**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY TUESDAY, 9 MAY 2023**

**VOTE NO 14 – STATISTICS SOUTH AFRICA**

***PROCEEDINGS OF HYBRID MINIPLENARY — GOOD HOPE CHAMBER***

Members of the mini-plenary session met at Good Hope Chamber at 16:45.

The House Chairperson, Ms M G Boroto, took the Chair and requested members to observe a moment of silence for prayer or meditation.

**APPROPRIATION BILL**

Debate on Vote No 14 - Statistics SA:

The MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENCY (Ms K P S Ntshavheni):

Honourable House Chairperson, Deputy Ministers in the Presidency, hon Kenny Morolong and Sonto Motoung, chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Public Service and Administration, members of the Portfolio Committee on Public

Service and Administration, hon members, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen and fellow South Africans ...

*Tshivenda:*

... ndi masiari.

*English:*

This Budget Vote debate takes place a day before South Africa and the world mark 29 years to the day Ntate Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela was sworn in as the first President of a democratic South Africa. A South Africa that breaks away from its shameful history of separate development where one’s ability to have access to electricity, water, education and jobs amongst others were on the basis of one’s skin colour. A democratic South Africa set inclusive development goals to achieve a prosperous, non-racial, non-sexist and equal society.

On the role of national statistical system in development planning and monitoring, good, reliable statistics are essential for measuring progress in reaching development goals and provide essential information about the effectiveness of policies and programmes. They help governments improve their

policies and to be transparent and accountable about the delivery of development results. An effective and efficient national statistical system that provides regular and reliable data is an important indicator of good policies and a crucial component of good governance.

Therefore, Statistics South Africa or Stats SA, as the agency responsible for the production of official statistics and coordination of our National Statistics System, NSS, has an important role to play in government’s attainment of our country’s developmental goals as set out in the National Development Plan. Dr Sanga Dimitri, in his paper on the Role of Statistics: Developing Country Perspective, 2014, he asserts that, “good statistics are needed to assess, identify issues, support the choice of interventions, forecast the future, monitor progress and evaluate the results and impacts of policies and programmes”.

As a matter of purpose, the statistical results released by Stats SA must ensure that government gets the information it needs to develop policies and programmes, and interventions and equally inform the public so that they can evaluate the effectiveness of government’s actions.

Wilson Allen Wallis, an esteemed American economist, once said, “Statistics may be defined as a body of methods for making wise decisions in the face of uncertainty.”

This Budget Vote also takes place when our nation has just come out of the disruption of the global Covid-19 pandemic that wreaked havoc to the world economy, when we are confronted by the global impact of the war in Ukraine, and on the domestic front, the impact of the energy security challenge and extreme weather disasters. Collectively, these multiple crises have resulted in weakening economic growth, accelerating inflation, and compounding our high unemployment rate.

The test to the nation’s survival and resilience is how its leadership and people act with agility to attend to the challenges at hand. To enable long-term, sustainable, and inclusive growth, we must work together as a nation as we strengthen our resilience beyond a survival capacity. To achieve better outcomes for this nation, it is important that our thinking, planning and policy responses be informed by reliable evidence. Therefore, the importance of numbers in times of crisis cannot be overstated. For example, the results

of the Quarterly Labour Force Survey, QLFS, have enabled us collectively, to determine the extent of the unemployment challenge.

The Quarterly Labour Force Survey is a household-based sample survey conducted by Stats SA that collects data on the labour market activities of individuals aged 15 years or older who live in South Africa. Although reporting a marginal improvement, with continuous marginal decreases in unemployment for all quarters of 2022 to 32,7% in the fourth quarter, the Quarterly Labour Force Survey has reported an increase in youth unemployment.

The increasing youth unemployment has warranted government to initiate dedicated youth employment initiatives under the Presidential Employment Stimulus, the largest youth employment intervention in our country’s history – which is estimated to have reached almost a million participants by July 2022. These initiatives include government’s school assistant programme under the Department of Basic Education, and the Employment Tax Incentive amongst others. In conducting Census 2022, Stats SA, while maintaining its independence, also partnered with

the Presidency to support the Presidential Employment Stimulus.

Similarly, the Consumer Price Index, CPI, which the International Labour Organisation, ILO, describes as an indicator which measures average changes over time in prices of fixed basket of goods and services of constant quality and quantity that a reference population acquire, use or pay for consumption. Changes in the CPI record the rate of inflation. The CPI can also be used as a cost of living index.

In April 2023 released CPI data that indicated that consumer prices increased by 1,02% from the previous month in March, accelerating from February’s 0,75% increase. The March’s increase was the highest reading since July 2022. Previous increases in CPI have resulted in government action to reduce pressure on households and businesses by not increasing the general fuel levy for the Road Accident Fund in the 2022 budget. Additional temporary relief was provided for four months at a cost of R10,5 billion during 2022. As announced in the 2023 Budget, government will again keep these levies unchanged in the 2023-24 fiscal year. In addition, government’s decision to extend until 2024, the R350 of the

Social Relief of Distress grant was informed by the cost of living index. Broadly, the CPI is a critical measure that the South African Reserve Bank relies on to adjust the repo rate.

An independent, objective and stabile national statistical system. Government continues to rely on these statistical results without fear of data unreliability because our national statistical system and statistics office remain free from any interference on statistical methods applied to data collections and the content. This is guaranteed in the Statistics Act No 6 of 1999. Such independence ensures that our official numbers have integrity and can be trusted by all. Statistical information is available at all levels of society including business, government, Parliament, civil society, schools and the public at large. It is for this reason that I implore you to become or continue to be ardent users of official statistics. It is available free of charge for all of us. The government continues to support the stability, quality and predictability of Stats SA’s operations because they are a key determinant of our action for our country’s development programme.

Hon House Chairperson, on the Census 2022 results. Statistics SA’s 2023-24 Work Programme reflects the drive to ensure that Stats SA is able to deliver the statistics that the country needs. Key to this is release of the much awaited Census 2022 results, which is scheduled for the 2nd half of 2023. The census has taken stock of our people, where and how they live. It will provide information on the demographic, economic and social dynamics for all persons in the country. This data set will become the new statistical information baseline for the country and that must inform our planning, policy formulation, budget allocation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes impact, amongst others, to enable focused attainment of the national development goals.

It is important to emphasise that the census data will enable provinces and local government to know and understand not only the size of its population, but also the gender ratios, age distribution, levels of education and income as well as their standard of living conditions. This information is critical for decision making at subnational level including informing the provincial equitable share of the fiscus.

Stats SA will be embarking on a comprehensive dissemination process in 2023-24 to inform each province of its results. Hon members will also be able to use this data to know the needs of their respective constituencies. Stats SA will also be releasing various thematic reports based on census data in the areas of education, child statistics, gender, people with disabilities, marginalised groups and household services.

On the Economic statistics programme, Stats SA continues to track the developments and changes within South Africa’s economy and society, in line with the national policy agenda and regularly report on various facets thereof. In 2023-24 the economic statistics programme will continue to deliver key national economic indicators by publishing 230 statistical releases and reports in line with international statistical standards. Stats SA publishes the following key economic indicators at subnational level, namely the Consumer Price Index, annual financial statistics of local government and the non-financial statistics of local government. Key innovations in this area include the introduction of a quarterly statistical release on capital expenditure, reweighting of the Producer Price Index, monthly publication of experimental statistics on Residential Property Index as well conducting

research on the use of alternative data sources to augment the production of official statistics.

The population and social statistics programme will continue to deliver key national socioeconomic indicators by publishing

53 statistical releases and reports in 2023-24 in line with international statistical standards and practices. The following key social indicators are published at a subnational level, namely: Employment and unemployment statistics; vital statistics, including births, deaths and causes of death; population projections and migration statistics; poverty and inequality statistics; living conditions statistics; and governance, peace and security statistics.

On the income and expenditure survey, I am pleased to inform the House that Stats SA has received funding allocation to conduct an income and expenditure survey that collects data on the poverty situation in the country. The survey will be completed in November 2023 in the 2023-24 financial year, and the results set to be published in 2024.

This survey is important because our country is still faced with the triple challenge of poverty, inequality and

unemployment. Therefore, policymakers need to know and understand the scale, the characteristics and the root cause of these challenges. This statistical information will help to identify the extent and nature of poverty and unemployment and those who are affected, their location and the extent of the impact. It will also help the country to track if measures implemented are making any progress in reducing poverty and unemployment, including trends and patterns over time, as well as to assess the effectiveness of our policies.

On draft Statistics Act Amendment Bill and improving lives through data ecosystems, we will also be submitting to Parliament for the consideration of the hon members the draft Statistics Act Amendment Bill that will propose to reconfigure and coordinate the National Statistical System to allow it to better achieve its vision of improving lives through data ecosystems.

Stats SA has established a strategy path with a vision of improving lives through data ecosystems. The strategic plan sets out an ambitious path of embracing an evolving data ecosystem that transforms the way we work and the way we lead the statistical system in the country to be responsive to

growing user demands for sustainable development. The organisation has identified four strategic outcomes to guide and elevate statistical development in this country.

The first outcome talks about insightful data. This outcome is about the statistical products and outputs that are delivered in response to user demands to bring deeper understanding and insight for informed decisions. It is about an information system that monitors the achievements of the goals of the National Development Plan, NDP, the Medium-Term Strategic Framework and other global policy frameworks.

The highest priority of Stats SA is about sustaining and protecting the quality of official statistics and national indicators. We are continuously updating the Integrated Indicator Framework that includes national key indicators to monitor sustainable development in the country. To this end, the organisation will be compiling the Sustainable Development Goals country report during 2023-24 to be presented at a global level on the progress South Africa made.

As part of bringing data to policy makers and the public at large in this digital era, Stats SA has developed a goal

tracker platform for tracking progress made on the development agenda at national, continental and global levels. At the national level this platform will monitor all the priority indicators contained in the NDP as well as the DDM. Stats SA is also investigating the tracking of indicators for infrastructure and investment projects.

The second outcome is about creating an agile operating model where business operations are lean, efficient and flexible.

The organisation is in the process of innovating and modernising its business operating model. An integrated operations model is being tested including the use of a multi- modal approach to data collection in all household surveys.

The cost of doing business will be reduced over the medium- term.

The third outcome is about creating an interconnected statistical system where people, systems and technology are interconnected through collaboration, partnerships and platforms. Envisioning the data ecosystem will be at the forefront of our strategic path as we are exploring partnering with new role players and accessing other data sources in the

data ecosystem to further innovate and transform our methods, processes and technology.

The fourth outcome is about transforming the capability of the organisation and the statistics system at large. Building a workforce that is fit for the future is a critical priority for the organisation. We are finalising our human resource strategy to build a sustainable work environment. We have also invested in establishing an end-to-end enterprise architecture for the organisation and the future data ecosystem. Technology is a key enabler to transform the business operations of the organisation.

Hon House Chairperson, I hereby table Budget Vote 14 of the Department Statistics South Africa in line with section 27 of the Public Finance Management Act, which allocation over the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework, MTEF, is R2,7 billion in 2023-24, R 2,8 billion and R2,9 billion in the 2024-25 and 2025-26 financial years, respectively. Programme 1 Administration is R744,9 million, Programme 2 Economic Statistics is R288 million, on Programme 3 Population and Social Statistics is R291,1 million, Methodology and Statistical Infrastructure is R155,7 million, Statistical

Support and Informatics is R324,2 million, Statistical Operations and Provincial Coordination is R842,7 million, South African National Statistical System is R44,5 million. This is a total of R2,691 billion.

In tabling this Budget Vote I like to take note and express my appreciation of the work of the South African Statistics Council charged with the responsibility of safeguarding the integrity of our official statistics, under the leadership of Prof David Everatt, for their dedication and continued support in the statistical development of our nation.

I also wish to express my appreciation to the Statistician- General, Mr Risenga Maluleke, and the entire Stats SA staff, for their continued efforts to ensure that this nation and its policy makers have the necessary data and information in order to face the future with greater confidence and certainty. The period 2020 to 2022 was a particularly difficult one to execute the national census under.

On behalf of myself and my predecessor and colleagues, Minister Mondli Gungubele, I extend our appreciation of the Portfolio Committee on Public Service and Administration as

well as the Select Committee on Health and Social Services for the supportive work and for holding Stats SA to account to the South African public at all times.

Lastly, we must endeavour to use statistics for insight and avoid what Andrew Lang, the renowned Scottish poet, once said, I quote: “Most people use statistics like a drunk man uses a lamppost: more for support than illumination.”

*Tshivenda:*

Ndi a livhuwa.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms M G Boroto): Thank you, hon Minister. Firstly let me welcome our guests here today. Statistics South Africa, feel welcome. We appreciate your presence. Thank you.

Ms T MGWEBA: House Chair, the Minister in the Presidency, hon Ntshaveni, Deputy Ministers, hon Kenny Morolong and hon Motaung, the Office of Statistics SA, hon members, good afternoon. It is a great honour today to stand before this august House to debate Budget Vote 12 of Statistics South Africa on this historical month, under a democratic

government. In May 1994, SA Parliament elected its first black President, our struggle icon, Tata Nelson Rholihlahla Mandela. In his inauguration, President Mandela said,

Our daily deeds as ordinary South Africans must produce an actual South African reality that will reinforce humanity’s belief in justice, strengthen its confidence in the nobility of the human soul and sustain all our hopes for glorious life for all close.

We are living in a new era where the present is changing faster than we designed for it. This is an important indication that we need to change gears and take the effort and courage necessary to design fundamental changes for the future of our country. The importance of statistics as an evidence-based tool informing policy planning and budgeting to develop a country remain a key question for the state and the market.

Statistics assist government to improve its policies and to be transparent and accountable about the delivery of the developmental results. If we have to adapt to a new era, where the present is changing faster than we designed for it,

statistics should inform policy planning and budgeting in all sessions of our country in order to fight the triple challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality Reliable statistics are a key element towards better measurement of policies and programs of government. Reliable and credible statistics describe the reality of people’s everyday lives.

The role of statistics in national development is very critical. The following vote from the World Bank provides a good starting point to my debate on Budget Vote 12 of Statistics SA.

Why do statistics matter? In simple terms, they are the evidence on which policies are built. They help identify needs, set goals and monitor progress. Without good statistics, the development progress is blind; policy makers cannot learn from their mistakes. The public cannot hold them accountable. Statistics produced by Statistics SA have been reliably and incredibly used to inform the planning and policies of our beloved country, including the production of the National Development Plan, Vision 2030.

Thank you Deputy Chief Whip. Hon members, in one of his state of the nation address, his Excellency President Cyril Matamela

Ramaphosa stated that, “The path we choose now will determine the cause for future generations.” He further said, “That is why we are taking steps to strengthen our democracy.”

Such a path, should solely be based on the foundation of what official statistics guide us, as a nation, in terms of addressing socioeconomic challenges encountered by various spheres of government. Loadshedding is another major challenge confronting us, which negatively impacts businesses, disrupts households, compromise the provision of social Services and affect safety and well-being of our people. Access to electricity in South Africa was reported at 84,39% in 2020, as the data was sourced from official statistics produced by Statistics SA.

only 20% of black South Africans had access to electricity in 1994. These statistics reflect the major transformation of the democratic ANC-led government. As much as we are all concerned about Loadshedding, our people have access to electricity and we hope with the new introduction of the Minister of Electricity, we will be able to reduce the loadshedding and ultimately end it.

Statistics SA remains a beacon of hope in transforming and changing agenda to facilitate and to drive the culture and organisational change required to implement the new strategic direction. In 2020, Statistics SA embarked on a national Census 2022, to assist the country in compiling a numerical profile of South Africa.

As the ANC we are pleased about the progress made in collection of data and analysis of Census 22 data, despite collecting census under the tough health conditions brought by Covid-19 pandemic. We congratulate the Statistician-General, Mr Maluleka and the team, for navigating and ensuring such an important project is carried through. The report will be published in July. This will provide us with the data of macro and micro socioeconomic shifts of our society and the country.

Hon members, the use of technology during census data collection should be the future in order to reduce all risk associated with paper collection of data. We are pleased about the development regarding Census 2022, where the majority of South Africans witnessed the first population count to introduce digital census through the use of online and telephonic data collection platforms, which allowed

respondents to complete the census questionnaire on their own. Digitalisation enables the collection of population data at a faster pace with an unprecedented level of detail.

Hon House Chair, who are quite aware of the historical budget shortfalls confronting the department, especially on the conversation of employees’ budget. Even though the National Treasury and Parliament have approached an additional budget for the compensation of employees over the midterm, the current allocation is not sufficient to retain highly specialised professionals. The success of the attainment of the objectives of the National Development Plan depends solely on the credible and timeless statistical data to inform planning policies and budget allocations, which will be translated into service delivery of public services.

We therefore appeal to all planners, policy makers, decision makers and leaders in our country to study the Census 2022 results once published, to plan according to the challenges confronting our society on the ground.

In our deliberations as the portfolio committee with Statistics SA and the Budget Vote, we observe that the

historical budget shortfall or resource constraints continue to negatively impact on Statistics SA’s ability to attain its set objectives; that the Statistics SA business model emphasises digitalisation. The committee further supports the establishment of interconnected statistical system for better co-ordination of various statistics produced in the country. We noted that the entity confronted with unreliable state information technology service.

We have recommended that: Statistics SA should expeditiously finalise the tabled amendment of the Statistics Act of 1999 to drive statistical reform in the country, timeously, to Parliament; that Statistics SA should consider adopting a program aimed at capacitating all government departments and local government on key statistical findings, focusing on outcome and impact measurement to assist all fears in planning, policy making, evidence-based decision making and budgeting.

Statistics SA, under the Minister in the Presidency, together with the Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation should encourage departments to use statistics releases.

Statistics SA should leverage the use of technology.

Statistics SA should ensure that an integrated indicator framework on the district development model; that the vacancy rate of 20,7%t has to drastically reduced by undertaking a recruitment drive.

With this, let me take this opportunity to thank the leadership of Statistics SA under the stewardship of Minister in the Presidency, Ms Khumbudzo Ntshaveni, the chairperson of the Statistical Council and the Statistician-General, Mr Maluleke and the entire Statistics SA doing their great work for the country throughout production of Statistics.

Furthermore, we appreciate members of the portfolio committing on conducting effective oversight Statistics SA and ensuring that the department provide the country with quality, reliably and accurate official statistics. The ANC supports Budget Vote

12 of Statistics SA, to continuously collect data and compile statistics that guide government, business and nongovernment sectors on the daily activities. I thank you.

*IsiZulu*:

Mnu Z N MBHELE: Ngiyabonga, Sihlalo ngaphambili, ...

*English*:

... Statistics SA stands apart from most other state entities and organs as one of the few islands of relatively good management and performance by most indicators in a sea of chronic public sector mismanagement, poor governance and failures to fulfil policy and legislative mandates. The organisation broadly demonstrates adequate activity and progress but remains heavily constrained by financial and human resource shortfalls, firstly with a budget decrease of almost 20% in real terms for the 2023-24 financial year, and secondly high staff turnover owing to a persistent skills drain and a high vacancy rate of up to 20%.

Its production of statistical products has declined over the years, with a number of survey reports having been delayed or discontinued in light of this limited funding and personnel, not to forget the shambles that was the early phases of Census 2022. It remains to be seen whether ... [Inaudible.] ...

Mr L J BASSON: Chairperson, there is no sound.

AN HON MEMBER: There is no sound. [Interjections.]

Mr Z N MBHELE: ... as it has been said previously by previous members, statistics are important to provide relevant and accurate evidence-based information for social stakeholders and institutions in order to facilitate proper planning, decision-making, and monitoring and evaluation of government policies and projects. In light of the government’s supposed and declared commitment to practising evidence-based policymaking and programme implementation, statistics should serve as primary indicators of what is working and what needs to be changed or improved. When statistics continually reveal stubbornly high and increasing unemployment, that should be a signal that we do not have an enabling environment for job- creating investment and growth, which should then compel a review of government policy to identify those key adverse factors that constrain and disincentive hiring and investment, as well as to adapt and innovate where needed. In converse, when statistics show an area of good performance, for example when the Western Cape demonstrated to be the only province that had job creation during a quarter last year, that should be a signal to enquire further and deeper as to the reasons and factors causing this positive outlier performance, to see whether and how the lessons and insights can be shared and implemented wider.

On this point let me be clear that when I refer to the good results of the Western Cape in the context of this debate, it is not simply to beat my party’s political drum or to engage in self-promoting chest-thumping because it is a DA-governed province, as I am hearing now some ANC members here with cynical ears when they hear what I’m saying. I do mean that the highlighting of such developments should be taken and used as an opportunity for learning and gaining insights that can help other provinces improve their governance and service delivery for the benefit of all our citizens, and I am sure I can speak confidently for premier Alan Winde and his provincial Cabinet colleagues when I say that the approach taken, policy innovations implemented, and programme work done

...

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms M G Boroto): Order!

Mr Z N MBHELE: ... by the Western Cape government in pursuit of governance and service delivery excellence is rooted in the intention of being a benchmark-setting example of best practices and ideas that will benefit the whole country when shared and adopted.

This need not be perceived as a threat to the ANC but rather taken as an invitation. It is clear to all that there are many shortcomings and failures in almost every area of government service delivery, from load shedding and rising crime to deepening poverty.

What is needed is radical reform to overhaul public sector operations, and the key to such a new chapter will be to promulgate a comprehensive suite of investment-attracting and job creation-promoting exemptions from overly burdensome red tape in order to ease the burden of doing business, lower barriers to compliance, and encourage investment and entrepreneurship.

Finally, one of the stated strategic priorities of Statistics SA in its five-year plan is to drive legislative reform, which dovetails and aligns perfectly with this imperative for a vigorous shake-up of the status quo and we encourage Statistics SA to pursue this proactively, stridently, without fear or favour, being led only by pure statistics and information as indicators and signposts of the direction of fundamental changes that need to happen going forward. I thank you, Chair.

Ms R N KOMANE: House Chairperson, let us acknowledge and greet the leadership of the EFF led by the capable commander-in- chief and the president, this Vote 14 ... and we don't know whether you're using this Vote to legitimise load shedding.

That being said, an entity like Statistics SA exists for a strategic and practical purpose.

Businesses, civil society, political parties, and many other stakeholders rely on a competent and well-resourced Statistics SA to give us charitable data to make decisions, implement programmes, and assess the impact of these programmes we implement. We need reliable information to know how to allocate limited resources when we table a budget.

However, it appears that there is a well-co-ordinated and deliberate effort to collapse and reduce Statistics SA into a weak institution. Since we arrived here in Parliament in 2014, we have consistently raised our concerns with all the budget cuts that Statistics SA has suffered. The organisation has a more than 20% vacancy rate because it cannot compete with the private sector to attract the best social scientists, economists, planners, geographers, statisticians, and many other professionals it needs to continue to do its work. In

the recent past, we have witnessed many committed professionals opting to leave for the private sector instead of saving the country in such noble professions because of the freezing of appointments and promotions because of the budget cuts.

We know that the former Statistician-General Dr Pali Lehohla left Statistics SA because he was vocal about this situation. He stood up against political ...[Inaudible.] ... when the ANC government wanted Statistics SA to hide their failures, despite the fact of high levels of unemployment, inequality, poverty, alarming gender-based violence and many other social ills. He stood up against the senseless budget cuts that rendered Statistics SA useless.

For the longest time, Statistics had to cancel and postpone poverty studies. They don't want a proper study on poverty in a country where there are more than 18 million beneficiaries of social grants, more than 11 million unemployed people and many millions who are not accounted for in education, employment, and training. In 2021, members of the Statistics SA council threatened to resign because of these budget cards. When the Minister of Finance tabled his 2022 Budget, we were

told that there is money that will be made for Statistics SA to conduct an income and expenditure survey. This is the survey that will be able to paint a clear picture of poverty. We were also told that Statistics SA will be able to hire new people and promote those already inside its ranks.

We find this very difficult to believe when the proposed budget today for the 2023-24 financial year is essentially going back to the budget of R2,6 billion, the same as it was in the financial year 2020 and 2021. We don't have a good understanding of the levels of hunger and the people who go to sleep with empty stomachs because Statistics SA does not have enough funding to do proper surveys. We don't understand the level of gender-based violence patterns and character because Statistics SA does not go into that space. This is made worse by the police statistics that depend entirely on the dockets. There is a lot we don't know that Statistics SA should be telling us.

When we say we reject this proposed budget for Statistics SA by the Minister of Finance, we don't mean that we don't want any money allocated to Statistics SA. We mean that we reject the budget cuts and the failure to allocate adequate resources

to Statistics SA. We should not be using ... [Interjections.]

... [Inaudible.] ...

Ms C M PHIRI: We expected that. You are always rejecting. Actually, you are confused.

Ms R N KOMANE: Yeah! We are rejecting this budget because you deliberately want to do away with Statistics SA. You want to victimise people. You want to legitimise load shedding. [Interjections.]

Ms C M PHIRI: Continue to be confused.

Ms R N KOMANE: Therefore, we cannot support this Budget Vote. Thank you very much.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms M G Boroto): Sorry for that, Ma’am Komane. Hon Phiri! Hon Phiri, what you just did, you can be immediately taken off this platform. You don't do that. You don't do that, hon Phiri. If you repeat that, you'll be removed from the platform. Thank you. [Interjections.] No, I never did that to you. Why do you want me to do that to her?

Mr M HLENGWA: Hon House Chairperson, I think, at the outset, one must thank the Statistician-General and his team for continuously doing good work under very difficult circumstances, particularly noting the budgetary constraints, which they have had to endure and will continue to endure over the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework, MTEF. Having said that, we have full confidence in the work that they do, and we place a heightened level of reliance and credibility on it, to ensure that it enforce planning. The saying goes, failing to plan is planning to fail.

There are tools, which arisen out of the Statistic SA, yet government seemingly is unable to respond to the challenges. You have heard a lot of song and dance there of sloganeering the triple challenge of poverty, inequality and unemployment. Yet, when it comes to crunch time, nothing actually happens.

So, Statistics SA remains one of South Africa’s most important departments in aiding government to plan to make systematic decisions based on data. This department’s work often provides South Africa with the sobering overview of government’s performance and an understanding of the reforms that our country so desperate need.

For example, in the last quarter of 2022, this department has once again reported that women are the most vulnerable in the labour market. Compare to men, women are more likely to remain unemployed for longer periods, which eventually affects their chances of being employed in the future. In this respect, in quarter four of 2022, 80,6% of women were in long-term unemployment, compared to their male counterparts with 76,1%. The incidence of long-term unemployment among women has consistently been higher than the national average.

This, therefore, leads to the question: What has government been doing to address this? Why do we have a department that reports some statistics on the very glaring inequalities between men and women, yet the government is not actively working to decrease these statistics. It is completely and utterly outrageous that we dedicate days and months on the celebration of women, yet the majority of these women find themselves in conditions of unemployment, dire poverty and inequality.

The quarterly output issued by this department should by no means be taken as a rubberstamp activity. However, this is unfortunately our current reality. Yet, again, we will also

come here and rubberstamp a budget that is not informed by the needs of Statistics SA.

Wil we ever reach a point of symmetry between government’s commitment to eradicating gender inequality and decreasing the long-term unemployment of women? This is just but on area of the many areas where Statistics SA has pointed us the extent of the challenges that the country faces.

It seems as if government is not attending to statistics with necessary level of seriousness that is required. For example, in the first quarter of 2022-23, 6 422 people were murdered, but the crime response does not match this, which is an increase of 664 murders compared to the same period when the country was placed under the Covid-19 lockdown levels one and two.

So, we, as the IFP, are content, that the statistics are a necessary tool for planning and to also gauge the extent to which government is committed to its own commitments or not. Currently, it is clear that it is not. The question becomes: It is good and well to have the statistics, but what are we doing with that? Are we utilizing it. Are we actually not

engaged in an exercise where we are happy to have the information and then it ends there?

So, the IFP is happy to support this Budget Vote, but also notes the fact that Statistic SA needs more money, in order for it to be effective and efficient.

In conclusion, I would like to end off with what the Minister has started off, on a totally different note. Minister, it was good to hear that you refer to the Ukraine war, because there has been a heightened level of denialism this side, calling it a conflict. So, it was good to hear you calling it exactly what it is. Thank you.

*Afrikaans*:

Me H DENNER: Agb Huisvoorsitter, Statistiek SA is een van die belangrikste entitieite in die ganse regeringsportefeulje. Ons is tans besig met Begrotingsposdebatte oor elke departement en sy entiteite se begrotings. Dis ’n oefening wat onmoontlik en rigtingloos sou wees sonder die onderliggende syfers en statistiek wat begrotingsbeplanning moontlik maak.

Inaggenome dat beplanning net so goed kan wees soos die syfers en statistiek waarop dit gebaseer is, is dit uiters belangrik dat hierdie entiteite behoorlik befonds word en oor die nodige hulpbronne en kapasiteit beskik om geloofwaardige en getroue uitsette te lewer.

Dit is daarom kommerwekkend dat Statistiek SA steeds grootliks onderbefonds word - ’n historiese probleem wat jaar na jaar geïdentifiseer en bekla word, maar wat net eenvoudig nie na behore aangespreek word nie, ten spyte van ’n addisionele allokasie van Nasionale Tesourie van R44 miljoen vir die 2022-

23 boekjaar en R132 miljoen oor die mediumtermyn, om die historiese tekort aan te spreek.

*English*:

This budget shortfall has had such a serious impact on the work of Statistics SA that the Income and Expenditure Survey has not been conducted since 2015, due to budget constraints. This means that for the past eight years, government, private- sector businesses, NGO’s, educational institutions, and the like have been flying blind with regard to statistics around poverty levels in the country. How can departments do proper planning and budgeting without accurate information about one

of the greatest obstacles faced by the majority of South Africans?

We take note of an additional allocation of R206 million to only now conduct the Income and Expenditure Survey and would like to see this information being made available according to the set timeline without any delays, such as being seen with the 2022 Census. Eight years have been wasted already; we cannot afford any more.

Furthermore, Statistics SA is not spared the countrywide critical skills shortage that we are faced with. The vacancy rate of more than 20% is alarming and a problem that has also been identified numerous times.

*Afrikaans*:

Die uittog van kundige, ervare personeel, wat oor die algemeen die kwaliteit van staatsdiens en administrasie in Suid-Afrika kniehalter, is ook baie duidelik by Statistiek SA te sien.

Sedert aanvanklike begrotingsbesnoeiings, wat sowat sewe jaar gelede begin het is hierdie as ’n probleemarea geïdentifiseer. Die addisionele allokasie van R44 miljoen vir die vorige

boekjaar het duidelik nie hierdie tekort aangespreek nie en dit verg dringend aandag.

Die doelwit wat gestel is om vakante poste te vul en van alternatiewe diensverskaffers gebruik te maak in die plek van, onder meer, die nuttelose Staatsinligtings en Tegnologie agentskap word deur die ANC se eie regeringsbeleid gekelder.

Wetgewing, soos die Wysigingswet op Diensbillikheid sal in teenstelling met artikel 217 van die Grondwet verhoed dat statistiek SA kompeterende diensverskaffers kan aanstel.

Gedwonge raskwotas in plaas van meriete sal personeelaanstellings belemmer en hierdie leemte sal volgende jaar weer gedurende die begrotingsposdebat bespreek word.

*English*:

As I have just mentioned, Statistics SA was confronted with the unreliability of the State Information Technology Agency or Sita, as is the case with several government departments on a daily basis. This is also a previously identified problem.

Why is Sita being allowed to waste government resources and time in such an egregious manner? This is unacceptable.

*Afrikaans*:

Ek het dit verlede jaar gesê en ek sê dit weer, Statistiek SA is een van die enkele staatsentiteite wat nog ’n mate van geloofwaardigheid het in die oë van die mense van Suid-Afrika. En slegs akkurate en tydige data-uitsette sal hierdie geloofwaardigheid handhaaf. Dieselfde probleme word jaar na jaar geïdentifiseer, maar nooit behoorlik aangespreek nie.

Sonder betroubare data kan geen effektiewe beplanning plaasvind nie. ANC-beleid en die onvermoë van reeds gefaalde enititeite en departemente is besig om hierdie entiteit saam met hulle af te trek. Dit moet aangespreek word, voor dit te laat is. Ek dank u.

*Setswana*:

MOTLATSATONA KWA KANTORONG YA MOPORESIDENTE (Mr I K Morolong):

Motl Modulasetilo wa Ntlo ya rona e e kgethegileng...

*English*:

... hon Minister in the Presidency, Ms Skhumbuzo Ntshavheni, hon Deputy Minister in the Presidency, Ms Nomasonto Motaung, Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Public and Administration, hon members, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. Statistics SA is a pre-evident data collection which is tasked to collect, produce and disseminate our

statistical data, so as to allow the society to properly assess the success or otherwise, of our socioeconomic imperatives, helping us to answer the question, are we progressing or regressing?

The answer to which the question must be embedded in our national worth to transform or improve the conditions of the living standards of our population. In this regard, the government continues to rely on the statistical products of Statistics SA, to elaborate and implement policy interventions that seeks to improve the living standards of all our people. One such policy intervention is the Presidential Employment Stimulus Package, PESP, which uses much of Statistics SA’s statistical releases, to evidence a suite of interventions within the package.

Hon members, Nobel laureate, Thomas Piketty, writing in his book, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, makes a salient observation that:

Social scientific research is and always will be tentative imperfect. It does not claim to transform economics, sociology and history into exact sciences. But by patiently

searching for facts and patterns and calmly analysing the economic, social, and political mechanisms that might explain them, it can inform democratic debate and focus attention on the right questions. It can help to redefine

the terms of debate, unmask certain preconceived or fraudulent notions, and subject all positions to constant critical scrutiny.

Statistics SA, amongst others, it’s a critical institution in the construction of our developmental state and its attendant to national, democratic society. Consistent with the observation that we cited above as made by Piketty, we hold strong a view that, statistics is an integral part of our democracy, one without which would be our keen for driving blind in a busy arterial metropolitan road.

The work that Statistics SA does, makes an enormous contribution to improve the quality of democratic debate, guide investment decisions, and help improve accountability, by providing reliable indicators that are especially vital for greater driven decision-making, both within and without the public sector. The collection production and the dissemination of these statistical products, is equally important for the

legislatures, assembled in this august democratic assembly of our people and their representatives, essentially helping us to frame the terms of debate, unmask certain preconceived or fraudulent notions and subject all positions to constant critical scrutiny.

For its part, the National Development Plan, NDP, elaborates our national ambitions and targets, which aims at helping us to broadly define the living standards, against which our socioeconomic progress can be tracked, assessed and measured. Hon House Chair, COVID-19 as well as other natural disasters has exposed gaps in our basic information management and statistics system in the country. To plague these gaps, robust and agile information management systems are continuously required. If our information systems fail or are inadequate, we will be flying blind, which may lead to a disastrous crash of our national economy, in turn, leading to loss of lives and livelihoods.

Hon members, it is a point to remember, however, those robust information systems are not free. They require time, attention and money, yet, they are priceless, when informed decisions that saves lives are taken and implemented. Without good

information, the country will not be able to track its economic, social or health recovery or progress. Data has become a major source of economic competitiveness globally, offering an enormous opportunities for citizens, business and government, to make better informed decisions.

The world now increasingly relies on data to create new knowledge and insight, for better understanding the past, the current and to predict the future. Economic growth, job creation, characteristics of the population, social living conditions, health, education and crime, are some indicators, on which statistical data provides an empirical evidence and objective insight to guide policy formulation and implementation.

Armed with these evidence, as collected, produced and stimulated by Statistics SA, we will certainly unmask certain preconceived or fraudulent notions and subject all positions to constant critical scrutiny, so that we fruitfully hold each other accountable. Hon House Chair, the past two years has seen our operating model being disrupted by COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown restrictions. For all household surveys in the

2023-24 financial year, face-to-face data collection will resume.

However, the organisation will continue to deploy and integrate the innovative methodologies that were deployed during the Census 2022 data collection into the operation model of Statistics SA. Investment into modernisation of our statistical value chain, has increase our efficiency, data security and data quality, will be our priority for the

ensuing Medium Term Expenditure Framework, MTEF, budget cycle. Hon members, Statistics SA envisioned its socioeconomic role in our society, as improving lives through data ecosystems.

As we all know, the technological advances that have been made in the last couple of years, demands of us, to continuously invest in new competing technologies, making it easier for us to collect, produce and disseminate our statistical products. Optimisation, partnership and innovation, will be the hallmarks of our march towards transformation of the production co-ordination and use of statistic. The increased need for collaboration between Statistics SA, other organs of state and the private sector, is critical as we build the data ecosystems.

The use and appreciation of official statistics in decision making, has become even more critical in the changing data landscape. In this regard, our office will elaborate an outreach programme, where the office of the Statistician- General to communicate the need to embed statistics in a decision making process of both public and private institutions. Hon House Chairperson, the highest priority of Statistics SA is about sustaining and protecting the quality of official statistics and national indicators.

Our National Statistics Agency is committed to continue to deliver its suite of official statistics, even amidst challenging and declining resourced environment. Our task ahead, in achieving our strategic intent and culture of innovation, agility and collective leadership that embraces change and diversity in thought and practice. Hon members, I invite you to join me in appreciating the sterling work done by Statistics SA team led by the Statistician-General, Mr Risenga Maluleke.

We would also like to extend our appreciation for the role the SA Statistics Council, under the leadership of Prof *David*

*Everatt, continues to play, in safeguarding our official*

statistics. I thank you.

The DEPUTY CHIEF WHIP OF THE MAJORITY PARTY: Hon Chairperson,

my apologies. I just want to remind the Table staff that, as the Chief Whips Forum, we agreed that all speakers in a particular debate must be in the House physical. So, you don’t have to call them if they are not here, unless a prior notice was sent.

Dr J NOTHNAGEL: Hon Chair, Ministering the Presidency, Deputy Ministers in the Presidency, Deputy Chief Whip, office of Stats SA, and Members of Parliament, good afternoon. The ANC in its 55th National Conference has prioritized monitoring and evaluation to ensure government plans are implemented and effective to enable interventions where challenges exist.

As the ANC Parliamentary Caucus, we have raised our concerns of the lack of effective measurement of outcomes of policy implementation. Through the work of Stats SA, through expanding those statistical data to various impactful areas, we will close this critical information gap. Measurement of outcomes and impact programmes is critical for enhanced

oversight. Key to the task of government is creating a better life for all South African citizens. This is a commitment underpinning many of our strategic documents and election manifestos of the ANC. It’s important, therefore, to recognize Stats SA playing a role in this historic mission in its own way and with expertise.

For the ANC, it’s important to recognize that South Africa fulfilling its strategic vision of and in brackets improving lives through data ecosystems. Ultimately, Stats SA must be a dynamic and modern entity empowered to transform people’s lives. An updated dynamic and advanced data ecosystem, which should be a basis for policy making and decision making by private and public sectors.

Hon members, the department derives its existence from Statistics Act of 1999 and has a responsibility to at advance the production dissemination use and co-ordination of official and other statistics to assist organs of state, businesses, other organizations, and the public in planning, monitoring, policy development and decision making. The Act also requires that department co-ordinates statistical production among

organs of state in line with the purpose of official statistics and statistical principles.

Hon as Chair, one of the biggest concerns for the ANC is to see the programmes of government changing people’s lives in a tangible way for the better. And this can be done when there is an empowered stats South Africa with the resources and skills that it needs to assess the impact of policies and the state of various services. It is an entity such as Stats SA that must help South Africans. From a state of only saying South Africa has good laws and policies, but the problem is implementation, which by implication may question the impact the policies have in changing people’s lives.

It’s important that institutions like Stats South Africa exist because data is important for monitoring and evaluating the services provided to society. A World That Counts from the United Nations states that and I quote:

Data are the lifeblood of decision-making and the raw material for accountability. Without high-quality data providing the right information on the right things at the

right time; designing, monitoring and evaluating effective policies becomes almost impossible.

The South African government has recently launched a District Development Model, DDM, and this new District Development Model and service delivery has been launched as a key intervention. For service delivery with the intention to integrate planning for co-operative governance with the aim to create a new integrated district-based service delivery approach aimed at fast tracking service delivery, and ensure that municipalities are adequately supported and resourced to carry out the mandate.

The implementation of this model requires statistical information to inform the DDM, and as a need for the current measurement agenda of Stats SA to reflect in DDM such that the impact of DDM is positively felt and continuously improved.

This will help the government in constructing a constitutional democracy and both institutions that have the capacity to broaden access to services. This will also help addressing the triple challenge of poverty, inequality, and unemployment.

Stats SA also helps government pave the way to undoing the structural pillars of apartheid, which produced multi-

generational impoverished of black community communities. Stats SA help to merge data to deal with segregation, exclusion, discrimination, oppression, and side lining of our people, thus shaping our government and private sector programmes.

There is a huge role to be played by Stats SA in terms of planning, budgeting, and prioritization in South Africa. Key amongst crucial things is to advance the increase in the use of data in all the departments and different spheres of government to help identify priorities and to plan and to budget site. For example, the matter of women’s socioeconomic empowerment. It is a matter that is of crucial importance in South Africa. Women’s socioeconomic empowerment and the promotion of gender equality is part of the urgent key matters of government priorities in its developmental agenda.

Stats SA in partnership with the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, the World Bank and other stakeholders are embarking on a focus study to develop the disability inequality index and research the possibility of running a disability survey. Stats SA outputs will take into consideration these societal changes by timely providing

decision makers with relevant data, enabling them to introduce and deploy public service programmes that will improve the lives of South African citizens.

These types of initiatives should serve as a catalyst on how government should transform its planning, budgeting, and prioritization through the use of Stats SA as an instrumental agency in guiding data driven planning. Gender budgeting is a critical aspect to address the level of gender inequality and in our society.

The increase in environmental risk globally is also a cause for concern. And Stats SA has a role to play in the South African context to help the government in issues relating to the urban planning and disaster management. The role of environmental statistics is evidently important for the nation and global policy agendas. As it influenced the measurement of the wellbeing of citizens, and it can also advance future planning. Many of the ways to consider reviving environmental statistics being part of statistics due to the fact that the natural disasters are a challenge facing the country and a continuous risk is to bring back and strengthening Stats SA of

economic environmental accounts, which was discontinued in 2016-17, due to financial constraints.

Hon House Chair, any national statistic offices and other statistic agencies across the globe have considered various initiatives and innovations to respond to many opportunities and threats that digital and data revolutions have. These trends in the statistics sector include the need to explore alternative data sources, including private sector data through partnerships with old and new entrants in the data ecosystem, and we must harvest big data and bulk cutting edge capabilities.

South Africa has some opportunities to explore in this regard, such as implementing the amendment of the Statistics Act and clearly outlining its strategic intent to build partnerships in the data ecosystem. The South African government should see these opportunities and unlock them for Stats SA through legislation to mitigate battles between those who believe in public knowledge and those who will be profiting from this disintegration. The management of public and private interest is crucial.

In conclusion, hon Chair, many opportunities can be unlocked through the use of data. Enormous opportunities for citizens, businesses, and government can be better leveraged because of informed decisions and innovation that can be data driven. The case of South Africa data can help us recover and strengthen our economic potential and areas of social impact. I thank you, Chair.

Mr J J McGLUWA: Chairperson, ignorance of statistical information results in policy and planning failures. Be that as it may, statistics has many customs. In this particular case, it advise government not only to make good decisions for its citizens but also to deal with uncertainty. Statistics has become an integral part of almost all spheres of modern life. No modern government can conduct its normal functions and deliver its service delivery and implement its development agenda without relying on good and credible statistics.

Programme three is allocated a budget of R291 million for the 2024 financial year and provides us with statistics on where people live, the conditions, what jobs they do, domestic tourism, transport, education and gender. Statistics SA further exposes and help the facts that characterise our

population, society, economy, health, education, environment and the nation as a whole. Statistics SA gives us a benchmark of the real state of South Africa. Our state of the nation is characterised by poor planning, poor decision-making government which fails to prioritize statistics according to its importance. Statistics SA can be seen as a command and as one of the major information tools but sometimes seems overlooked when it comes to budgeting.

The living standards of South Africans have worsened by the day through a high unemployment rate, poor service delivery, unsafe cities, and high cases of gender-based violence, poverty, inequality, corruption and more than 120 days of load shedding in 2023. Signs of load shedding appeared as early as 2004 under former president Thabo Mbeki. This was worsened by ignoring the statistics regarding the planning around the increase of population, urbanisation and maintenance of aging infrastructure on energy power plants. This all landed on deaf ears.

We also see now Minister Gordhan appealing against the High Court judgement on load shedding but Minister Gordhan should be reminded that he was part of the governing party when all

these statistics were ignored. Currently, indicators show that Statistics SA which is a well performing department has over the years experienced budget shortfalls regarding compensation of employees. If these signs of budget shortfalls are ignored, Statistics SA will start to collapse, just as we have seen with Eskom, whereby it will be unable to produce quality, credible and reliable statistics for the country and international communities.

There is a high turnover rate in the institution due to the department being unable to retain specialised scarce skills employees which are difficult to get such as statisticians and mathematicians. As much as we understand the concept of limited resources and other challenges, our government should not allow Statistics SA to be destroyed through inadequate budget allocations. The overall budget in 2023/24 financial year is R2,69 billion, which is a decrease of approximately 11,14 percent as compared to R2,99 billion allocated in 2022/23 financial year. This mean that poor Statistics SA must do more with less.

According to the Cabinet decision pronouncements of 20 October 2022, the then Minister of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation has made announcement that:

Cabinet approved the submission to Parliament of the Statistics Amendment Bill of 2022 for further processing. The Bill proposes the amendment to the Statistics Act, No 6 of 1999. The amendments provide for the development and implementation of the National Statistics System that supports evidence-based decisions.

The question remains to the hon Minister in the Presidency Ms Ntshavheni, where the Statistics Amendment Bill? This Bill is long overdue since the Fifth Parliament. Where is the urgency if this government? The DA are now considering tabling its own Private Members Stats Bill before the end of this Sixth Term, should this government not wake up and smell the coffee.

We welcome the transition from paper to digital business process. A new way of conducting business in most developed countries. This transition will reduce unwanted office accommodation in the country’s offices since the technology allows hybrid working models. We should also consider

reduction of redundant staff whom might not be needed in the new business model as a way of managing the wage bill. To avoid retrenchments, redundant staff members should be redeployed to those departments in need of capacity. Savings through office accommodation should be use towards the funding of critical position of Statistics SA which currently has a 19,7 percent vacancy rate as at 31 December 2022.

*Afrikaans*:

Ek dank u.

Ms V P MALOMANE: Hon Chair, greetings to hon Minister, Deputy Minister Morolong, Deputy Minister Motaung, Deputy Chief Whip, Office of the Statistics SA, hon members who are present and all South Africans. Data-driven analysis is a critical for planning, for effective and efficient government which is able to be highly responsive and profound with planning and budgeting for short-, medium- and long-term goals. Planning plays an imperative role for government to achieve its goal.

One key element government uses is evidence-based planning. Evidence-based planning is used for gathering and evaluating data and evidence to understand the current situation,

identifying and analysing potential solutions and selecting the best cost of action based on the available evidence.

By using evidence to inform decision-making policy makers, planners and implementers can identify the most pressing, social and economic challenges, determine the most effective solution, evaluate the impact policies and programmes and enhance accountability and transparency.

Planning is a pivotal factor in our governance system. The ANC, in the 2019 manifesto highlighted that we need to strengthen and consolidate efforts to digitalise government, utilise big data in planning and execution and expedite the implementation of e-governance so that citizens can access public services from any location as they become connected well, strengthening the co-ordination of intergovernmental relations and planning and be more proactive in mediating and resolving problems, including between district and local municipalities.

Hon Denner – sorry for the wrong pronunciation – you usually speak about the issues of policies of the ANC saying it is delaying in implementing policies. Id you want to implement

policies in government, you must go outside and campaign and win the elections so that you can implement your own policies that you want. When the ANC is implementing its policies because it has campaigned and the people of South Africa have voted the ANC to implement its policies.

Statistics SA plays a critical role in planning and service delivery initiatives in South Africa by providing accurate reliable and timely data that informs decision-making processes in government and other sectors. As a national statistical agency, Statistics SA collect data analysis and disseminate it as information. This process is based on various aspect of the South African economy and society. The data and statistics provided by Statistics SA is used by government departments, state-owned entities, businesses, researchers, civil society organisations and the general public to understand and monitor the country’s socioeconomic conditions, and to inform policy making and service delivery initiatives.

Some of the key areas where Statistics SA data is used are economic planning and development, social planning and development, infrastructure planning and development,

demographic and population planning. In economic planning and development, Statistics SA provides data on the country’s economic performance including gross domestic product, employment, inflation and trade. This information is used by the public and private sector to inform economic policies and investment decision. The information is used by government to plan, budget and implement infrastructure development projects. And in demographics and population planning, data provided by Statistics SA pertaining to our country’s population includes sectors such as age, gender, race and migration patterns. This is used by the government to plan and implement population-based initiatives such as the health care, education and educational programmes.

This district development model, DDM, is a programme that was created for development planning and implementation in South Africa that seeks to improve service delivery, economic growth and job creation in local areas. The state of the nation address speech of 2019 identified the difficulty of monitoring and oversight in government. It highlighted that this was highly attributed to a pattern of departments in the three spheres of government operating in isolation, which caused a lack of coherence in planning, budgeting and implementation.

As a result, there had been less of an impact on the triple challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment. This has also resulted in poor service delivery in some areas. The development of statistical indicators focusing on the DDm will help track progress, identify challenges and measure the impact of the model on local communities. Some statistical indicators that were developed for the DDM are concerning infrastructure development, job creation, service delivery, economic growth and social development.

Funding is essential for the success and growth of any institution. The budget is used to cover the cost of infrastructure, research, staff salaries, data collection and processing. Funding to Statistics SA has been a challenge which should be addressed as this has reduced the capacity of the entity to optimally execute its mandate and increase its offering. I believe, Minister, you are hearing this, that as ANC we are also speaking about the issue of the budget. In the 2022 Budget presented by the Minister of Finance, government stopped the cycle of reduction of Statistics SA and provided funds to the income and expenditure survey, which Statistics SA advanced, as well as some monies for filling essential positions.

Moreover, the recruiting and promotion restriction have been relaxed, allowing Statistics SA to fill acting roles with highly trained professionals. We implore and concur with Statistics SA that more funding is required for employees, surveys with larger sample sizes and most importantly, for the collection of reliable local government level data for the DDM. However, we believe that the tide has reversed and we are hopeful that as we recover from the catastrophic COVID-19 pandemic, we anticipate that moving forward, we should be able to produce a renewed and fruitful partnership.

Hon Komane, I am very surprised and disappointed by you when you said here, telling the people of South Africa that you reject the budget. But if the people of South Africa were listening to you in the portfolio committee when you adopted that budget - so, it won’t be correct. When we are here in the plenary you speak contrary to what you’ve said in the portfolio committee. So, with that, I am very disappointed.

The other matter hon Komane is about the appointment of secretary-general – when the President appoint the secretary- general, it is prescribed that the appointment is for five years but it can be renewed. When you come here you spoke about uBali and said that he resigned because of the ANC

interference and whatsoever – it is not because of those things. That’s not true, honourable. You must speak the truth. You must be honourable when you are here. When you are standing here, you must be honourable as an honourable member. I just want to teach you to say that it is prescribed for five years and if it is renewed, it is up to the committee and President.

The other matter that I want to speak about is that we really appreciate the IFP for supporting the budget. They have done it as they have done in the committee. But with the DA, they come and speak here and want to shine because now they know that it is time for campaigning. This is not the podium o use for campaigning, just go outside and convince members to vote for us – for all of us. But we know that the ANC leads, the ANC lives. The ANC supports the budget. Thank you. [Interjections.]

The MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENCY (Ms K P S Ntshavheni): Hon

Acting House Chair, I like to first appreciate the open acknowledgement by the opposition parties with no exception, even the ones who are politicking about the sterling work of Statistics South Africa and the confidence expressed on

statistical releases and reports, because that is important that we maintain the credibility of both the institution and the national statistical system. At least you agreed, it is one thing that we can be proud of as South Africans.

Hon Teliswa Mgweba, the Acting Chairperson of the portfolio committee, the challenges of energy security on the country does not ... [Interjections.]

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms T M Joemat-Pettersson): Order please, hon member. Order, hon member! Hon member! Order please! Hon members, order please! Thank you. Hon Minister, you may continue. Members! Hon members, could you please have order now.

The MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENCY (Ms K P S Ntshavheni): I’m

tempted to withdraw my appreciation. Hon Teliswa Mgweba, the Acting Chairperson of the portfolio committee, the challenges of energy security in the country do not erase the fact that 84% of South Africans have access to electricity compared to 14% in 1994. Therefore, we must never refrain to acknowledge the progress we’ve made whilst we acknowledge the challenges facing us, and you are correct that the energy security

challenges are being addressed and we’ll come to the full House and explain those challenges and the progress we are making to address them. They say that it’s always darkest before it becomes dawn.

Hon Nothnagel has explained or has dealt with the issues that were being raised by hon Hlengwa around women empowerment and women discrimination in this country. She explained how the use of statistics have been directed in dealing and introducing women socioeconomic empowerment programmes and also dealing with gender-based violence, but also as the ruling party making sure that half of our representation in this House are women and no other party can challenge us to that fact. It’s as if I knew when I quoted the famous poet Andrew Lang that most people use statistics like a drunken man uses a lamp posts more for support rather than illumination.

Hon Mbhele, the American writer Rex Stewart once said that there are two kinds of statistics: The kind you look up and the kind you makeup. We are on the ones you look up but, unfortunately, yours on the performance of the Western Cape government are the kind you makeup. Yes, the Western Cape government has created most jobs in the fourth quarter of

2022. However, the provinces of Eastern Cape, Northern Cape, and North West equally created jobs in 2022, the fourth quarter, and that cannot be changed. Therefore, it is not separation or separate development where Khayelitsha, Delft, Philippi, Langa, Nyanga and Gugulethu remain unequal in a province where it’s a South Africa of equal people 29 years after our democracy.

Whilst the funding of the Statistics SA remains a challenge, National Treasury allocated in the 2021-22 budget R40 million for the Stats SA to fill vacancies. Therefore, we have prioritised 120 vacancies and that are being filled and those that are being filled have been prioritised. We know the impact of the inflation on jobs and on salaries, and we continue to engage with National Treasury through the budget process so that they can make the allocations. Therefore, part of the work of the new vision of Stats SA to digitalise statistics in the country, and to introduce interconnected system and reliance on other statistical sources in the country means that there would be saving in Medium-Term Expenditure Framework, MTEF, and we’ll do that those ones that become redundant because of the change in business operating model will then be declared redundancy and those vacancies not

filled and we fill the ones that we require because Stats SA is preparing itself for a digital economy.

I thought that when we come to the hon House, we all come with prepared speeches. Therefore, when we come with those prepared speeches, we have also, as hon members, a responsibility to listen to what is being presented because that’s why is a debate, and respond to the facts presented and not stick to the rhetoric of once assumed was going to be presented. In this Budget Vote speech, I presented two things that will be done. I presented about us ready to submit the Draft Amendment Bill for the Statistics SA Act 6 of 1999, in this very House. Therefore, I do not know why the Democratic Alliance would be ready to table its own Draft Amendment Bill because we have mentioned that we are ready to bring it to the table here.

The problem that we have is that we deal with the term of office, and this is the Sixth Parliament and I don’t know whether when we are in the Sixth Parliament I must then be taken to the fifth, and the fourth, and the third, the second and the First Parliament when I was not there. Some of those Parliaments I was still a child. Therefore, I’m here and I’m saying that this is what we’re going to do and hold us to

account in the financial year that we are proposing to table this and to say that have we tabled, have we failed to table? And this is what we committed to do without any probing, we didn’t respond to your issue, we tabled it upfront to say that we will bring it forward.

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms T M Joemat-Pettersson): Order, hon members! Hon members, order please! Hon Minister, you may continue.

The MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENCY (Ms K P S Ntshavheni): Hon

Acting House Chair, I also thought in my tabling of the Statistics SA Budget Vote that we indicated the strategy and the vision of Statistics SA, and we even articulated the four outcomes that we are seeking to achieve. Therefore, in part of the statement we seek we are going to realise savings in the long-term in this very House. And the savings in the long-term means the adjustments of the budget as they come through will then also, what members are complaining about that is degrading, be ... [Inaudible.] The fact that we have come in and said that we have challenges it doesn’t mean we’re not making mechanisms to make it perform, we have come to this House. We equally came to this House and said that we will

table the results of census 2022, in this particular period, here in this very House.

However, what is more interesting, I’ll have to be reminded of her name, I was so shocked that what we tabled that we are bringing in this House and it has been funded, we are being accused of not having done it. Because those of us who know in terms of performance will know that as much as we have had challenges when we correct you we must be given an acknowledgement. We came in this House and table without, and I will read, without anyone provoking us. I said on the income and expenditure survey, I am pleased to inform the House that Stats SA has received funding allocation to conduct an income and expenditures survey that collects data on the poverty situation in this country. The survey will be completed in 2023-24 financial year, in particular November 2023, and the results said to be published in 2024. I will not understand why we were ranting and raving about that income and expenditure survey when we didn’t say that we were going to do it we also gave you a timeline to hold us accountable because we do not believe in open-ended undertakings, we believe in performance that is measurable, that is ... [Inaudible.] that

we can all hold each other too and that is our bases of accountability.

Hon Hlengwa, as I conclude, my first language is not English. However, I would have claimed to have gone to schools where I learnt English as a first language and I passed very well.

I’ve also gone to universities that the language of instruction was English as a first language. Actually, the only language where I graduated lastly, they spoke only English. Therefore, maybe we must and look at the *Oxford Dictionary* about war and conflict. However, I know what you’re trying to insinuate around the Ukraine war. The position of South Africa remains the same that we are nonaligned on the conflict of Ukraine and Russia. We have now for the privilege with this House started to initiate dialogues so that we can mediate on that conflict because our role in mediation is acknowledged globally. Therefore, you can do that when you’ve taken sides, and you’ll be amazed when we make the necessary announcement who invited us to mediate the conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

However, let me inform you about other things. The very United States, US, who have imposed unilateral sanctions on Russia

have ... [Inaudible.] ... us to say that South Africa engaged with Russia to come to the table and that would not have possible if we have taken sides. A mediator is a person who is credible in terms of their independence or view on a particular conflict, because then you become objective and not subjective. However, in any case today we’re dealing with statistics, I don’t want to go to damn lies, and I’m speaking on statistics. Thank you.

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms T M Joemat-Pettersson): Thank you very much, hon Minister. Hon members, that concludes the debate and the business of this mini-plenary session. The mini-plenary will now rise.

Debate concluded.

The mini-plenary session rose at 18:27.