**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WEDNESDAY, 19 MAY**

**MINI PLENARIES (VIRTUAL)**

**10:00 – 12:15**

1. **Vote 22: Correctional Services
[Hon. CT Msimang]**

Honourable Speaker,

The IFP supports the mission and vision of the Department of Correctional Services in South Africa, to contribute to a just, peaceful, and safer South Africa.

We acknowledge the efforts made by the Department to rehabilitate offenders. The Department in its 2019/2020 Annual Report indicates that it has a total of 15 formal schools and two Private Partnership Facilities. We also note the improvements in the pass rates in these schools, with six schools registering a 100% pass rate in 2019.  The overall pass rates for all schools also improved, from 68.9% to 80% between 2014 and 2019. Despite these developments, the efforts exerted by the Department on rehabilitation are far from being comprehensive. South Africa - with an inmate population of 154 449 in the 2019/20 financial year - cannot pursue an inclusive rehabilitation programme with only 17 educational facilities.

It is also the view of the IFP that a Medium-Term Expenditure of R2 175.5 billion on rehabilitation - relative to R14 961.1 billion spent on incarceration - proves less commitment to the former programme by the Department.

Our concerns on this issue continue to fall on deaf ears.

The Department cites overcrowding as the source of most of its challenges. Statistics from their report in 2020 found that with an inmate population of 154 437, correctional centres were 32.25% overcrowded. However, the causes of overcrowding at Correctional Facilities are multiple, including an ineffective parole system and long trial periods. The IFP also notes with concern the excessive overcrowding percentages in Johannesburg Medium A, Allendale, Queenstown, Polokwane, with overcrowding rates above 100%.

The IFP is of the view that addressing the challenge of overcrowding needs a multi-pronged approach, and improving our justice system from the time a person is arrested, until they serve their sentence, could alleviate part of the problem. Tackling economic challenges that sometimes lead people into crime is equally vital.

The IFP is also concerned with corruption at different levels within the Department. SAPS Crime Intelligence have in the past arrested government officials from the Department of Correctional Services.  This is rather ironic, as the same officials that pledged their allegiance to promoting a just society and are the custodians of law and order, have been found to be working against their own mandate.

Corruption is unacceptable and we expect the Department of Correctional Services to lead by example.

The IFP supports the reduction of the Department’s baseline by R11 billion - the cuts will result in the reduction of personnel - but mostly of non-essential staff and those who will be lost through natural attrition.

The IFP supports the Budget Vote

I thank you.

1. **Vote 28, 24 & 21: Police (includes Independent Police Investigative Directorate and Civilian Secretariat for the Police Service)**

**[Hon. Z Majozi]**

Honourable Speaker,

The pandemic has accentuated the role of the SAPS in ensuring that government policy, aimed at securing and protecting the people of this country, is implemented. The IFP remains concerned by the thinly-stretched budget allocation for this critical agency, beyond the pandemic.

The IFP welcomes the more frequent reporting on crime statistics in the country, despite the worrying trends that were announced by the Police Minister last week. The country’s murder rate continues its climb, despite the lockdown regulations, with murders increasing exponentially across the nation. The IFP urges the SAPS to investigate and take appropriate action in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, where a dramatic rise in killings has been recorded. Addressing the murder rate in general requires a more effective approach from all agents in our justice system. Regarding this, the IFP believes that improved collaboration between all crucial actors will mitigate violent crime, including gender-based violence and femicide, and work on restoring public trust in our police service.

The IFP notes, with concern, the continued leadership issues that are affecting the Department’s ability to effectively fulfil its mandate. There is a desperate need for corrupt officials, at all levels, to be visibly held accountable and removed from positions of influence. This is another factor in the public’s distrust in the police.

The IFP wishes to express its disappointment at the state of the Forensic Sciences Laboratory (FSL), which remains a source of discontent amongst victims of crime. The FSL is unable to efficiently deal with its backlogs, resulting in delayed justice for far too many victims of violent, and other crimes. Further, this backlog is testament to the poor resourcing of the SAPS and the agencies that support its work, all to the detriment of the South African people.

The appointment of the Executive Director has provided IPID with the opportunity to regain lost ground and set the Department right. That being said, the IFP supports the request for a report into why the process of appointment took almost two years, particularly for such a crucial leadership role.

The inadequate resourcing of the IPID is a serious concern that has been raised by Parliament over the years. This poor resourcing has hampered the effectiveness of IPID and has led to a significant reduction in its geographic footprint, with numerous satellite offices across South Africa being forced to close. This means there are less boots on the ground to hold SAPS officers accountable, and more unscrupulous officers will operate with impunity in the face of misconduct. IPID cannot be allowed to fail due to a lack of resources.

The IFP urges SAPS to use all its available resources to ensure that crime rates decrease, that IPID can fulfil its mandate, and so that the public can know that SAPS is capable of meeting its constitutional mandate to guarantee the safety and security of all who live in this country.

The IFP supports the Budget.

I thank you.

1. **Vote 6: International Relations and Cooperation**

**[Hon. MM Hlengwa]**

*Awaiting debate*

**MINI PLENARIES (VIRTUAL)**

**16:30 – 18:45**

1. **Vote 11, 7 & 12: Public Service and Administration (National School of**

**Government and Public Service Commission)**

 **[Hon. R Cebekhulu]**

Honourable Members, the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic has placed an immense economic strain on our resources. However, it cannot be used as an excuse for failing to use available Government funds effectively and economically, as our Government is constitutionally mandated to do.

We therefore need to carefully analyse how these resources are used to serve the public in these strenuous times.

The National School of Governance’s funding has been severely impacted by the pandemic. The NSG’s education, training and development initiatives fulfil an important role in providing public servants with desperately needed human resource skills. According to the Auditor-General’s *2019-2020 Consolidated General Report*, the Human Resource Management of 39% of Government Departments was still of concern. We therefore cannot allow the NSG’s training programmes to be compromised. The IFP therefore supports the Committee’s recommendation that the NSG should continue to engage National Treasury on exploring alternative funding models and especially use e-online resources effectively and efficiently to provide their training programmes.

Honourable Members, turning to the Annual Performance Plan and Budget of the Department of Public Service and Administration – we need to remind ourselves of this Department’s mandate yet again.  The Department is mandated to put in place mechanisms and structures to support departments and, importantly, develop their professional ethos. However, the Department is glaringly slow to put in place such mechanisms and structures. The Department has been assigned to develop guidelines for lifestyle audits in the public service. The development of such guidelines has been talked about for years. This was already a subject of discussion in the debate on the State of the Nation Address in Parliament in 2018. This cannot simply be further delayed. Finalising these guidelines must be a top priority. The IFP therefore fully supports the Committee’s recommendation that the Department should present their progress reports before March 2022. We further support the Committee’s recommendation that the Department should finalise the second phase of regulations on the *Public Administration Act* of 2014. This sluggish progress in effective legislative changes and developing policies cannot be accepted.

Honourable Members, the Public Service Commission’s custodial oversight of Public Service is critical in ensuring that public administration adheres to constitutional principles. It is therefore imperative that the draft *Public Service Commission Bill*, which was recently published by the Minister for public comment, should be fast-tracked. The IFP also fully supports the Committee’s recommendation that the Public Service Commission should be more proactive, and should put in place a system to monitor adherence to prescripts relating to the appointment and recruitment of personnel in the public service.

Honourable Members, we need to remind ourselves that the cost of corruption and misgovernance is felt the deepest by our most vulnerable citizens, who are highly dependent on a functioning Government for the most basic services. We cannot allow any loopholes in enforcing accountability in the public sector.

The IFP fully supports Budget Votes 7, 11 and 12.

1. **Vote 16: Basic Education
[Hon. S Ngcobo]**

Honourable Members,

The Department of Basic Education is critical to the future of our country. As such, anything that happens to this Department has immediate and long-term implications for South Africa.

It is sad that this Department has been one of the biggest casualties of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Since 2020, our children have not received meaningful learning, due to ongoing disruptions to their learning as a result of the pandemic. They have been deprived, for the most part, of their right to learn due to the lockdown.

This has implications for the future direction of this country. As such, one would have expected a robust response from this Department to the pandemic. One would have expected all funds made available to this Department to be utilised optimally to ensure the provision of quality basic education for all children.

However, the Department has not fully mitigated the implications of the pandemic due to uncertainties in its response. As a result, rural learners have mostly lost out, putting their future in jeopardy and increasing inequalities.

The IFP calls on this Department to fulfil its medium-term plans to provide proper school infrastructure, high-quality support materials for learners and teachers, and to provide nutritious meals for learners. It goes without saying that the economic implications of the pandemic have a negative effect on our poor communities and that our learners look to this Department for the provision of not only their education but also their meals. This Department must not let them down.

The Department must deliver on its promise to provide learners with access to appropriate and safe infrastructure at schools, through the Education Infrastructure Backlogs Grant. It is unacceptable that more than 20 years into this democracy, we still face the shameful reality of mud schools and open pit toilets, which not only ravage the dignity of our learners but also cause tragic losses of lives. This is an indictment on this Department and the Government.

The Department must thrive to make it possible for our rural learners to receive quality education. The conditions of our rural learners must be improved so that they don’t have to walk long distances to school. The scholar transport obligation must be fulfilled, as ordered by the High Court in KwaZulu-Natal.

The conditions of work for our teachers must also be improved, to enable them to deliver fully on their promise to educate this nation. Hence, textbooks and other necessities must never be in short supply and should arrive on time.

The Department must go back to basics, as its name suggests. Getting the basics right in this Department will go a long way in enhancing basic education in this country.

Honourable Members, the IFP accepts this Budget.

1. **Vote 8: National Treasury
[Hon. EM Buthelezi]**

Honourable Chairperson,

For the second time in a row, we are meeting under difficult circumstances, as a result of the global health emergency caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The pandemic has shown us the importance of the national purse in protecting the nation through availing funds for the procurement of vaccines, and closing the socio-economic gap created by the pandemic. The efforts of the National Treasury have helped to protect socio-economic rights through the funding of emergency programmes.

Despite our immediate health challenges brought about by Covid-19, this nation must move on. We note and appreciate the willingness of this Department, through its proposed Budget, to review the tax policy, support economically-integrated cities and communities, develop infrastructure and make government procurement more efficient and inclusive. We also note that this Budget seeks to facilitate international and regional cooperation.

The IFP has always made its position known that inclusive economic growth and reindustrialisation depend on lowering taxes to decrease the cost of doing business and to make our country appealing to foreign direct investment. We reiterate that economic growth will come from inclusive policies and strategies, and that it will not come from overly taxing our people and businesses.

While noting that the proposed review of the tax policy seeks to eliminate tax loopholes, the IFP does not believe that our Budget shortfalls will be met by increasing taxes year-in and year-out. Instead, the IFP believes that lower taxes will drive economic growth, but only when utilised appropriately and not squandered. In this regard, the Department must do its part under the Constitution.

As the engine that drives our economy and funds public programmes, this Department must thrive in order to fulfil its mandate as per section 216(1) of the Constitution. It must ensure transparency, accountability and sound financial controls in the management of South Africa’s public finances.

However, it appears that this Department has fallen short of this obligation, as illustrated by the squandering of Covid-19 emergency funds. National Treasury must be vigilant to ensure that our hard-earned taxes do not fall into the hands of opportunists who have no regard for the national interest and the plight of our people.

The IFP believes that at the heart of this Department’s Budget should be an unwavering commitment to creating opportunities for the youth, most of whom are unemployed. The Department must take their plight into consideration, and build and maintain an economic policy that ensures that our youth are taken care of in the economy and given opportunities to thrive. The National Treasury must support state entities that will deliver on this objective. We call on National Treasury to promote economic growth, social development and reduce poverty through proper allocation of funds to government departments and efficient oversight of the national purse.

The IFP supports this Budget.