**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (VIRTUAL) THURSDAY, 4 MAY 2023**

***PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY***

The members of the mini-plenary session met at 14:00

The Acting House Chairperson Ms R M M Lesoma took the chair and requested members to observe a moment of silence for prayer or meditation.

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms R M M Lesoma): Announced that the virtual mini-plenary sitting constituted a meeting of the National Assembly.

# CREATING A BETTER FUTURE FOR CHILDREN THROUGH HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND HELATH PROVISION

(Subject for Discussion)

Ms B P MBINQO-GIGABA: Hon House Chair, and good afternoon to yourselves and all the members that are on the virtual platform.

The transformation of our society and the advancement of socioeconomic development to address challenges such as inequality, poverty and unemployment requires a nation to build its human capital. Human development is a critical component of the attainment of global Sustainable Development Goals and the Africa Agenda 2063.

The National Development Plan, NDP, on direct measures to attack poverty proposed the introduction of a nutrition programme for pregnant women and young children and extend early childhood development, ECD, services for children under five and the improvement of the quality of our education so that all children have at least two years of preschool education and all children in Grade 3 can read and write.

In his state of the nation address, the President committed government to provide young children with a foundation to read for meaning and development and increase the ECD subsidy to reach more children in need.

Statistics South Africa reported in 2018 that 43% of children aged 0-6 did not attend any education institution in 2018. Education is a critical instrument of advancing the human development of the nation. It is for this reason that the ANC

government has placed education as an apex priority to empower South Africans to be their own liberators and have the skills and capacity to participate in the mainstream economy.

The debate that we are having today is critical under the theme of children and early learning as a defining phase for the cognitive development of children for better human development outcomes and for the eradication of poverty. It is for this reason that the prominent leader of our struggle and nation Nelson Mandela donated half his salary to poor children and when he got the Nobel Peace Prize he gave part of the prize money to help street children. In his word, Nelson Mandela stated on receiving the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize that, and I quote:

South Africa’s children shall play in the open veld, no longer tortured by hunger or disease or threatened with abuse.

Children are our greatest treasure.

It is for this reason that his vision of a child hospital has been realized throughout the development of the Nelson Mandela Children’s Hospital in Parktown.

If we are to create a better future for our nation, our investment on children is paramount. Various studies have

identified various aspects as critical to the holistic development of a child.

South Africa’s total population was estimated at 60 million

people of whom 20 million were children under 18 years. Children make up 34% of the total population. Fifty-eight percent of

children are living in the poorest 40% of household as compared with 42% of adults.

The Sixth Administration has prioritized early childhood development as a critical area which requires enhancement through the ECD migration from Social Development to Basic Education, which has been completed. This is critical in order to strengthen early learning. The expansion of ECDs and the partnership with various non-profit organizations, NPOs, has increased access to early learning.

The impact of not providing quality childcare and early learning contributes to disadvantaging children, particularly the poor, and their cognitive development to perform at their best potential in the education system.

The problem of reading for meaning by the age of 10 is a critical barometer which should strengthen our resolve of creating equal

opportunities for all South Africans, particularly for the poor and disadvantaged. Reading is a priority of the Medium-Term Strategic Framework signifying the prioritization of the sector and our children’s development.

The rate of child stunting at one of four children in South Africa should concern us all, because our children need all of us to protect their wellbeing, through provision of nutritious food and a developmental environment. Children are vulnerable and require the care and protection by the community, and most importantly the family. Children without care need government social assistance and as a nation we have cushioned children through various social support.

This is a phase of life wherein we build, or harm and the democratic government has chosen to build through expansion and developing a model for early learning.

Various research studies have demonstrated the benefit of strengthening the development of children particularly the first five years. Children require facilities to play and grow physically, children require health care and educational learning for their cognitive and holistic development.

Progress has been made to firstly study the landscape through the Thrive by Five programme and the ECD Census of 2021. This was critical to ensure that government intervention focuses on key gaps in the sector, and the children between the age of four and five in South Africa, that’s plus minus 930 000 which is 72% are in early learning. The study found that 84% of our ECDs provided breakfast and 94% provided lunch, whilst 34% do not have access to an outdoor playground with suitable equipment and 56% have access to age-appropriate books for different ages. Only 33% of the ECDs are subsidized by the Department of Basic Education whilst 67% are not subsidized. Forty-three percent of the ECDs are not registered with the Department of Basic Education.

This is a problem. Our government is calling upon society to support. The department has a programme which has been advanced from Department of Social Development called the Vangasali campaign. It is critical that we have early learning centres to be registered to ensure sufficient support for the children in line with the President’s call.

This gap requires the focus of the nation, communities, families, political organizations, civil society, and religious organizations to join hands with stakeholders in the early

learning childhood sector to ensure all children get the opportunity to free their potential.

A significant milestone of the democratic government is the investment in closing the inequality gap of rural and urban schools. Despite the backlog of infrastructure, better ablution facilities, sufficient classes and sporting facilities. Many of our schools in townships and rural areas have most of the required facilities. In our communities we have created spaces for children to play sports. Government’s infrastructure intervention has developed over 3 000 projects on water, electricity and eradicating inappropriate structures. We provide nutritious food to over 9,6 million students. These are interventions of a caring government.

Our societal threat remains the threat of safety of our children and the risk of child trafficking. Combatting these requires law enforcement agencies working with the people to create the spaces for children and defeat the drug lords which have begun to creep into our schools and communities.

For the ANC, this debate offers us an opportunity to reflect on the status of children, the challenges confronting them and the progress of the democratic government to heighten our focus. The

debate should enable us as public representatives to engage on how we accelerate the creation of a better future for children.

We are confident that the vision of the Department of Basic Education to transform early childhood development will yield positive education and societal outcomes. A future of equal opportunities for all our children. Thank you very much, House Chairperson.

Ms A M VAN ZYL: House Chairperson, children learn better if they are not hungry or sick. Yet, 12 582 children under the age of five died in public hospitals due to malnutrition over the last decade. This is the unfortunate reality that many children face under the rule of the uncaring ANC.

While we understand that it is the responsibility of the parents to ensure that children’s basic needs are met, the reality however is that South Africa is a country of extreme socioeconomic disparities that must be considered.

Unemployment is at an all-time high with an estimate of 13,8 million people living below the poverty line. Cost of living has rocketed, leaving many families desperate and unable to care for themselves and their children.

Malnutrition impacts a learner’s cognitive abilities, physical stamina, and emotional wellbeing. When children are ill or malnourished, they are more likely to miss school and tend to struggle with learning. In the current environment, children cannot achieve their full potential.

The National School Nutrition Programme caters for nearly

9 million children in South Africa. This gives these parents hope that their children would at least get one meal a day, as this is sometimes the only meal that they receive that day.

The ANC government in KwaZulu-Natal must hang their heads in shame that in that province children did not even get this one meal a day. The uncaring ANC MEC of Basic Education, Mbali Frazer’s head must roll. Yet the premier has publicly stated that her job is safe.

A decision by MEC Frazer to centralise the National School Nutrition Programme has left children hungry, under her watch. Does the ANC government learn from this tragedy? Of course not. They still seek to centralise functions through the Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill, which will have a negative effect on the basic education system in South Africa, as was proven with this school nutrition failure.

Investing in human development and health care is critical to creating a better future for children. Children who have access to quality health care and education from an early age are more likely to lead successful, healthy and meaningful lives. The uncaring ANC government is failing on both the education system as well as the health care system.

Another area that contributes to human development is proper sanitation and clean water. Well, we already know that children are dying in pit toilets as government is not addressing this fast enough. Twenty-five percent of schools still have unreliable water supply and 22% still have pit toilets. Two thousand one hundred and thirty schools only have pit toilets. If we want to create a conducive environment where children will prosper and thrive in an educational setting, this needs to be addressed very fast.

The false promises of the past 29 years will not cut it anymore. The ANC’s abbreviation now directly translates into “absolutely no consequences”. There are absolutely no consequences for these Ministers that are failing the poorest of poor people in South Africa. They live lavish lifestyles, in state paid mansions fitted with generators and the like, while the rest of the country suffers.

These Ministers also have absolutely no clue about what is happening to people on the ground, absolutely no consequences, absolutely no clue, and absolutely no care. This is what the ANC embodies.

The 2024 national and provincial elections are fast approaching and John Steenhuisen’s Moonshot Pact will ensure that we create a better future for all our children. Now is the time to vote for that better future and join the DA. Children must thrive, not fight to survive.

Ms N N CHIRWA: Greetings to the commander-in-chief of the EFF, Julius Malema and all the officials, commissars and fighters of the EFF. The protection of children in our nation is the one that should ordinarily bring the government of the day to shame. Children, being the most vulnerable in our society have to fend themselves whilst the ANC government prides itself on giving orphans one meal a day. One in four children in this country under the age of five is stunted and severe malnutrition remains one of the three leading causes of child deaths.

In Louterwater, in the Eastern Cape, unemployed mothers, some who are children themselves, as young as 10 years old starve

their own children so that they can get one pack of porridge per month that then feeds the whole family. The ANC government knows about this atrocity and the government of the ANC would do absolutely nothing about it. What do we make of the children whose lives is ruined as soon as they arrive on this earth? The hundreds of thousands of children who suffered hypoxia and negligence in your public hospitals upon birth and go on to live shattered lives in zero support from them and their mothers.

Is it possible that you are applauding yourselves for the past

30 years of governance, misleading your own Ministers that they are doing a great job when a girl child in South Africa, under your leadership is most likely to be raped than to be able to read for comprehension by the age of 10? Is it still ANC leads, ANC lives - when children with disabilities, like Esakhe Ntlonti, who died in the fire at the age of 12 without ever having seen a classroom despite us having begged Ministers of Basic Education and Social Development to intervene a year prior to this unfortunate death.

It is not possible to be the forces of change for children when you are the same government that steals money meant for their feeding schemes. When you harbour rapists and murderers

in your high echelons of power and responsibility and have a President who can kill the very parents of those children in Marikana. Stop tenderising feeding schemes. Permanently employ the women in the community to create, run and utilise vegetable gardens for school children and for those in need.

Early childhood development, ECD, from the age of three should be compulsory with tangible legal consequences against the state and its personnel for failing to ensure that every child in our society has an equal opportunity to have foundational intervention. Education does not start in Grade R - even for your own great grandchildren. You should ensure that in every ECD facility, trade therapist and social work are mandatory for ... [Inaudible.] ... the health and safety needs of vulnerable children, eradicate waiting lists in clinics and hospitals of children awaiting surgeries and for children requiring referrals and consultation to specialists for diagnosis that is very crucial for their adequate placement in the education system. You should build specialised schools for neurodivergent children and for children with disabilities in each and every district across the country that are well resourced, and abnormalise child homelessness.

The first priority of every municipality should be to ensure that there is no child on the streets regardless of whether they are succumbing to drug addiction or not. All crimes of abuse against children should be handled by a specialised court and concluded in no more than six months. In fact, all forced child rape cases that have been withdrawn must be reopened and thoroughly investigated as children are prone to lie about their perpetrators out of fear and threats by the rapists and child molesters.

Paul Kennedy and Gerhard Ackerman are an example of how crimes against children can be purported by powerful people in our society who gets away with treacherous crimes against children for decades on end. The ANC government is incapable of delivering development for the children of our nation. Our daily realities are testament to this reality. Only the EFF has the political will power to protect the dignity and lives of our children. Only the EFF offers permanent solutions for the economic futures of the children this country. Thank you very much.

Ms A GELA: Hon Chair, I am making an apology because of load shedding. Hon House Chair, hon members of the House, Ministers and Deputy Ministers, good afternoon. Let me start by

expressing my outmost appreciation for this opportunity to participate in this important debate. Let me also, in particular, thank my party, the ANC, for giving me this opportunity indeed. It is really an honour and great privilege for me to present the ANC in this important debate.

Let me paraphrase my speech with the following important quotations and steps from our late icon, the father of this nation, uTata uNelson Rolihlahla Mandela regarding children’s care. He made this profound statement in just his 100 days in office as a democratic President of this country back in 1994. Madiba said and I quote:

Our children are the rock on which our future will be built, our greatest asset as a nation. They will be the leaders of our country, the creators of our national wealth who care for and protect our people.

In 2013, Madiba has this to say, and I quote: “Any society which does not care for its children is no nation at all.” Let us also not forget that again in 1994, Madiba made a critical important announcement in health when he announced that children under the age of six years old, and pregnant mothers will receive health care services for free. I don’t know of

any leaders in the world who have taken this bold step, let alone the pre-1994 South Africa. Who can ever forget the establishment of the Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund and the Nelson Mandela Children’s Hospital for those who do not know or suffer from amnesia like the hon members from the DA about what the Nelson Mandela Children’s Hospital is about. Let me remind you that the Nelson Mandela Children’s Hospital was founded by Madiba in 2009. This hospital is a dedication facility service serving children of Southern Africa. It was established by the son and the leader of the great movement, the ANC.

In the ANC, we currently busy with the National Health Insurance Bill. Its objective is to provide health care to all South Africans – by all we mean all people of South Africa, regardless of whether they can pay or not. But it’s important for the nation to know that the opposition parties in this Parliament such as the DA, the EFF and the FF Plus and others like the ACDP, are saying that the National Health Insurance, NHI, will not happen in this country. In other words, they are saying that poor people – those who cannot pay for expensive private health care must see for themselves. That is what they are saying, but the people of this country, led by the ANC, must not allow them to get away with such inhumane and

uncompassionate irresponsible stand. The NHI must happen and the NHI will happen. The children of this country will benefit a lot form the NHI. So, please the DA and others, just allow our poor children and everyone to get access to health care through the NHI.

I can go on and on and give many quotations here, including what the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa is saying about children, but let me rather now focus on my speech further. According to the World Health Organization, each year, diseases that are preventable and treatable claim the lives of millions of children. The majority of these children coming from underprivileged socioeconomic backgrounds and residing in lower income countries. There are a number of cost-effective therapists that might greatly lower child mortality but their use is largely lacking, especially in the nations where they are most required.

Globally, approximately, 2 million children and youth aged five years to 24 years, 43% of whom are adolescents perished in 2021, along with almost 5 million children under the age of five, including 2,3 million newborns. This ... [Inaudible.]

... significant loss of lives, the majority of which was brought about by treatable and preventable conditions, serves

as a sharp reminder of the urgent need to put a stop to the unnecessary deaths of children and teenagers. The majority of these deaths can be avoided with a widespread and significant treatment, including rather prenatal care vaccines, nutritional supplements and water and sanitation programme.

This of course is made possible through required budget allocation focused on access to health care for children. Madiba said: “Investing in children’s health is a sound economic decision for government to take, even if moral justification for such programme are not always considered. The core economic benefits of ensuring that children are provided with needed health care services for better human development prospect is essential so that healthier children later make up a healthier adult population that can make a meaningful contribution to the economy through various economic activities.

In the South African context, significant progress has been made in ensuring that children survive, although much work remains to be done in this regard. The Department of Social Development as has been highlighted later in this debate also plays a critical role in dealing with the component of social wage and required contribution to ensuring that the future of

our children in this nation is secured through the necessary state intervention. Of course, in the context of understanding our health and social development goals towards the attainment of the National Development Plan 2030.

Some of the key of intervention by the Department of Health on children’s health over the years include providing free health services for pregnant mothers and children up to five years of age. As I have already alluded to earlier, expanding the package of services for mothers and children such as expanding asexual and reproductive health services, including antenatal visit emphasis on any booking and postnatal ... [Inaudible.]

... including introduction of new childhood vaccine, integration of HIV care and maternal newborn child health care services, providing information to women and families to MomConnect which offers reliable pregnancy related digital information to mothers with opportunity to give feedback, compliments and complaints. The new road to health booklet which offers information to families in all aspects of earlier childhood development available on the platform.

We are working with other sectors to empower women such as programmes targeted in keeping pregnant teenage mothers in school, alongside the Department of Basic Education and ...

[Inaudible.] ... and adolescent’s health programmes for access to sexual reproductive health rights and services along the Department of Justice. This intervention has made a good legacy for the area of maternal and children and women’s health in South Africa. However, the challenges in this sector are complex and difficult to address.

In the context sub-Saharan Africa, children continue to have worst rate of mortality in the world, with 74 deaths per 1000 birth, which is 14 times greater than the risk for children in Europe and North America. The Department of Health relies on estimates based on the repeat mortality civilians by the SA Medical Research Council to measure child mortality. This figure shows that ... [Time expired.].

Ms M D HLENGWA: Chairperson, section 28 of Bill of Rights of our Constitution carries the right of each South African child. To summarise both this section states that every child has the right to basic nutrition, shelter, basic healthcare with service and social services and to be protected from multi-treatment neglect, abuse or degradation to name but a few.

However, what we are witnessing in relation to health provision for the children is short of applying and uttering and acceptable more than 900 babies died from avoided incident at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital between 2020 and 2022.

Furthermore, 1 443 babies were born with lack of oxygen during delivery in the hospital maternity unit and more than 50 medical negligent claim total R1 billion.

It has been reported that the avoidable factors that led to death of the more than 900 babies at the hospital over the three years, including in adequate infection control, limited in ICU beds and hypotonia. Based on this, it is clear that South African children are born bearing and brunt of the government in a capable and effectively non-public healthcare system.

Here we are debating how to create a better future for children yet some of them do not even make it through the first few hours of life. The only way to create future children through health provision is without the corrupt, looters lining their pockets with complete disregards and apart for how their actions are crippling the South African healthcare system.

We can continue to increase the health budget as much as we want for as long as corruption prevails there will be funding but not equip. Africa is one of the most unequal society in the world with children and adolescence facing different threats to their futures, which forms a breathing ground for mental health issues. Therefore, mental health support in full should be responsible to a learner content, age and develop stage. There should be a continuous of care covering the promotion of position mental health, preventing of the mental health condition and access to treatment and covering services creating a better future for the actions that ... [Inaudible.]

... I thank you. [[Time expired.]

Mr P A VAN STADEN: Hon Chairperson, the most significant aspects of human development are education, a healthy life and resources. It also describes as the process of enlarging people’s freedoms and opportunities and improving their well- being. These are the most important aspects in human development.

*Afrikaans*:

Hoe kan ons egter vir ons kinders in hierdie land ’n beter toekoms skep deur middel van menslike ontwikkeling en gesondheidsvoorsiening? Hoe kan ons hierdie toekoms skep as

die regering bly vorendag kom met ANC-beleidstukke, wat die toekoms van ons kinders in die wiele ry?

Ek verwys spesifiek na die Covid-19-inperkings wat ’n geweldige stremming op ons kinders se onderwys en opvoeding geplaas het. Die sielkundige uitwerking en impak wat dit op hierdie land se kinders gehad het, asook die feit dat kinders nie voldoende toegang tot staatshospitale en voldoende gesondheidsorg gedurende hierdie tydperk gehad het nie, was enorm. Ons praat nie eers te van miljoene arm kinders, wat honger moes gaan slaap het, omrede hul nie skool kon bywoon, waar hul daagliks deur middel van skoolvoedingskemas gevoed word nie. Dit is maar enkele van die negatiewe uitwerkings, wat die inperkings op kinders se welstand gehad het.

Die omstrede Onderwyswetsontwerp, die Bela wetsontwerp, is ook op die tafel. Die Minister van Basiese Onderwys het dit van stapel gestuur. Daarmee word beoog om onderwys te sentraliseer. Dit het sodoende tot gevolg dat kinders nie ’n keuse kan uitoefen oor die taal waarin hulle kan skoolgaan nie, maar as te ware gedwing word om onder ir ANC-beleid gebuk te gaan. Daar is regstellende aksie waar kinders nie medies kan gaan studeer nie, omdat sy of haar velkleur nie voldoen

aan die standaarde van die regering se beleid nie, al het hy of sy die beste in hul matriekjaar gevaar.

Dan sit ons ook met die Nasionale Gesondheidsversekering- wetsontwerp wat dit ten doel het om alle gesondheidsdienste in die land te nasionaliseer en sodoende tot gevolg gaan hê dat die openbare en private gesondheidsektor so afgewater gaan word en alle mag in die hande van ’n Minister gaan plaas, dat ons kinders nie hul grondwetlike reg sal kan uitoefen, om gesondheidsdienste van uitstaande gehalte te ontvang nie.

In ons staatshospitale is dit duidelik dat hierdie reg hul alreeds ontneem word. Daar is onlangs berig is dat 178 000 kinders, die afgelope dekade tussen die ouderdom van 0-5 jaar gesterf het, weens matige en ernstige akute wanvoeding en weens longontsteking en diarree, asook ander onnatuurlike oorsake.

Weens die haglike toestande van ons staatshospitale loop alle pasiënte die risiko van infeksie in hierdie fasiliteite. Dit is skrikwekkend.

Met al hierdie in ag geneem, ontstaan die vraag hoe gaan ons ’n beter toekoms vir die land se kinders skep onder ’n ANC-

regering? Ons kan nie. Ons kan dit slegs doen as die ANC nie meer aan die stuur van die land is nie en wanneer die regering nie meer inmeng by kinders se grondwetlike reg om voldoende onderwys en gesondheidsdienste nie en rasdiskriminerende wette nie op die wetboeke geplaas word wat kinders se lewens en toekomsdrome drasties inperk en vernietig nie.

Ons is besig om af te stuur op die kweek van ’n chaotiese samelewing - ’n samelewing sonder waardes en respek vir ander; ’n samelewing waar die regering nie hierdie waardes en respek toepas nie en landsburgers doodeenvoudig net dwing om hul ondeurdagte beleidsrigtings te aanvaar, ’n samelewing waar die regering geen leierskap toon nie, maar soos diktators optree; ’n samelewing waar kinders geen positiewe toekoms meer kan betree nie en al hul drome vertrap word deur ’n selfsugtige regering, wat net in sy eie belang optree.

Ons kan dit slegs keer deur hierdie regering uit die kussings te lig by die stembus volgende jaar, waar ’n verantwoordelike en verantwoordbare regering tot stand gebring kan word, om ’n blink toekoms vir die kinders van Suid-Afrika te skep. Ons soek ’n toekoms van vryhede, geleenthede en welvaart. Dit is tyd om op te tree in belang van ons kinders.

*English*:

I just want to say to the hon Gela, it is your premier in the province of Gauteng Mr Panyaza Lesufi that has start the budget of social services so drastically but for children who are in children’s home stand the chance to go and live from the streets. Thank you very much, Chairperson.

Mr S M JAFTA: Hon Chair, there are at least four questions we need to preface this discussion on. Are children at the infancy and child development stages equipped with skills necessary to enter the primary and secondary schooling system? Is human development infusing in our primary schooling system? Are children empowered to free their potential through modern and technical impacting of skills? And are children empowered to make health wise decision? These are important questions, hon Chair. We must confront them head on. The rate of teenage pregnancy and child-headed household is a nagging nightmare in our country. This has the potential to erode the natural development of children who are less resourceful and emotionally equipped to stand for themselves.

Hon members, the extend of young children leaving the school system is a risk for disaster. State has therefore to look at Grade 9 as the exit point. This proposal first appeared in our

manifesto in 2019 and was later adopted by the Minister of Basic Education.

The use of contraceptives must be hammered throughout so that girl children are empowered to independently made decision correspond to their reproductive right. Part of freeing the potential of children is to involve them in sports.

Recreational facilities in schools and outside the classroom must be common place in our communities.

Hon Chair, young children with the urge to invent technological devices must have access to training and funding. Social upliftment grants must be introduced and the young children must be taught on how to cultivate skills in agriculture, agro-processing and so on.

The human development on children also means exposing children to such basic things crafting of contracts positional law in training on basic business skills.

We therefore need a collaborative effort to free the potential of young children and contribute towards their development. I thank you.

Mr D M STOCK: Hon House Chairperson, the South African Constitution remains one of the key custodians of human rights, and in particular the children’s rights in our country’s democracy. The rights that are attributed to children are inscribed in section 28 which gives children the rights to a name, citizenships and also some form of care.

Children are through this afforded the right to food and shelter, protection from all forms of abuse including neglect to a particular extent. In South Africa no child should work when under age or do work that will interfere with his or her education or development. South Africa was ranked in the Southern African Development Community, SADC, region as the country with the third lowest population below the age of 15 years with approximately about 28,8% of this population being below the age of 15 in 2019. Compared to the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, Brics, countries in 2019, South Africa had the highest percentage of youth below 15 years of age.

Considering that today’s debate’s focuses on looking through how we can foster a better future for children to human development and health provision, I will focus mostly around the need to prioritise both access and protection of the rights of children for transformation and sustainable

development. As a point of departure it is important that we acknowledge that the situation of children, and mostly African children, remains critical due to the unique factors of the socioeconomic, cultural, traditional and developmental circumstances. We also need to note that natural disasters, violence in some communities, exploitation and hunger accounts on the child’s physical and mental immaturity. Some of these special needs which the children have are actually linked to safeguard and care that are critical for the human transformation in creating a sustainable environment that children can properly grow.

As a country we are doing very well in strengthening the meaningful child participation. These are useful guidelines and framework for child participation. These are also to a larger extent the beginning to yield possible results as South Africa became the first country in the history of the Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour to have children participating. Our children were vocal in telling the world how child labour delayed their progress in their development and how it was contributing to their unsustainable development.

We have also institutionalised the Children’s Parliament where Ministers with their different portfolios attend to the Children’s Parliament to listen and to respond to the recommendations from the children on key issues of service delivery to the extent that these children are affected. This Parliament plays a very important role in enriching our democratic institutions as there is direct dialogue between the Ministers and also the children.

We are also encouraged that South Africa now has the world’s biggest social security system, which is about 42% of the children aged from the age group of from 0 to 17 years. We are both money metric and multidimensionality poor. High rates of poverty were found among children living in the rural areas with about 88,4%, followed by those living in nonmetropolitan areas at about 73,7%. While relatively low percentage at 39,6% of the children residing in metros were found to be multidimensional poor. It is for this reason that our government has a social protection system which provide as a safety net to paying over 13 million social grants to beneficiaries on behalf of our ordinary children. Those who argue against the grants do so from a position of privilege and disconnected to the lived reality of our children and to a large extent these are the doomsayers who are continuing to

enjoy the privileges of the minority since the inception of the country from a few or a number of years. They continue to enjoy these privileges and they will never be able to live to the reality to see some of the challenges that our children are encountering on a daily basis. They will also, for their own convenience, turn a blind eye and create an impression that the ANC-led government through its different departments, through its interventions, through its policies, is not doing anything. We want to challenge all those hon members and say to them they must never be inconvenienced for the truth and they must tell it as it is. Where there are challenges we have never shied away from raising those challenges, and where there are a number of interventions those interventions have been addressed to improve the ordinary lives of our ordinary people.

Whilst improved access to health and other social services can play a role in this, it also requires the changes in the households practices such as increased exclusive breast feeding, improved complementary feeding and more quality interaction between young children and other household members. Social services have a role to play in encouraging and supporting these behaviours and more integrated efforts amongst departments is needed for this.

It is also important to highlight that while we are making these investments and interventions, we need to give extra caution that children will not fall through the cracks throughout our system. Herein we are referring to low access rates reported for children in rural areas as well as children with disabilities. There are still young people across our country that are not empowered and are struggling to put together a basic existence. We must recall that Aspiration 4 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child stresses that every child survives and has a healthy childhood. Aspiration 5 as well states that every child grows up well-nourished and with access to the basic necessities of life. We are not totally free until the most vulnerable in society, namely, women and our children are free. In this regard we need to develop and strengthen social compact driven by the public and the private sector as the civil society and organised labour to ensure that the integration of children across all strategic sectors of society especially to ensure that they are free and to the best of their abilities they can also participate in the meaningful contributions throughout the economy.

In conclusion, we should bear in mind that one of the legacies of apartheid in our country is the dismantling of our

communities and our families. However, the process of rebuilding and brining about social cohesion is underway. Whilst complex it is also critical not only about the building of a prosperous nation but also in the shaping of the future of our children and the youth who would soon become the leaders of our nation. It is for this reason that we have prioritised the foster care legislative changes. Having said this our communities and family units have a critical role in both safeguarding the rights of our children as well as ensuring that government interventions to the social wage and health services among others contribute effectively to the creating a better, more just and a prosperous future for our children.

As the ANC we remain committed to the children’s development and reaffirm our commitment through the social policies and interventions through a number of programmes in the social development. We also need to reaffirm the need to strengthen the measures that we put in place to keep the children of our nation at the top of our national agenda by prioritising the development and transformation of the experiences of the children of South Africa. Thank you very much, hon House Chairperson.

Ms A L A ABRAHAMS: Chairperson, families depend on state support to raise their children. Nurturing them into productive members of society is essential to building the capacity of the state. Through the Constitution and the Children’s Act, the state has an obligation to protect and provide for children when families are unable to do so. Both family and state have a role and responsibility to create a better future for children and protecting them as we commemorate the Child Protection Month. For example, the family has a responsibility to register a baby’s birth. The state has a responsibility to provide a functional Home Affairs system. The family is obliged by law to enrol their child in a school. The state has a responsibility to support vulnerable children with free schooling, meals and quality education.

If the family is unable to support the child, they must approach the SA Social Security Agency, Sassa, and complete the necessary forms for a child support grant. The state has a responsibility to provide an efficient service and pay the grant.

Functional families, health facilities and education equals a better future. However, where the above are dysfunctional and

fragile with broken state services, the combination will fail children. Unfortunately, in South Africa, both the family and the state are compromised, failing the vulnerable children of this nation. I will give just two painful examples. Last year, a nongovernmental organisation, NGO, came across an eight- year-old crystal meth addict from Eldorado Park where the child’s mother, who was a sex worker, indicated it was easier for her to buy him a bag of meth for R50 a day than to feed him. Last week, a teenage mother from Mphego village was arrested for murdering her two-year-old child and dumping his body in a pit toilet. She was released back into her family’s care as she is eight months pregnant and the family has yet to open a case of statutory rape despite knowing the identity of the man. These are examples we are all too familiar with.

But there is hope for our children. This hope is validated by the mass semigration to the DA governed Western Cape as many families seek a better life and future for their children.

Parents have a higher chance of securing employment in the Western Cape and therefore able to provide for their families with independence and dignity. An educated child is more likely to be able to support themselves in the future breaking the cycle of poverty. That is why the Western Cape Rapid

School Build project is building more schools than ever before. It has already completed two junior high schools in previously disadvantaged areas of Atlantis built in just 65 days and also in Delft.

The DA cares about your health and while hospitals in other provinces battle to provide the basic necessities such as food. The Western Cape government over the next 12 months will install hybrid inverters in every rural primary health care facility over two phases and solar panels at 15 hospitals to shield patients from load shedding.

Statics SA as well as the general household survey confirmed the Western Cape as the top performing province in terms of service delivery. Compared to other provinces, residents in the Western Cape have a better quality of life that is supported by an efficient and clean government.

The DA has proven time and time again that where it governs, it is committed to improving people’s lives through better service delivery which is evident in the City of Cape Town’s recently announced three-year infrastructure budget which is bigger than Jo’burg and Durban metros combined. Everything the DA does is for the betterment of your family, your children

and the future of this country. And with your help in the 2024 national and provincial elections we can bring the DA competence and success to the whole of South Africa. I thank you.

Mr B B NODADA: House Chairperson, South Africa’s children are suffering – not because their parents are failures – but because this ANC government has made it impossible for poor and vulnerable citizens to rise above their circumstances, despite their best efforts. So an ANC debate on creating a better future for children through human development and health provision, is no doubt to sell hogwash. Fortunately, South Africans are not stupid and see through the 30 years of ANC oppression and lies that has failed to develop the children of this country. Instead, confiding them to a life of poverty, hunger and unemployment.

The truth is always revealed. Like when KwaZulu-Natal failed to provide meals for millions of hungry learners as part of the National School Nutrition Programme. In that province alone, more than 2,4 million leaners are depended on the programme. Perhaps the only guaranteed meal for many of those children. This was clearly not considered when the KwaZulu- Natal Department of Basic Education decided to centralise the

school nutrition programme. A contract that is now being probed by the Special Investigating Unit. Should there be cadre deployment corruption with this tender, the DA will expect heads to roll.

Hon Mbinqo-Gigaba, Nelson Mandela’s vision of children not being hungry, has been betrayed by this ANC government.

Developing young humans is about more than nutrition though. It’s also about environment, and most of the country’s learning environment is atrocious in our schools.

In 2011, the Accelerated Schools Infrastructure Delivery Initiative, ASIDI programme was launched to eradicate unsafe school infrastructure by 2016. Then, Sanitation Appropriate for Education, SAFE was launched to eradicate pit toilets by 2020, yet there are still over 5000 schools with pit toilets that are functional to date. Had the department kept its promise to eradicate these pit toilet and unsafe infrastructure in their deadlines, four-year-old Langalam Viki might still be alive today. That’s why the DA - we are going to court - to eradicate unsafe infrastructure in schools.

Infrastructure is so trivial to this ANC government that the Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga had to return R412 million because

they failed to spend their school infrastructure grants. Yet on the other hand, the Western Cape government has however broken the mould with the Rapid School Build programme, which hon Abrahams referred to. Building a school in 65 days. Yes, you heard me correctly, 65 days.

Government must take opportunity and learn from these successes that the Western Cape has achieved. How are learners expected to develop and learn when their schools are unsafe and undignified? Eighty-two percent of our grade 4 children can’t read for meaning. There are 4,2 million youth and not in education, employment and training. Seven in every 10 young people are unemployed because of this government. Yet, there are still zero allocated to reading in the budget of Basic Education. Yet, there are double number of children in the Western Cape that can read for meaning.

The ANC has failed to develop generations of our children. It is now time to vote these oppressors out in 2024 and vote for the DA moonshot pact government, to create a pathway out of poverty and unemployment into opportunity with an education system that truly develops our children for a prosperous future. I thank you, Chair.

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms R M M Lesoma): Thank you. Before I recognise hon Mbinqo-Gigaba, hon members, I urge you that when you debate, don’t make accusations that you will not necessarily be prepared to make a substantive motion. It was made earlier on, it’s just that I got delayed to see that and to advice on that. I thought I need to caution you. Also members, if possible, if you are not going to be debating, it is just courtesy to indicate so that we know and we can move smoothly. Other than that, I am recognising hon Mbinqo-Gigaba to close the debate. Over to you, Ma'am.

Ms B P MBINQO-GIGABA: Chair, let me thank everybody that has participated in the debate. It is safe to say that one must probably use also this opportunity to say that the public has been made an issue as part of this debate, and are continuing this weekend. We are starting in Gauteng tomorrow and we are going to continue and finish them as planned. We are not shaken as believe as the ANC that the amendment on the Bill will better the future of a child in our schools.

As we are closing, we would want to reflect by saying that the social challenges affecting our society such as gender-based violence and femicide and patriarchal practice require socialisation at a young age. The values and principles that

our children should be taught in their homes, schools and religious environment, should be underpinned by the values of our Constitution. The realisation of the vision of the Constitution requires citizenry that understands their rights and responsibilities. National consciousness is very critical.

We need to teach a boy child to respect and to view a girl child as an equal. We must teach a boy child to respect the girl child. As society, we also have a duty to protect a girl child who is confronted with various threats which require awareness to a girl child and broader society. The safety of a girl child should concern us as this will impact their freedom to realise their potential. The greatest gift of our democracy can realise its empowerment for self-liberation. We should prepare our children for the change in the world.

Today’s debate has enable a critical reflection on the status of the children and the challenges we still need to confront as society. Our debate also affirmed that the democratic dispensation has brought about better conditions for our children. As was argued by hon Stock, our family unit require focus as a nation for it constitute the most basic unit of our society. Without building cordial family relations, we weaken our social protection and the wellbeing of our children. Our

democratic dispensation has broken the cycle of poverty through empowering children in all households. Education is no longer a privilege.

The horizon of the future of our children is filled with opportunities. We have reflected on the dire circumstances of the children in rural areas, and this requires monopolisation as representatives of the people. Working with various partners to ensure we build the strongest base for human development. To ensuring that children receive sufficient healthcare in the first 1000 days and that all children below the age of five receive early learning. We must continue to strengthen the basic education system which nationally, 87,6% of children above the age of five attended primary or secondary schools. This also tells us that tackling the programme of dropouts is critical at the grade R level and between the grade 10 and 12. Through the current Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill, the Bill proposes to increase accountability of school management teams to trace and follow up learners who do not return to schools. This is to ensure that all learners are in schools as required by the law.

As hon Gela has stated that it is also the duty of women - young and old – to ensure they take appropriate prenatal care

and ensure all preventive measures are taken to eradicate child mortality due to natural causes. Middle and adolescent age is another important phase in childhood, wherein children are exposed to various social ills such as drugs which are paddled in all our communities, and alcohol which is accessible to persons below the age of 18, despite prohibition by the law.

During this phase of childhood, children are exposed to sexual activities which bring about risk of diseases. For example,

1 300 adolescent girls and young women were infected with HIV in the country every week. This is a social matter which requires the nation. We must tighten our societal efforts to protect a girl child and children broadly. Our vison and plan as the ANC is to transform early childhood development in order to create an environment wherein our children succeeded and have equal opportunities.

The Department of Basic Education is currently reviewing the institutional structure of Early Childhood Development, ECD delivery. To prepare children for the changing world of technology, the department has piloted coding and robotics in all provinces to ensure that learners are ready for the world of artificial intelligence in the fourth revolution. With

time, our children should learn technological skills at an early age. To enhance our investment infrastructure and eradicate inappropriate structure is on course and is on progress.

As entailed in our Freedom Charter, we must open doors of learning, and we have done that. The other objective of the Freedom Charter is to create equal opportunities for all and through our investment in children. We empower them for equal opportunities and not on the basis of race, class or gender. As the ANC, we will continue to sustain the legacy of Nelson Mandela of placing children and education in the centre of our development and of transformation. Thank you very much, Chair.

Debate concluded.

# ESTABLISHMENT OF AN AD HOC COMMITTEE IN TERMS OF RULE 253(1)(a) TO EXERCISE OVERSIGHT OVER THE NEW MNISTER OF ELECTRICITY AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OFFICE OF MINISTER RAMAKGOPA’S PROGRAMME OF ACTION

(Draft Resolution)

Mr K J MILEHAM: House Chairperson, there should be no doubt in the mind of anyone in this Chamber that the single biggest threat to South Africa’s economy, to the lives and livelihoods of our people, is no longer the COVID pandemic, but rather the ongoing inability of this government to ensure a stable, reliable supply of electricity.

By now we are all well aware of the causes of the problem - corruption, mismanagement, cadre deployment, policy incoherence – all of which would be much more manageable if Parliament was effective in its oversight function. Without electricity our hospitals cannot function, our businesses cannot operate, and our homes cannot be lit or heated. It is therefore critical that we ensure that the Minister of Electricity is held to the highest standards of accountability and oversight.

The importance of accountability and oversight cannot be overstated. It is what separates a functioning democracy from a failed state. It ensures that those in positions of power are held to account for their actions, and that they are answerable to the people they serve.

The Constitution of South Africa establishes a system of separation of powers, which means that the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government operate independently of each other. It goes further to provide for accountability and oversight of the executive by the legislature. Indeed, it is of such importance, that it is enshrined in our Constitution in sections 55, 56 and 92.

Section 92 of the Constitution provides that Cabinet members are accountable collectively and individually to Parliament for the exercise of their powers and the performance of their functions. Members of the executive, including the President, Ministers and Deputy Ministers, are all accountable to the National Assembly and its committees.

The Constitution further provides for the establishment of parliamentary committees to exercise oversight over the executive. Section 55 of the Constitution stipulates that the National Assembly must provide for mechanisms to ensure that all organs of state, government departments and members of the executive are accountable to it ... let me repeat that, ensure that all organs of state, government departments and members of the executive are accountable to it, and must maintain

oversight of the exercise of executive authority, including the implementation of legislation.

How do we do this? How do we ensure that the Minister of Electricity is held to account for his actions and decisions? How do we measure his performance against key milestones and objectives, especially as there is currently no parliamentary oversight over the Presidency, or members of Cabinet serving in the President’s Office?

The answer lies in the establishment of an ad hoc parliamentary committee. Such a committee would have the power

– in terms of section 56 of the Constitution - to summon the Minister of Electricity to appear before it and answer questions about his programme of action. It would also have the power to call expert witnesses and other stakeholders to provide evidence and input. The committee would be tasked with ensuring that he is acting in the best interests of the country and its citizens. It would provide a forum for public participation, for the people of South Africa to share their views and concerns about the electricity sector and the Minister’s performance or lack thereof.

It is also worth noting that establishing an ad hoc parliamentary committee is not a new or radical concept. It has been used before in South Africa, and in other democracies around the world, to provide oversight and accountability of government officials. In fact, this Parliament has had several such committees in the past, including the ad hoc committee into the SABC Board, the ad hoc committee on the funding of political parties and the ad hoc committee on amending section

25 of the Constitution. It requires no additional research to implement because we have done it before. It is, in fact, no different from establishing a new portfolio committee, something we have done numerous times in the past.

Most telling, however, is the Zondo Commission of Inquiry’s final report on state capture, in which Chief Justice Zondo highlights the failures of Parliament in holding the executive accountable. The report called for urgent reforms to strengthen parliamentary oversight, enhance transparency and accountability, protect whistle blowers, and prevent conflicts of interest. The report urged Parliament to create a committee to oversee the Presidency and to review its own rules and procedures to ensure effective oversight. This motion seeks to do exactly that with specific reference to the Minister of Electricity.

The findings of the Zondo Commission have shown that there were numerous instances where government officials acted outside the law and in their own self-interest. The President and his cabinet must be held accountable for these actions, and Parliament must play a crucial role in ensuring that this happens.

As Members of Parliament, we have a responsibility to carry out effective parliamentary oversight over the presidency and the executive. We must work to ensure that Parliament has the necessary resources and expertise to carry out this oversight, and that it is conducted in a nonpartisan and impartial manner.

South Africa cannot afford another 15 years of rolling blackouts simply because we, as Parliament, have failed in our constitutional obligations. I therefore call on all members of the National Assembly to prioritise parliamentary oversight and to work together to ensure that the executive are held accountable for their actions, through the establishment of an ad hoc committee to oversee the function and role of the Minister of Electricity. Let us build a strong, transparent, and accountable democracy - one that serves the people of

South Africa and upholds the principles of good governance and the rule of law. Thank you.

Ms R M M LESOMA: Hon Chairperson and hon members, ordinarily the National Assembly will not respond to any reconfiguration of the executive by the President. He is required in terms of its constitutional oversight function to consider the implications of such reconfiguration on the existing oversight structures. I repeat, existing oversight structures and whether any change may be required. The sponsor of this motion has done that.

His party has come to a conclusion that in terms of Rule 253 an ad hoc committee to oversee the new Minister of Electricity is required. However, what the sponsor of this motion has not opted to do in terms of the National Assembly Rule 225, is to use the Rules Committee acting in concurrence with the Speaker to propose the establishment of a portfolio committee on the Minister of Electricity. Clearly, the sponsor and his party recognised that there is a unique situation and they have opted to use Rule 253.

The last comprehensive review, hon members and hon Chair, of the National Assembly Rules took place in 2016, seven years

ago. As we have been they are due for a review which is underway. Within such a review there is a need to close Rule

253. It only has two criteria currently as it stands; one, you may establish an ad hoc committee for the performance of specific task; two, the last comprehensive review of the National Asse ... Okay, two, you may or you must set timeframes to complete the task. What this allows for is that any party who believes there is a specific task that needs to be done and by a certain date may lodge a motion for the Order Paper in the hope that the resolution of the House will concur and they will have an ad hoc committee for the objective that they want.

This is precisely, hon House Chair, why you hear among other particular political parties’ continuous calls for an ad hoc committee for a range of matters. For anything they need an ad hoc committee, it is raining you need an ad hoc committee. The majority view has often been to remind such applicants that we have committees of oversight whose powers and functions are there to do the work and report to the House. So, a review of Rule 253 need to be seriously considered in order to introduce a criterion that would be well understood and be explicit to all so that we have some rational and logic when we are called

to debate a motion or motions on the establishment of the ad hoc committee.

We welcome the opportunity to debate, which we really appreciate. It gives us as the ANC, an opportunity to explain in what situation do the ad hoc committee is established and in what situation - after the reconfiguration - the committee or the portfolio committees are established. In applying rational and logic to this motion we need to ask ourselves the question: what is that the President had in mind on 06 March 2023, when he announced the Minister for Electricity? The announcement was made in the context that just over one year remains in the 6th-Term Administration and that the changes of 06 March, were not about overwhelming overhauling the national executive, but rather, to direct government more effectively towards the areas that require urgent, close and decisive action.

The Minister for Electricity’s task is to deal with the immediate crisis of load shedding. A crisis that was addressed in the February 2023 state of the nation address. Our most immediate task is to dramatically reduce the severity of load shedding during 2023-24. The Minister of Electricity will focus on the full and urgent implementation of the Energy

Action Plan that has been agreed between government, Eskom and other stakeholders. The primary task of the Minister of Electricity is to significantly reduce the severity of frequency of load shedding as a matter of urgency and effectively oversee the electricity crisis response.

The Minister has the political responsibility, authority and control over all critical aspects of the Energy Action Plan. So, in the context of this motion, what makes the Minister of Electricity different from other Ministers? So that we can take an informed decision as Parliament and South Africans also are well informed that we don’t just object for the sake of objecting. By the way of structure, it is very different. It has no department unlike other Ministries; it has no staff unlike other departments; instead, it makes use of the personnel in the presidency who are part of the National Electricity Crisis Team.

By the way, it doesn’t have any budget. That makes it different. It has no budget and it relies on the administration budget of the presidency, which is Vote 1. It does not have a strategic 5-year plan but rather it is an immediate programme over the next two years or less than two years. Very short term in nature. I am sure all of us will

agree with that because the end of the term is next year. It does not have an annual performance plan like all other departments but it is a programme within the presidency.

Parliament requires accountability and there is no party in this House who does not want accountability not just to be said but to be seen being done as well.

In the context of the Minister of Electricity, accountability takes place under the state of the nation address debate; quarterly questions to the President; quarterly questions to the Deputy President; regular reports from the presidency; and the debate on Vote 1 in terms of the Budget Vote debate. In respect of the stand-alone accounting from the Minister of Electricity, he answers questions once in a term under the Economic Cluster of Ministers, as well as debate on this ministerial statements that he will in the immediate future hopefully. Less than seven points of accountability that I’ve just articulated.

Hon members, that takes place in the Parliament to account for the programme that the Minister of Electricity has responsibility for under the presidency. This is therefore, answers the misleading statement under clause three of today’s motion before the House which states, I quote: “It is

impossible for the Assembly to exercise its constitutional mandate oversight responsibility over Minister Ramokgopa and the office he heads” We have demonstrated above that there are no less than seven opportunities for oversight to happen. Many of which are on the quarterly basis.

Clause four of the motion it tries to suggest that the Minister of Electricity has a duty to account to the Assembly on the work of his Ministry and by implications unless there is an ad hoc committee then he is not accounting. The sponsor of this motion is behind the times and he must just need to catch up and his party. There were two questions to the Minister of Electricity in the Order Paper yesterday, 03 May 2023, under the Economic Cluster. So, any thought that he cannot account under what currently exists for accountability is misplaced and very disingenuous. Clause 5 of the motion gives it all away. It calls for combined oversight over the Minister of Minerals and Energy, the Minister of Public Enterprises and the Minister of Electricity in an ad hoc committee.

An enormous of an ad hoc committee which is huge and which has never been seen and displays an oversight where there would be no decision taken. Also the other committees that have their

own standalone portfolio committees that they account under. The work of the Minister of Electricity with the Minister of Public Enterprises and the Minister of Minerals and Energy is co-ordination around a plan that the executive has agreed and has been made public. It means the sponsor of the motion wants double oversight over the Minister of Minerals and Energy, the Minister of Public Enterprises, as well as the Minister of Electricity besides the fact that they report to their respective committees.

Clause 6(b) in terms of specifying the task of the ad hoc committee states that, the ad hoc committee must monitor and oversee the budget ... [Inaudible.] ... of the new Ministry. The new Ministry does not have a budget, I repeat, and it does not have a 5-year plan. So, the motion is calling for establishment of an ad hoc committee on something that does not exist. The examples that the hon member have made is not the same as this in terms of the facts.

The sponsor calls for the cumbersome 25-member ad hoc committee ... [Inaudible.] ... Of course, to coincide with this motion for consideration by the National Assembly as we have drawn our customs to this. When we have to take decisions, sensation is generated from social platforms to

deliberately create a hype and release untested claims designed to create maximum damage to the governing party, government and its executives. This time it comes in a form of an off the shelf nongovernmental organisation, NGO, whose name exposes what they want in future.

In their claims they talk about a Bill of R37 million a year for a new Minister with no evidence being put forward. They say that of the R37 million, the highest cost of the taxpayers goes to the salaries of the Minister and his deputy, which he doesn’t have and the respective offices, which he doesn’t have because it is under the presidency. They also further said that there is R17,8 million. There is no Deputy Minister of Electricity. They even went on to talk about very important people, VIP, protection and luxurious cars. They went on to claim that the Minister will get free water and electricity, which even hon members spoke to. They have put forward a financial figure for that which scientifically that is not substantiated.

So, it is just a coincidence that at the same time as the call for the ad hoc committee on the Minister of Electricity, we get such misleading information being circulated on the media. You know better, probably just the light of the DA. The

reality is that the responsibility of the state with regard to energy transfer transmission outweighs that of the private sector. The ANC will not support the establishment of the ad hoc committee on the Minister of Electricity as the case for it has not been made. There remain more than adequate parliamentary oversights which I have stated above, which are almost seven or more than that oversight mechanism in place to conduct oversight over the Minister of Electricity.

Hon House Chair, instead, we should strengthen the oversight existing structures for such oversight and ensure that this takes place on a regular basis. Duplication oversight is not helpful and deviates away from the essence of ensuring systematic, well known and working systems of oversight are conducted. Thank you, hon Chair. We don’t support the establishment of the ad hoc committee. The systems of oversight that we have in Parliament are adequate. Thank you very much, hon Chair and members.

Ms S J GRAHAM: Chairperson, I do not need to tell you about load shedding and how it impacts on our lives. I do not need to illustrate how according to reports 66% of township businesses have had to cut jobs due to load shedding with more than 60% of these same businesses being unable to operate at

all when power outages hit. The SA Reserve Bank has indicated that Stage 3 to Stage 6 power cuts are negatively impacting the economy by between R204 and R899 million per day, respectively.

Large retailers like Shoprite are spending an additional

R93 million per month on diesel in order to continue trading during load shedding. It is inevitable that these costs will be passed onto the already overburdened and cash-strapped consumers. And what about health care facilities where it is alleged that healthcare workers are being forced to choose which patients to help because load shedding makes it impossible to help everyone? Where vaccines are being stored in cooler boxes and generators are either failing or can only run certain pieces of equipment, leaving patients waiting hours for medical attention.

I do not have to remind you, Chairperson, of the children trying to study for exams across the country, knowing that their only way out of poverty is through education, but being forced to lose precious learning time to hours of darkness.

We do not need to hear another litany of sob stories about how our people are going days and weeks without water in rural

areas because 12 hours a day of power in 3 or 4 hour increments are not enough to fill reservoirs. We all know these stories. This is our lived reality. This is South Africa after 29 years of ANC-led governance.

Towards the middle of last year, load shedding hit unprecedented levels. President Ramaphosa, in a rare public appearance, addressed the nation on the severity of the crisis. So shocked was he that he skipped task team level entirely and went directly to the establishment of a committee. Cue the National Energy Crisis Committee or Necom. The mandate of Necom, according to the Energy Action Plan, drafted in August of 2022, is to do “whatever it takes to achieve energy security”. The document goes further to state that:

By applying laser focus to a limited number of high-impact interventions, and by acting with urgency and decisiveness, we can end load shedding.

Sounds promising. In January of this year, 6 months after its establishment, Necom assured us that the committee was on track to address load shedding and the energy crisis. While I do not want to state the obvious here, it is worth noting that

there have been only two days without load shedding this entire year so far, with 91 days having had between Stage 4 and Stage 6 blackouts. By way of comparison, before the establishment of Necom, we experienced only 28 days of load shedding in total over the same period in 2022. You can draw your own conclusions.

Rather than admit that the major contributing factors to the energy crisis are inter alia corruption, cadre deployment and mismanagement, President Ramaphosa did what any self- respecting billionaire President would do – he threw money at the problem. Around R30-odd million a year’s worth of taxpayer’s money in the guise of a Minister of Electricity.

In his statement on the appointment of Minister Ramokgopa in March, the President outlined his vision of the role that the Minister of Electricity would play in resolving the electricity crisis. First and foremost, the new Minister has been tasked with reducing both the severity and frequency of load shedding as a matter of urgency. Just short of two months into his tenure, I can say with absolute assurance that he has accomplished neither. Instead, his appointment has been characterized by political infighting, a complete lack of coherence with respect to his role, functions and authority

and a whole lot of posturing while power outages continue unabated.

Tasked by President Ramaphosa with the political responsibility, authority and control over the Energy Action Plan, Minister Ramokgopa has a daunting task. But this should not give rise to a lone wolf Minister, unencumbered by any oversight or accountability mechanism, operating outside the bounds of Parliamentary or Constitutional constraints.

Instead, given the very serious and urgent nature of his responsibilities, it is imperative that the Minister of Electricity be required to report to an ad hoc committee established by this House. In this way, Parliament can ensure that finding solutions to the energy crisis is done in a transparent, accountable manner and that the proper checks and balances are in place.

This ad hoc committee would serve for the duration of the tenure of the Minister of Electricity, who will serve until such time as the energy crisis has been averted. The mandate of the committee, as agreed to by this House, would assist in consolidating the expected outcomes of the Minister’s position by providing the parameters within which the committee would provide oversight and evaluation. Given that we are still

waiting for clarity on the actual role of the Minister, the ad hoc committee would be an invaluable part of transparency, oversight and finding solutions to the energy crisis.

Furthermore, the interests of all South Africans would be represented through the Members of Parliament who serve on the ad hoc committee. Every person in this country has a vested interest in the success of the Minister. It is our duty as Parliament to ensure that the Minister achieves his mandate honestly and transparently and not through further erosion of our democratic principles because the in the ANC-led government are more concerned with protecting those intent on destroying our country than solving the crisis. Or because public representatives are too lazy to do the work they were elected to do. Let us do our duty and establish this ad hoc committee. Let us be part of the solution to the energy crisis and not be the enablers of those hell-bent on keeping us in the dark. We request that this motion be supported. I thank you.

Ms P MADOKWE: House Chairperson, we greet the EFF president, Commander-in-chief, Julius Malema, EFF’s members of the central command team, EFF’s Members of Parliament and fellow South Africans. Today, we stand before you to discuss the

establishment of the ad hoc committee under Rule 235(1) a. This committee is intended to exercise oversight over the newly appointed Minister of Electricity ... [Inaudible.] 14:59 of the Minister’s programme. As the EFF, we expressed our critical view on this appointment considering it unnecessarily and reflective of the fragmentation within the current government.

The creation of the Minister of Electricity position seems like an afterthought without any clear or coherent programme. His tasks are created as they go. Today, we are told, for example that the Minister is practically a Minister of a special kind and he will be there roughly for two years. Why establish an entire Ministry just to do oversight over the President’s committee? The President of the ANC established numerous similar redundant advisory committees, Ministers and Deputy Ministers during his tenure.

These ever growing bureaucracy will soon resemble a Cabinet on its own. This proliferation of positions has resulted in duplication and in some cases a breakdown in command within the Cabinet itself. The ANC President’s desire to transfer power to procure energy from the independent power producers, IPPs led to a public battle with the Minister of Mineral

Resources and Energy. The current state of affairs is characterised by confusion as Ministers with overlapping roles offer contradictory statements on load shedding.

We have always argued that solutions to the electricity crisis do not necessitate a new Ministerial appointment. In his short tenure, the Minister of Electricity has demonstrated competence in travelling, photo shoots and presentations in business in organised pro-privatisation events. Perhaps the President should consider reassigning the Minister to the position of Trade and Industry, Tourism or any field that involves sales and pitching instead of attempting to solve the complex energy crisis that requires a more serious approach.

The solutions to the energy crisis are evident and are often overlooked due to the inability to contribute to capital accumulation. These solutions include extending the life of coal power stations, building nuclear plants through a build operate transfer model, and implementing ship mounted floating power plants like the power ships, investing in state driven renewable power plants such as solar panels like the RDB houses with suitable battery storage capacity and establishing a state-led green industry.

Reviewing the ridiculously expensive the IPP contracts and making publicly available all the IPP contracts including their terms and conditions. AMFC, the state-owned mining company must be capacitated and be given priority to supply Eskom with high quality coal as opposed to be just a company that competes for tenders in Eskom. Establish a highly skilled team of engineers to address the load shedding and conduct research on energy security and energy infrastructure planning for the coming years, amongst others.

Why do we support the establishment of the ad hoc committee? We firmly believe that Parliament must focus on creating more substantive mechanisms to hold the Presidency, Ministers in the Presidency, advisory committees and convoys accountable. Let us concentrate our efforts on practical solutions and efficient government rather than adding unnecessary layers of bureaucracy.

We have also observed how one of the reasons energy crisis is far from over. It is because of these numerous layers bureaucracy and the allocation of Eskom related responsibilities and functions to different Ministries. The constant tug of war between the Ministers of Public Enterprises and of Mineral Resources and Energy has created

more problems than solutions for Eskom. The appointment of the Minister of Electricity has made the situation even worse.

There are now three Ministers vying for control of Eskom over bringing stability over the entity up from the previous two.

The EFF reiterates these positions that the issues with the South Africa’s energy supply are caused by those who want to destroy Eskom so that they can generate electricity privately for their own rapacious capitalist interests. The Minister of Electricity is just a dancing puppet used to hastily carry out this agenda and that for as long we have a current President in South Africa, we will move to stage 4, 6 and 10 until we allow the mutilation and privatisation of Eskom.

Furthermore, the EFF acknowledges that the proposed ad hoc committee’s role will be fundamental in these trying times but further calls for the oversight over the entire Presidency which has been creating councils, committees and Ministers that do not account to this Parliament but rather to a lawless President who is a law unto himself. In conclusion ...

*IsiXhosa*:

... sisatsho nangoku...

*English*:

...he must resign. Thank you hon House Chair.

Mr E M BUTHELEZI: Thank you very much, hon House Chair, transparency and accountability are the core values and enshrined in the Public Administration section of our Constitution. Therefore, the IFP is in full support of The establishment of the ad hoc committee as the omittance of such is unconstitutional. However, these oversight mechanisms have been rendered useless by the ruling party as it often evident that committees will exercise their oversight and provide recommendations that remain only on the pages where they are written while we optimistically called for an oversight committee, the harsh reality is that currently government treat these committees like a tick box exercise.

It’s not surprising, hon Chair, that the ANC is opposed to this committee because it’s totally against transparency and accountability. Proof to this is that the same ANC muzzled the establishment of an ad hoc committee aimed at uncovering the wrong doings in the same entity Eskom typically for a party led by compromised leaders with zero sense of self- contradiction. Over the past few years, South Africa has been in the grip of its worst severe energy crisis with the load

shedding progressively worsening. This means that the task at the end of electricity cannot be tackled in isolation.

Hon Chairperson, considering the fact that the budget for this comes from Vote 1 which does not have oversight committee components, compounds the problem even further and therefore necessitates the establishment of such a committee something that the IFP parliamentary leader Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi has been advocating for the longest of time.

Hon Chair, considering the character of the ANC and what hon Lesoma just argued now the IFP hopes that the Minister will be guided his integrity and honesty as he conducts his work because his Party the ANC has caused complete distrust when it comes to oversight, accountability and transparency. So, what becomes the most important thing to do is to get rid of the evil that is ruining our country which is the ruling party.

Let us not forget that just recently the same ANC was trying to exempt Eskom from complying with all laws and legislations designed to prevent fraud, corruption and thievery. If it was not for the opposition parties and South Africans putting pressure on the Minister of Finance, they would have continued. That on its own clearly shows that there is a danger here and we need such an ad hoc committee.

*IsiZulu*:

Kukhona okunuka santungwana, Sihlalo.

*English*:

The IFP supports the establishment of this committee. Thank you very much.

*Afrikaans:*

Dr W J BOSHOFF: Agb Huisvoorsitter ...

*English:*

... it is told that the British monarch of the 17th century, Elizabeth I proudly declared that she took a bath twice a year, whether she needed it or not. I won’t vouch for the truth of the story. What I do know, however, is that South Africa sometimes gets a new Minister in the Presidency, whether we need it or not.

Today, we even heard from hon Lesoma that the ministry does not exist, only the Minister or something like that. It is not that we regard electricity as unimportant. We even believe that the incumbent, Dr Sputla Ramakgopa can perform better than he did as Mayor of Tshwane, where he became famous for a

smart metre contract which was later overturned by a court of law.

We understand that the hon President is not one for rash decisions and if he can refrain from making one altogether, he finds it even better. Ministers in the Presidency can really assist in this regard. It is also a space in which one can truly keep your friends near and your enemies nearer.

*Afrikaans:*

So, laat niemand beweer dat die VF Plus sonder begrip vir die aanstelling van ’n Minister in die Presidensie vir Elektrisiteit is nie. Ons dink nie dis ’n slim plan nie, maar ons verstaan. Nogtans, staan die noodsaak tot deeglike oorsig. Een kommentator het opgemerk: “Die Parlement is wel deesdae die regering se skoothond, pleks van ‘n waghond, maar dis beter as géén hond.”

Ons praat vandag oor ’n voorgestelde ad hoc-komitee. ’n Vaste portefeuljekomitee oor die Presidensie is natuurlik, soos die VF Plus en ander opposisiepartye al herhaaldelik genoem het, noodsaaklik.

Die Presidensie se verantwoordelikhede brei uit, namate die President meer sake vind waaroor hy nie wil besluit nie, en steeds oefen die Speaker nie haar bevoegdheid uit om ’n portefeuljekomitee daarvoor in te stel nie.

Oor die redes kan ons net bespiegel. Is dit ’n kwessie van versuim, of is dit juis om sekere aktiwiteite teen oorsig te beskerm? Of dalk om die gebrek daaraan te versteek?

Dit is natuurlik ’n gevaarlike roete om te volg. Onder die huidige President is die ergste wat kan gebeur, niks. Maar, daar was al – en dit kan weer gebeur – ’n President wat graag besluite neem, mag uitoefen en sodoende, die staat kaap.

Omdat die Speaker hierdie verantwoordelikheid nie nakom nie, moet die Nasionale Vergadering intree. Dit het die bevoegdheid het om ’n ad hoc-komitee aan te stel, vir ‘n spesifieke taak en ’n spesifieke tyd, en dit verval wanneer die tyd verloop of die taak voltooi is.

Ons hou nie asem op dat die Minister van Elektrisiteit se taak binne die afsienbare toekoms afgehandel gaan word nie.

Eerstens, omdat niemand nog weet wat sy taak behels nie. Werskafbakening tussen Ministers en ’n besluit oor watter

departemente of dele daarvan aan die komitee verslag moet doen, sal die eerste taak wees, hoewel die agb Lesoma gesê het dat daar geen departemente en geen amptenare is wat verantwoording hoef te doen nie. Daaroor sal so ’n komitee ook moet praat.

Maar, daar is nog ’n rede hoekom ’n ad hoc-komitee dalk vanpas is. Hierdie regering se tyd verstryk volgende jaar, lank voor die kragkrisis opgelos sal wees en selfs voor die twee jaar waarvan ons vandag gehoor het waarvoor die Minister in die Presidensie aangestel is, verstryk het. Wanneer ’n veelpartykoalisie dan regering oorneem, sal hierdie pos afgeskaf word en dn sal die behoefte verval. Ek dank u.

*English*:

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Thank you, hon member. I am informed that hon Jafta is not on the virtual platform.

So, I’ll proceed to the next speaker.

Mr A M SHAIK EMAM: Thank you very much, Chairperson. Allow me to start off by saying that I don’t think the question that should be asked is whether we needed an ad hoc committee to conduct an oversight, but the question should rather be: Was it absolutely necessary to now have a Minister of Electricity?

Given the severity of the problem, obviously, I would imagine that the President took into consideration that despite having two Ministers that, of course, this will fall under, he realised they did not have the capacity to deal with this problem. As such, because of the serious challenges that the energy crisis poses to South African businesses, employment and other aspects in the country, he felt that it was necessary.

Perhaps the question is: Should he not have rather put a committee chaired by somebody rather than a Minister, because there is no doubt about it, there will be a cost implication. However, if I was many of my colleagues, I would worry about many other things: The conflicting statements that come from the Minister of Electricity; and that from Minister Mantashe; and the issue of coal versus renewable.

Of course, we were told that we want to move to renewable because of the high levels of emissions and pollution and things of that nature, and the environmental impact that it will have. Yet, there is talk now by the Minister of Electricity: Let’s privatise those coal mines; the very same ones. So, it means that it does cause an impact to the environment when it is in public hands, but when it is in

private ends, it seems like there are no emissions. I don’t know where that comes from.

On the other hand, as in yesterday, the Minister of Energy, Minister Mantashe, said Komati should not have been decommissioned or shut down. It was premature because it could provide a lot more than the renewable energy for which we wanted it. Perhaps those are some of the things I think we should take more importantly. There hasn’t been much that has come forward from the new Minister of Electricity other than he has done a tour of all these power stations and highlighted a few of the challenges.

However, other than that I don’t see the urgency in this thing

- the urgency in order to deal with the crisis that we are faced with, as far as the energy is the problem that we are facing within the country. So, we feel generally that it is not necessary. It is a waste of taxpayers’ money to have a Minister of Electricity. I think my time is up, Chairperson.

The NFP believes that it is not necessary to have this ad hoc committee. Once again, it will be a waste of taxpayers’ money.

Lastly, I think there is some measures in place to have an oversight over the Presidency; something that was discussed the other day. Perhaps that will solve the problem. Thank you.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Thank you, hon Shaik Emam. It is quite unusual for you to say yourself that your time is up. You had a few seconds left, but thank you for your vigilance. The next speaker is hon Cachalia.

Mr G K Y CACHALIA: House Chair, as my colleague, Kevin Mileham, has cogently argued, we are desperately in need of implementing sections 55, 56 and 92 of our Constitution to exercise oversight on the Minister of Electricity. The Minister’s avowed focus is only loadshedding and he seems to have succeeded for one solitary day, when the EFF tried to effect a national shutdown. That was more like a national joke actually, but I divert ...

His stated aim is to get the units at Eskom online. Never mind unbundling the entity into transmission, generation and distribution. He thinks that is going to come from simply visiting 14 power stations, and that the challenges at Kusile for example - that mothership of corruption - are simply,

“Technical problems that have nothing to do with so-called corruption.” His words!

Never mind that extending the life of the coal fleet would contradict the plans laid out for renewable energy and energy security as stated in the 2019 Integrated Resource Plan and the Energy Action Plan announced in 2022, which includes approvals for 30 gigawatts of renewable energy, where there are no plans that are noted to extend the life of coal plants. Whatever you view, methinks, the left hand doesn’t know what its own left shoulder and elbow are doing!

It’s all a bit of a dog’s breakfast if you ask me, with Minister Mantashe initially saying that the new Electricity Minister would only be a, “Project manager”. Then, there is a confusion about who Mr Ramokgopa actually reports to. Does his work fall under the Public Enterprises department and Minister Gordhan, where Eskom lies; or does it fall under the Energy department of Minister Mantashe?

Add to this, the debacle of the President placing us in an all-encompassing Electricity State of Disaster in February 2012, and then withdrawing it no sooner than a rotisserie chicken could turn; while Mr Ramokgopa assured us that this

withdrawal would not undermine the, "Agility, pace and responsiveness", of procurement. Again, his words!

I am not sure what happened to the President’s belief that the way forward was to remove bureaucratic obstacles standing, not least BEE, cadre deployment and procurement regime standing in Eskom’s way as the country grappled with loadshedding.

Meanwhile, the elephant in the room remains: With cash from operations being insufficient to meet debt servicing; with capital investment requirements which translates into an inability to effect required repairs and maintenance; and to fund unsustainably high finance costs as well as primary energy expenses in the usage of Open Cycle Gas Turbines, which burns diesel at the rate of knots!

Where, Oh Minister of the three lamps, is the dosh going to come from? Who is going to monitor what you are doing with your oil rag? Who is going to make your wishes come true? And, how? Who is going to hold this new kid on the block accountable while the hoary old chestnuts of corruption, mismanagement, cadre deployment and policy incoherence need – now more than ever - a beady eye?

Who is going to honour the dictates of our Constitution about oversight of Cabinet Ministers, especially, when the genie, the oil rag and the wishes currently sit on a carpet in the Presidency which is devoid of the very oversight mechanisms which our Constitution requires – make – demands!

Surely, it is time for an ad hoc committee to ensure transparency, responsibility and accountability. Lest, we continue to leave the door open to finding successive letters of the alphabet, to fill the spaces between the ‘A’ of the arms deal and the ‘Z’ of Zondo Commission? And, don’t forget, as it has been said, this Minister of Electricity has form here. Remember the tender scandal for smart meters in which he was involved during his time as Mayor of the Tshwane Municipality, costing taxpayers billions of rands?

Now, perhaps you are beginning to understand, hon Lesoma, why The DA is insisting on the constitutional dictates that govern oversight and accountability in our Constitution – a document that must not be ignored but revered and implemented. I thank you.

The DEPUTY CHIEF WHIP OF THE MAJORITY PARTY: Thank you very

much, hon House Chairperson, good afternoon to you and my

colleagues on the platform. Hon House Chairperson, you know when some of the speakers who spoke earlier, debate this matter like they know what they are talking about. It is like there are no mechanisms in Parliament to hold the Executive accountable. It is like Parliament is doing nothing. The National Assembly is doing nothing with regard to oversight to the Executive. It is like the Executive is not accounting to Parliament which is a false narrative that is being driven by these parties who are not even attending the rules committee meeting.

It is a shame that the DA will bring this motion for debate today because they were part, not the speakers who spoke here, not the sponsor of the motion but their members were part of the discussions in the rules committee which took decisions about these matters that we are dealing with today. It is a shame that they are doing that. They are trying their level best to double dip though it is understandable on our side because we are on an electioneering mode all of us. Last week Tuesday the 25th of April, the National Assembly rules committee held extensive discussions on matters pertaining to oversight and accountability. With reference to this debate, two matters came up for discussion: Firstly, was the matter of oversight over the Presidency; and Secondly, was the matter of

oversight on the Minister of Electricity. The NA rules committee in both cases came to a decision. On the Presidency, the rules committee resolved that the Parliamentary Budget Office would be ask to do more work on the request looking at Vote 1 given that by their own admission. It was only a preliminary report that they submitted; Secondly, that a small team from the rules committee will undertake an overseas study tour to look at models of oversight that exist and submit a report as part of the legacy report to the Seventh Parliament to act upon.

Thirdly, that more time needs to be given and more research needs to be undertaken before any decision could be arrived at. On the Minister of Electricity, the decision of the rules committee was that no portfolio committee to be established as it is not a department and does not have a budget but it is a dedicated programme within the Presidency that the Minister will fully account under the oversight mechanisms that currently exist and in this regard in terms of the questions to the Executive would be treated as a standalone Minister reporting under the economic cluster questions. Those were the decisions of the rules committee and so we are back today just over a week later discussing the same matter because the NA rules do not prohibit the matter to be re-raised through

another rule in this case Rule 253 which deals with the establishment of the ad-hoc committees.

Mr K J MILEHAM: On a point of order, Chairperson the rule of the rules committee is in breach of the rule of anticipation, Chair, given that this item was on the Order Paper from several weeks ago. So, any decision by the rules committee or by reference to a decision of the rules committee would be in breach of the rule of anticipation.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): No, hon member, you are not interpreting the rule of anticipation correctly because the rules committee that is convened by the Speaker has the agenda items where sub-committee’s report and I am aware that the sub-committee on rules has done extensive work on this matter before it goes to the rules committee. So, the rule of anticipation does not apply here. Please proceed, hon Dlakude.

The DEPUTY CHIEF WHIP OF THE MAJORITY PARTY: Thank you very

much, hon Chairperson. In the space of the last seven days, the IFP has on two occasions correctly raised the point in different plenary sessions that we need to relook at the NA rules as they seem to have lacunae on matters of importance

before the House. The same applies to this motion for debate. The committee that has authority over the rules of the National Assembly is the rules committee. If the rules committee has resolved on a matter, it means that parties in the rules committee have applied their minds and made a determination of the rules for the National Assembly. Surely, it cannot therefore be correct that a party who was part of such a determination can then use another rule of the National Assembly and revisit a decision of the rules committee outside the rules committee itself. To do so is just undermining the authority of the rules committee which is chaired by the Speaker. However, because we have not under Rule 193 the functions and the powers of the National Assembly committee determined that the decisions of the rules committee are binding and that no other rule can be used to undermine the decision of the rules committee. We have a case of this motion for debate today which seeks to have a recommendation on this motion taken to a future plenary of the National Assembly to establish an ad hoc committee of oversight over the Minister of Electricity. This is exactly what the rules committee did not agree to do, but because of the lacunae in the rules it gets exploited because of the desires of a particular party.

Hon House Chairperson, we need under Rule 193 to introduce a new subclause which indicates that decisions are binding and can only be revisited in a meeting of the rules committee.

Otherwise, it just makes a mockery of the decisions that we take and allow those who do not like the decision to undermine it through the use of another rule, in this case Rule 253. I would agree with hon Lesoma. This is a consequence of allowing seven years to pass without comprehensively reviewing the rules. Even the very rule we are using today in the debate Rule 253 does not have criteria setting out a threshold to meet to establish an ad-hoc committee. The criteria that are there are so broad that any party at any time believe there is a specific task to be performed, will call for an establishment of an ad hoc committee. Establishing such committees is a costly exercise as Parliament has learnt over the years and in certain cases, we have nothing to show for the vast amount of money that has been spent because amongst ourselves we could not come to a decision.

We need to protect our working space and time and use it far more productively than allow the use of one rule to get around a decision created under another rule and in this case, by a committee that should really have authority to guide the National Assembly in terms of procedures. But we all know what

has sparked this debate. We should seriously debate this principle in the next sitting of the rules committee so that in terms of the committee authority and in particular where the Speaker presides over such a committee, there needs to be recognition of the authority of decisions that such a committee takes.

We should debate this because tomorrow it will be another issue that will be raised and we will move backwards and forwards based on self and individual party interests, instead of the collective interest of the Assembly. This then raises another matter, that of the philosophy of accountability as contained in the oversight structures of the National Assembly for accountability versus the narrative of non-accountability that gets driven by political parties and others in the society. The narrative that the executive is not accountable and that we need regulatory measures to enforce, this really reflects a lack of appreciation of the totality of what exists by way of oversight model of Parliament to which the ANC has added systematic oversight. Parliament in terms of its oversight has certainly strengthened during the Fifth and the Sixth Parliament. Unless, we want to convince one another that all the work we are doing in committees is of no consequences. Are there weaknesses? Yes, there are, and it is precisely the

rules that need amendments from time to time to address these weaknesses.

We have been both through and post the Judicial Commission of Inquiry process heard matters referred to Parliament to act upon which is precisely what is happening in designated committees. Where we believe the judicial commission has overreached itself we say so and give reasons. So, the narrative that there is no accountability is one that is used by particular individuals and parties to draw attention to themselves and their party so as to appear relevant. This will get progressively worse the closer we get to elections, as there will be those who will seek to be more relevant than others. It is quite politically childish. Where we have established facts and evidence-based research, we must act on it in the interest of the people not for narrow political party interest.

So, today’s motion when seen in light of the decision we have taken in the rules committee really lacks integrity. On the one hand, we have clause three in today’s motion telling us it is impossible to do oversight over the Minister of Electricity, because we do not have the oversight committee on the Presidency. We have in the same rules committee resolved

how we will deal with the Presidency and explain how the Presidency accounts. We have a decision of the rules committee which demonstrates seven areas where the Minister of Electricity can be oversighted and accountability takes place namely under the state of the nation address debate; secondly, quarterly questions to the President; thirdly, quarterly questions to the Deputy President; fourthly, regular reports from the Presidency; fifthly, debate on Vote 1 in terms of the budget vote debate; sixthly, standalone accounting from the Minister of Electricity answering questions once per term under the economic cluster of Ministers; and lastly, debates on ministerial statements that he will issue on a regular basis in the National Assembly. We have as the ANC established accountability for the Minister of Electricity and where that accountability in terms of Parliament lies. If we are to exercise all seven areas, the oversight will be comprehensive and accountability will be assured. As we have said before, we cannot agree to setting up of more structures when Parliament through its rule-based system of oversight has already provided for this. Ensuring accountability through what exists and the committee structures that exist in the National Assembly will always be preferable option instead of demanding an ad hoc committee. The ANC will not support the motion and put forward that all parties make use of what currently exist

for oversight and where there are weaknesses allow the rules committee to deliberate on it. Hon House Chairperson, I thank you.

Mr K J MILEHAM: Chairperson, let me close this debate by quoting today’s Cape Times editorial a publication not noted for its sympathy towards Democratic Alliance. The newspaper noted and I quote, “Parliament should not delay the establishment of a portfolio committee to play an oversight role over the Presidency.” It indicated that the rules committee had decided to embark on a study tour to determine how other countries have oversight over their presidencies. It further reported that the Parliamentary Budget Office had advised that:

In many instances, the performance indicators of the presidency were not included in the Annual Performance Plan and the question is thus whether not having an oversight mechanism or committee on the presidency denies Parliament access to these reports and prevents Members of Parliament, MPs, from engaging with the accounting officer.

The PBO had informed the rules committee that various countries use a permanent or ad hoc committee to oversee the

presidency. The same arguments hold true with regard to a Rule

253 ad hoc committee for the Minister of Electricity and the excuse being offered by the ANC and its sycophants for not having an ad hoc committee for the Minister of the Electricity is that it does have a specific budget, which essentially means that the only way to hold him accountable is through oral and written questions. To quote the Cape Times this does not bode well for the accountability of the Executive and good governance.

Now let me note for the benefit of hon Lesoma and the ANC that the Constitution of South Africa trumps the rules of the Nation Assembly and that you cannot ignore your constitutional obligations simply because you choose to be a rules lawyer.

And to answer hon Lesoma’s question nothing makes Minister Ramokgopa different from any other Minister. He is still a member of the Cabinet and is individually accountable to Parliament whether he has a budget - a ministry or a department. No one is saying there is no accountability. What we are saying is that it is weak and insufficient. Chief Justice Zondo made it very clear that Parliament had failed in its oversight function and in holding the executive accountable. Chairperson, I beg of this House that we acknowledge and respect our constitutional obligations. The

same Constitution we all sought uphold and support this motion to hold the executive accountable for its actions and decisions. We cannot afford to delay. The electricity crisis is too real and affects too many people to not immediately implement oversight over the Executive. Thank you.

Debate concluded.

The mini-plenary session rose at 16:12.