sisterhood and solidarity in the many challenges we face every day. My thanks go to chairperson Xasa and hon members of the committee for your thorough oversight which keeps us alert and on our toes. My sincere gratitude to Ms Nomfundo Tshabalala, all of the board chairs and CEOs of our entities, and all our managers and staff of team Forestry, Fisheries and Environment. Your dedication to sustainable use and development, as well as to environmental conservation and protection inspires me each and every day. I thank you.

Mr F D XASA: Thanks, hon House Chairperson, my video is not switching on for now and I hope you can hear me ...

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): You are audible, hon Xasa. You may proceed.

Mr F D XASA: Hon Barbara Creecy, Deputy Minister Maggie Sotyu, hon members, especially members of my portfolio committee, critical stakeholders of the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment and ladies and gentlemen, a healthy thriving environment is essential for our personal health and

wellbeing. Our very own survival depends on the environment. The relation between the environment and us; humankind, is one of interdependence. Just as our actions and choices affect the environment, the health of the environment or the whole of planet earth influences our own personal health and wellbeing, as well as that of our families, communities, societies and economies.

I would like to remind the House that our Constitution is alive to this interdependent relationship between humans and the environment, which states in section 24 that:

Everyone has the right –

1. To an environment that is not harmful to their health or wellbeing; and
2. To have the environment protected for the benefit of present and future generations through reasonable legislative and other measures that –
	1. prevent pollution and ecological degradation;
	2. promote conservation; and
	3. secure ecological sustainable development and use of natural resources, while promoting justifiable economic social development.

This right can be seen to have a twofold purpose: The first part guarantees a healthy environment to every person, whereas the second part ensures compliance with the provisioning of the first part, using appropriate legislation. The environmental protection emphasis of South Africa’s environmental legislation and programmes derived from this constitutional imperative, which was first institutionalised in the National Environmental Act, of 1998, commonly known as Nema. Nema is a framework environmental law which is more specific than the constitutional provision for the environment. It lays down general obligations and principles, but leaves the task of enacting further specific legislation and other specific measures as may be required to the department and/or Parliament. These other Specific Environmental Act, SEMA, cover specific facet of the environment, such as air, biodiversity, forests and woodlands, marine living resources, waste and climate change.

Despite these existing laws, the South African environment has come under pressure from the interaction of population growth, consumption and the environment, biodiversity laws and air pollution. Air quality issues are a serious challenge in the hotspots areas in our country. Outdoor and indoor air

pollution continues to be seen as a serious problem with pollutants emitted by numerous sources. The sources include, power generation activities, industrial processes, transportation, both public and private, etc.

Air pollution is a major concern in areas of heavy industrial developments such as the Vaal Triangle, the Highveld and the Waterberg-Bojanala Priority Areas. We also noted that Durban South Industrial Basin should also be a central focus. It is in this regard that we will be interacting with some of the country’s major polluters to ensure that there is full compliance with the minimum emission standards in the current financial year.

Another serious challenge for our country relate to poaching of rhinos, elephants as well as abalone; one of our highly valued marine species. The country has become a prime hunting ground for those seeking rhino horns and ivory illegally. The statistics of rhino poaching since 2007, to date, attest to this reality. In 2 000 South Africa lost 13 rhinos due to poaching. By 2009, the number had reached 124. In 2010, it rocketed to 335.

The poaching trends and the levels of sophistication in the killing of Rhinos vary alarming and require urgent intervention. However, we hope that Minister Creecy’s courageous leadership may see us through this serious challenge. My optimism is informed by what happened two weeks ago. Minister Creecy did something that none of her predecessors could do. She announced that South Africa plans to ban the breeding of lions in captivity, for trophy hunting and for tourists to pat and the captive breeding of lions for hunting. Lion bone trading came under severe criticism from both local and international conservations for harming South Africa’s well-established and highly respected conservation image. The announcement was the outcome of a High Level Panel that was established, last year.

With these good news, I wish to conclude by stating that, having considered the inputs by the department and its entities, the committee is of the view that the department and its entities have a clear road map for implementing their responsibilities. We will ensure that commitments are realised or exceeded. In this regard, I rise to on behalf of the committee and the ANC to recommend to the House to adopt the

Forestry, Fisheries and Environment Budget Vote 32. Thank you very much, House Chairperson.

Ms A M WEBER: House Chair, Minister Creecy and Minister Sisulu, the dams and rivers in this country are infested with alien invasive plants. The increasing invasive plants decrease the availability and quality of water creating the perfect conditions for soil erosion, land degradation and loss of biodiversity.

On 26 November 2019, Parliament accepted a motion without notice that move to: “Congratulates Rowing SA on securing the rights to host the 2023 World Rowing Masters Regatta at the Roodeplaat Dam; recognise that this is the first world drawing event ever to be held in Africa; notes that the championships will boost tourism by bringing thousands of athletes and tourists to South Africa; calls on the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries to ensure the integrated control of aquatic weeds at the Roodeplaat Dam so as not to put the championships at risk.

On 07 February 2020, the Department of Water and Sanitation gave a directive to Roodeplat Dam to stop the spraying up of

invasive plants. They have stated that Expanded Public Works Programme, EPWP, workers will be deployed to manually retrieve these invasive plants. The Minster indicated in June 2020 that the COVID-19 lockdown temporary stopped all implementation activities such as the removal of water hyacinth and biomass from the dam and the release of biological control agents.

She further indicated that her office is in the process of directly appointing contractors to manually remove hyacinth. Four months later, the dam was more 65% infested with hyacinth and still no sight of EPWP workers. By November 2020, international athletes had to cancel and move somewhere else as excising on the edam was not possible. Business lost all income as fishermen, holiday goers, professional athletes ... weddings and functions were all cancelled as the dam was covered with hyacinth. Employees lost their jobs and the local economy suffered.

In December 2020, the department agreed to use oversight but at what cost? Now it is in May 2021 and the hyacinth is growing rapidly again as they can double every 11 to 18 days. At almost a year later no EPWP workers and to clean them.

Why are both departments not actively doing what they could to ensure economic growth, local employment through better water quality and the hyacinth is removed in order to ensure that the World Rowing Masters Regatta is held in 2023.

Hartbeespoort Dam is also tourism attraction is already 11% covered in Caribou weed and increasing everyday again no EPWP workers as promised.

The Western Cape is actively removing alien invasive plants, whilst seven million litres of water per hectare is returned to the river system. Research shows that the removal of invasive alien plants is the most cost-effective intervention to avoid a water crisis in South Africa by delivering the highest potential water savings. When many provinces in South Africa have water scarcity, it should be a priority to remove all invasive plants in our water as it is destroying our water resources. I thank you, House Chair.

Mr M N PAULSEN: Chairperson, good morning ...

*Arabic*:

As-salaamu-alai-kum. [Peace be with you.]

*English*:

... to fellow Muslims in South Africa and Africa and the diaspora.

Minister, it is going to take more than a petty name change from environment forestry and fisheries, EFF, to forestry fisheries and environment, FFE, for this department to end the rot that has taken root in the department and entities under its management.

This government has tremendous problems, right now juggling names of departments isn’t a priority. When this report was tabled at the last portfolio committee meeting, it was almost not adopted due to insufficient support. You were saved by an IFP member. I can tell you with certainty that your par’s factional battles are now playing itself out in Parliament.

Minister, it is under your watch that in a single year irregular expenditure jumped from R342 million to R2,9 billion in the department, due to inadequate monitoring of compliance with supply-chain management laws and regulations. According to the last Auditor-Generals Report, amongst the many supply chain management irregularities included its procurement

without inviting competitive bids. These issues appear to be a common phenomenon in the environmental portfolio. Tenders amounting to almost R380 million were awarded to preferential bidders. Put it in another way Minister, the tenders were created especially for these bidders to flees our taxes.

Disciplinary action was taken against employees of this department for a total of more than R152 million. In addition, fraud and misconduct in more than R1,4 billion worth of allocations. Then, there is wasteful expenditure of

R141 million due to poor management and that brings us to a total of just over R2 billion for the environmental department alone.

Minister, according to the Auditor-General’s Report, at least 87% of the irregular expenditure relates to the department itself when internal controls where inadequately designed and implemented. The finances of this department is run like a toddler’s piggy bank because sadly, fruitless expenditure relates to pre-payments made to implementing agents, vendors and suppliers for goods and services that were not in line with the contractual arrangements and agreed deliverables, cancellation of travel or no show accommodation, payment of

interest and penalties, payment of Value-added Tax, VAT, charge by non-VAT vendors, damaged stock, misuse of vehicles and overpayment to suppliers. Part of the mandate, only part of the mandate of this department is to ensure the protection of the environment for future generations to enjoy.

Residents of Wentworth in Durban, that were affected by the explosion at the Engen refinery in December last year are still aggrieved by the lack of urgency in addressing the aftermath of the explosion. Minister, why was the refinery allowed to continue operating when it is so close to a densely populated urban area? It seems that the only time it is a crime to contravened environmental laws is when the offenders are poor indigenous black people. As in the case of the member of the Hobeni Community who were found guilty of fishing in a marine protected area adjacent to the Dwesa-Cwebe Nature Reserve. Thankfully, the appeal court eventually upheld the appeal against the sentence and conviction.

So, Minister, my question to you is will indigenous black people have to still go to such lengths in order to exercise the customary rights to ply their trade which has passed down for many generations? Small scale fisheries have not been

spared from the ineptness of this department. The Minister had to approach the high court to scrap the flawed process followed in awarding small-scale fishing rights in the Western Cape.

The universe this department is living in is not the same as the one that small-scale fishers are living in, it is two completely different worlds. From the quality perspective to human rights issues rooted in the implementation of the small- scale fisheries policy. There is also a third universe, the private sector fishing companies that continue to fight to keep their privilege, the fourth universe is the environmentalism protecting the environment to the point that people are pushed away. Small scale fisheries are in need of an of environmental justice.

Chairperson, that brings me to the forestry management component of this department. The department’s report says very little about forestry and that alone should raise alarm bells. Forestry products contribute at least four and a half percent of total manufacturing placing among the top five sectors in manufacturing.

In less than 10-years, export earnings have almost trebled with the sector providing a positive trade balance of close to R10 billion. Much of forestry operations are rural based making a significant contributor to rural economies supporting close to 700 000 livelihoods contribute to the traditional view of forestry as the science of managing forested land, forestry today is about the relationships between people and the resources provided by the forest. It is in this area where issues remain unresolved. These issues have not been addressed since they were raised at public hearings in 2017. We can only attribute the reason for this once again to the continuous infighting in the ANC. Chairperson, the infighting will never end and therefore, we will never have ANC Ministers who will focus on taking care of the needs of South Africa. The EFF does not support this report. Thank you very.

Mr N SINGH: Hon Chairperson, the right to an environment, as ensconced in section 24 of the Bill of Rights in our Constitution guarantees not only a healthy environment to each and every individual, but goes further and mandates the state to ensure that such compliance occurs. To that end, the interventions in Cato Ridge are to be welcomed.

This department is at the coalface of balancing the sustainable use of the environmental resources currently available in a manner which does not render them finite and irreplaceable. Hon Minister, you shoulder the unenviable task of ensuring that environmental resources are utilised within the parameters of the sustainable development model. This is a continuing battle that is currently being waged upon many environmental and biodiversity fronts.

And as the IFP, we wish to highlight the following issues for urgent attention and corrective action: Single-use plastics pollution in our environment, and particularly our marine environment remains one of the most concerning and detrimental pollutants which you have not decisively addressed, will continue to indiscriminately kill marine animals and sea birds and contaminate our seafood sources. In addition, they place unnecessary strain on our waste management systems and and the production, primarily from fossil fuels, contributes to global warming and climate change. In our opinion, single-use plastic should be banned immediately.

Hon Minister, on 2 May, you released the high-level panel report on the management, breeding, hunting, trade and

handling of elephant, lion, leopard and rhinoceros, following the parliamentary hosting of a colloquium on captive lion breeding and hunting, which included the extremely controversial lion bone trade. This was held in August 2018. The report and recommendations do indeed herald a new dawn for our wildlife, where we move to a position that incorporates the decommodification of iconic African species such as the African lion, and which the report states quite categorically in respect of our treatment of lions, that the cruelty, barbarism, and abhorrent exploitation of them must end now.

The report also further affirms that these practices have indeed been a dark stain on the ethics of our democracy and the road block to our tourism reputation.

Hon Minister, it is our hope that you move swiftly, with both legislation and regulation in this regard and the IFP will most certainly be supporting the report and its recommendation when it comes before Parliament.

With regard to wildlife crime and enforcement in South Africa, this still remains our Achilles heel in conservation efforts, where perpetrators of such crime are all too often dealt with

far too lightly, if at all. Often, once convicted, they are simply released with a small fine or a slap on the wrist. The punishment certainly does not fit the crime, which in total, leads to the decimation of keystone species in South Africa.

The IFP therefore reiterates its calls for the establishment of specialist wildlife prosecutorial courts with competent judicial officials, backed by unambiguous and stringent legislation and criminal sanction for wildlife-related crimes. In certain instances, we have sound legislation and regulation, but there is just not sufficient enforcement.

If we look specifically at the report, concerns must be noted about how the department intends dealing with its decrease in the budget, yet still achieving the targets it sets for itself? Hon Minister, you stated last week that you expect nothing less than 80% achievement of targets from your officials. How do you intend achieving such targets with a zero budget allocation to the Green Fund? How will this assist the development of our green economy?

Regulatory certainty should, especially with regard to small- scale fishers, be prioritised. These people depend on fishing

for subsistence and livelihoods, and as such, should not be the victims of ineffective and ambiguous bureaucracy.

With regard to the regulation that ... [Inaudible.] ... will show, which is a protected area, on which, Minister, I trust, you have received a report from an official that was sent from your department to have meetings and conducted in loco inspections on that site. It will be evident from the report that we receive that some of the restrictions imposed on line fishermen in that area clearly illustrates ulterior motives by those who hide behind what is called the Clansthal Conservancy. Minister, you should not allow past privileges to hamper the future of citizens in a democratic South Africa.

In conclusion, the IFP supports the Budget Vote and looks forward to continuing to work together with the department in the achievement of its goals and targets.

*Afrikaans*:

Dr W J BOSHOFF: Agb Huisvoorsitter, Omgewing, Bosbou en Visserye is moontlik een departement wat die meeste met die langtermyn werk.

*English*:

Regarding environmental affairs, it is this department’s task

to represent future generations in present decision-making. The present generation needs economic opportunities now and does not intend, by itself, to consider long-term impact, whether it is due to greed from the large and wealthy enterprises or the basic needs of food, clothing and shelter. The needs of future generations just don’t seem to be imperative.

*Afrikaans*:

In sekere opsigte is die huidige geslag een van daardie volgende geslagte. Ons ervaar klimaatsverandering wat minstens gedeeltelik met die verbranding van fossielbrandstowwe te doen het. Ons kan nie meer op skoon drinkwater reken nie, omdat munisipaliteite die aanlegte wat rioolwater moet skoonmaak, nie ordentlik onderhou nie. Die lys van produkte en dienste van ’n gesonde ekologie, wat voorheen vanselfsprekend was, maar nie meer as nie, is lank.

Wat kos dorstige indringerplante die land wanneer damme in die Oos-Kaap eenvoudig opdroog? Wat kos ’n eenheid elektrisiteit as hoër koolstofvlakke in die atmosfeer tot langer droogtes en

meer intense oorstromings lei? En watter omgewingsrisiko’s lê

verder in die toekoms?

Omgewingsake gaan dus oor meer as ’n evaluering van hierdie myn se impak op ’n vleiland, of dat die SA Weerdiens moet voorspel of dit môre gaan ryp of eers volgende week.

In 1994 het ’n joernalis kommentaar gelewer op die aanstelling van Prof Kadar Asmal as eerste ANC-Minister van omgewingsake. Sy opmerking was dat Asmal een van die groot menseregteportefeuljes wou hê, maar oud-president Mandela stel hom toe aan by Omgewingsake. Toe maak Asmal dit ’n menseregteportefeulje, deur onder andere die Werk vir Water en ander programme.

Wat die joernalis nie besef het nie, is dat omgewingsake nog altyd oor menseregte gaan, dit het net iemand soos Prof Asmal gekos om dit uit te wys.

Bosbou en visserye is uiters komplekse stelsels wat maklik oorbenut kan word, veral omdat mense dikwels nie die dinamika daarvan begryp nie. Ook hier gaan dit oor die langtermyn.

Die probleem met omgewingsprodukte is dat die verband tussen oorsaak en gevolg nie tot landsgrense beperk kan word nie. Die Amasone-woude produseer byvoorbeeld baie van die aarde se suurstof. Maar ’n boer in Brasilië kan nie geld uit ’n paar hektaar se suurstof maak nie; wel uit die beeste wat hy daar kan laat wei as hy die woud afgekap het.

Net so kan ’n skool visse wat met moeite in een land se gebiedswater bewaar word, na ’n ander land se kuslyn migreer en vernietig word. Of kleinskaalse vissers wat hulle lisensies verloor het, kan hulle kennis van die see gebruik om perlemoen teen veel groter winste aan smokkelaars te verkoop. Rook draai nie by doeane om nie en vir grondwater kan jy nie by die grens opdam nie.

Om die toekoms by die hede te verteenwoordig, beteken dat baie navorsing gedoen moet word. Soms beteken dit ook om ’n unieke habitat te beskerm, al is dit net ’n stukkie daarvan. Dit beteken dat jy die natuurskoon as prysloos kan beskou, maar bewaring daarvan het beslis ’n prys.

Die R8,7 miljard wat Suid-Afrika het om aan omgewingsake, bosbou en visserye te spandeer, is sowat 0,64% van die totale

begroting. Hierdie departement het ongeveer 22% van sy voorgrendeltydperk se begroting verloor.

Daaruit moet voldoening aan omgewingswette verseker word, oseane en die kus moet beskerm word, klimaatsverandering moet bestudeer en hopelik afgeweer word, biodiversiteit moet deur nasionale parke en botaniese tuine bewaar word, kapitaal moet in omgewingsprogramme gevorm word, chemiese stowwe en afval moet bestuur word, sowel as bosbou- en visbronne. Dit is die programme van hierdie departement.

Omgewingsimpakstudies vir groot ontwikkelings word deur die aansoeker betaal. Daar is dus goeie rede waarom die konsultant, wat graag die inkomste wil realiseer, geen rede sal vind waarom die kliënt se aansoek afgekeur behoort te word nie. Omgewingsake doen nie die ondersoek nie; dit kontroleer net die ondersoek. Mens sou dit anders wou hê, maar dan sou befondsing anders moes lyk.

Indien Suid-Afrika ’n meer produktiewe ekonomie met meer werksgeleenthede en minder korrupsie, kaderontplooiing en minder maatskaplike besteding kon hê, kon daar ook meer geld wees om toekomstige geslagte se belange vandag te

verteenwoordig. Ten spyte van die klein begroting, ondersteun die VF Plus dit wel. Baie dankie.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND ENVIRONMENT:

Hon Chairperson, hon Minister, Ms Barbara Creecy, all Ministers and Deputy Ministers present on the platform, chairperson of the portfolio committee, Mr Xasa, hon Members of Parliament, especially those from the portfolio committee, the management of the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, all the CEOs of the department’s entities, as of 1 April 2021, our department has been officially renamed as the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment. The prominence given to forestry in this order of title is neither a mistake nor a farce. It is simply a recognition that without trees and forests, there would be no healthy clean environment for biodiversity and ecosystem to thrive.

This means that there are environmental and social aspects of forestry, which are equally important to the wellbeing of our society in general. And, this has also been highlighted by the Paris Climate Agreement in 2015, where it agreed that the forestry function is broader than just a focus on commercial forestry. For instance, all terrestrial biodiversity lives in

forests and each year many species go extinct as a result of forests being destroyed.

Furthermore, forests play a role in climate change, and deforestation results in 12% to 18% of the world’s carbon emissions and accelerated global warming. And, as we all know, forests and trees provide food, fibre and even medicines for approximately R1,6 billion of the world’s population, especially in the rural, remote communities.

In the same vein, we have been advised and encouraged by our President, His Excellency, Mr Ramaphosa, that we need to simplify this high-level language of International Agreements and Instruments on climate change, by embarking on awareness campaigns and projects to practically exhibit this importance of trees and to addressing concerns of climate change, and lack of cleaning and greening of our communities. And, as part of the government’s greening programme, the President has directed that our department co-ordinates and facilitates the planting of two million trees annually, for the next five years.

By this, we refer mainly to the ornamental shade, fruit, and tree species that are used for greening in human settlements and in the rehabilitation of degraded areas. Planting of trees and cleaning of the communities will be intertwined. We are thus happy to announce to the nation that our department will be officially launching the Greening, Cleaning and Planting of Trees Project on 5 June 2021, which is the World Environment Day. And, we are assuring our people that this is not a symbolic eventful project, but a project that is a kick-start to a Forestry Development Master Plan with possibilities and opportunities for skills development in the environment in general; transformation, growth and, creation of our economy; and employment opportunities, especially to our youth and women.

The Forestry Development Master Plan is a formal implementation plan that has been endorsed by labour, industry and government to ensure for creation and sustainability of decent employment, long-term investment and the transfer of skills and expertise to the next generation. To prepare for a successful implementation of this master plan, the Ministry has begun with inspection visits to all our regional offices across the 9 provinces to ensure that our structure and

reconfiguration of our department is in line with the governance structure as adopted in our departmental master plans.

We want to ensure that our department has a human capital workforce that always offer well trained and skilled graduates, vocational training in the Forestry, Fisheries and Environment sectors. If we truly want to achieve the African Union Agenda 2063 - a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity, then we need to ensure that our societies, communities and villages in South Africa are continuously empowered to manage their own environmental infrastructure and natural resources well through a biodiversity economy. It is of no use to always boast that Africa has a wealth in biodiversity and wildlife, when in reality the majority of Black Africans continue to be deprived from being game farmers and landowners.

Just to mention, our department’s Biodiversity Economy Programme: the South Africa’s Transfrontier Conservation Areas, TFCAs, seeks to empower communities so that they can manage their own ecotourism projects within the cross-border environments. A budget of R400 000 has been set aside for four

projects in this financial year for Qwaqwa in the Free State, Awelani, Mahlati, and Gijana in Limpopo community structures.

Two Community Conservation Areas, Awelani-Mahlati, will receive boreholes this year for the provision of water in their reserves. The amount allocated to this is R350 000. The Khomani San and Mier in Botswana and South Africa, a community-owned lodge in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park called !Xaus Lodge - is to be fitted with solar panels to not only deal with regular power outages, but also to improve the energy efficiency of the lodge. A total of R450 000 has been allocated to this project. The Lubombo Transfrontier Conservation Area Integrated Development plan will be concluded this year and it aims to develop a structured plan for developing areas that fall within the Lubombo TFCA encompassing areas in Eswatini, Mozambique and South Africa. This process will follow a substantive stakeholder consultation processes at ground level in all three partner countries to ensure that the plan is aimed at benefiting all that reside in these areas as well as creating economic opportunities as well as transboundary eco-tourism.

R800 000 has been allocated to this project.

In addition to our ecotourism economy efforts, our department will also be implementing projects approved through a grant from the Global Environment Fund of R56 million over a five- year period to sustainably manage grazing lands, that is the Fetakgomo Local Municipality in Limpopo and the Dawid Kruiper Local Municipality in the Northern Cape.

This fund will alleviate the effects of desertification, land degradation and the severe drought in our country. Given the strategic importance of rehabilitating and restoring degraded landscapes, through the presidential stimulus package - a programme to support restoration of degraded land for sustainable livelihoods, through upscaling of sustainable land management practices in different provinces, has been developed.

By these flagship projects within the biodiversity economy, we want to focus on rebuilding an economy that would again be resilient, low carbon and sustainable, after the COVID-19 pandemic ravaged our country’s, continent’s and worldwide, economies and livelihoods. By unlocking the potential that exists with traditional communities, rural poverty will be reduced, and traditional communities will be able to

participate fully and effectively in the South Africa’s and African continent’s economic recovery. That is why for the past 6 months starting in November 2020, we continued with the official opening and handing over of facilities to our municipalities to ensure that we make the nature-based green economy a reality.

Recently, we officially opened and handed over the Awelani Eco-Tourism Lodge and Community Conservation Area in Vhembe District Municipality in Limpopo. The lodge employs 23 permanent staff members, all of whom are from beneficiary

communities. This year accredited training will be provided to empower these and other community structures that are being supported in their ecotourism projects within TFCAs. In March 2021, we handed over the Lekgalameetse Nature Reserve in the Maruleng Local Municipality in Limpopo. And, again, on 30th April 2021, which is about two weeks ago, we handed over the Environmental Education Centre to the Maluti-a-Phofung Municipality in Qwaqwa, Free State.

Our department is committed to the District Development Model, DDM, to ensure that the municipalities conserve these resources and use them sustainably. It is critical for

municipalities to be able to manage their environmental infrastructure and natural resources well, as they are sources of sustenance and income generation for most households.

Through the DDM’s “One Plan”, our department will continue to endeavour that all our infrastructure programmes are always carried out with the required environmental authorisations.

Protecting our environment in a manner that benefit our people for generations to come is key to the development of environmental initiatives that would create low carbon and climate resilient development in line with both the National Development Plan 2030 and the African Union Agenda 2063. We want our people to fully participate in the South African’s economy recovery. No one must be left behind in our African continent.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the hon Minister. Minister, thank you very much for your leadership in the Forestry, Fisheries and Environment sectors, especially during the past year. Thanks to the Chairperson, hon Xasa - you have done a lot within a very short space of time. And again I welcome the department’s Director-General, Ms Nomfundo

Tshabalala. I thank the entire team in the department for their support in the past year. Most of our director-generals are women, the director-general here is a woman. The Minister and the Deputy Minister are women; you should expect a lot from this department. I thank you all.

*Afrikaans*:

Me M E SUKERS: Agb Voorsitter, gedurende hierdie begrotingsrede wil die ACDP klem plaas op die uiters noodsaaklike behoefte vir die volhoubare ontwikkeling van kleinskaalse vissersgemeenskappe in die Wes-Kaap. Daar is ’n trotse en kleurvolle geskiedenis van visserye in ons gemeenskappe wat ’n bestaan uit die see voer. Hierdie sektor kan met reg genoem word, seelandbou.

*English:*

... our small-scale fisherman from the supply chain. In the years to come, these entrepreneurial communities will become more vital to food production, food security and economic growth.

*Afrikaans*:

Hierdie sektor van die ekonomie is ryp met moontlikhede, maar oor die jare heen word vissersgemeenskappe, veral kleinskaalse vissermanne en vroue, verwaarloos. Die probleem met visserspermitte en kwotas is voortdurend met mense wat bevoordeel word, sonder dat hulle werklik deel van die gemeenskappe is, wat vir generasies. uit die see ’n bestaan voer

Die volhoubare ontwikkeling van hierdie gemeenskappe moet geprioritiseer word en dit is ’n saak van dringendheid. Die impak van vertragings en daadwerklike optrede het ’n negatiewe uitwerking op beide mense en seebronne. Dit bevorder die swartmark en onwettige handel van seebronne.

*English:*

The strategic objectives of addressing climate change and sustainable development of the industry, is severely undermined by the delay in implementation of the legislation that governs the sector. The poor economic conditions that prevailed before Covid, for fishing communities, has become desperate for many. Covid worsened the already desperate conditions of our people in fishing communities who live here in the Western Cape.

As a daughter of this soil, I am pleading with this department and with the Minister, to address the concerns of our communities and to accelerate the processes to deal justly with those who are rightfully supposed to benefit from the development of this sector. There is a critical need for effective and continuous engagement by government with our communities in the Western Cape to address the issues of customary rights. Prohibition has negatively impacted families who for generations made a livelihood out of the sea.

We are losing a proud heritage and a unique identity, as more children of traditional fishermen leave this industry. The ACDP calls for the rights of historic fishing and to be recognised and the development of female entrepreneurs in especially artisanal fishing. As I listened to the Minister, I want to leave with this question.

*Afrikaans*:

Minister, die vraag is: Hoe moet ons mense ’n bestaan voer?

*English:*

the policy positions of government mean nothing, if it does not translate into a sustainable livelihood for our people who lives of the sea. I, thank you, Chairperson.

*IsiXhosa:*

Mnu B H HOLOMISA: Sihlalo weNdlu, Mphathiswa, namaLungu ePalamente, i-UDM iyaluxhasa olu Hlahlo-lwabiwo-mali lweSebe lezaMahlathi, uLobo nokusiNgqongileyo. Uthi uMadiba, xa wayebuya kwiihambo zakhe, sijikeleza ekuseni phaya kweza lali zaseQunu, “Bantu kwathini na le nto kungasekho ngxolo yeentaka ekuseni nje? Impendulo yam yathi kuye kungenxa yentlupheko tata kuba abantu bayayibasa imithi, benze imililo ukufudumeza imizi yabo. Okwesibini, ngenxa yokuswela imbeko, abantu bawaqhawula amacingo abiyeleyo nto leyo eyabangela ukuba iintaka zizive zingakhuselekanga. Loo nto yabangela ukuba zimke, ziye kwezinye iindawo ezikude nabantu.

Namhlanje sicinga ukuba siqwalasele kakhulu iindawo zasezilalini. Kwidabi lomzabalazo sasicula ingoma eyayisithi siyaya ePitoli. Saye safika ePitoli, kuphethe thina ngoku, kodwa ikhona ingoma eculwayo, elandela emva kwethu, ekwathi siyaya ePitoli. Leyo ke yila nto kuthiwa kukuvela kwentlango

(desertification), kuba intlango nayo icula le ngoma iqhankqalaza isithi, “siyaya ePitoli”.

Loo nto ithetha ukuba eli sebe kufuneka lenze njengoko sasenzile nongasekhoyo uMkumkani Zwelithini apho ngeCop-17 sasityale ama-34 000 emithi yemveli ngosuku olunye sisenza ihlathi phaya ngaseNyokeni. Ndiqinisekile ukuba loo nto ingasese inatyiselwe nakumanye amakomkhulu kumaphondo ngamaphondo ungakhona umahluko.

Eyona nto esijongileyo ngoku yeyokuba uMzantsi Afrika uphela ungcolile, umdaka. Ndiphakamisa kuMphathiswa ukuba apasise uMthetho oza kunyanzelisa oonoteksi okanye abaqhubi beebhasi ukuba bamise bucala, bacele umkhweli aye kuchola iphepha okanye ibhotile athe wayilahla ngefestile ngexa egqiba kutya okanye ukusela. Kungenjalo amshiye kuloo ndawo ammisele kuyo endaweni yokuba ilizwe lethu libe lingcoliswa kwasithi.

Okokugqibela, sicela uMphathiswa wesebe ukuba athethe noongxowa-nkulu, oosomashishini, noomasipala kuphume wonke umntu waseMzantsi Afrika ngemini ekhonjiweyo, umntu acoce kwakhe naseyadini, aye kucoca nasesitalatweni sakhe. Aba baneelori ezinkulu bavolontiye bathuthe loo nkunkuma baye

kuyilahla endaweni efanelekileyo kukhe kucocwe uMzantsi Afrika kuba mdaka. Ndiyabulela.

Ms C PHILLIPS: Hon House Chair and my fellow South Africans, although not nearly as significant as the intentions found in a renowned world of change speech by the British Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, in our very own Parliament in 1960, there is definitely a welcome breeze of change being felt in the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries from criminal charges to end many Hollywood acting positions, accountability in the form of special leave taken while the law takes its course, and most importantly of all, life on the horizon for iconic lions.

Every bit of positive change is welcomed by the DA. Minister Creecy, the lions and I thank you. There is, however, much rot in our environment, but both methodically and literally, that it will take not only winds of change, but tornados of change, to save our environment and our animals for our children, grandchildren and generations to come. The developing economic crisis in the St Lucia area caused by bad flooding, is one that urgently needs more than once in 500-year cyclone domain alike storm, to alleviate the looming devastation. The

response from iSimangaliso officials and scientists involved, that the farmers were warned of the possibility of flooding, is totally inadequate.

These farmers, both commercial and small-scale, do not have a few cattle or a sheep, and they can simply move when they receive a warning, they have thousands of hectares of crops that cannot be harvested, and hundreds of employees and their families, is depending on the income from those crops.

Flooding is not something new to those farmers, it has been happening for hundreds of years. The difference is that in the past the water has subsided within two to three weeks. The crops have now been under water for four months, with no end in sight, if the river remains choked by recent salt and cannot flow into the sea.

The reeds that are choking the remarkable Umfolozi River, are becoming a nationwide scourge, locking many rivers and wetlands even in the Southey Kruger National Park. A study needs to be undertaken to address the presence of these reeds in our rivers. Although the DA will without doubt, welcome the important natural estoril functions being restored, the sad fact is that, millions of Rands of taxpayers’ money has been

spent by the department on artificially opening and closing the mark of the estoril, diverting the river, creating an island and then trying to remain the said islands.

These decisions were probably made with the very best of intentions. But, like the proverb that says the road to hell is paved with good intentions. The results of years of interference is now both a looming, social economic and an environmental disaster, that needs to be urgently addressed. Any actions taken to return estoril natural conditions, have to have mitigating factors to address the impact on the local economy, beyond just warning farmers of the possibility or probability of a flood.

There must be a workable long-term plan. Everyone is going to have to give a little, but no one should be forced into poverty by estoril management plan that does not benefit both the environment and the lives of the people who live in the area. Thank you.

Ms S G N MBATHA: Hon House Chairperson, hon Minister Barbara Creecy, Deputy Minister, hon members and ladies and gentlemen, the African National Congress is committed to the creation of

an environment that is not harmful to the health of the citizens of this country and their wellbeing, and most importantly, to secure ecologically sustainable development and use of natural resources while promoting justifiable economic and social development. This is the constitutional mandate of the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries, as found in section 24 of the Constitution. South Africa boost with some of the most progressive environmental laws found in African continent and anywhere in the world.

There is no doubt that we have a progressive Constitution in the world, and in it Chapter 2 deals with guaranteed Bill of Rights, and section 24 is found in that chapter.

In giving effect to section 24 this Parliament passed enabling legislation, the Environmental Management Laws Amendment Act, which is the National Environmental Management Act and this piece of legislation ensures the cementation of the constitutionally guaranteed rights in section 24 of the Constitution of the Republic. The National Environmental Management Act introduces a legislative framework dealing with environmental impact assessment, issues of pollution and environmental degradation, prosecution of environmental crimes, and most importantly, it confirms the states

trusteeship of the environment on behalf of the citizens. The National Environmental Management Act established a co- operative governance model on environmental matters by establishing the necessary governmental institutions that will ensure proper enforcement of environmental protection.

The African National Congress supports and advances the cause of environmentally sustainable development. It is the ANC’s policy to use the environment in a careful and planned way so that all can benefit now and in the future and that any plans to grow the economy must not harm the environment. Towards the achievement of these policy objectives, the ANC indicated that the public and various stakeholders must be consulted in decisions concerning the environment, and to further work with other countries to look after the earth. This firm and consistent position breeds life into the Freedom Charter when it declares that the people shall govern. The 2021-22 Budget Vote of the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries is an instrument that government uses to finance government policy programme. Under the National Environmental Management Act, you have the Waste Act of 2008, which provides reasonable measures for pollution.

Hon House Chairperson, the waste management sector has a great potential to create employment opportunities for many of our employed young and low skill citizens and uplift many out of poverty. They are already many households from waste pickers that are deriving their livelihoods from the waste recycling industry. The total allocation of R1 billion set aside to enhance accountability for waste management and to support the development for a new Tyre Waste Industry Plan, as well as the review of producer responsibility regulation and the development of waste economy master plan that will deal with bulk industrial and municipal waste, 90% of waste that goes to landfill site is recyclable, and it is for this reason that we find poor people establishing settlement around municipal waste landfill sites. The department plans to divert through the implementation of the National Waste Management Act, 40% of all waste from landfill sites by the end of the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework, MTEF.

When coming to fisheries management, South Africa has got a vast amount of coastal resources available for use and development of its citizens. The fisheries sector has always provided source of livelihood for communities living along the coast. As members of the portfolio committee, we have

interacted with and many big and small-scale industry players in the fisheries sector made presentation before the committee and, as the ANC has noted their concerns. About

R562 821 million has been allocated to the fisheries branch, and there is a lot more than the department would like to do with little allocated resources. The ocean economy can employ many of our young unemployment citizen, and this Vote will see the finalisation of the Aquaculture Development Bill. The aquaculture ... it has been reported that with the growing demand for fish and natural fishing resources in decline aquaculture provides new opportunities.

The department has indicated that within the fishing sector they are creating an effective and enabling regulatory framework for the management and the development of marine and fresh water living resources. The Budget Vote will again see the allocation of fishing rights in the Western Cape to small- scale fisheries. This development of the small-scale fisheries cannot be achieved by the allocation of fishing licences and permits only, but clearly needs a well-co-ordinated strategy, and it is for this reason that we take note of plans by the department to develop an integrated development support strategy for small-scale fisheries.

Under forestry management, hon House Chairperson, our forest resources contribute meaningfully towards our economy

R746 160 million has been allocated to the forestry branch. A transformed forestry sector is critical to the empowerment of communities residing in state forestry land. In conclusion, hon House Chairperson, I rise on behalf of the ANC to support this Budget Vote 32, and take note of the constraints in the state fiscus, we are very pleased that the department is doing the best to better the lives of all South Africans. Thank you.

Mr D W BRYANT: Good afternoon, House Chairperson, South Africa’s natural environment is facing an unprecedented crisis that requires us all to change the way we do things in the years to come. Some of the challenges we currently face are beyond our control but there remain significant issues that are the direct results of wilful neglect mainly caused by this government’s abject failure to address the endemic issues within forestry, fisheries and the environment over many years.

All entities under the control of the department suffer greatly thus far under poor administration, irregular expenditure, minimal consequence management and absence of

real strategic guidance. Earlier this year we found out that the department had accumulated unauthorized, undocumented and wasteful expenditure totalling a whopping R2,9 billion. In the report, the Auditor-General flagged inadequate monitoring supply chain processes and multiple cases of fruitless and wasteful expenditure. In this regard, I would like to commend the Minister for accurately disclosing the R2,9 billion hole as previous audits only seem to uncover a fraction of this.

Perhaps, as my colleague hon Phillips has mentioned, there is reason to be hopeful that the wheel may finally begin to turn on those cadres who have been gorging themselves in the trough of public resources for so many years.

The Auditor-General further stated that these issues, “appear to be a common phenomenon in the environmental portfolio”.

This is a sad indictment of all entities under the department’s control and nowhere is this more evident than in the beleaguered SA National Parks, SANParks.

Under this administration, SANParks has stumbled from one controversy to the next and as of this week is now making do with the stand-in CEO while the current CEO is under investigation for alleged assault.

In South Africa’s premier national park, the Kruger National Park, the endangered rhino population is well on its way to complete extinction, 70% of all rhino in the Kruger Park have been lost to the poaching of the past 10 years alone. If this trend is not arrested urgently there is a very good chance that all the rhino in Kruger Park could be gone in the next 10 years.

The department was very keen to point out the drop in rhino poaching in the hard lockdown period. But as the country has opened up again, we've predictably seen poaching numbers rise. During recent busts between July 2020 and February 2021, officials confiscated a total of 277 kilograms of rhino horn, worth around R234 million are. While we welcome these busts it is further evidence of the trade of illegal rhino horn is alive and well.

If one looks at the extremely low numbers of rhinos being poached at private rhino farms, it is evidence that the vast majority of poaching is taking place in the reserves managed but SANParks primarily the Kruger National Park. I am glad to hear that the Minister will be meeting with the private rhino owners next week and I hope that this bears fruit.

The SA National Parks have admitted that internal corruption within the entity is one of their major concerns but steps must now be taken to address it. We welcome the recent news that polygraph testing of SANParks staff will be increased going forward which is something that the DA has been calling for. This is only one aspect of a much bigger problem. This government needs to target the warlords who worked to corrupt our SANParks staff and recruit desperate young men to a dangerous life of poaching.

One of the main rhino poaching kingpins was first arrested 10 years ago on multiple charges but he still yet to face any real consequences after numerous court postponements. During a recent oversight visit, members of the portfolio committee were able to meet with the special Anti-Poaching Unit. Rangers from this unit expressed their concern that the expensive equipment used to combat poaching will be difficult to replace with the current budget at their disposal.

The department should be able to allocate an additional budget to SANParks to increase the complement of rangers and invest in further training and equipment. Taking this into account, it is, therefore, bewildering to note that the department is

proposing to cut the budget of the SANParks by half a million rand in the coming financial year. This while all other entities within the department will see an increase.

We can’t allow the lives of our brave rangers and our endangered animals to continue to be put at risk. What is required now is action, and that action will require funding. The recent fires in Table Mountain have also shone a light on SANParks’ inadequate management, most notably the lack of attention given to clearing alien and invasive vegetation.

Many key experts believe that if the alien vegetation was cleared the devastation of the UCT library and other buildings may have been avoided. We welcome the investigation launched by the Minister and look forward to the findings which I understand will be released soon, and we hope that this will not simply be a Public Relations, PR, exercise to help SANParks.

It is important that we express our concern regarding the long outstanding fishing rights allocation process. The fishing industry is desperate for this process to be concluded. While we appreciate the assurances from the Minister that the

process is now underway, we cannot allow for any further unnecessary delays. The same goes for the allocations for small-scale fisheries in Western Cape where the process was completely bungled and local fishers were left in limbo.

In these difficult economic times, we must do all we can to help those who are struggling and this starts with empowering communities to be able to earn a living. Our climate is in flux and the coming years will no doubt see changes that will require us to mitigate where possible but most importantly to adapt. The newly formed Presidential Climate Change Commission certainly has its work cut out for it, and we would appeal for continued transparency and openness from the commission as they work towards a just transition.

South Africa is still sadly woefully below its emission reduction targets. More must be done to remedy this. The DA would like to thank the Minister for the step she is taking to address the many years of mismanagement within the areas under her control. We are aware, however, that as she digs deeper she will no doubt be faced with opposition from vested interests and politically connected entities.

We would urge her to hold the line and not be swayed by some who are keen to see her fail. Their *schadenfreude* will be at the cost of the environment, and we simply cannot allow this to happen. There is too much at stake. To conclude, I would like to quote the renowned environmentalism and broadcaster, Sir David Attenborough, on the plight of the natural environment when he says:

Many individuals are doing what they can. But real success can only come if there is a change in our societies and in our economics and in our politics.

Thank you, Chair.

Mr P M MODISE: Hon Chairperson, greetings to you, greetings to hon the Minister Barbara Creecy, greetings to hon the Deputy Minister hon Sotyu, hon members of the portfolio committee, fellow South Africans, ladies and gentlemen, this Budget Vote of the Department of Forestry, and Environment is very important in ensuring to our collective survival, the responsibility to protect our environment and all our natural species is the responsibility not only of government but for all South Africans from all facets of life. Ln 2020 President

Cyril Ramaphosa said in his state of the nation address human beings are faced with an extential threat from the form of climate change and the devastating effect it has on our communities especially on those communities that depend on it for subsistence farming on production and on biodiversity.

This Vote takes place during the most uncertain period of COVID-19 global pandemic and we have learnt how our environment has benefited from the previous health lockdown experience last year and this evidence of the kind of pressure that human activities places on the environment. The main drive behind climate change is human activity.

Again, as we engage in the combustion mission against climate change and the protection of our climate environment we also need to make note of the importance of creating sustainable socioeconomic wellbeing of our people.

In response to the challenges of climate change has said that it will bring and introduce the Climate Change Bill. This Bill will seek to provide a co-ordinated and integrated response to climate change by all spheres of government, business and civil society in a manner that will enable economic growth,

employment creation, social and environmental development in a sustainable manner.

The department will finalise rhe development of the five climate adaptation sector plans and this is a great initiative that we would like to applaud as the portfolio committee.

This Vote has allocated about R207 133 000 to the SA Weather Service whose mandate, through legislation, is to produce weather climate information as well as to provide early warning alerts and severe warnings and adversaries to the national disaster management centre.

Hon Chair, as it relates to the SA National Parks, Sanparks, and wild life, the core mandate of the SA National Parks is conservation management through our national park system. An allocation of R419 177 00 is given to Sanparks. Rhino poaching still remains a problem and the department will have to work extremely hard in increasing and maintaining the rhino population in our parks. There is an argument by some stakeholders in our biodiversity sector that rhinos would probably be in extinct in South Africa were it not be for the private breeders and farmers. We do not agree with this

argument and we welcome the statement made by the Minister a few weeks ago during the release of the High Level Panel report that was set up to investigate the management, the breeding, the hunting and the trading of elephants, lions, leopards and rhinos. We would like to see more and more South Africans visiting our national parks especially from the previously and historically disadvantaged communities and we also expect that more schools will access the parks for educational purposes. We would also like to see South Africans visiting these parks and this we are sure that it will put a positively to the spin-offs of the development of our tourism industry.

Chairperson, we really need to assure South Africans that if South Africans have confidence on others they would have certainly voted for them in 2019 in the national government elections. The continuous losing of by-elections by some amongst our midst is a confirmation that they have nothing to offer.

In the deliberations that are taking place today is clear that the organisation that claims to represent the people of South Africa it is the only organisation that comes as an opposer to

Budget Vote 32. There are those who make it their business to preoccupy themselves with the battles of the ANC. We know for a fact that the factional battles of the ANC have never sought to destabilise the functionality of government. Unlike the open dictatorship, absolute monarch and power and monarchy in the ranks, in particular the EFF. An organisation of the angriest, the defectors with a unclear ... [Interjections.]

Ms E N NTLANGWINI: “Suka” [Leave], concentrate on your debate.

Mr P M MODISE: Chairperson, I am sure you are going to protect me.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Hon members, you cannot just switch on your microphone and then start talking. You know the virtual Rules.

Mr P M MODISE: Think you very much, Chairperson. It confirms that indeed, people are angry. This Vote will finalise sector job’s resilient plans that are meant to ensure that the development of small micro and medium enterprises, SMMEs, and it will help us to build an all inclusive economy. It is expected that this Vote will add increase in the number of air

quality and monitoring stations that will effectively help us realise our transition of a low carbon emission.

The ocean and coast programme is targeted to the realisation of our National Development Plan. Forestry and fisheries will unleash inclusive economic potential of our people especially rural communities who have little or no economic activity.

In conclusion, the ANC as represented by myself, rise to support Budget Vote 32 of the Forestry, Fisheries and Environment. Thank you very much.

THE HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Thank you, hon member. The next speaker who will close the debate is the hon Minister of Forestry Fisheries and the Environment. Hon Minister, you have saved some time, as well as the Deputy Minister. So, you have 11 minutes left from the executive time for your concluding remarks. The hon minister!

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES: Thank you

very much, hon House Chair. That is indeed wonderful news. Hon members, let me start by thanking you all for participating in this debate today. Let me also note that

there is a high degree of consensus across all parties that the threats that our environment face come first and foremost from our path of development, consumption and distribution.

I think that there is wide agreement with section 24(b)(III) of our Constitution, that says secure ecological, sustainable development and use natural resources while promoting justifiable economic and social development. This is the challenge that confronts us. Indeed, it is a difficult challenge, and a challenge that requires constant re- evaluation each and every day.

Let me start off and thank hon Xasa for the report, and let me say that we absolutely agree with him here in the department that one of our priorities has to be cleaning up the quality of air in our country. I have myself personally communicated with two of the biggest polluters, namely Eskom and Sasol, that it is my expectation henceforth that they must comply with the minimum air quality standards, and that beyond 2025 there will be no more deferment and exemptions for those who do not qualify.

Secondly, let me agree with all honourable members who have highlighted concerns around the illicit trade in wildlife, and in particular in poaching of our iconic species as well as of our fisheries resources. Let me say to you, hon members, that one of the reasons why there is such a higher level of poaching in the Kruger National Park is that some of this crime is transborder crime and obviously it creates a very complex and difficult situation for us.

At the same time, I think that it is a very important to state here today that you can throw as much money as you want to throw into the war on poaching, but what you do need to do is to make sure that young people and communities who live on the outskirts of our protected areas and our natural resource areas are able to benefit from those areas.

Until you ensure that, you will have an ongoing poaching problem, and you will have a situation ultimately, as a result of the poor quality of water that is very rich in nutrients that is flowing into these dams. However, we will give you an update on what we are able to do as the Department of Environment.

Other issues, including the question of sewerage spill into water ways leading into these dams would need to be dealt with by the Department of Water and Sanitation, and we would urge you to raise this matter there.

Hon Paulsen, hon Sukers and hon Mbatha, all of whom - I think there were also other hon members - who had spoken about the issue of small scale fisheries. Let me say to you that I have recently met with Masifundise and we have agreed that we must set up a joint committee to look at this question of marine protected areas and fishing persons, who would in most cases have rights in our small scale industry, so that we can try and sort out some of the conflicts that are existing. We agree is not productive and not appropriate. So that task team is being set up and we look forward to getting reports.

It is our intention, hon members, next year to revisit the Marine Living Resources Act. It is not something we can do this year, because all of our capacity is tied up with facts. I think that when we revisit the Marine Living Resources Act, we are going to have to consider this thing called customer fishing rights.

We are also going to have to consider those who are in the recreational space, but in fact are fishing for a living. We are going to have to look at how do we change the regulatory dispensation in that area, because this is clearly an area that requires attention in the law reform process.

Let me also agree with all the hone members who have emphasised the fact that there has to be proper support and capacitation women for the small scale sector. Let me also say, hon Sukers, that the only reasonable way in which these fisher men and women can make a livelihood is if we start to review the basket of species, and that is what the split apportionment that I was speaking about earlier is all about.

Let me agree with those who are concerned about the irregular expenditure? I myself am deeply concerned about it, and it does not help to stand in this House today and say that this irregular expenditure, except for R100 million or one

R130 million occurred before my time. It is unfortunately my responsibility to sort it out.

We have widespread processes of discipline. We have laid criminal charges. We have a number of independent

investigations. We have training sessions. We have set up proper processes with regard to our backs on our desks. We are also cleaning up the whole supply chain network.

So this is what is required. It is not a quick fix; it is not an overnight fix, but we do need to do it. We agree with those who feel that this was completely unacceptable and that something urgent must be done to remediate the situation.

I think our Deputy Minister has spoken in detail about the questions that have been raised by hon Holomisa, hon Mbatha and others about the importance of the forestry sector. She has spoken about the Forestry Masterplan. She has spoken at great length about cleaning and greening. We agree with the hon members who have emphasised these points, and we would want to see that this continues.

Let me just say on the Green Fund this is intended as a place where the department should be receiving external donations, and it’s not something that the department would be directly funding. Hon Phillips, on this issue of the back flooding, there was a court case a few years ago: The farmers lost that to the department.

We will nevertheless include this issue in the work that the special panel is doing, so that we should give attention. I agree with hon Mbatha that the waste economy is one of the most important areas, both in terms of diversion from landfill and in terms of creating livelihoods for small scale farmers.

Hon Bryant, let’s wait for the report on the forest fires, then we can see who is right and who is wrong. We are not running away from our responsibility. We were there shoulder to shoulder with the Western Cape Government, fighting those fires; and we will be there when we must account for who is right and who is wrong.

In conclusion, let me thank all hon members, once again, for the debate and for the quality of speeches presented here today. Thank you very much.

Debate concluded.

The mini-plenary rose at 11:43