**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
TUESDAY, 10 MAY**
***MINI PLENARIES (VIRTUAL)*
10:00 - 12:15**

1. **Vote 14: Statistics South Africa**

**BUDGET VOTE: 14**

**Inkosi RN Cebekhulu, MP**

Honourable Speaker,

Statistics South Africa is an important Department that helps government to make systematic decisions regarding the economy and our society. Its work provides South Africans with an overview of government performance and an understanding of the quantity of reform we need in South Africa.

One of the key indicators we as South Africans look for is the quarterly release of employment data, as we face an unemployment crisis in this country.

Whilst there is a great appreciation for the work Stats SA does, we need greater integration of this Department into all other government departments and institutions, such as Parliament. What is needed is that Stats SA takes over the research component in each department, yet remains independent of the departments.  This will help government to centralise a database of resources that provides information to guide decisions. The maintenance of its departmental independence will additionally help to create a professional public service that makes informed decisions based on quality and ethical research. The importance of having correct and unaltered information when making decisions cannot be emphasised enough.

The IFP would like to support the Committee’s recommendations regarding the filling of vacancies and encouraging the Department to hire more youth in these vacancies. It is important for the youth of this country to actively participate in the research and understanding of the needs for the next generation. However, the Department must invest in attracting and retaining person/s who provide value to such an important instrument for decision-making. It is concerning that these people are leaving for ‘greener pastures’. The Department needs to look at its incentive package in much more detail and rather identify individuals with qualities of consistency and endurance.

The recent issue of accuracy in the Census conducted by Stats SA is a matter of concern. The Census of our country is a baseline that informs us of the population, its growth and important socio-economic issues.

We have noticed that large quantities of rural-based people have not been counted, and they do not have access to data in order to complete the online form. This presents a major challenge going forward when determining policies to address poverty, inequality and unemployment. We call on the Minister to appraise this House on the success of the online Census system; as to whether it has reached its target audience.

Honourable Speaker, recently the IFP has been receiving widespread complaints from farmers and farm workers, who claim that Census officials have either not visited their farms or have promised to return and have not done so. We request that Census officials return to the farmlands in South Africa and undertake an accurate count so that vast numbers of people are not left uncounted.

The recent flooding in parts of KwaZulu-Natal has changed the social position of thousands of people overnight as they are now left with no homes, businesses and personal belongings. This warrants a revisit to the province by Stats SA, to relook the data that will be used to determine policy going forward. The work by Stats SA can prove to be invaluable, as this Department has the ability to set a clear agenda for South Africa.

The IFP supports the Budget.

I thank you.