**SPEAKING NOTES - BUDGET VOTE HIGHER EDUCATION (17)**

**Honourable Chair**

1. The EFF rejects the Higher Education proposed austerity budget.
2. We must register as a point of departure that the budget for the Higher Education, Science and Innovation Sector is first and foremost a product of the feeble-minded economic policy that defines South Africa today.
3. By this we mean, there is a broader agenda in this country to chronically underfunded and cripple social welfare and developmental efforts, through cutting public spending with no reasonable prospects of achieving people-centered growth.
4. Education, the cornerstone of any society and a fundamental developmental indicator is a victim of this deliberate attempt to subject South Africa to permanent junior status in the world.
5. The budget plan tabled here and ratified by the Portfolio Committee on Higher Education is nothing but an endorsement of failure.
6. Failure that has defined this department ever since the so-called communist known as Mr. Blade Nzimande occupied the position over a decade ago when the department was formed.
7. We will outline this by pointing to specific non-plans, and how chronic underfunding during a pandemic that requires comprehensive reconstruction of how the sector operates, is a recipe for disaster
8. Firstly, we must note that to cut the baseline budget for higher education by 24.8 billion is indicative of a government that is allergic to knowledge production, which is of no surprise if we are to consider where the country finds itself in terms of the economy and unemployment
9. Year after year there is supposedly consultation within the higher education sector and civil society on what needs to be done to improve access to higher education while promoting academic excellence and quality research
10. Seemingly though, all of these consultations are for show, because none of these proposals manifest themselves pragmatically
11. Instead, stakeholders are ridiculed by a loud-hailing Minister who has led the charge of reducing intake at UNISA, one of the most technically ready institutions in Africa and the world, to adapt to distance learning and increase the intake of students into the sector during a pandemic
12. It is a Department that is complicit in cabinet reducing the allocation to NSFAS by R6.8 billion, reducing University subsidies by R5 billion, and a staggering R947.1 million reduction on TVET infrastructure grants
13. These palpably stupid decisions will result in institutions of higher learning having to drastically reduce their intake, meaning thousands of young people will be condemned to crime and drug abuse.
14. The cutting of TVET infrastructure grants means a continued abandonment of the vocational sector in a country that is desperately in need of vocationally qualified people to lead industrialisation, as seen in powerful nations such as China.
15. One wonders what the point of South Africa is being a member of BRICS if we can’t learn the most basic developmental lesson from our counterparts.
16. Instead of making meaningful change, Nzimande’s tenure has been characterised by the withholding of qualifications for over 106-thousand graduates, and there is no plan in his budgeting to alleviate this to allow for these students to register their post-graduate studies and transform the post-graduate sphere and apply for jobs properly.
17. As we are gathered here, the chronic underfunding of the South African Qualifications Authority has led to massive retrenchments and the entity's incapacity. This will allow bogus institutions to scam our people without reprieve and diminish the outputs of our academia qualitatively
18. We are left to seriously question when constructing their budget, who exactly is this department considering, and what is it that justifies this department being regarded as one that exists to facilitate the interests of higher education, science, innovation, and technology?
19. In their budgeting, there is no consideration of the need to make innovative and sophisticated contributions to science and innovation, further proving that this department is not worthy of the name it holds.
20. This is the department that is charged with developing South Africa’s own research to transform the state pharmaceutical company into a vaccine-producing company as per the very resolution of the ruling party.
21. Instead of doing this, to ensure that we can develop our vaccines and sophisticated medicine, it is a ruling party at war with itself and preoccupied with resolutions that are of no national consequence.
22. It is no wonder that the Ketlaphela Pharmaceutical project is a shell of an initiative that has wasted money because this government has never developed anything during its tenure.
23. It is simply a budget for the sake of it, formulated to tick administrative boxes while institutions of higher learning collapse awaiting disbursement of money supposedly budgeted for them.
24. It is a department defined by irregular expenditure, ghost employees, and ghost students who receive monies as proxies of corrupt officials.
25. It is a department that has failed to regulate the procurement of private security militia on campuses, that are paid millions to suppress the genuine cries of students, harass them, beat and kill them.
26. To endorse this budget when we know it is nothing, but a filing exercise would be to partake in a collective waste of the time of students of this country.
27. There needs to be a substantial increase in the funding allocated to this sector, and this will not happen through dependency on foreign direct investment or that seek to make us a colony of IMF and the world bank.
28. It will not happen through privatising SOEs and surrendering our capacity to private monopolies.
29. It will not happen through austerity.
30. It is only through a decisive redirection of our wealth, through nationalising of our minerals and establishment of a state bank whose interests are controlled by a developmental state, that education can become a viable sector with correct budgeting measures.
31. Outside of this, we are all engaged in a collective exercise of breathing hot air, and for this reason, the EFF rejects this budget.