**DRAFT DEBATE: STATISTICS SOUTH AFRICA**

1. The EFF rejects the proposed austerity budget to cut Statistics South Africa’s budget by the National Treasury.
2. Chairperson, allow us first to congratulate the Statistician-General Mr Risenge Maluleke, the team at Statistics South Africa and all the field workers. We all know they worked under challenging conditions to carry out the 2022 Census.
3. We know this to be true because, since our arrival as the EFF here in Parliament, we learned that there was a deliberate effort by the ruling party to defund and collapse Stats SA.
4. The systemic defunding and collapse of Stats SA has signified the ruling party’s true intentions toward the people of South Africa.
5. The ANC intends to perpetuate poverty. The ANC want young people to live in the streets unemployed. They want our children to continue to learn under trees and in mud schools. Workers continue to receive wages that are less than what their great grandparents received in the 1940s, 50s and 60s.
6. While doing all this, they don’t want a capable and dependable Stats SA to tell the country and the world about the shocking conditions our people find themselves in.
7. Honourable Chairperson, no policy will bring about concrete and practical solutions without a proper understanding of the material conditions, And that is why Stats SA exists. It exists to be a credible source of data that should and must inform policy formulation and implementation.
8. But guided by austerity, the Stats SA’s budget has consistently been cut. This has compromised the quality, scale and scope of work that Stats SA can do.
9. This Parliament has consistently failed to interrogate proposed budget cuts and their implications because the ruling party abused its majority.
10. This is what it means to defund Stats SA:
11. We know where we live in a country with the highest levels of unemployment, gender-based violence characterised by extreme unimaginable levels of violence. For a country that does not have wars, our mortality rate is way too high.
12. We know that the gap between the rich, mainly whites, and the poor, mainly blacks, has increased since 1995.
13. We also know that the basket of food, the cost of each food item and electricity, water and sanitation have increased drastically. We know these things because we live and experience them on a day to day basis.
14. While we know many of these things, we lack quantitative and qualitative studies because Stats SA hadn’t collected this data or when they wanted to collect it. At the last minute, such initiatives get cancelled because of a lack of resources.
15. Time and again, we warned against senseless budget cuts. Now come and want to allocate some money so that Stats SA can fill the critical posts that have been vacant since 2016 without a thorough impact assessment study is nothing but lip service.
16. Minus the once-off allocation that was also insufficient for the 2022 Census, allocation to Stats SA has declined. It will continue to decline, as shown by the average decline of more than 17% over the medium term.
17. We must do this to stabilise Stats SA and build a capable institution.
18. Number one, Stats SA must be an independent institution, away from manipulations and pressure of the government. It must be stand-alone like a Chapter 9 institution that issues data without fear or favour.
19. Number two, Parliament must look closely at the impact caused by many years of defunding of Stats SA, study the impact of prolonged vacancies of critical positions, cancellation of essential studies and come to a more practical funding for Stats SA instead of lip service.
20. Number three, Stats SA must be given a clear mandate to collect and disseminate data that should inform the beneficiation of mineral resources, job creation and industrialisation in South Africa.
21. Number four, Stats SA must be accessible to all, including schools, community-based organisations, NGOs, all political parties and traditional leaders. As the EFF, we say we must find Stats ZA in every municipal building accessible to all.
22. Number five, Stats SA must present to the public a clear, practical and implementable strategy to rebuild human resource capacity.
23. Lastly, SG, many verified field workers are not paid after doing the work. Many young people have come to the EFF Labour Desk to request our intervention to get their money.
24. We want to plead with you, to pay all field workers and set up clear and adequate communication processes to resolve as many of these unpaid claims by field workers as possible within the short space of time.
25. We hope this will be resolved as soon as possible. We cannot accept a budget failing to allocate enough resources to rebuild the Stats SA.