**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**JOINT SITTING**

**WEDNESDAY, 16 FEBRUARY 2022**

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***PROCEEDINGS OF THE JOINT SITTING***

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Members of the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces assembled in the Chamber of the National Assembly at

14:00.

The Speaker of the National Assembly took the Chair and requested members to observe a moment of silence for prayer or meditation.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Hon members, in the interest of safety for all present in the chamber, we request that you please keep your masks on and seat in your designated areas. Thank you.

**REPLY BY THE PRESIDENT TO THE DEBATE ON THE STATE OF THE**

**NATION ADDRESS**

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Speaker of the National Assembly, Ms Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces, Mr Amos Masondo, Deputy President of the Republic, David Dabede Mabuza, hon Ministers and hon Deputy Ministers, hon members, representatives of South African Local Government Association, Salga, and all those who are present, let me start of by thanking you hon Speaker and hon Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces for allowing me to participate in the debate on the virtual platform. It enabled me to listen very carefully and to take copious notes of some of the issues that were being raised here.

*Tshivenḓa*:

Ndi dovhe hafhu ndi livhuwe na vhathu vhoṱhe vhe vha amba, na

zwoṱhe zwe zwa ambiwa musi ndi tshi vula Phalamennde. Ndi a

livhuwa, ngauri ndi vhathu vhanzhi vhe vha amba. Ndi livhuwa

zwoṱhe, zwivhi na zwivhuya zwo ambwaho. [U VHANDA ZWANḒA.]

*English:*

As I concluded the state of the nation address, last week, I

called on every South African to rally together in our fight

against corruption, in our fight to create jobs, and in our

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fight to achieve a more just and equal society. I called for a

new consensus to unite our people and our country in a moment

of great crisis, behind an agenda for change and renewal.

In the debate over the last two days, several members of the

two Houses of Parliament have answered this call. Although

they represent different parties and different perspectives,

many of the speakers in the debate affirmed their commitment

to this shared goal.

We have heard many valuable contributions on how we may more

effectively address the many challenges that confront our

country right now. But we also heard a lot of vitriol. We also

heard a lot of attacks. There is no need to respond to insults

that were launched here ... [Applause.] ... because in the end

the insults that were hurled here do not contribute to a

meaningful debate about the challenges our country faces.

[Interjections.] Instead, I am motivated to reflect on the

constructive criticisms and sincere suggestions that have been

put forward with a view to improving the state of our nation.

I refer here, for example, to the contribution on behalf of

the hon Buthelezi on the characterization and appropriate

response to state capture. I refer to the suggestions by the

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hon Whitfield on moving the SAPS into the 21st century by

introducing modern, cutting-edge training for police officers

and the more effective use of technology. I refer to the call

by the hon Malema on the industrialization of cannabis in a

manner that benefits local farmers in places like the Eastern

Cape, Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal. Put aside many other things

that he said, including the fact that I was wearing a cheap

suit. [Interjections.] ...

*Xitsonga:*

Ndzi vi le na xivutiso xa leswaku xana sudu ya mina yi nghena

kwihi eka mhaka leyi? A nga yi rhandzi. Xana a nga rhandzi ku

vona vanhu van’wana va sasekile ke? A ndzi sasekile swinene. A

fanele a vurile leswaku Presidente, namuntlha mi sasekile mi

ambale sudu ya kahle. Ematshan’weni ya sweswo yena wa ndzi

rhuketela.

*English:*

I will not comment on that. ... I refer here also to the

comments by Premier Ntombela on rural infrastructure and

development, and the suggestions by the hon Letsie on

solutions for youth unemployment.

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Another example of valuable suggestions was those made by the

hon Nodada on the prioritization of reading, writing, language

and numeracy in the foundation phase, and on ways of assisting

those learners that have dropped out of school.

We appreciate the call by the Deputy Chair of the NCOP, hon

Lucas, for government to develop the necessary tools to

accelerate the implementation of the Gender Responsive

Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring, Evaluation and Auditing

Framework.

We agree with the hon Herron that whilst other people want to

move offshore because of the many challenges that we face,

there is still room for opportunity for many South Africans

here in this beautiful country.

The hon Hlengwa makes an important point that since all

development is local, municipalities should be empowered

through increased budget allocations to meet the demands of

development. These are some of the contributions that have

made this debate worthwhile, and I expect that in addition to

the many issues that were raised by Ministers who are

responsible for government work on this platform, and expect

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that government officials will have taken note of the many

issues, suggestions and criticisms that were raised during

this debate. I thank you all for all the inputs that you have

made. In the end, the criticisms and inputs will make us a lot

better than what we are. I don’t know what the insults will

do, but it’s okay. [Laughter.]

As I began the state of the nation address, last week, I said

that the speech would focus on the measures we are taking to

and ought to take to enable faster economic growth and the

creation of employment. That was the main heart of what I

wanted to impart to you all and to the nation. This is because

fixing the economy is our most pressing challenge at this

moment, and is essential to progress in almost every other

area of the lives of the people of our country. Our focus on

the economy does not, however, diminish the importance of the

many other areas of government’s work. It does not diminish

the many other aspects of our people’s lives. Many of these

issues have been raised in the debate and will be dealt with

in greater detail in upcoming Budget Votes and public

engagements by Ministers.

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As we reflect on the state of the nation, and as we look to

the year ahead, we should always remember where we have come

from and what our country has endured. We cannot escape the

basic truth that we have an economy and a society that is

still largely defined and scarred by its colonial and

apartheid past.

Despite the great progress that has been made in the last 28

years to address the legacy of dispossession and exploitation,

the material divides between black and white, men and women,

rural and urban, still persist until today.

The steady economic recovery, expanding employment and

increasing investment that followed the advent of our

democracy was disrupted by the 2008 global financial crisis.

It was also disrupted by falling commodity prices, by severe

energy constraints, by inefficient network industries, and

lately, by the negative impact or destructive impact of state

capture on so many vital public institutions.

At the same time, our economy has become less and less

competitive. We could not sustain investment in economic

infrastructure. That has persisted over a long time.

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As public spending rapidly increased, the benefits of

increased spending declined, to a point where the cost of

servicing our debt has been crowding out our social spending.

This was the situation that this administration was elected in

2019 to correct, and we took several decisive measures to turn

the economy and the country around.

Yet, just as we were emerging from more than a decade of low

growth and deepening unemployment, and from the era of state

capture and the assault on the institutions of the state that

accompanied it, we were hit by the worst global health crisis

in more than a century. We cannot disregard the fact that the

pandemic has caused our economy severe damage that will take

years to repair. Unless we appreciate these facts, unless we

characterize the current situation correctly, our response may

well be ill-considered and may also be misdirected.

It is wrong to say that there has been no action as a number

of people who spoke here said. We have achieved remarkable

progress in spite of the constraints of the present and the

challenges that have accumulated over a number of years.

Confronted with the worst global health crisis in a century,

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we were able to rise up to the challenge and protect our

people.

In less than a year, we have undertaken the most extensive

public health campaign in our country’s history, constructing

new hospital bed capacity in many locations, deploying

dedicated health workers to care for the sick throughout the

country and administering more than 30 million COVID-19

vaccine doses to over 18 million South Africans.

At the beginning of the pandemic, we increased social grant

payments, and within the space of only a few weeks, we

established a brand new grant that initially reached six

million South Africans and now reaches some 10 million South

Africans. [Applause.] I know of no other country on our

continent that has been able to do as much as we have done in

dealing with the COVID-19 disaster. [Applause.]

We mobilized a national effort, working with industry and

public research institutions to build things such as

ventilators and produce hand sanitizers, medical-grade face

masks and gloves, therapeutic drugs and cutting-edge vaccines.

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These, we were able to do in response to the moment that faced

our nation.

We introduced an unprecedented social and economic relief

package, which amounted to some 10% of our gross domestic

product, GDP, to provide vital support to businesses in

distress, to workers facing retrenchment, and to households

that were threatened with deepening hunger.

When we are looked at more globally, as a middle income

country, we measure up well in the leagues of those high

income countries as well. We confronted the COVID-19 pandemic

with great strength and great commitment to save the people

and the businesses of our country. Our collective actions in

response to the pandemic saved tens of thousands of lives and

kept millions of people out of dire poverty.

While most of the Members of these two Houses of our

Parliament are firmly committed to building a united, equal

and prosperous nation, others have different interests and

priorities.

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Where some preach despair, we see hope. We see that hope in

the 10 million people who now receive the Social Relief of

Distress grant. We see it in the new work and livelihood

opportunities created by the initiatives that we have taken,

including the Presidential Employment Stimulus that will soon

reach over a million people. We see it in the bridges that are

being built so that children can go safely to school. We see

it in the sector master plans that are driving new investment

which creates new jobs and the revival of key industries in

our country. That is what progress looks like. It is not doom

and doom and no action.

Where some create doubt, we see renewed confidence. We see it

in the most significant reform of our energy system in nearly

a century, creating conditions for cheaper, cleaner and more

plentiful electricity. Where even as we transition from where

we are, we will be able to ensure that it becomes a just

transition that cares for the workers in our mines and the

communities that live in the towns and the cities that produce

electricity.

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We see this in the long-delayed reforms like the spectrum

auction and the revised critical lists that are being

implemented by this government.

We see it in the concrete steps that we are taking to

modernize our ports and rail infrastructure, and to get our

passenger rail services back on track. Some of these may be

taking time, but we are coming from a very broken situation

which we are sewing up and building up all the time and not

sleeping on the job. That is what progress looks like.

Where some are determined to sow division, we are working to

unify our country in the fight against corruption. We have

strengthened the ability of the National Prosecuting

Authority, NPA, to pursue those responsible for state capture

and corruption, rebuilding its capacity and establishing a

dedicated unit in the investigating directorate. We are

already seeing the results of a strong and independent

prosecuting authority in several cases as well.

Let me be clear, yet again, on the matter of prosecution

because somehow, this notion is embedded in the minds of the

members here. When they look at me, they often say, when are

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you prosecuting all these people? [Interjections.] I do not

prosecute. [Applause.] I would like to make it very clear.

Some even suggests that the President may be using the

prosecutorial agencies against those that they perceive as my

opponents or enemies. It is not within the power of the

President, and it shouldn’t be within the power of the

President to initiate criminal proceedings against anyone.

[Applause.] I have said this repeatedly both here and

elsewhere that I am not the one who initiates criminal

proceedings. It is the sole responsibility of the relevant

director of public prosecutions. It is important that I state

this so that this thought and notion that is embedded in our

heads should begin to melt away.

Our task as the executive is to capacitate the NPA and make

sure that it has all the resources that it needs to prosecute

wrongdoing as an independent authority. That’s all.

[Applause.]

As government, we have supported the State Capture Commission

to complete its work, and enabled the commission to share vast

amounts of information with the investigators and prosecutors,

and we signed regulations to that effect. We are taking

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disciplinary action against government officials implicated in

procurement irregularities and have started to recover

billions in looted funds. [Applause.] This has not often been

done in the past but it is happening now.

We have put in place capable leadership at previously captured

state-owned entities, public institutions ... [Interjections.]

... and have reversed - you may care to listen first - the

decay at Sars, the Public Investment Corporation, PIC, Eskom,

Transnet and many others. You not agree but that’s precisely

what we have been doing. [Interjections.] That to me is what

progress look like, for those who care to look.

We are on a long and difficult journey to renew the promise of

our democracy. At times, it may seem that the path is too

long. It may also seem like it is not achieving much. It may

also seem like the climb is too steep, that the risks are too

great, but it is at precisely that moment that the courage and

resilience is required. [Applause.]

Even though we disagree in this House, across society, there

is broad agreement that as we grow the economy, create

employment and fight poverty and hunger, no person should be

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left behind. We have a responsibility, first and foremost, to

those South Africans who are poor, marginalized and

vulnerable.

This informs all our policy choices and all the programmes

that we seek to pursue and are pursuing. This is the hallmark

of our developmental state. Leaving no one behind, means

focusing on small, medium and micro enterprises, SMMEs, small-

scale farmers and on the informal economy. A number of other

countries have a huge and burgeoning informal economy that

sustains and supports the lives of ordinary people. That is

not so with us. This is the direction that we do need to take.

It is in these areas that small-scale enterprises and most

jobs will be created and through which poor South Africans

will be able to earn a livelihood.

We are removing constraints on the establishment and growth of

these businesses and also providing them with access to

finance, skills and various capabilities. This explains the

work being done by the Department of Small Business

Development to lower barriers to entry and remove impediments

to growth through, amongst other things, a review of key

legislation like the Businesses Act. It explains the redesign

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of the bounce back loan scheme so that small businesses can

more easily access the funds that they need. And it is our

focus on small business that informs the expansion of the

employment tax incentive to make it easier for small companies

to hire more people. As you recall, this initiative was

launched to make it easier for firms and companies to hire

young people. It has done extremely well. It is to this effect

that the Minister of Finance will speak about it when he

presents his budget. The work that is underway to reduce red

tape will have benefits for companies of all sizes, unleashing

investment and growth.

The establishment of a team in The Presidency to tackle red

tape, which will be headed by Sipho Nkosi, is similar to

initiatives taken by governments around the world. [Applause.]

It is located in The Presidency because red tape is not found

only in one department and there is no single department that

can tackle red tape on its own. Not only does red tape

increase the costs of doing business, but it also constrains

South Africans in their everyday lives and in many of their

interactions with government. Whether it is a matter of

getting a building permit – I waited for three years and more

to get a building permit to extend a room by four metres –

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That in itself was a constraint. A title deed. When people

wait for title deeds ... We need to find out exactly what it

is that makes the system come up with the impediments. People

wait for years for things such as water licenses because of

the bureaucratic inefficiencies that has become embedded in

our system. I am pleased to have heard that either the Western

Cape or Cape Town also has a red tape unit. [Interjections.]

We will be able to compare notes to see how best that works.

[Applause.] We are already comparing notes with what happens

in other countries. Countries that have been able to reduce

red tape and regulatory impediments. Countries that are now

rolling out the red carpet instead of the red tape to those

who would want to move on with a number of initiatives,

whether business related or just personal initiatives that

they embark on.

While all businesses will benefit from these reforms, it is

small and informal businesses that will benefit most, whether

from a stable electricity supply or cheaper data, similar

regulations or a more efficient state. But in the end, it is

our people who will benefit the most. Through this unit, we

will be able to focus on areas that our people find as huge

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constraints that form road blocks to the progress of their own

lives.

Our commitment to the transformation of the economy so that it

benefits all South Africans is unwavering. We will not abandon

our commitment to the protection of the workers, to supporting

and growing black business, and to affirming black people and

women in the workplace. [Applause.] We will not abandon our

support for the poor and the working class, nor our commitment

to build a more just and equal society.

As this government, we are quite clear about where our

policies come from. Our policies were not formed over a few

months or a few years, but are defined by a constant

progressive thread that spans over decades.

The programme of action that I outlined in the state of the

nation address is founded on seminal documents like the

Freedom Charter, the Ready to Govern document, the

Reconstruction and Development Programme, RDP, as well as the

National Development Plan, NDP.

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As this government, we are quite clear what our mandate is. We

have a manifesto for which the people of this country

demonstrated overwhelming support – that is a bold and

coherent plan to achieve a better life for all. [Applause.]

My call for a new consensus for change and renewal is informed

by the challenges of the present and is also guided by the

strength of the electoral mandate we got in 2019.

The focus on job creation, which I outlined in Sona has given

rise to a useful debate across society on the relative roles

of the state and the private sector in fostering economic

growth and creating employment. I have enjoyed listening to

different voices talking about this concept. In many ways, it

was about time that as South Africans we engage in this

debate. Some speakers have taken a crude and self-serving

approach to a complex issue, but for the most part,

commentators have engaged meaningfully with one of the most

important questions facing our country today. They have

earnestly sought to answer the central question of who will

create the jobs for the 11 million unemployed people in our

country.

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The state has a clear role to play in job creation through

state-owned – Listen - enterprises, the state employs a lot of

people, through public employment programmes, which I spoke

about, through the impact of its industrial policy, through

the implementation of its competition policy, through

infrastructure investment and through the employment of the

public service itself. [Applause.]

The reality in our country – listen first - as in most other

countries – this is now the stark reality - is that the

private sector creates the most jobs. [Interjections.] The

private sector in our own country creates three quarters of

workers jobs and accounts for over two thirds of investment

and research and development expenditure.

In South Africa, the number of people employed in the public

sector increased from 1,9 million in 2002 to 2,8 million in

2017. That is quite a sizable increase. Over the same period –

this is facing the reality of our situation - the number of

people employed in the private sector increased from

8,2 million to 13,5 million. South Africa is not alone in

seeking to rapidly expand our productive capacity by

unleashing the potential of the private sector. What we are

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seeking to do is to do what we have often said that we want to

crowd in the private sector so that they can let go of these

monies that they hold so that they can create jobs. We want to

continue creating the conducive environment so that they do

create the jobs. One just needs to look, for example, at the

approach taken by China under Deng Xiaoping – I read quite a

lot of the things that Deng Xiaoping did – His experience was

to mobilize when he began to change China and modernize it.

Deng Xiaoping embarked on a process of mobilizing private

capital to promote private enterprise to meet the country’s

developmental needs.

As noted by the Vice Chancellor of the University of

Johannesburg, Prof Tshilidzi Marwala, in his article just

yesterday, he published an article where he said:

In 2018, 87% of urban employment in China was from the

private sector compared to 18% in 1995. At the same time,

the total GDP increased from US$734 billion in 1995 to

US$13 trillion in 2018.

We, therefore, do not accept that we must make a choice

between a developmental state that drives economic and social

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transformation, and a vibrant expanding private sector that

fuels growth and employment. We do not agree that by

recognizing the role of business in creating employment that

we diminish the central role of the state in co-ordinating,

planning and guiding the development of the economy.

[Applause.]

It is evident from the programme that I outlined in Sona, we

envisage both a developmental state and a dynamic and agile

private sector, which work together and complement each other.

This is precisely the policy approach of the ANC for a mixed

economy. [Applause.] This is what we mean when we talk about a

mixed economy that draws on the resources, the strengths and

the capabilities of both public and private sectors. If you

have both working together – they may continue to be sworn

enemies – to agreed goal, then you are able to grow the

economy. This is precisely how other countries like China,

which was quoted “ad nauseam” by hon Xivambu, was able to grow

and to be the gigantic power that it is today, to a point

where the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, ICBC, the

biggest bank in the world is now listed on the New York stock

exchange. And yes, it is still owned by government but they

brought in the private sector and floated their shares on the

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New York stock exchange so that the ICBC can grow. The same

applies to China Mobile, the largest mobile telephone company

in the world, they followed exactly the same trajectory. Deng

Xiaoping said: “No matter if it is a white cat or black cat;

as long as it can catch mice, it is a good cat.”

Leaving no one behind, means expanding opportunities for young

people in our country, expanding opportunities for women and

also for people living with disabilities so that they can

participate more meaningfully in the economy. We are focusing

on the economic empowerment of the women of our country. Had

we not been diverted by COVID-19 when we were the chair of the

AU, we would have wanted to see this women empowerment

programme being expanded throughout the continent, not that it

is not being done. Not only is this an important part of the

fight against gender-based violence, it is also a fundamental

matter of social justice and essential if our economy is to

draw on the potential of all our people. We are determined to

make greater progress on the decision to set aside at least

40% of government procurement for women-owned and women-run

businesses. [Applause.] This is what we want to see happening.

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This year, we will ratify the African Union Protocol on the

Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which amongst other

things, includes the right to work. It places a responsibility

on government to promote opportunities for people with

disabilities to initiate self-employment, entrepreneurship and

so that they able to have access to financial services as

well.

The Employment Equity Amendment Bill has been tabled in

Parliament to regulate the setting of sector-specific targets

for representation of black people, women and persons with

disabilities.

Leaving no one behind, means supporting those who are

unemployed. One of the most important successes of the

Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan is the Presidential

Employment Stimulus as well as the number of structural

reforms that we have embarked upon. As I reported in Sona,

this initiative has provided work and livelihood opportunities

for over 850 000 people in the 16 months since its

establishment. The programme is making a real difference in

the lives of many in our society whose potential would

otherwise be lost to unemployment. It includes more than

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100 000 small-scale farmers who have received vouchers to

expand their production. Hon Singh spoke about this,

yesterday. He said that the halt that has been put to this

programme should now be restarted so that it can continue

contributing positively because he is one of those who has

seen the impact that it is having particularly in the rural

areas in the various provinces.

We have announced that we are massively increasing the scale

of this programme to reach a quarter of a million small-scale

farmers and transform our rural landscape. [Applause.] If the

fiscus challenges that we face were not an impediment, I would

have wanted to see a million of the small-scale farmers being

made to participate in this programme. As small-scale farmers

participate, we find that it is quite empowering to them. The

late Prof Karaan from Stellenbosch had said that:

Agriculture has the potential to create a million jobs. I

do believe that we can unleash that potential and create

even more than a million jobs for food security and a

number of other purposes.

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The Presidential Stimulus Programme includes the artists,

musicians and film producers. Minister Mthethwa will talk

about that when he presents his Budget Vote. These are the

people who have received grant funding to continue their work

as well as the museums and cultural institutions that have

been saved from closure. It includes the many thousands of

people who have been employed to build and maintain rural

roads. Hon Xivambu, said that we are talking about pavements.

I want to take you around the many areas in our country where

rural roads are being paved, not only where I went in Limpopo.

We now want to move to the industrialization aspect where the

bricks are made right in the villages where our people live

... [Applause.] ... so that they can pave their own areas. If

you fly around the country and see the mud roads in our

country, you will have the belief that as we pave our roads,

we are not paving pavements but roads which will enable our

people to walk and to drive on. This is an enabling process

and it enables our people to take their products and services

to the markets. It also includes the young people whom we are

helping to access opportunities through the Presidential Youth

Employment Intervention. We have implemented these programmes

and continue to do so.

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What gives me pride about these programmes is that they were

done within a short space of time right across the country. As

they were being done, there were no middle people - men and

women. There was no corruption in the implementation of these

programmes. They have impacted on the lives of those that were

targeted for these programmes. Much as we face severe fiscal

constraints, because of the challenges that we have, these

programmes are making an impact and are also yielding economic

value for those who participate in them.

If we had more resources available, we would scale up all

these initiatives and we would be able to reach more

unemployed people. What we would prefer to see, is seeing less

unemployed people but more people productively involved and

participating in economic activities in our country either

through programmes in the public sector or programmes in the

private sector. Through these and other measures, we are

supporting the dreams of millions of young people and even in

the most difficult of conditions, finding opportunities for

them to succeed and to be economically active.

It is worth noting that this programme is being co-ordinated

from The Presidency, bringing together 14 government

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departments to implement the largest and fastest expansion of

public employment in our country’s history where we have

gotten rid of silo working mentality, where departments work

together being properly and co-ordinated effectively, yes, at

the centre of government which happens to be The Presidency.

[Applause.] This is not the work of a bloated Presidency. It

is not a parallel state that some people say it’s being set

up. It is a Presidency that is at work to drive a coherent and

effective programme of action across government. [Applause.]

This is a government elected by the people, for the people and

which carries the trust of the people of our country. This is

a government that remains united around a common goal and

programme of action and that will not be deflected or diverted

from its course because of statements like it is a bloated

Presidency.

I preside over a Cabinet of Ministers that are committed to

their responsibilities, Ministers in whom I have the greatest

of confidence as President. [Applause.] More importantly ... I

will wait until you want to listen ... [Interjections.] ... in

whom the people of our country also have confidence and the

highest expectations. [Applause.]

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Hon members, leaving no one behind, means - this time around

we mean it when we say leaving no one behind -

[Interjections.] ... it means expanding social protection to

reach those who are in need. Whilst we have focused in this

Sona on growth and employment, millions of South Africans face

the immediate challenge of feeding themselves and their

families. It is estimated that food poverty affects some

5,5 million households. Without monthly grants for children,

the elderly and persons with disabilities, many South Africans

would face destitution.

We know that grants have provided an effective system for

income redistribution and poverty alleviation in a society

with unacceptable levels of inequality and unemployment. Given

the scale of unemployment and the impact of the pandemic, the

interventions we are undertaking to create jobs will take many

years to reach the 11 million South Africans who are

unemployed.

We are as we have said extending the R350 Social Relief of

Distress Grant for another year precisely to reach those

people who are unemployed and to stave off hunger. We are

doing this within a fiscal environment that has been badly

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worsened by the pandemic. We do need to do so while making

sure that we do not further weaken our macroeconomic position

and that we do not allow our debt service costs to further

crowd out social spending. The Minister of Finance will

elaborate on this when he presents his Budget, next week. He

will paint the full picture of what servicing our debt does to

our budget and what we need to do. He will outline all that so

that we all gain a better appreciation. Some would suggest

that it doesn’t matter; borrow more money. Some would even say

it doesn’t matter even if our debt servicing costs keep

burgeoning and going up. We seek to be prudent. The Minister

of Finance will be presenting all these in his Budget, next

week.

As a country, we nevertheless, need to fill the gap in social

protection to achieve a minimum level of support for those who

cannot find work. Finding a sustainable, affordable and

effective solution must be one of the central pillars of the

renewed social compact that we have undertaken to build. It is

this that the social partners are going to deal with. What do

we do with the 11 million people who are currently out of work

and look at the extent to which we can create jobs that will

absorb those people?

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There are several other aspects of social protection that are

receiving attention. This includes strengthening our child

protection services in areas such as adoption, foster care,

and the protection of the rights of children. We have

programmes, for example, Risiha Programme, is a community-

based programme to protect orphans and vulnerable children,

including those living in child-headed households, and those

living and working on the streets. This is all part of our

efforts to develop a comprehensive social protection system

that in the end leaves no one behind.

Leaving no one behind, means improving the quality of our

education system as well. To achieve the transformation of our

economy in the long run, we must improve our education

outcomes. It starts with early childhood development, ECD. The

Presidential Employment Stimulus has provided support to close

to 60 000 early childhood practitioners that were affected by

the pandemic. With the transfer of responsibility for the ECD

into the Department of Basic Education, we are now better able

to manage the transition from early childhood development into

pre-school and into schooling.

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There is significant work under way to strengthen Basic

Education through addressing the school infrastructure

backlog, which Minister Motshekga will speak about in her

Budget Vote. We are also focusing on the training and

equipping teachers to promote early grade reading, and

bringing new teachers into the system through the Funza

Lushaka Programme.

The appointment of over half a million young people as

education assistants in over 22 000 schools around the country

has been welcomed by teachers, school management and parents

as a valuable contribution to the quality of learning and

teaching. We have been able to do this just within the past

year. We will be continuing this programme into the next phase

of the Presidential Employment Stimulus.

The expansion of access to Higher Education is a great

achievement that will benefit the economy and our country for

many years to come. Together with the work being done to

strengthen Basic Education, the growth of post-school

education will ignite the skills revolution that we have so

often spoken about. Minister Nzimande will also speak about

that more when he presents his Budget Vote. Importantly, these

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skills revolution will have the greatest impact and children

from poor and working class families, helping to break the

cycle of poverty.

To ensure that skills training is linked directly to the

demand in the economy, we are pioneering a fundamentally

different approach to skills development for unemployed youth.

This approach links payment for training beyond the placement

of candidates in a job opportunity. The first phase will

provide training to up to 4 500 unemployed youth to secure

employment in the digital and tech sector with funding from

the National Skills Fund, the Sector Education and Training

Authorities, SETAs, and the Unemployment Insurance Fund’s

Labour Activation Programme.

By addressing the educational needs of children and young

people at every point in their development, and by helping

them to transition from learning to earning, we are working to

ensure that we leave no young person behind because we are

committed that no one must be left behind. [Applause.]

Across the world, the pandemic has severely damaged economies,

undermined livelihoods and set back human development by many

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years. The experience of the last two years underscores the

need to ensure that all South Africans have access to quality

health care regardless of their ability to pay. The massive

inequality in access to quality health care is one of the

greatest constraints on social and economic progress. The

COVID-19 pandemic has required the diversion of significant

health resources. As a result, we have not paid sufficient

attention to other public health crises affecting our people.

We are still in the midst of the Aids pandemic. Our country

has the largest number of people living with HIV in the world.

We are far behind other countries in achieving our testing and

treatment targets. We must and will accelerate the

implementation of this programme to save lives.

Just as we drew on the experience of our HIV programme to

respond to COVID-19, we can now draw on our experience of

managing COVID-19 to strengthen our HIV response. In the same

way that South Africans have had to adopt safe hygiene

practices to prevent COVID-19 infection, we must encourage

similar discipline in pursuing healthy lifestyles to minimize

the prevalence of diseases such as diabetes and hypertension

as well.

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In advancing the health and the wellbeing of South Africans,

we must do everything we can to ensure once again that that no

one is left behind. Every person in this country has a right

to be safe and feel safe. The murder and rape of women by men,

the children killed in the crossfire of gang wars, the theft

of cables and other infrastructure, the intimidation and

extortion at construction sites are a daily reminder of our

far removed goal to achieve a better life for our people. Yet,

despite the scale of the challenge, we are taking real and

practical measures across a range of fronts, yes, to respond

to crime, violence and instability.

Working with partners in civil society and other communities

across the country, we are confronting gender-based violence

and femicide. We are confronting the attitudes and practices

that demean and disempower the women of our country. We are

strengthening the legal protections that women and children

have, we are improving support to victims and we are working

to ensure that perpetrators in the end do see justice.

Due to the legislation that this government introduced and

which this Parliament passed, a woman can now apply for a

protection order online and does not have to face her abuser

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... [Applause.] ... a child is now able to testify via CCTV in

one of the new Sexual Offences Courts, a victim can be

confident that they will find an evidence kit at a police

station, a suspect will find it harder to get bail.

[Interjections.]

We are strengthening our police service, tackling corruption

within its ranks, setting up specialized multidisciplinary

teams to tackle specific types of crime against our people and

our economy.

The report of the expert panel into the July unrest is

damning. But it also provides critical insights and makes

important recommendations that we will use to strengthen our

entire approach to the security and stability in our country.

[Applause.]

By the same measure, we expect that the report of the State

Capture Commission will make far-reaching recommendations that

will empower us to take those steps necessary to prevent and

act against corruption. In regard, we would like all of us to

work together; this Parliament in unison with the executive

should be able to join hands so that we tackle corruption in a

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more effective way. [Applause.] This is not a government that

seeks to hide problems. We expose them and we work to fix them

and we work to fix them. [Interjections.]

Our principled commitment to equality and justice extends

beyond our borders. Through all our international engagements,

in our relations with other countries and in our participation

in international fora, we continue to work for a more just and

equitable global order. We continue to advance the interests

and needs of poorer countries, particularly on the African

continent, and ensure that they are properly represented in

all multilateral institutions.

We continue to work with our neighbours to promote peace,

stability and development. That is why we are supporting the

Southern African Development Community’s efforts to deal with

the insurgency in Mozambique’s Cabo Delgado province and

ongoing assistance to Eswatini and Lesotho to resolve

political challenges that they are facing. We cannot accept

that there are still people in the 21st century that continue

to languish under colonial occupation. Our support for the

self-determination of the peoples of Palestine and Western

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Sahara remains ... [Applause.] ... a central pillar of our

work towards a just, equal and peaceful world order.

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated how important it is

that no country, no community and no person is left behind in

the drive for vaccines, treatment and care.

Through the positions that we occupy in the African Union, AU,

and on international bodies, we have consistently fought for

developing economies to receive financial assistance to

respond to, and recover from this pandemic. We will be caring

this message across once again as the African Union when the

AU meets tomorrow and day after tomorrow in Europe, where I

will be travelling to. [Applause.]

We have consistently fought for equity in access to vaccines,

and through our efforts, we have secured over 500 million

vaccine doses for the African continent. [Applause.] We, as

South Africa, have also donated vaccines to some of our

African sister countries. [Applause.]

Despite these achievements, there is much more that needs to

be done to ensure that the global recovery is inclusive and

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equitable. At the G20, we have advocated for the

redistribution of newly issued global reserves, known as

special drawing rights, towards our continent.

There is much more that needs to be done to ensure that

wealthy countries honour their commitments to support the

actions of developing economies to respond to the effects of

climate change.

There is much more that needs to be done to reform the United

Nations and to democratize other global institutions. If, as a

global community, we are committed to ensuring that no one is

left behind, these are the urgent tasks that we need to

undertake.

Hon members and fellow South Africans, this debate has

unfolded at a time and in a place of great significance. It

was from the balcony of this building that the father of our

democracy and our nation, Nelson Mandela, addressed a jubilant

crowd after his release from prison on 11th February 1990. The

crowd which gathered on the Grand Parade could not have known

the events that would follow, but they knew one thing: that,

we, as the people, would prevail.

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As we confront another turning point in our history, we must

draw on the same spirit, courage and determination. Twenty-

five years ago, this month, our democratic Constitution came

into effect.

As we look to the year ahead, we are reminded of our solemn

responsibility as the representatives of the people of this

country gathered here to heal the divisions of the past and to

establish a society based on democratic values, social justice

and fundamental human rights. We need to work together despite

our many differences to improve the quality of life of all

citizens and free the potential of each person. We must

remember that it is possible to stifle a country with

cynicism, and it is possible to inspire a country with hope.

Going forward, our task is clear. We must build a new

consensus to revive our economy and renew the promise of our

country, and we must leave no one behind. Let us be the

merchants of hope, let us be the merchants of confidence and

let us go out and spread hope and confidence amongst our

people instead of cynicism. Thank you very much. [Applause.]

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Thank you very much, at

this point, I take the opportunity to thank the hon President

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for his address and response. That, hon members, concludes the

debate on the state of the nation address and the business for

the day.

The Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces adjourned

the Joint Sitting at 15:18.