Chairperson,

This department and its entities have had to scale Mount Everest during this past year. We’re all aware of that. We’re a developing country with many challenges. Challenges that have led to several frustrations with all this department has had to deliver.

We also believe that there are good people within this department and its entities, but that these good, honest, hardworking people are often left to fend for themselves, overworked, picking up slack because others do not do what they are supposed to. We also understand that THE GOOD these people try to do cannot filter down the ranks by their sheer will power alone. We commend these people and their efforts. You are seen and appreciated.

My colleague, hon. Breedt has relied heavily on you, as I am sure other colleagues have also done during this time.

This does not however give the department and its entities a “get out of jail free card” for all the mistakes, AGSA findings and worries South Africans have had to deal with when it comes to Social Development within South Africa.

Our acknowledgement of the challenges and successes this department and its entities have had should in no way be seen as an agreement with the way the ANC-government chooses to run the department by refusing to listen to sound logic and address the real issues of poverty and hunger within the country.

We do not agree that South Africa should be a welfare state as it currently is. It is unsustainable to have more than 25 million South Africans reliant on government grants. Grants are NOT the answer to South Africa’s poverty problems.

The minister herself recently said that should the Covid-SRD-Grant that has been paid up until April be made permanent or even extended it will be unsustainable, because there is no money left to pay for more extensions. And she’s correct, because if we don’t grow the economy and encourage and enable employment creation where will we get more money to pay for these grants?

She also said that if we do not extend the grant that people will riot, and South Africa will not be able to recover from that.

But who drove people to riot? Who taught the people that by burning and breaking success can be achieved? Who taught the people that frustration needs to be voiced through violence?

Was it not former President Nelson Mandela that in 1993 at a COSATU-conference said: “If the ANC does to you what the Apartheid government did to you, then you must do to the ANC what you did to the Apartheid government!”

This ANC-government that are now dumbstruck by these acts of violence.

This ANC-government has proven that it is not a responsible government. You should take action rather than hiding behind the past.

Take action against the entities that do not perform. Rather than blaming the past, take action against cadres, comrades, and family that are found guilty of fraud, corruption, double-dipping and all the other charges.

Chairperson, the piloting of SASSAs electronic application system for most grants and the online portal to book a doctor’s appointment for the disability grant should be made mention of. It is something that, on paper, is a step in the right direction towards cutting the queues at SASSA offices. This will also, hopefully, cut out visits to those offices (such as the Pretoria Church Street office) where people are treated without dignity and respect and sent back three, four, five, up to eight times, because for example the bank statement did not have that that specific day’s date stamp on it, but the previous days. This is a real example, and there are many more.

That being said, the South African reality is somewhat more challenging for a system like this. South Africa’s literacy rate has dropped 7% according to the last known statistics. The majority of South Africa is quite rural and access to internet is poor. Many people still do not have access to internet, be it a smart phone, home computer or even internet café. Our SASSA grant holders are those that are impacted most by these factors.

SASSA has promised to train staff in assisting people with the online system, but the reality is that SASSA is already short staffed, and a series of other questions also arise.

The NDA will most probably be thrown into the ring as an option, but its assistance to date has been non-existent and questions arise about this system and its feasibility

Chair, I have not even skimmed the surface of the issues and questions we are faced with on a daily basis, but I conclude with this remark:

Because of cadre deployment, corruption and skewed priorities, the Department of Social Development, SASSA, and the National Development Agency are not currently effecting the change that is necessary to create a better future in our country.

I thank you.