Address by (MP) Cde Mina Lesoma on the Budget Vote Debate of the Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation

When gathering to engage on the Budget Vote of the Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation, we frame our engagement on this Vote of Funds informed by the fact that we are dealing with an instrument of the government that is duty bound to reflect on the country’s socio-economic policy priorities on the one hand and on the other have the ability to translate ANC and government policy priorities into the framework of the Medium-Term Strategic Framework 2019-2024.

This specialised Department is the one on whom we depend to direct and guide government’s long-term planning, strategic planning and annual performance planning. This role requires providing evidence-based research and the production of facts on crosscutting issues that have long-term implications for the development of the country.

To guide this process, we expect to receive a NDP Five-Year Implementation Plan to provide a medium-term roadmap, which will inform the basis for developing Five-Year departmental plans.

These five-year plans respond to the governing party Manifesto 2019-2024 and the realisation of the NDP priorities and such a five-year plan serves as a monitoring framework for oversight informed by the Departments own Programme of Action reporting system.

On the review of the National Development plan, in 2011 at the adoption of the National Development Plan (NDP), it was understood that the NDP would require to be reviewed on a regular basis. Whilst did not happened we welcome the fact that a few years back a review was announced. Reviewing the NDP gives us the opportunity to assess the assumptions we had almost 10 years ago.

Our socioeconomic development targets and specifically the development of programmes to deal with poverty, creating jobs and reducing inequality by 2030 has had to be carried out under changing concrete conditions which have had an impact on the original 2011 assumptions.

The National Planning Commission was tasked with reviewing some aspects of the NDP to address certain implementation challenges. Critically and a matter the governing party has been raising is the need to review the capacity and capability of the State in measuring the implementation of the NDP. We are pleased that the National Planning Coordination sub-programme provides for this.

On the Assessment reports produced by the Department, these are core to our oversight work and require far closer scrutiny. Based on the outcomes of these assessments, the key delivery priorities are identified together with the National Treasury for funding of national departments. Are oversight work needs to focus on this since these inputs shape what we eventually deal with in the quarterly reports and as we are now doing in the budget vote debates.

We welcome the planned intervention programmes to support service delivery. The fall-out from communities over poor service delivery has the potential to result in alienation between communities and government and this can never assist the nature and character of the society we are trying to construct.

The promised two reports per year over the MTEF period to monitor the impact of policy priorities in relation to actual service delivery through various frontline monitoring programmes, including targeted site visits, citizen-based monitoring and the Presidential Hotline must be welcomed and we await the first one to interrogate and assess whether it matches our experience as public representatives through our oversight work.

We note that this will include the development of a new monitoring model to replace the management performance assessment tool, and support the annual development and assessment of performance agreements of Heads of Department.

On research and development, we welcome the commitment by the Department that over the medium term, the Department plans to produce 10 evidence reports on indicators related to the evaluations as well as research and development. We need to create sufficient time to interrogate these reports as the Committee but also get public feedback on them from the very stakeholders that they target so that we in turn can assess just how relevant these reports are in bringing about a qualitative change in the lives of our people.

On the actual vote of funds and where the allocation of these will go in future, we are pleased that the focus goes towards strengthening planning and budgeting functions to support government priorities and on strengthening the production of evidence-based reports for planning, monitoring and evaluation systems.

On looking forward we need to receive the Integrated Planning Framework Bill as soon as possible so that we address through our oversight just how effect the Department is with regards enforcing coordination, collaboration and coherence of planning and budgets across the three spheres of government.

Our concerns remain about the lack of a monitoring tool to monitor some critical State-Owned Enterprises as per the previous SONA priorities announced by the President. In addition to what the Department of Public Enterprises may do and their scope only covers a small percentage of the big SOE’s, the department must take on far more responsibility to monitoring the SOEs as important pillars in the economy.

On Local Government monitoring and evaluation, there is growing concern given the historic evidence of interventions whether these interventions are having the desired outcome. We need the Department to document case studies aimed at strengthening weaknesses leading to future interventions in the public administration. Use of case studies on lessons learned can improve and strengthen policies and programmes as well as the nature of the intervention. We would expect far more to be coming from the Department in this regard given the state of local government and it is not that we don’t understand what causes these problems.

Again, how section 139 has been used in interventions has serious implications and lessons that we need to learn from and we hope that the Department in its Assessment Reports would be bringing creative proposals to Parliament for our engagement. Cogta and National Treasury are working on these in a collaborative manner and we would want to see the Department adding strategic value to this work.

The Local Government Management Improvement Model must be made to be an effective and efficient tool in dealing with core challenges facing municipalities.

Whilst we note that the transfer of National Spatial Development Framework to the Department must still be completed internal capacity to drive spatial reforms for the country is very necessary.

In conclusion, the ANC will continue to support the Department and to exercise oversight so as to ensure that planning is informed by Government’s Programme of Action and the Medium-Term Strategic Framework.

The ANC supports Vote 9.