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**PROCEEDINGS OF VIRTUAL MINIPLINARY**

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Members of the mini-plenary session met on the virtual platform at 10:00.

House Chairperson Mr W Horn took the Chair and requested members to observe a moment of silence for prayer or meditation.

House Chairperson Mr W Horn announced that the virtual mini-plenary sitting constituted a meeting of the National Assembly.

**THE URGENT NEED FOR ENHANCED PROTECTION MEASURES FOR  
WHISTLEBLOWERS AND WITNESSES IN HIGH-PROFILE CASES**

(Subject for discussion)

Mr O M MATHAFA: Good morning, Chair, good morning, members and guests on the call. Chair, the debate before this House is

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about the urgent measures needed to enhance protection for whistleblowers and witnesses in high-profile cases. The essence of this debate is about the protection of whistleblowers in general.

It is common cause that our country is grappling with the serious challenges of corruption. The evidence presented before the Zondo Commission, its findings and recommendations, as well as the Nugent Commission of Inquiry on SA Revenue Service, Sars, to mention a few, are critical points of reference on the depth of corruption in our country.

In addition, the hearings of both the Ad Hoc Committee and the Madlanga Commission investigating allegations made by Lt-Gen Nhlanhla Mkhwanazi also paint a painful picture regarding crime and corruption in our country, and worse, this time within the law enforcement agencies.

To make matters worse, some of the witnesses who appeared before the Madlanga Commission have been assassinated. We know of the brutal killing of Ms Babita Deokaran, who was a hard-working single mother and chief accountant at the Gauteng Department of Health, killed in August 2021 outside her home.

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Her sin was to blow a whistle on the criminality that was taking place.

In this regard, the Special Investigating Unit, through a proclamation by the President, has published a report on their investigation on the Tembisa Hospital corruption. The Special Investigating Unit, SIU observed that the investigation highlights a comprehensive disregard for duty by officials at Tembisa Hospital and the Department of Health. Those responsible for procurement ignored fundamental regulations. Accounting officers abdicated their oversight role entirely.

The SIU report further observes that the failure of officials to perform their duties allowed for the unchecked spending of public funds, with no verification of whether what was procured was necessary or represented fair value for the state.

In essence, officials were active participants in malpractice or turned a blind eye, effectively allowing the public purse to be looted through a combination of maladministration and collusion with third parties.

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Babita Deokaran was not part of these public servants who actively participated in the malpractice. She did not turn a blind eye on the corruption that was taking place in Tembisa Hospital, where public money was looted to the detriment of the people for whom the services were intended for.

Hon members, when the President addressed the joint sitting of Parliament in his Sona, he said that we will finalise government's approach to the recommendation of the National Anti-Corruption Advisory Council on the establishment of a permanent independent overarching anti-corruption board.

The President further said that we cannot accept that those who speak against corruption are victimised and targeted. The Whistleblower Protection Bill will be introduced in Parliament, among other things. This will criminalise retaliation and provide psychosocial, legal and financial support to whistleblowers.

Hon members, it is perfectly obvious that the President is chiefly concerned about the protection of whistleblowers in the fight against corruption, as we are also concerned. We are encouraged by the commitment by the President that the

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Whistleblower Protection Bill will be introduced in Parliament.

Our firm belief is that the Bill will tighten our legislative resolve in ensuring that protection and support of whistleblowers as part of our fight against crime and corruption.

Hon members, corruption remains a serious concern for us as the ANC, and it requires concerted efforts to address it.

Corruption militates against the objectives of our government of addressing unemployment, inequality and poverty. The monies that got looted through corruption are intended for service delivery to our people. Our people are denied health services, safety, education, housing etc because of dirty hands of criminals on public money.

There are existing legislation and international conventions to provide a legal framework in the fight against corruption, in the fight against the endemic scourge of corruption, which undermines all areas of society's development. South Africa is a signatory to the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

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The convention contains measures to protect the physical safety of whistleblowers. Domestically, South Africa has passed several statutes which provide a measure of protection, but there is no integrated matrix of protection for whistleblowers. Legislation which deals specifically with the protection of whistleblowers is the Protected Disclosure Act 26 of 2000.

The Act only protects a whistleblower against unfair treatment and detriment in the workplace. Our hope is that the coming Whistleblower Protection Bill will close some of the existing legislation gaps to tighten protection of whistleblowers in the fight against corruption.

I thank you very much for the opportunity, Chair.

Mr M MANYI: Chairperson, greetings to everybody on the platform. House Chairperson, South Africa stands today at dangerous crossroads. We are a country that publicly claims to fight corruption, yet we remain a country where those who expose corruption often pay with their livelihoods, their safety, and sometimes their lives.

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The subject before this House, the urgent need for enhanced protection measures for whistleblowers and witnesses, is therefore not just a technical issue. It is a test whether the South African state truly wants the truth to come out. And sadly, under the so-called Government of National Unity, the answer is becoming increasingly clear. This government is comfortable with corruption remaining hidden because those who expose it remain unprotected.

Chairperson, over the past decade, South Africans have witnessed a chilling pattern. Individuals who step forward to expose corruption and criminality inside the state or corporate South Africa are left completely exposed.

We all remember the courageous individuals who testified during the Zondo Commission. Many of them risked everything. But once the cameras were switched off and the hearings ended, the state also disappeared. Some whistleblowers lost their jobs, some were financially ruined, some were forced into exile, and tragically, some paid with their lives.

One of the most painful examples that I'm sure everybody in South Africa will remember is that of Babita Deokaran, who

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exposed corruption in the Tembisa Hospital. She was brutally murdered outside her home.

Chairperson, that was not simply a criminal act. It was an indictment of the South African state. A state that cannot protect those who defend public resources is a state that has surrendered itself to criminal networks.

But the problem is not simply with protection, Chairperson. The deeper problem is political will, something that is totally absent in this so-called Government of National Unity, GNU. This so-called GNU administration speaks endlessly and passionately about fighting corruption, yet the practical systems required to protect those who expose corruption remain weak, fragmented, and ineffective.

In fact, they are totally absent. People are on their own. The Protected Disclosure Act exists only on paper, but in reality, it has proven grossly inadequate. It offers legal theory, but no physical protection. It offers procedural comfort, but no financial security. It offers promises, but no enforcement power.

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As a result, whistleblowers are forced to make an impossible choice, remain silent and survive, or speak the truth and risk everything. Why is that even necessary? That is the moral crisis facing this country.

Chairperson, let us be honest about the consequences of this government that is not taking this matter seriously. When whistleblowers are not protected, corruption flourishes. When witnesses are intimidated, criminal syndicates penetrate the state. When the investigators are undermined, justice collapses.

This is precisely why South Africa today faces an explosion of organised crime, from procurement corruption to infrastructure sabotage to criminal infiltration of law enforcement. The situation that we are seeing in the Madlanga Commission is spine-chilling. A state that cannot protect truth tellers cannot defeat corruption.

The MK party therefore rejects the empty rhetoric of the so-called Government of National Unity. This coalition was sold to South Africa as a stabilising force. Yet on issue after issue, it doesn't matter what it is, from economic recovery, which is a disaster, to public safety, which we've seen the

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numbers last week that they are a total mess, it has produced paralysis instead of reform.

Instead of decisive leadership, we see political compromise. Instead of bold reform, we see bureaucratic delay. Instead of protecting whistleblowers, we see a system where those who steal from the public purse continue to operate with impunity.

Chairperson, the MK party as a government-in-waiting that believes that protecting whistleblowers is not merely a legal requirement, it is a pillar of democratic accountability. When the MK party assumes the responsibility of governing this country, very soon, we'll implement a decisive four-pillar programme.

First, we'll establish a fully independent national whistleblower protection authority. This authority will not sit buried inside a department. It will have statutory independence, its own investigative powers, and the authority to provide immediate protection to whistleblowers and witnesses. Not this rhetoric we've just heard.

Secondly, whistleblowers will receive state-funded protection comparable to witness protection programmes used in organised

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crime prostitutions. Protection will include the following four things, physical security, relocation when necessary, legal representation and lastly financial assistance, because the reality is simple. You cannot ask citizens to expose corruption while leaving them financially and physically vulnerable. It's absurd!

Thirdly, the MK party will introduce severe criminal penalties for retaliation against whistleblowers. If an employer dares to dismiss intimidate or victimise a whistleblower, that will no longer be treated as a minor labour dispute in the government of the MK party. It will be treated as a criminal offense against the integrity of the state.

Fourthly, whistleblowers who help recover stolen funds will be entitled to financial compensation mechanisms, ensuring that those who defend the public purse are not left destitute, as it's currently happening because protecting whistleblowers is not charity. It is an investment in the integrity of the republic.

Chairperson, countries that successfully fight corruption do not do so by speeches that Mr Ramaphosa does every day. They do so by protecting those who bring the truth forward. When

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whistleblowers feel safe, corruption networks collapse. When witnesses feel protected, prosecution succeeds.

When the truth is protected, democracy is strengthened. The tragedy of the present moment is that South Africans have lost faith that the government has the courage to implement these reforms. This so-called Government of National Unity is just a showman. It appears more focused on marginal political alliances than confronting corruption networks. They are just busy trying to survive as a coalition that is unsustainable. But the MK party represents a different future, a bright future, a future where the truth is protected, a future where those who steal from the people face consequences, and a future where citizens who defend public resources are honoured, not abandoned, like is currently happening with so-called GNU.

A nation that abandons its whistleblowers abandons justice itself. The MK party refuses to accept that future. We stand here ready to build a state where the truth is protected, corruption is punished, and justice is not selected.

That is the government South Africans deserve. We hope that in the upcoming elections, there will be no vote rigging so that

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the true will of the people, which was expressed on 24 May 2024, that, that truth is realised. The people of South Africa have made their mark to say they want the MK party to govern them, but the vote rigging denied them. We hope that going forward that the mess will be sorted out and the people will get the government they deserve, the MK party government. I submit.

Thank you, Chair.

Mr N T TSHOTETSI: Hon House Chair, hon members of this august House and South Africans that are following these proceedings, I rise today to speak on one of the most pressing requirements for rebuilding trust in our institutions and securing the future that we all want for our children, fostering a culture of disclosure and incentivising whistleblowers in the fight against corruption.

We meet at the moment when several independent processes are still unfolding. The Madlanga Commission of Inquiry into the criminality, political interference and corruption in the criminal justice system continues its work. One of those is the Ad Hoc Committee examining the serious allegations raised by Lieutenant General Nhlanhla Mkhwanazi is likewise

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proceeding with the care and thoroughness that the matters before it deserves.

These are vital, constitutionally mandated inquiries. They deserve and receive our full respect. Nothing said here today is intended to prejudge, interfere with or anticipate their findings. Rather, the reflections I offer are meant to support the broader national effort to strengthen transparency, accountability, and protection of those who courageously lift the veil on wrongdoing.

Corruption is not an abstract policy challenge; it is a direct assault on the living conditions of ordinary people. Every rand stolen through inflated tenders, ghost workers and kickbacks is a rand taken from the clinic without medicine, a classroom without textbooks, a family waiting for a house, or a young person desperately searching for their first job.

The Special Investigating Unit, SIU, and other bodies have repeatedly shown that billions are lost annually. Those losses fall heaviest in the poorest households, the very people that the democratic government was established to serve and uplift. When corruption flourishes, inequality deepens, social

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cohesion frails, and the faith on the democratic system itself weakens.

That is why whistleblowers matter so profoundly. They are not troublemakers, but they are the guardians. They step forward often alone because they believe that the public interest outweighs the personal comfort and safety. Yet the reality they face is harsh. We remember the likes of Babita Deokaran, the courageous supply chain manager who uncovered massive irregularities at the Tembisa Hospital. We remember others who have been intimidated, dismissed, isolated or forced into exile. Each case is a wound on the body of our democracy. Each case sends a chilling message that you speak out, and you pay a heavy price. We cannot allow this message to stand.

The first and most important task is to foster a genuine culture of disclosure. Disclosure must become normal, not exceptional or a heroic in a dramatic sense, but an ordinary expected part of responsible citizenship and public service. To achieve that cultural shift, we need sustained education. Schools should teach young people that reporting wrongdoing, when done in good faith, is an expression of patriotism. Workplace, both public and private, should run regular

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awareness programmes. Communities should hear consistent messaging that transparency protects everyone.

Technology can help in this regard. Secure, encrypted, anonymous reporting channels ... [Interjections.] [Inaudible.] ... and independently overseen, lower the practical barriers and reduce immediate risk. Several countries have shown that accessible digital platforms dramatically increase the volume of quality ... [Interjections.]

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr W Horn): Hon Tshotetsi, my apologies. Hon members, specifically the hon Gwabaza, if you are not about to speak, please remain muted. Hon Tshotetsi, please continue.

Mr N T TSHOTETSI: The second pillar is incentivisation. When a disclosure leads to a recovery of significant public funds or the prevention of major loss, it is only fair that a person who provided information receives meaningful recognition. International experience, most notably the United States False Claims Act, demonstrates that a structured reward system, typically between 10% to 30% of the recovered amount can generate billions in savings for the public purse while encouraging high-quality reporting.

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In our context, we could design a carefully calibrated scheme, perhaps between 10% to 20% of verified recoveries, subject, of course, to strict verification, independent adjudication, and safeguards against vexatious and fraudulent claims. The purpose is not to commercialise whistleblowing; it is to recognise sacrifice, balance risk, and create a powerful economic incentive against corruption itself.

Thirdly, we must criminalise retaliation unambiguously and severely. The forthcoming Whistleblower Protection Bill, as signalled in the recent policy statement, provides a critical opportunity. Retaliation, whether dismissal, demotion, harassment, threats, or violence should constitute a standalone criminal offence. Penalties should reflect the gravity of the act. Substantial imprisonment, particularly where life or safety is endangered. A reverse onus provision in appropriate cases requiring employer or accused party to prove that the adverse action was unrelated to the disclosure could help overcome the immense evidentiary burden whistleblowers currently face.

Fourthly, protection must be holistic. Legal safeguards alone are not enough. Psychosocial support is essential. Many

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whistleblowers suffer serious traumas. They suffer anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress. We need dedicated counselling services, trauma-informed care, and peer support networks, ideally co-ordinated through expanded public mental health framework.

Legal support must be readily available. Free or subsidised representation priority, access to Legal Aid SA where necessary, and mechanisms to protect identity from the moment a report is made.

Financial support is equally vital. A whistleblower who loses employment may face immediate hardship. Interim income protection, relocation assistance for those who are under threats and compensation for provable losses would prevent ruin and demonstrate that society stands behind those who stand for society. A dedicated whistleblower support fund, possibly capitalised in part from recovered corruption assets, could make these commitments sustainable and visible.

In shaping these measures, we should draw guidance from the United Nations Convention Against Corruption, which South Africa ratified in 2004. Article 33 thereof requires states to consider appropriate measures to provide protection against

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any unjustified treatment for individuals who report corruption in good faith. Article 32 thereof addresses witness protection more broadly.

After more than 20 years, it is time to close the implementation gap by aligning our domestic law and practice more closely to the United Nations Convention Against Corruption and with African Union Convention on Prevention and Combating of Corruption. We would not only meet our international obligation, but we would also be positioning South Africa as a credible leader on the continent in the fight for clean governance.

These four focused areas - culture, incentives, criminalisation of retaliation, and comprehensive support - do not stand alone. They connect directly to the wider national priorities. Corruption undermines climate adaptation when funds for resilient infrastructure disappear. It stifles youth employment when training and enterprise development budgets are diverted. It deepens gender inequality when women who report abuse or irregular procurements face compounded risk. Addressing corruption through ... [Time expired.] ... Thank you very much.

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Mr D D KLOPPER: Hon House Chair and hon members of the National Assembly, I rise today on behalf of the DA to debate an issue that strikes at the very heart of our constitutional democracy: The urgent need for enhanced protection measures for whistle-blowers and witnesses in high-profile cases.

South Africa is a constitutional state founded on accountability, transparency and the rule of law. Yet in recent years, we have witnessed a chilling and deeply disturbing trend, those who expose corruption and criminality are often threatened, intimidated, harassed and even murdered. When whistle-blowers are silenced, ...

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr W Horn): ... hon Klopper, hon Klopper ...

Mr D D KLOPPER: ... corruption thrives. When witnesses are targeted, justice is obstructed. When the state fails ...

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr W Horn): ... hon Klopper, hon Klopper.

Mr D D KLOPPER: Yes, House Chair. I can hear you.

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The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr W Horn): My apologies. Please, switch off ... yes, thank you. Well, allow for your video feed to remain switched off to enhance connectivity. We didn't hear you. Please, proceed.

Mr D D KLOPPER: My apologies, hon House Chair. When whistle-blowers are silenced corruption thrives. When witnesses are targeted, justice is obstructed. When the state fails in its duty to protect those who speak the truth, the rule of law itself is severely undermined.

We recall the tragic case of Babita Deokaran, who was assassinated in August 2021, after flagging suspicious COVID-19 procurement contracts within the Gauteng Department of Health. She was not killed because she committed wrongdoing, she was killed because she exposed it. The minor players in this assassination now languish in prison after pleading guilty. The kingpins, however, remain free. Some in this House are reportedly beneficiaries of that corruption, but here we sit.

More recently, we saw the murder of Marius van der Merwe, known as Witness-D, who testified at the Madlanga Commission. He was gunned down outside his home in December 2025, shortly

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after co-operating with investigators and incriminating high-profile players. We remember Pamela Mabini and Jimmy Mohlala, also murdered for blowing the lid off corruption.

These are not isolated incidents. They are symptoms of a much deeper crisis, a state that continues to fail to protect those who help expose corruption. A mafia state. We have consistently warned that corruption is not merely about stolen money, it is about weakened institutions, compromised law enforcement and a climate of fear. When corruption networks feel emboldened enough to target whistle-blowers, it reflects systemic failure in a mafia state.

South Africa does have legislation intended to offer protection. It has, however, proven to be insufficient, unwieldy and desperately requires upgrading and more teeth. The Protected Disclosures Act 26 of 2000, was designed to shield employees from occupational detriment when they disclose wrongdoing. It does not adequately address physical safety, relocation or long-term financial security for those who suffer retaliation beyond the workplace.

The Witness Protection Act 112 of 1998, provides mechanisms for protecting individuals who testify in criminal proceedings

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or commissions of inquiry yet its scope is limited, its processes are slow and many whistle-blowers fall through the cracks because they are not formally enrolled in witness protection at the right time or because threats emerge before proceedings begin.

In practice, we have a fragmented system. What we need is an integrated, proactive, much more sophisticated and properly funded protection framework. The DA has long advocated for stronger anticorruption mechanisms and independent oversight structures. We have introduced a Private Member's Bill to enable the establishment of an independent anticorruption agency, insulated from political interference as recommended by the Constitutional Court in the Glenister judgements.

There has been a disappointing lack of enthusiasm to address this issue. However, an institutional reform must go hand in hand with protecting the individuals who provide evidence to those institutions. President Ramaphosa has indicated that a new Whistle-blower Protection Bill will be introduced. That is welcome but legislation must not be cosmetic. It must be robust, enforceable, and more importantly, adequately resourced.

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The blame lies squarely on the state. Hon members, we, in this House, are that state. We have collectively failed to protect South Africans who have done the right thing. As long as we sit here and only talk about it, we remain complicit. In our view, there are five key reforms that must be prioritised.

Firstly, retaliation against whistleblowers must be explicitly criminalised with mandatory minimum consequences. Those who target whistleblowers must know there will be swift and serious repercussions.

Secondly, protection must extend beyond workplace remedies. It must include physical security assessments, relocation where necessary, identity protection and support for immediate family members.

Thirdly; we need a dedicated, independent whistle-blower protection office, not one buried within a department susceptible to political pressure but one accountable to Parliament with transparent reporting requirements.

Fourthly, financial support mechanisms must be created. Many whistle-blowers face ruin, legal costs, loss of employment and

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blacklisting in their sectors. Courage should not result in destitution.

Lastly, we must strengthen oversight of the Witness Protection Programme and ensure it is insulated from political interference, properly funded and subject to independent parliamentary scrutiny.

The reality is that whistle-blowers have succeeded where state institutions failed. It was whistleblowers who exposed state capture. It was whistle-blowers who revealed procurement corruption during the pandemic. It was whistle-blowers who provided the evidence that commissions of inquiry relied upon. And yet, too many of those individuals were left isolated and vulnerable.

The DA stands ready to work constructively in this House to strengthen legislation, enhance oversight and ensure that protection mechanisms are real, not theoretical. We will also hold the executive accountable because announcing reforms is not enough. Implementation is what saves lives. Sustainable and reliable witness protection cannot be done on a shoestring budget. Corruption cannot be brought under control and eradicated on a shoestring budget.

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The Department of Justice has received an additional allocation of R1,5 billion. This is a good place to start. If we are serious, we must demonstrate it and put our money where our mouth is. Thank you, House Chair.

Mr M KHOZA: We take this opportunity to greet the commander-in-chief and president of the EFF, commissars, fighters, the downtrodden masses of our people in South Africa, Africa and the diaspora. We are angry. We are angry because whistle-blowers in South Africa continue to be hunted, intimidated and brutally killed for exposing corruption. Yet justice remained delayed or completely absent.

We are angry that in Bombela, Mpumalanga, Comrade Jimmy Mohlala, the Speaker of Council in Bombela Municipality, was brutally shot in his home in 2009, in front of his family after exposing corruption linked to the corruption of the Bombela Stadium for the 2010 Fifa World Cup. He stood firm against corruption. For the courage he had, he was, therefore, executed so that criminals could continue stealing public money and live luxurious life.

We are angry, House Chair, that in the same province of Mpumalanga, Comrade James Nkambule died in 2010, after

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exposing the same corruption connected to the 2010 Fifa World Cup stadium construction. Two people exposed the same corruption and both are now dead, while those who benefited from the looting continue to drive luxury vehicles and enjoy proceeds of corruption.

We are angry that in Rustenburg, in the North West Province, Councillor Moss Phakoe was gunned down at his home after exposing corruption within the Rustenburg Municipality. He spoke the truth about corruption in local government and the reward he received from his broken system was assassination, while the corrupt continue enriching themselves from public funds.

We are angry that in Gauteng, in the City of Ekurhuleni, Marius van der Merwe, a former Ekurhuleni metropolitan police officer and witness before the Madlanga Commission, was brutally killed at his home. A man was prepared to assist the truth. He was silenced permanently so that corruption networks could remain protected. We are well aware, it is revealed that people continue to kill the innocent for them to get the Brazilian Butt Lifts, BBLs, that they get from these solicited monies.

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We know that they continue killing our people because they want to go to Turkey to put the BBLs and these artificial teeth. Our people remain dying and silent because of the ruthless and heartless officials that continue leaking the names of the whistleblowers. We are angry, that also in the same Ekurhuleni, Gauteng, Mpho Mafole, the city group provisional head of corporate and forensic audit, was found in his car, riddled with gunshot wounds after exposing corruption in the municipality. He was doing his job, exposing theft of public money. Yet he paid with his life while those responsible for corruption continue spending public resources to fund lavish lifestyle, which is ruthless.

We are angry that in the same province of Gauteng, Babita Deokaran was assassinated after exposing corruption linked to procurement at Tembisa Hospital. She identified suspicious payment and irregular contracts during the COVID-19 period and protecting public money. She was brutally murdered, while those who benefited from the corruption continue enjoying the fruits of stolen public funds.

We are angry that in Mangaung, in the Free State province, Xola Banisi was gunned down after receiving threats following its exposure of corruption in municipal tenders. Instead of protection, he received bullets because corruption in this

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country has become protected by violence. House Chair, the message in South Africa today is clear, if you expose corruption, you risk your life. That is the reality faced by whistleblowers in municipalities, hospitals, police departments and public institutions across the country.

The EFF, therefore, demands real protection not empty statements after funerals and not policies that are not implemented. The EFF calls for South Africa and the government to establish an independent whistle-blower protection authority that is free from political interference and separate from the SA Police Service, because we know the blue brigade is captured together with its Ministers who always come to Parliament to tell us nothing, who are not ashamed of standing up in Parliament to say absolutely nothing. Therefore, this unit must be separated from the corrupt SA Police Service.

We demand that a high risk whistle-blower must receive automatic entry into a strengthened witness protection programme, including relocation and guaranteed income support. A whistle-blower solidarity fund must be established and financed directly from recovered corruption fund. An official

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who leaks the identity of whistle-blowers must face mandatory prison sentence.

House Chair, protecting whistle-blowers is not charity, it is defence of democracy itself. When the truth becomes dangerous, democracy is in crisis. The EFF refuses to accept a South Africa where courage is punished and criminals are rewarded. We are angry and our anger will not ... [Inaudible.] ... until whistle-blowers are protected and corruption is defeated. I thank you. [Time expired.]

Inkosi R N CEBEKHULU: House Chairperson, the IFP supports enhanced protection measures for whistle-blowers and witnesses. They are a vital component of oversight in addressing serious malfeasance, both within government and throughout the private sector. Both are highly vulnerable to retaliation. Thus, it would be contrary to our values if such protections were reserved only for a selected few in high-profile cases.

Protecting them is not just a legal obligation. It is a moral imperative. It sends a message that South Africa values those who stand for truth and accountability.

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Our Constitution is unequivocal in affirming that all are equal before the law. Therefore, these safeguards must be applied fairly and consistently to every person who seeks the protection of justice. We must carefully weigh what is the best way forward and on which level we should act to better protect them.

Speaking up in South Africa often comes with a high price. This silence is deeply rooted in a painful legacy – the stigma of being labelled as an impimpi, an informant under apartheid. To this day, whistle-blowing is still viewed by many, not as courage, but as betrayal. This perception has made it even harder to hold the wrongdoers to account.

The IFP believes that if we are serious about dismantling corruption, we must also dismantle this stigma. We must protect, not punish whistle-blowers and witnesses. That means enacting strong legal safeguards.

Firstly, anonymity must be guaranteed. People must feel safe to report wrongdoing without the fear of being exposed.

Secondly, job security must be protected. Fear of dismissal, demotion or blacklisting, silences far too many.

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Thirdly, legal support must be accessible. Whistle-blowers often face long legal battles against powerful institutions. They cannot and should not face that fight alone.

We must establish an independent whistle-blower protection authority with the mandate and resources to provide legal advice, advocacy and support throughout the entire process.

As the legislative arm of government, it is our duty to close these gaps. We can no longer delay. The lives and future of real people are at stake. It is important to highlight the fact that lives are at stake and decisive interventions to help those who speak up is an integral part of developing a lawful society. I thank you, Chair.

Ms J S PETERSEN: Chair and hon members, today we debate something that lies at the heart of justice itself – the protection of those brave enough to speak the truth.

Across South Africa, whistle-blowers and witnesses play a critical role in exposing corruption, the abuse of power and criminal activity. Without them, many of the most serious crimes in our society would never come to light.

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Yet, the reality is deeply troubling. Those who step forward to tell the truth often become the ones who suffer the most. Instead of protection, they face intimidation. Instead of safety, they face threats. And, in some tragic cases, they even face death.

High-profile investigations, including those revealed during the Zondo Commission, show just how essential whistle-blowers are in uncovering wrongdoing at the highest levels of power. However, these same cases also expose something else. Our systems are failing to protect them.

When whistle-blowers risk their jobs, their safety and sometimes their lives to reveal the truth, the state has a moral and legal duty to protect them. Yet, many whistle-blowers report that existing protections are weak, slow and ineffective. Some lose their livelihoods, others are forced into hiding, many live in constant fear.

Ask yourselves this. How can justice prevail if the people who hold the evidence are too afraid to speak? If witnesses and whistle-blowers are not adequately protected, corruption will flourish in the shadows, criminal networks will grow stronger

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and powerful individuals will continue to act without action  
...

Enhanced protection measures are not optional. They are urgent. We need stronger witness protection programmes, faster legal safeguards for whistle-blowers, and meaningful financial and security support for those who come forward.

Most importantly, there must be real accountability for anyone who intimidates or harms them, because when we fail to protect whistle-blowers, we are not just failing individuals; we are failing justice itself.

If we want transparency, accountability and the rule of law to survive in South Africa, we must ensure that those who expose the truth are not left to stand alone. Protect the truth tellers and you protect democracy. Thank you.

Mrs H DENNER: Chair, the 2026 state of the nation address served as a grim reminder of a Presidency defined by recycled promises and lethal inaction. For four consecutive years, President Ramaphosa has stood at the podium, first in 2022, then in 2023, 2024 and now again in 2026, offering the same assurances that whistle-blower protection is a priority. Yet,

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while these speeches are polished for public consumption, the brave men and women who expose the rot of corruption are being hunted and killed with terrifying frequency.

Talk is cheap, but for those standing in the gap the cost of this and the previous administration's paralysis is blood. The trail of bodies left behind by this failure is an indictment of the soul of the organisation that has been in power for 30 plus years.

We remember Babita Deokaran, executed outside her home for exposing personal protective equipment, PPE, corruption. Since the President's first promise in 2022, the list of the fallen has grown to include Cloete and Thomas Murray, Lt-Col Frans Mathipa, Simnikiwe Mapini, *Zenzele Benedict Sithole*, *Pamela Mabini*, *Mpho Mafole*, Tracy Brown, Bouwer van Niekerk, and recently Marius van der Merwe, who was murdered just days after testifying as witness D in front of the Madlanga Commission.

*Afrikaans:*

Dit is 'n nasionale skande dat die ANC toegelaat het dat Suid-Afrika voor, na en veral gedurende die nege verlore jare onder die Zuma administrasie in 'n mafiastaat laat ontaard het,

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terwyl die huidige President toe as Adjunkpresident gedurende daardie tyd links voorgesit het.

Hy het toegekyk hoe staatskaping onder Zuma wortelskiet – dit is vir my baie interessant dat die MK Party so lustig aan hierdie debat deelneem – en vandag sit hy op 'n stapel verslae van kommissie na kommissie wat op sy lessenaar stof opgaar terwyl die korrupsie voortduur.

Sy herhaalde beloftes is niks meer as 'n doodsvonnis vir die volgende fluitjieblaser wat dit waag om die waarheid te praat. Die regte geluide word wel gemaak maar geluide red nie lewens nie.

*English:*

The necessary reforms have been clear for years, yet the legislative process remains stalled in bureaucratic quagmires.

The Whistle-blower Protection Bill must be introduced immediately to criminalise retaliation and provide actual psychosocial, legal and financial support.

A total review of the Protected Disclosures Act and the Witness Protection Act must be done to move beyond a system

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that only protects those already in court. There must be a transparent oversight mechanism and resource allocation in strict accordance with the *Public Finance Management Act, PFMA*, to ensure that funds meant for protection are not looted, as always.

The President continues to hide behind criminal justice reform initiatives while his own party allows criminal syndicates to infiltrate the very structures meant to protect the public.

We see a cycle of commissions from Zondo to Madlanga and Khampepe that serve only to identify the extent of decay that everyone already knows exists. While the Madlanga Commission exposes rampant corruption within the SAPS, we fail to provide interim protection for those currently in the crosshairs, like Patricia Mashale, or those forced into exile, like Athol Williams.

*Afrikaans:*

Genoeg is genoeg, Voorsitter. Suid-Afrikaners is moeg vir die opening van die Parlement se leë woorde terwyl die regstelsel in duie stort en getuies soos diere afgemaai word. Hierdie traagheid is aandadig aan moord. As die fluitjieblasers vandag

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nie beskerm word nie sal daar niemand oorbly om môre te getuig  
nie.

*English:*

The time for outlining plans and frameworks has long passed. Every day the Whistle-blower Protection Bill is delayed is a day the state grants permission for another assassination. Adequate whistle-blower protection, as promised over and over, will remain a lie until there is a reformed, modernised, honest, dependable and fully funded criminal justice system that values the lives of its defenders over the political survival of the corrupt. Thank you, Chair.

Ms M P KOBE: House Chair, as Action SA, we have witnessed, beyond any doubt, how this Parliament and the so-called Government of National Unity have become paralysed in the face of corruption. While corruption continues to hollow out the state, this House dithers. While whistleblowers are assassinated, the GNU occupies itself with consensus meetings, photo opportunities, and silent compliance.

Just last August, we commemorated the four-year anniversary of the death of Ms Babita Diokoran, who was gunned down for exposing corruption at Tembisa Hospital. In December, Mr

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Marius van der Merwe was assassinated outside his home for giving evidence at the Madlanga Commission. Let us not forget Mpho Mafole, who dared to expose corruption in Ekurhuleni, or Marumo Phenya, who was also gunned down for his bravery. Hon members, courage should not be a death sentence; it should be rewarded.

South Africa's experience of state capture and the work of whistleblowers before the Zonda Commission make one fact unavoidable. Without whistleblowers, state capture and corruption would have never been exposed. Yet, despite the Commission's recommendations on whistleblower protection and incentivisation, they remain largely unimplemented. And this is why, early in January this year, Action SA took the bold step to introduce a Private Members' Bill, which seeks to protect whistleblowers and reward those who are brave enough to fracture corruption at the single largest site of systemic corruption in the state, in public procurement.

The public procurement accounts for approximately \$800 billion in spending every year, with the intention to deliver vital services and uplift our communities. Yet, across all spheres of government, from municipal offices right through to the union buildings, government fails. Not because of a lack of

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money, but because corruption diverts resources meant for people into the pockets of the connected few.

In introducing the following Whistleblower Protection Bill, Action SA will demonstrate to South Africans what an active government looks like. Not one that complains on TV, not one that specialises in theatrics, but one that puts down solutions on the table and forces accountability. The following Whistleblower Protection Bill, at its core, does four things:

Firstly, it disrupts corruption networks at their most vulnerable point by creating a formal mechanism for whistleblower disclosures to the public procurement office, with aligned protections against retaliation. Secondly, it strengthens protection for whistleblowers by increasing penalties for intimidation, obstruction, or interference with whistleblowers for a maximum of 10 to 20 years imprisonment. Thirdly, it incentivises disclosures that lead to real financial recoveries for the state.

Where a disclosure leads to financial recovery, a court may award between 15 to 25% of recovered amount. And finally, it opens the door to private prosecution where the state fails to

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act. Whether NPA refuses or just fails to act because of institutional weaknesses, the Bill allows for private prosecution.

In these high-risk cases, the reward increases from between 20 and 33%. If the state will not prosecute corruption, this bill ensures that someone will. This Bill, South Africa, recognises the value of whistleblowers.

It sends a clear message that those who steal from the people of South Africa will no longer be protected, and those who expose corruption will no longer stand alone. This Bill, ladies and gentlemen, tells every whistleblower in South Africa that we see you, we believe you, and we will stand with you. And we do urge all honourable members in this House to support us in this brave new endeavour that we have taken on. Thank you very much, House Chair.

Rev K R J MESHOE: House Chairperson, the urgent need for enhanced protection measures for whistleblowers and witnesses, not only in high-profile cases, cannot be overstated.

South Africa witnesses a deeply troubling pattern of intimidation, harassment, and assassinations against those who

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dare to expose corruption and testify against powerful figures. This undermines not only the integrity of South Africa's justice system, but also Parliament's constitutional mandate to safeguard accountability.

This time last year, Pamela Mabini was shot and killed outside her home, a community activist and whistleblower whose testimony played an instrumental role in the arrest of televangelist Timothy Omotoso and others on trial for rape, racketeering, and human trafficking.

The plight of whistleblowers such as Arthur Williams, Babita Diokaran, Jimmy Mohlala, Martha Ngoepe, Cynthia Stimpel, and many others points to the personal cost not only of whistleblowing, but of government's apparent disinclination to resolutely implement the laws of protection. This is not surprising given the number of public servant criminals exposed in the Zondo and Madlanga commissions who remain free, still awaiting prosecution and incarceration. President Ramaphosa has repeated a previous commitment to introduce a new whistleblower protection bill in Parliament. This must be passed as soon as possible. We have fallen short of ensuring that protective legislation is updated to meet modern risks,

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particularly in the digital age where information spreads rapidly and uncontrollably.

The ACDP edges stricter confidentiality protocols, protecting the faces and names of witnesses in commissions and courts, and the enforcement of sanctions against media outlets that irresponsibly expose identities.

Criminal justice experts such as Dr. Tinyiko Ngoveni have warned that the deaths and threats faced by whistleblowers linked to the commission seriously jeopardise the credibility of ongoing investigations. The ACDP has consistently argued that moral courage must be matched by institutional safeguards. We applaud moral courage in whistleblowing as a vital element in the value chain of speaking truth to power and doing what is right. Yet, without decisive action, the chilling effect on whistleblowing will remain, will silence truth, and embolden corruption. Thank you.

Ms N MOTAUNG: Hon House Chair, we are participating in this important debate that focuses on the protection of whistleblowers who are critical to our fight against corruption. Corruption has been a serious concern for the ANC

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to an extent that the ANC has to resolve on ridding corruption from within its ranks.

Some of the critical measures adopted by the ANC include the step aside resolution that ensures that those who are charged with corruption step aside from their responsibilities within the organisation. We are referring to the measures taken by the ANC to deal with corruption to illustrate the seriousness with which the organisation views the challenge of corruption.

In our election manifesto for 2024 elections, we indicated that over the past five years, we have taken key measures to strengthen the state's capacity to prevent and fight corruption. As recommended by the State Capture Commission, we are putting in place laws, institutions, and practices that reduce the potential for corruption of any sort and on any scale.

Our resolve in tackling corruption by improving public accountability, strengthening investigations, and prosecution capabilities and ensure several consequences for corruption activities in the public and the private sphere.

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In the foreword to the United Nations Convention Against Corruption, it is indicated that corruption is an insidious pleasure that has a wide range of corrosive effects on societies. It undermines democracy and the rule of law, leads to violations of human rights, distorted markets, erodes the quality of lives and allow organised crime, terrorism and other threats of human security to flourish.

The convention further indicates that this evil phenomenon is found in all countries - big, small, rich and poor - but it is in developing world that its effects are most destructive. Corruption hurts the poor disproportionately by diverting funds intended for development, undermines a government's ability to provide basic services, feeding inequality and injustice, and discouraging foreign aid and investment.

Corruption is a key element in economic underperformance and a major obstacle to poverty alleviation and development. It is a common cause that the view expressed in in the foreword of the UN Convention Against Corruption is a view we also hold.

Indeed, corruption undermines democracy and the rule of law.

It deprives the poor of the developmental initiatives that government intends to provide.

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As indicated by the sponsor of this debate, the President, in state of the nation address, that the Whistleblower Protection Bill will be presented before Parliament. We welcome this intervention by our government to strengthen the protection of whistleblowers. Amongst the measures that the President highlighted is that they will be addressed in the Bill, including the need for psychosocial support, the need for legal support, as well as the need for financial support for the whistleblowers.

These measures will encourage whistleblowers to blow the whistle on corruption with the knowledge that necessary support will be provided. It is very worrying and sad that most of our whistleblowers leave or cut off, and the only probable conclusion can be that those who are accused of being involved in corruption may not be far from the killing of the whistleblowers. The law should be very harsh to anyone who retaliate by hating or killing whistleblowers.

The measures to protect the whistleblowers will foster a culture of disclosure amongst other people that no one should be silent in the face of corruption. Being silent on corruption tender anyone to be complicit to crime. To illustrate the point that we are trying to make on the need to

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strengthen the protection of whistleblowers in our country, I make paper by the Department of Justice on proposed reform for whistleblowers protection regime in South ... [Inaudible.]

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr W Horn): Hon Motaung ... would seem is no longer with us ...

Ms N MOTAUNG: ... Public Protector paper titled "Whistleblower Protection in South Africa" reflects ... [Inaudible.] ... the whistleblowers, is known to be a precautional one with the whistleblowers often either regarded as a hero or reprehensible traitor.

Various pieces of legislation have attempted to remedy their precaution position, especially within the employment relationship in which the whistleblower, more often than not, has the most to lose.

Again, Isparta in her PhD thesis paper titled, I quote: "The position of the whistleblower in South African law", in 2014 when investigating the question of whether whistleblowers in South Africa are appropriately protected in terms of provisions of the relevant legislation, namely the Protected Disclosure Act, concluded that effective and appropriate

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protection afforded to a whistleblower makes blowing the whistle a great deal more enticing when relevant provisions are embodied in legislation.

The conclusion from both the discussion paper of the Department of Justice and the paper by Isparta concludes amongst other things that the fact of the matter is that the Protected Disclosure Act needs to be revised and addressed.

The whistleblower evidence from the commission on inquiry, the discussion paper and the academic paper all points to the critical role that whistleblowers play in fighting corruption and also point to the need to tighten the gaps and weaknesses that exist in the current legislation. Therefore, the need to strengthening protection of whistleblowers is a must if we are to root out corruption in our society, and we should act now, not protect the whistleblowers. Thank you very much, House Chairperson.

Ms D KOHLER: Hon House Chair, if you have never felt the need to become a whistleblower through moral obligation or conscience, you will probably not realise what a whistleblower goes through in South Africa.

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As a whistleblower, you will be threatened, first in off-the-cuff remarks and then in more extreme forms. The very system designed to protect the innocent and punish the guilty is, in practice, an engine that does the exact opposite. There are assassination attempts, some of which succeed, families and reputations are ruined, and the state stands by and not only does nothing to protect you, but also turns a blind eye to the reality of the situation you find yourself in.

So, if the SAPs will not help you, who will? I am referring to the full gamut of what a whistleblower faces in our country. It is about corruption within a business. They will soon fire and face financial ruin, those who speak out.

They are then, as a now unemployed person, attacked legally and are forced to find what will prove to be extremely expensive lawyers. This could be in the form of defamation cases, criminal charges or perhaps attempts to seize documentation. The tables are thus effectively turned by those originally accused.

Again, zero state protection seems to be offered to those in nongovernment entities. Now, along with the dismissal often comes reputational blacklisting, so that the very mastery in

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the industry that the whistleblower has spent his or her life owning is thereafter useless. There is nothing left and nowhere to turn.

If, on the other hand, the whistleblower is determined to reveal corruption in relation to any of the numerous state-owned entities, the outcome is frequently more dramatic, lethal in fact. Over and over and over again we have heard of whistleblowers being murdered. It seems to be the quickest and easiest way to ensure that the looted millions stay exactly where they are, transmogrified into palatial houses, extreme cars and blue label lifestyles.

Over the years, there have been a veritable torrent of reports of officials taking cash out of their car boots to pay contractors, carrying suitcases of cash out of official buildings, and laundering looted millions via casino cards at a convenient casino near you. The stories are legion. On the other hand, who has been arrested? For recently there have been a few of them in court, ex-Ministers, now ex top SAPS members, executives from the mining sector, and at last, we have seen some green shoots from the trunk of the R1 billion Zondo Commission, with 51 arrests and 27 entities facing criminal charges, plus R11 billion in stolen assets recovered.

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In fact, yesterday was a watershed moment as the former top MP and ANC leader Vincent Smith, who once took our entire Police Portfolio Committee to dinner along with his Correctional Services Committee members, was sentenced to seven years in jail. Well, this some six years after the Zondo Commission wrapped up, and some 20 years since the state capture became endemic, at last. Sadly, the looting has not stopped, let alone slowed, especially with political congresses and the local government elections on the horizon.

I gather there are campaigns to pay for and votes to buy, and there are pots of gold awaiting collection within every government department. The current Protected Disclosures Act may protect a whistleblower in the workplace, but there is nothing protecting them outside the office. Whistleblowers are very special indeed, but our country just does not take a single step forward to protect them.

I had a whistleblower detailing for me the mass looting at a government hospital in KwaZulu-Natal. The information was sent to the necessary investigators, but the threats to her life became so intense, she was literally driven to leave the country, the country of her birth, where her entire family lived. Now, what does it take, in terms of spiritual

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fortitude, to potentially face financial ruin, physical threats, possible mental collapse, and trauma? We have seen that the SAPS investigations into such threats are desultory.

We have seen that those making the threats, as they swiftly stash their looted largesse, are protected by the SAPS disinterest. If there are blood and a body, and preferably a book written on the subject, suddenly the SAPS are galvanised, though the chances that they will help prevent the blood and body outcome are very slim indeed. Usually, the looters are left feeling safe in their mink cocoons, and the whistleblowers are destroyed.

Think for a moment of the families of our whistleblowers. Their fate is devastating, as they face the trauma of the attacks or murder of their loved one. Where are the witness protection mechanisms? There is nothing, no stake aid, no empathy whatsoever.

The neighbourhoods often treat them as pariahs, believing there are reason why they are under attack. No smoke without fire, you know. The families are often targeted, their homes burned, they are spied on, harassed.

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Other whistleblowers die, having spent all their savings on lawyers, leaving the family in extreme poverty. The family attempts to get justice, are stonewalled, and they wait for years for an investigation outcome. One example is that of former National Lottery Commission staff whistleblowers, who after blowing the whistle were promised support, but that promise was then retracted and the financial compensation denied. Others receive a pittance, others absolutely nothing. Imagine a whistleblower realising their family was under threat, having to personally hire private security, basically being penalised for doing the right thing.

This is the reality of the life of a whistleblower in South Africa. It is a national shame that people who should be given medals for their service to the country are instead left broken, financially beggared or dead. Babita Diokaran was assassinated, shot nine times right outside her home, and think what her family saw.

The DA has a plan to protect whistleblowers by strengthening legal safeguards, offering financial compensation and ensuring, by whatever means possible, physical safety for those exposing corruption. We demand protection and anonymous secure reporting channels in all our government departments.

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We will drive legislative reform, advocate the tangible protection for whistleblowers facing death threats, financial compensation for them and ensure deep independent investigations into the allegations.

The DA has long called for the overhaul of the current whistleblower protection system. One of our key calls has been to ensure that whistleblowers disclosures are routed to specialised investigators who are equipped to handle them, alongside providing financial incentives to whistleblowers who come forward with credible information. We must, as a nation, do better.

In the name of Babita Deokaran, Mpho Mafole and Marius van der Merwe, among so many others, as a nation we just have to do better. I thank you, Chair.

Mr O M MATHAFA: Chair, if you allow me, I am going to keep my video off, as my system was telling me that the network is unstable.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr W Horn): You are welcome.

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Mr O M MATHAFA: Let me take this opportunity to thank all the participants in this serious discussion, and we truly welcome the sentiments that are being shared, that the protection of whistleblowers and witnesses is paramount and should be taken seriously. We are really looking forward to their support as well, when the Bill is finally before Parliament.

As the ANC, we wish to take this opportunity, to thank the President for hitting the call to look at the importance of protecting witnesses and whistleblowers. That underscores the view that most of the speakers alluded to, that protecting whistleblowers is an investment to the country, because it will safeguard the little resources that we have to ensure that the fiscus is strengthened and service delivery improves, as those funds would ordinarily be intended to ensure that service delivery is advanced to those that are deserving it.

Chairperson, we thank you for allowing us to have this discussion. Thank you very much, Chair.

Debate concluded.

**THE FAILURE BY THE CITY OF JOHANNESBURG AND MUNICIPALITIES TO ADEQUATELY FUND WATER INFRASTRUCTURE REPAIRS, ENDANGERING THE**

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**RIGHT TO WATER FOR RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES, AND LACK OF  
ACCOUNTABILITY FROM RESPECTIVE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS**

(Subject for discussion (Mr S J Moore))

Mr S J MOORE: Hon Chairperson and hon members, South Africa's water crisis is no longer a technical problem discussed in reports and committees. It is a daily indignity, an economic threat and a warning that local government is failing at its most basic duty. From the municipality to municipality the failure is not at the dam. It is in the street, in burst pipes left for weeks, in pump stations without spare parts and in reservoirs that run dry because maintenance was postponed again and again. Communities are expected to live with less while paying more. That is why this debate matters because the right to water in our Constitution is not protected by speeches or slogans. It is protected by budgets, by repairs and by accountability when those responsible fail to do their jobs.

Colleagues, Johannesburg stands before us today. But Johannesburg is not alone – from Tshwane to eThekweni, from Nelson Mandela Bay to towns like Makhana, Madibeng and Sol Plaatje. Too many communities are trapped in the same cycle.

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Maintenance is underfunded, infrastructure is allowed to decay, treated water is lost through leaks and then residents and businesses are told to accept the unacceptable. Low pressure, intermittent supply, sewage spills and systems that fail when people need them most. The warning lights were there. The national reports warned us, audit outcomes warned us and residents warned us. But where infrastructure is not maintained, collapses is not an accident. It is the result of choices. When service delivery collapses jobs and growth collapse with it.

Municipalities are at the coalface, but provincial governments cannot wash their hands off this crisis. Provinces have oversight duties. They see the repeated failures, they see the same breakdowns, the same excuses, the same budget choices year after year, yet too often intervention only comes when the cameras arrive, and not when the pipes first crack. When the cameras leave, so do the results.

Let us be clear about what this really is. This is not only a water failure. It is a jobs and growth failure. You cannot grow an economy on dry taps. You cannot attract investment when businesses cannot plan around outages. You cannot speak of dignity when families queue for water and sewage runs down

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the road. The DA's message is simple. Let's move from excuses to enforcement, from plans on paper to repairs in the ground and from task teams to measurable change. The DA believes municipalities should be judged by a clear standard. Firstly, water and sanitation revenue must be ring-fenced. Water money must fix water infrastructure. Secondly, maintenance and renewal plans must be published and open to scrutiny because residents have a right to know whether their council is protecting the systems on which their lives depend. Thirdly, operational data must be published regularly. Outages, repairs losses and spending against plan. Transparency helps stop the next collapse before it begins. Fourthly, there must be consequences for failure. Where funds are diverted, where procurement is abused, where managers repeatedly miss targets without cause accountability must follow. [Time expired.]

Mr M DLELANGA: House Chairperson and hon members, I rise on established protocols. The ANC observed Human Rights Month under the banner, the People's March defending our sovereignty and democratic gains. We remember the sacrifice of those who stood courageously against apartheid oppression, particularly the martyrs of the Sharpeville Massacre. Their blood watered the tree of freedom and strengthened the resolve of the liberation movement to fight for a democratic South Africa

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founded on dignity, equality and justice. It is therefore fitting that during this month we reaffirm our commitment to advancing the rights which they fought for. Among fundamental of these rights is the right of every South African to have access to sufficient water and dignified sanitation. Access to safe and read water is not a privilege. It is a constitutional right and a basic requirement for the health, life and human dignity. The ANC-led government has consistently placed this responsibility at the centre of its programme of transformation as reaffirmed by the President in the state of the nation address. Expanding access to water and sanitation remains a national priority because it directly affects the wellbeing of households, the function of schools and hospitals and the growth of our local economies.

The opposition may seek to grandstand on the issue of water the as though challenges facing our municipalities exist in isolation from the historical injustices that shaped this country. The reality is that the democratic government inherited an unequal and fragmented system where many black communities were deliberately excluded from basic services. Since 1994, it is the ANC-led government that has expanded access to water to millions of household who were previously neglected and forgotten. At the same time, we acknowledge that

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serious challenges persist in parts of the country. Ageing infrastructure leads capacity constraints pose challenges that continue to persist. But unlike these who prefer to problems without solutions, the ANC is taking decisive action to address these challenges.

The President has established a national water crisis committee to co-ordinate urgent interventions to stabilise water supply system across the country. This initiative will accelerate infrastructure repairs, deploy technical expertise to municipalities and reduce bureaucratic delays that undermine service delivery. However, municipalities must also play their part. We call on local government to act decisively in fixing leaks, upgrading ageing pipes and infrastructure, strengthening technical capacity and enforcing reasonable water management. Water losses through neglect and poor maintenance cannot be tolerated while communities struggles to assess their basic resources.

Central to the ANC programme is the principle of equitable development. Historically marginalised and underserved communities must receive priority when water infrastructure projects are implemented. This is part of our commitment to correct the deep inequalities created by apartheid and

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ensuring that development reaches every corner of our country. Water infrastructure investment also forms part of the ANC programme. [Time expired.] Thank you so much, hon members.

Ms H O MKHALIPHI: Chair, on a point of order: Before you call the hon Reddy, from the platform, let us do corrections. The hon Mandlakayise Hlophe is said to be the EFF member. Please, tell the Table staff to correct that.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr W Horn): Thank you.

Mr V G REDDY: House Chairperson, this morning millions of South Africans woke up, walked to the bathroom, turned on the taps and nothing came out. No water to brush their teeth, no water to take a shower, no water to make tea for their children before school. That is not an inconvenience. That is the daily reality for millions of South Africans. Let us be honest, this is not drought, this is not climate change, this is political failure.

Hon colleagues, South Africa is not facing a natural water crisis. South Africa is facing a man-made water disaster. Today we debate a motion sponsored by the DA about the water crisis in Johannesburg. But here is the irony, it is a shame

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that the very same DA that sponsors this debate today occupies the position of Deputy Minister of Water and Sanitation in this very House. It is the same DA that occupies the position of chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Water and Sanitation in this Parliament.

I think the time has come when we need to speak the truth, let's not hide behind fancy speeches. So, the question must be asked: If the crisis is so serious today, where have you been all this time? And here is the most astonishing part and hear me very carefully, the DA governed the same City of Johannesburg for several years. They occupied the mayor's office and ran the administration of that metro. So, the question South Africans must ask is very simple: Did the pipes only start bursting after the DA left the mayor's office?

The truth is that this crisis did not begin in Johannesburg. For years, communities across this country, in townships, in the rural areas, in working class neighbourhoods, have been living with dry taps. while many in this House look the other way. As the MK Party, we warned this country and this Parliament about this crisis over a year ago, and the Hansard will prove it. We called for this National Water Disaster Intervention Team. We called on Mr Ramaphosa to declare the

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water crisis a national disaster. But instead of action, we saw denial.

Even members of the so-called Government of National Unity, GNU, including the DA chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Water and Sanitation and the DA Deputy Minister, insisted that there was no crisis. While politicians were arguing, communities were suffering. Look at Tongaat, where communities went months without reliable water after floods damaged infrastructure. Look at Hammanskraal, where contaminated water made people sick because wastewater plants collapsed.

When people suffer and even die because government cannot protect water systems, that is not a technical failure, that is a collapse of governance. Yes, municipalities need resources, but we must confront the uncomfortable truth. Many municipalities have become cesspools of corruption and thieving. Money that was meant for infrastructure disappears before it reaches the pipes. So, the question is simple: How will more money fix the pipes when corruption steals the budget first?

Let's also be honest about the politics behind this crisis. In many municipalities that are collapsing, the ANC and the DA

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sit together on mayoral committees. They share executive power. And here in Parliament, the situation is even clearer, the DA has chosen to enter into an alliance with the ANC in the so-called GNU, which means the DA is no longer the official opposition. They are part of this government. That is why today, the MK Party stands here as the official opposition in this House.

So, the next time Madam Helen Zille or any aspiring DA mayoral candidate arrives in your community complaining about the water crisis, ask them this: Where were you all this time? Why are you only discovering the crisis now that elections are approaching? Where was the DA Deputy Minister of water and sanitation while taps across the country were running dry? Where was the DA chairperson of this portfolio committee whose job is to hold government accountable?

You cannot sit inside government and then go into communities pretending to be the opposition. South Africans are not fools. Let me say something directly to the voters of the ANC and the DA, you were betrayed. Neither party asked you for permission to form this alliance. You voted for them to oppose each other, am I right? Not to govern together. But the moment the opportunity came, the DA sold its soul to join the ANC in

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government. Why? They wanted the Cabinet posts. They wanted the blue lights, the Ministerial offices.

South Africa did not run out of water. South Africa ran out of leadership. And until leadership, accountability, and competence are restored, millions of South Africans will continue to live without the most basic dignity, and that is water in their homes. South Africans are tired of excuses. The time is ... [Inaudible] ... MK Party. [Time expired.]

*isiXhosa:*

Nksz F MBIKO: Sihlalo weNdlu ... [Ngokungavakaliyo] ... phambi kwenu kanje ukuze ... [Ngokungavakaliyo.] Abantu baseMzantsi Afrika baphelelwe lithemba ... [Ngokungavakaliyo.] SiyiDA ...

*English:*

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr W Horn): Hon Mbiko.

Ms F MBIKO: Yes, House Chair. Yes, House Chair.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr W Horn): Your camera is not switched on, but the sound on your side is not of a good quality. I don't know whether you can maybe ...

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Ms F MBIKO: I can switch on my ... I'm in a rural area. I'm in Qunu as we speak House Chair, but I can switch on my camera.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr W Horn): No, don't switch it on. You're allowed to switch it off. The sound quality was not good, but it is better now. Please continue.

Ms F MBIKO: Is it better? Okay, I'm in a rural area. Can I start from the beginning then?

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr W Horn): Yes, you're welcome.

Ms F MBIKO: Thank you very much.

*IsiXhosa:*

Malungu ahloniphekileyo ePalamente, ndimi phambi kwenu namhlanje ukuze sijongane nentlekele yokunqaba kwamanzi ingakumbi eRhawutini nakwilizwe ngokubanzi jikelele. Abantu baseMzantsi Afrika baphelelwe lithemba kwinkululeko yethu. SiyiDA sithi kubemi nakubahlali abaphelelwe lithemba, utshintsho luyeza. Utshintsho luyeza. Utshintsho luyeza.

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Iziseko zamanzi zaseRhawutini ziyawa ngenxa yokungakhathalelwa nokungaxhaswa ngezimali. Kwilizwe lethu, abahlali baxhatshazwa yiANC engakhathaliyo. INkulumbuso yePhondo laseRhawutini uTata uPhanyaza Lesufi yena uhlamba ezihotele. Ulibele ukuba ezi hotele ahlamba kuzo ziimali zabarhafi phofu bona abarhafi bengenawo amanzi.

EQunu kwintlupheko eyenzeka apha, abahlali bale ndawo ndikuyo bahleli iinyanga ezimbini bengenawo amanzi. Impompo zale ndawo ziphuma umoya njengoko bekubikiwe kwiDaily Dispatch yangomhla wesibini kweyoKwindla. Abantu bangazijongela. Indawo yaseQunu ihlonitshiwe lihlabathi jikelele kuba kaloku uMadiba wazalelwa kule ndawo, kodwa xa kunamhlanje urhulumente weANC ubanikele umva abantu bale ndawo kuba xa kunamhlanje basela amanzi kunye neehagu.

Ngenxa yokungabikho kwamanzi eMpuma Koloni, imisebenzi inqongophele. Izikolo ziphuma phambi kwexesha kuba kaloku abantwana abakwazi ukuzithuma.

Xa kungekho manzi amashishini ayavala. Ekhaya apho ndivela khona, izikolo zivalwa phambi kwexesha kuba kaloku abantwana abakwazi ukuya kwizindlu zangasese. Xa kuvalwe izikolo abantwana abafumani kutya emini kuba inkoliso yabantwana itya

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kanye xa izikolo zivaliwe. Loo nto ithi, xa kuvalwe izikolo kuba kungekho amanzi, abantwana bayalamba.

Amanzi bubomi. Amanzi lilungelo loMgaqo-siseko, hayi into yokuhoywa xa kuza kuvotwa. Ukusuka eRhawutini ukuya eLimpopo, KwaZulu-Natal ... [Ngokungavakaliyo] ... ingaphumeleli.

*English:*

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr W Horn): Hon Mbiko.

Ms F MBIKO: Yes, House Chair. I'm in a village House Chair. Apologies.

*IsiXhosa:*

Ukungaphumeleli kweziseko kunye nolawulo, oomasipala bayoyisakala ingakumbi oomasipala bezithili kuba abakwazi ukuwazisa ngokukhawuleza amanzi. Endaweni yokuthatha uxanduva, sibona ucwaka. Urhulumente wesithili onoxanduva lokujonga usilele ekuthatheni amanyathelo.

Eli lizwe loMzantsi Afrika sisipho nelifa kuthi. Ukusebenza kukarhulumente yimbeko enkulu. Xa ungasebenzeli ukuphakamisa ibandla nabahlali, ithini kwaba balwela idemokrasi yethu? Nakwiinkqubo zokukhetha abantu kwiibhodi ezibalulekileyo

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sibona ukungaphumeleli kuba kuqeshwana ngokwazana. Apho kuphetha khona iDA izinto ziyenzeka. ENgqura abahlai banawo amanzi, imisebenzi iyavulwa kwaye akubiwa mali. Abantwana bahleli ngokuhlonipheka.

EKnysna ngenxa yokungakhathali kukamasipala kuye kwafuneka ukuba urhulumente weNtshona Koloni angenelele ukuqinisekisa ukuba abantu bayawafumana amanzi. Apho kuphetha khona iDA, abantu bayakhathalelwa. Amakhaya akwiindawo eziphethwe yiANC, abantu bayasokola. Uluntu olufana nolwaseQunu luhlala lomile iinyanga ezininzi. Ithontsi ngalinye lamanzi angekhoyo ikwalithontsi elilahlekayo lethemba elibiweyo.

SiyiDA sinecebo lokulungisa amanzi kwezi ndawo zingenawo. Sifuna imali ngokungxamisekileyo yokulungisa iziseko zamanzi kwaye bakhathalelwe abantu boMzantsi Afrika. Enkosi Sihlalo weNdlu.

Ms H O MKHALIPHI: House Chair, if one listens carefully to the discussions around the water crisis in Johannesburg and in parts of Pretoria, one might think the country has suddenly run out of water. That is not the problem.

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The problem is that the infrastructure required to supply water to our people has been neglected for years, and the state responsible for its maintenance has gradually been weakened. Johannesburg now faces a water infrastructure backlog amounting to tens of billions of rand. Pipes that should have been replaced long ago remain underground.

Many of the asbestos pipes that burst repeatedly, reservoirs run dry, pump stations fail, and nearly half the water entering the system disappears through leaks. Communities wake up without water. Sometimes delays, while the systems meant to supply them continue to deteriorate.

Chairperson, we must say this openly, that the collapse we are witnessing today is because of political choices. For years, municipalities were stripped of their technical capacity. Engineers disappeared, maintenance teams were reduced, and skilled technicians left municipalities. Instead, everything was outsourced.

If a pipe bursts, we must wait for a contractor. If a pump station needs maintenance, procurement process, delay repairs, A city of millions cannot be run through a tender document.

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Water infrastructure requires permanent workers on the ground to monitor systems, check pipes, and fix faults before failures become crises. This is why the Economic Freedom Fighters have introduced the Insourcing Bill in Parliament, and we hope all political parties will support it. The responsibility of maintaining the systems that sustain life cannot be outsourced. Municipalities need workers who maintain infrastructure daily. There must be someone whose job is to check the pipes and someone whose job is to monitor the water system and reservoirs before failures become crises. That capacity must reside within the state.

Chairperson, the second issue we must confront is how municipalities are funded. For years, since EFF came into Parliament, it has warned that the equitable share model leaves municipalities responsible for complex infrastructure without insufficient resources. How can municipalities maintain ageing infrastructure and expand services when their funding model does not match the responsibility? Until we deal with such structural issues, the crisis will continue to repeat itself.

The provincial government of Panyaza Lesufi cannot watch municipalities collapse without water while they shower in

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expensive hotels and act as if nothing is happening. Across municipalities, billions are now spent on water tankering. That begins as emergency relief but becomes permanent.

Infrastructure remains neglected while tanker contracts multiply. You must ask yourself, who is benefiting? Politicians benefit in one way or another. To this day, the Auditor-General refuses to provide the list of the 50 municipalities that rely on water tankering.

It has not been provided. When a constitutional oversight institution withholds information from Parliament, it undermines accountability and weakens the ability of this House to protect the public interest. Corruption must always be confronted. But even if its two individuals are arrested, the structural problem remains. When the state deliberately allows its capacity to collapse, private profiteers move into the cell, beg what should have been delivered as a right. The real issue here, is that the state has gradually been reduced to a contracting authority rather than a provider of essential services.

Water, electricity, and other basic services cannot be sustained under such a model. That is why the EFF says

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solutions must be structural. Municipalities must be funded properly so that infrastructure can be renewed and maintained.

Municipal technical capacity must be rebuilt through insourcing so that maintenance happens every day rather than through emergency contracts. And Parliament must have full transparency on water tankering and infrastructure spending so that public resources are protected. Because people are also being killed over water issues. But it seems as if Parliament does not even grasp the crisis which is very deep in South Africa.

Chair, the right to water is a constitutional obligation. A government that allows infrastructure to decay without sourcing responsibility cannot claim to be fulfilling that duty. If water systems collapse while governments look away, the responsibility lies squarely with those who choose this model of governance.

*IsiZulu:*

Sifuna ukuthatha leli thuba sikhumbuze abantu bakithi ukuthi  
...

*English:*

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When local government comes in local elections, they must vote correctly and they must vote for Economic Freedom Fighters.

Thank you very much, Chair.

Mr T M LANGA: Good morning, hon Chair. May I request to keep my camera off for better connectivity purposes?

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr W Horn): You are welcome.

Mr T M LANGA: The Inkatha Freedom Party welcomes this important debate as an opportunity to highlight the importance of sustained investment, proactive planning and strong cooperation across all spheres of government to safeguard South Africa's water infrastructure. The discussions around challenges experienced in municipalities such as the City of Johannesburg reminds us that protecting the constitutional right to water requires ongoing attention to infrastructure maintenance and long-term planning. Water services are fundamental to the dignity, health and economic participation of our people.

Reliable water supply supports households, schools, healthcare facilities and businesses while also enabling economic growth and investment. As urban areas continue to expand and

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populations grow, the demand on existing infrastructure inevitably increases. This makes it essential that municipalities continue to prioritise infrastructure upgrades, preventative maintenance and improve storage and distribution capacity.

It must also be acknowledged that in many areas, maintenance of existing infrastructure was neglected for extended periods under previous administrations. As a result, many municipalities today are working to address ageing pipelines, leaking networks and reservoirs that require refurbishment. Addressing these historic backlogs requires careful planning, sustained funding and co-ordinated support so that infrastructure can be restored and strengthened for the long term.

The IFP strongly believes that the framework of cooperative governance is central to achieving these objectives. Through cooperation between national, provincial and local government, solutions can be implemented more effectively, and resources can be aligned to meet the needs of communities. In this regard, the leadership of the Minister of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, hon Velenkosini Hlabisa,

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demonstrates the value of a proactive and cooperative approach.

During a recent oversight engagement in Gauteng, the Minister joined provincial leaders, municipal authorities and water sector stakeholders to assess water supply challenges and identify practical solutions to strengthen the system. This engagement helped support the establishment of an Intergovernmental Relations Water Operations Centre in Gauteng, bringing together national departments, municipalities, provincial authorities and entities such as Rand Water. The purpose of this co-ordinated platform is to improve real-time monitoring of the water system, strengthening communication between stakeholders and accelerate interventions such as leak detection, reservoir refurbishment and improve infrastructure planning.

This initiative reflects the importance of collaboration and shared responsibility in addressing infrastructure pressures while ensuring that municipalities are supported in delivering essential services to the communities.

Hon House Chair, ensuring water security requires foresight, responsible governance and sustained investment in

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infrastructure. By strengthening partnerships across all spheres of government, improving technical capacity and maintaining a proactive approach to infrastructure management, we can ensure that water systems remain resilient and responsive to the needs of our growing communities.

The IFP remains committed to supporting cooperative governance, strengthening municipalities and ensuring that every South African enjoys reliable access to safe and sustainable water services. Thank you so much, hon House Chair.

Ms S M PETERS: Hon, Chairperson, access to water is a constitutional right, yet residents and business in the City of Johannesburg and many municipalities are increasingly facing water shortages and disruptions. The root causes clear, years of underinvestment in water, infrastructure maintenance and repairs. Across municipalities, ageing pipes, failing pump stations and poorly maintained reservoirs continue to deteriorate. Instead of proactive maintenance and upgrades, we see delayed repairs, insufficient budgets and reactive crisis management. The result is massive water losses through leaks and bursts while communities are left without reliable supply. This is more than an infrastructure programme. It is a failure

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of governance and accountability. Municipalities have a responsibility to prioritise essential services like water. Yet infrastructure maintenance is often neglected or underfunded. Equally troubling is the lack of accountability from provincial government. Provincial departments are responsible for oversight cannot stand by while municipalities fail to maintain critical infrastructure. When service delivery collapses provinces have both the authority and the duty to intervene.

If we continue on this path the constitutional right to water will remain at risk. Residents, businesses, hospitals and schools cannot function without reliable water supply. We need urgent action. Municipalities must prioritise funding for infrastructure repairs and maintenance as well as provincial governments must strengthen oversight and hold failing municipalities accountable. Water is not an optional. It is an essential to dignity of health and economic activity. Thank you, Chair.

Mr W W WESSELS: House Chairperson, speaking about human rights and recommitting to every South African's basic right to access to adequate and clean water, is redundant without actual action. Whilst 47% of treated water is lost we cannot

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speak about human rights and our commitment to that access to adequate water. Even though more households do have connection to water supply, their taps are dry. As long ago. As at least 2008, technical experts warned that South Africa's water supply system faces total collapse. That collapse is coming nearer. The hon Reddy is correct that this is not a new crisis. But many of us in this House has not only a year ago, but many years ago already warned about this problem and that it is becoming more serious. Also during the tenure of the MKP's president.

But water is not political. Water is dignity, life and water is the future. Without water there cannot be a sustained future for communities, for economic growth and for livelihoods in South Africa.

Most, if not all, municipalities have no idea of the extent of their water infrastructure. There is insufficient and incomplete water infrastructure asset registers. No mapping is done, and no idea of the age of the different components of the water systems are there. Without this a crisis council will not assist. What is needed is the modernisation of leak detection with mapping and a complete water infrastructure asset register. Technical skills are needed. Currently, only

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21% of nonexecutive directors of water boards have technical skills. On municipal level there is not one municipality in South Africa that meets the municipal staff regulations issued by the Minister of Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs in South Africa which determines that for every one support staff member there should be three technical expert staff members. This needs to be corrected. The best people should be appointed to do the job and address this crisis.

The FF Plus agrees with the hon Moore that ring-fencing of water revenue for water infrastructure spending is needed. But furthermore, equitable share should be spent to provide water and electricity to indigent households and not on operational needs, salaries and all other luxuries that municipalities spend on currently. Conditional grants should also be spent for the purpose it is intended to especially in terms of water infrastructure. Corruption in terms of water infrastructure projects are rampant and one of the biggest causes of the backlog and the problems that needs to be addressed the future. The future looks bleak if this crisis in terms of water is not addressed. Let's not make it political, but let's get the technical experts to address this programme on local level, especially. I thank you, Chair.

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Ms D E JAMES: Speaker, across South Africa communities are facing an increasingly unacceptable issue going days, if not weeks without water and zero assistance and accountability from those in power. What should be one of the most basic and guaranteed services of government has become uncertain, unreliable and in many cases completely unavailable.

In my home city, the City of Johannesburg the situation is particularly severe. Families cannot cook, bake or maintain basic hygiene. Small businesses that rely on water to operate are forced to shut their doors losing income and placing jobs at risk. Hospitals, schools and public institutions are placed under immense strain. This is a crisis that directly threatens dignity, health and economic stability.

Water is not a luxury. It is a constitutional right, and yet what we are witnessing is a systemic failure by municipalities like the City of Johannesburg to adequately maintain and fund critical water infrastructure. Pipes are left to deteriorate, reservoirs fall into deep disrepair and repairs are delayed because the necessary investment simply has not been made.

The failure does not happen in isolation. When basic services collapse criminal opportunistic move in, and the so-called

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water mafia has emerged in parts of Johannesburg, exploiting the desperate communities by selling access to water that they should have been freely available through functioning municipal systems. This criminal exploitation thrives where governance fails.

What makes this crisis even more troubling is the lack of accountability from the provincial government. Despite repeated warnings from engineers, from community organisations and residents themselves, decisive intervention has been absent. Instead of urgent action to restore infrastructure and hold those responsible accountable, residents have been met with dismissive remarks and hollow assurances telling residents to simply find alternative arrangements. The Premier Lesufi even suggesting that people could go to hotels to shower, demonstrates how far removed some leaders have become from the daily realities faced by ordinary South Africans. The majority of residents do not have the luxury of alternatives. They rely on government to fulfil its basic responsibilities.

The ongoing water crisis is not inevitable. It is a result of poor planning, inadequate investment and a lack of accountability. Municipalities must prioritise the repair and maintenance of water infrastructure. Provincial governments

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must exercise their oversight responsibilities where local governments fail. I thank you.

Rev K R J MESHOE: Hon Chairperson, with Johannesburg's water warning of major water outages next week, affecting five regions, the ACDP greatly welcomes this debate and hopes it may result in effective action being taken on the grave crisis of water infrastructure in Johannesburg and other municipalities.

The right to water is enshrined in the Constitution, yet millions of residents are denied this right. The Vaal Dam, which is the main Johannesburg water supply, is estimated to be full, yet it is not functioning optimally because of failing pipes, leaking reservoirs, apparent theft of funds and a lack of political accountability.

Before addressing the Johannesburg water crisis at its roots, the ACDP urges ring-fenced funding for urgent repairs and upgrades, independent auditing, and a stop to new developments where there is no infrastructure to sustain them.

The department has estimated that repairing and upgrading the nation's beleaguered infrastructure will cost an astounding

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R90 billion annually, while its budget for the current financial year is not even R2 billion. Dr Ferrial Adam, a water specialist and executive director of WaterCan says Johannesburg Water does not control its own budget and the mayor appears uninterested in hearing solutions.

The ACDP asks the Minister to act decisively by directing municipalities to establish statutory water infrastructure planning and implementation, and departments staffed with engineers and financial controllers appointed transparently and bound by professional codes.

Secondly, the Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003 should be amended to criminalise the diversion of infrastructure funds with mandatory reporting to the Hawks and SIU.

Thirdly, municipalities should adopt tamper-proof digital ledgers for expenditure, such as blockchain systems to prevent diversion of funds and enable real-time auditing.

Fourthly, provincial transfers must be performance-linked, tied to measurable outcomes like kilometres of pipe replaced and reservoirs repaired.

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The ACDP insists that Parliament acts decisively to restore the integrity of our people, protect residents and ensure that Johannesburg's water crisis does not become a national catastrophe. We know that the Lesotho Highlands Water Project completion is not expected before the early 2030s, meaning Johannesburg's water crisis will not be alleviated ... [Time expired.]

Ms C T NONTENJA: House Chair, water is a basic need in South Africa for its citizens. However, citizens need to protest in order to have access to the basic need, due to government not being able to maintain infrastructure, evidently causing no water in municipalities like the City of Johannesburg for months. The right to access clean running water is enshrined as a fundamental human right in many countries, including South Africa.

Due to this crisis, businesses are scaling down, allowing staff to work from home and facing potential closures, particularly in the entertainment and manufacturing sectors.

Poorer communities are the most affected when adequate, clean running water is not provided. This exacerbates existing

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social inequalities, as wealthy residents can afford alternative water sources like, ...

*IsiXhosa:*

... ukuya kuhlamba ehotele ...

*English:*

... while poorer communities are left vulnerable to health risks.

Year in, year out, the Auditor-General of South Africa, AGSA, reports about millions of rands of unaccounted water. However, the municipalities are doing nothing to address the matter of decaying infrastructure. It starts with the fact that the percentage allocated for maintenance is very low. To make matters worse, municipalities use less than half of the allocated funds. In Johannesburg, this has led to water outages and contamination that harm the health of residents.

The UDM believes that municipalities and provincial governments must prioritise water infrastructure. The Department of Water and Sanitation needs to conduct site visits and monitor how municipalities are regulating their water systems, providing capacity where needed, instead of

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pointing fingers to the municipalities. The three spheres of government should be working together to overcome this nightmare. I thank you.

*Afrikaans:*

Me A M VAN ZYL: Agb Huisvoorsitter, twee weke gelede, in sy nasionale Begrotingsrede het Minister Godongwana ons herinner aan 'n eerlike waarheid. Geld wat ingevorder word vir sekere dienste moet aangewend word om daardie selfde dienste te onderhou, voordat dit gebruik kan word om enige ander gaatjies te stop. Hy het spesifiek vewys na geld wat ingevorder word van water en elektrisiteit en dat dit spesifiek weer gebruik moet word vir dieselfde doeleindes, 'n beleid bekend as ring-fencing [afkamping].

Hy het Suid-Afrikaners herinner dat munisipaliteite landswyd baie geld aan Eskom en waterrade skuld en dat daar werklike gevolge moet wees vir munisipaliteite wat operasionele teikens en bestuursteikens mis.

In klein dorpies en in te veel stedelike woonbuurte lewe inwoners in stille vernedering. Die alewige beplanning rondom wateronderbrekings en die stoor van water in net-vir-ingeval-

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kanne, dit als terwyl hierdie inwoners al hoe meer vir dienste moet betaal, maar minder ontvang.

Die Nasionale Tesourier het uitgewys dat omtrent 162 van die 257 munisipaliteite in finansiële nood is en dat ongeveer 116 munisipaliteite steeds onbefondsde begrotings aanneem, dit terwyl hulle krediteure steeds nie binne die bepaalde tydsraamwerke betaal word nie. Inwoners ervaar daaglik die nagevolge van hierdie swak bestuur en besluite.

Die Nasionale Tesourier het gemeld dat biljoene rande reeds verloor is as gevolg van skoon water wat net eenvoudig uit stukkende pype loop. Dit is 'n simptoom van swak beheermaatreëls en infrastruktuur wat ineenstort weens geen instandhouding nie. Dit, tesame met munisipaliteite se onvermoë om lekkasies reg te maak, meters wat stukkend is reg te maak, onwettige verbindings te diskonnekteer en die uiterse swak munisipale rekeninge wat inwoners ontvang, aan te spreek is die resep vir die groot ramp wat miljoene mense tans ondervind met water tekorte.

So, vandag praat ek graag namens die families wat alles reg doen, maar steeds sukkel. Hulle rapporteer waterlekkasies, hulle daag op by wyksvergaderings en betaal hulle munisipale

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rekeninge. Alhoewel hulle hulle kant van die kontrak nakom met munisipaliteite, word hulle met absolute stilte begroet.

Ek praat namens die kleinbesighede wie se deure moet sluit, omdat hulle nie water het nie. Ek praat namens die pensionarisse wat nie nog 'n emmer water kan optel nie en ek praat namens skoliere wat moet fokus op hul huiswerk, maar bekommerd is oor hul skool se toilette wat nie kan spoel nie. Ek is besorg oor hulle en nog baie meer.

As die DA sê ons dat daar een benadering moet wees. Die regering moet vir sy mense werk en daar moet ernstige gevolge wees, as hulle nie doen nie. Eerstens moet ons seker maak dat lekasies en ander waterstruktuur reggemaak word.

Munisipaliteite moet geloofwaardige restorasie-en instandhoudingsplanne het, nie net projekte nie, maar roetine en lekopsporingsplanne, pypvervangings vir ou infrastruktuur en algemene instandhouding.

Tweedens, die inkomste van hierdie dienste gelewer moet beskerm word. Dit kan gedoen word deur water- en elektrisiteitsinkomstes te ring-fence [afkamp] in afsonderlike rekeninge. Dit is van kritiese belang dat hierdie geld in dieselfde dienste terugbelê word.

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Derdens moet ons plaaslike regerings professionaliseer. Kernposte soos munisipale bestuurders, finansiële bestuurders, ingenieurs en ander ambagsluiposte moet deur bevoegde kandidate gevul word en nie deur kaderontplooiing nie. Jy kan nie 'n effektiewe netwerk van water met politieke aanstellings bestuur nie.

Laastens, gevolgbestuur moet 'n werklikheid word, nie net 'n slagspreuk nie. Vir elke moontlike oortreding moet daar aksie wees. Dit moet ondersoek word in voorgestelde tydsraamwerke, kriminele klagtes moet gelê word waar daar bedrog is, verliese moet verhaal word, kontrakteurs wat misluk om kwaliteitwerk te lewer moet op 'n swartlys gesit word en amptenary wat herhaaldelik misluk in hul werk moet verwyder word.

Die provinsies moet ophou om weg te kyk. Wanneer 'n munisipaliteit aanhoudend misluk moet Nasionale Tesourier hul konstitusionele reg gebruik, al beteken dit die weerhouding van fondse.

Die Begrotingsrede het 'n nuwe taal op die tafel gelê - prestasie, ring-fencing [afkamping] van fondse en gevolge. As die DA, sê ons, goed, kom ons pas dit nou toe in al ons klein dorpsies en stedelike woonbuurte. Die maatstaf van of 'n

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munisipaliteit werk of nie is eintlik heel eenvoudig. Wanneer 'n ma 'n kraan oopdraai, kom daar skoon water uit? Suid-Afrikaners verwag nie wonderwerke nie, maar hulle wil munisipaliteite hê wat bekwaamd is, wat omgee vir sy inwoners en waar daar gevolge vir swak bestuur is.

Spesiaal vir die agb Reddy en die MK-kiesers wil ek ook net herinner dat onder hulle partyleier ,biljoene rande, wat infrastruktuur kon reggemaak het, die land uit is in die nege verlore jare. Ek dank u.

Ms D R DIREKO: Chairperson, my network is very bad. Can I please switch off the camera?

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr W Horn): You are welcome to.

Ms D R DIREKO: Hon Chairperson, Members of Parliament, Minister and Deputy Ministers, and our community at large, water challenges in our municipalities remain a serious concern. It is not just a local problem but it is a national issue because water is a basic human right and it affects the dignity and health of our people.

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As the ANC, we do not deny the fact that we have been in government for more than 30 years. We acknowledge that some municipalities are still facing challenges. That is why we have adopted the six priorities, including fixing local government by improving service delivery and in strengthening infrastructure so that our people can receive reliable water and sanitation.

Local government is very important because it is the face of government. It is the sphere of government that the people interact with every day. Our goal is very clear. Every household must have reliable access to water and proper sanitation.

We must also recognise the progress that has been made. Before 1994, millions of black South Africans did not have access to water. Today, more than 87% of households in South Africa have access to basic services in their homes. In fact, access to pipe water has grown to more than 82% of households, showing that progress has been made in expanding water services to our communities.

This means that millions of families who were previously excluded now have access to water and sanitation. The

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government of the ANC has moved our country from a time when water was just a privilege for a few to a time where water is now recognised as a right to all South Africans, regardless of their race. The ANC has made real progress in ensuring that more South Africans have access to water and sanitation.

The Department of Water and Sanitation also plays an important role in building and managing crucial water infrastructure while municipalities deliver water directly to communities. This shows how different parts of government work together to serve our people.

In the recent state of the nation address, President Cyril Ramaphosa recognised the need to strengthen the system, and announced policies of intervention to improve water delivery to our people.

The ANC remains committed to ensuring that our communities receive the services that they need. To strengthen accountability, we have put in place a monitoring and evaluation system for our councillors. This is to ensure that services reach our people, and where serious allegations of wrongdoing arise, councillors are required to step aside.

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The Portfolio Committee on Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs conducts a joint oversight to provinces. These visits promote accountability across all spheres of government, which is ecosystem accountability, that are responsible for providing support to our municipalities in order to ensure that municipalities receive the support they need for service delivery.

This oversight has been done in several provinces, and as we speak now, we can positively point to positive results in provinces such as the Free State, North West and Eastern Cape.

The other intervention was made for both provincial and national government that owe money for rates and taxes to municipalities ... have been engaged to sign a memorandum of agreement to settle those debts. This is also going to assist municipalities to have enough funds to fund their infrastructure maintenance and protect their infrastructure, and also to be able to pay the water boards.

We have also witnessed active co-operation between municipalities and the Department of Water and Sanitation to address water challenges.

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In the City of Johannesburg, for example they have signed a memorandum of agreement with the municipality of ...

[Inaudible.] ... to support the improvement in water and sanitation. This programme is at the implementation ...

[Inaudible.]

The National Treasury is also assisting municipalities with funds to replace aging infrastructure and build new systems where needed. In support of the smooth running of water boards and other relevant entities, National Treasury is ensuring that municipalities pay their debt, and where challenges arise, municipalities are encouraged to enter into a payment agreement in order to stay on track.

Through this intervention, the ANC continues to ensure that all our communities have access to clean water, reliable sanitation and sustainable municipal services.

The ANC has also called for a review of the 1998 *White Paper on Local Government* to strengthen municipalities and ensure that all South Africans benefit from democracy. The review was all about policy, not politics, to make sure that municipalities have capacity, funds and guidance to deliver

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services. It also emphasises the restructuring of municipal funding.

We also have the District Development Model, DDM, which is a key tool in this work. It is a co-ordinated programme of government which is used for planning, and which is used to secure resources and ensure that all the spheres of government work together to resolve the problems that are faced by our communities.

Through the White Paper review and DDM, the ANC is ensuring that local government is empowered, accountable and able to deliver real services to our people.

As we deal with issues of water, let me quote OR Tambo. He once said that freedom is meaningless unless it is accompanied by the ability to live with dignity. Access to water is part of that dignity.

The water problems in Johannesburg are as a result of years of negligence under the DA-led government, showing that poor leadership leads to the suffering of ordinary people. Hence today, the people of Johannesburg are suffering. However, as

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the ANC, through our strategic leadership, we will apply realistic mechanisms to resolve the matter.

The case is not only with regard to the City of Johannesburg. We also have the City of Cape Town. However, using the lens of dialectic materialism, we see that the material conditions of our people, their homes, their access to water and their health are directly shaped by the leadership and policies of those in power.

The ANC, unlike the DA, has consistently worked to change these material conditions, expanding water access to millions of households and ensuring that water is a human right for all, not a privilege for a few.

Our struggle is not only political, but practical. We deliver services that improve the real lives of our people. That is the measure of true leadership.

In Cape Town, under the same political party, which is the DA, the city is faced with a day zero crisis, with severe water restrictions and years of underinvestment in infrastructure.

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This failure shows that the DA cannot deliver basic services. The people of Khayelitsha, Dunoon, Langa and Mfuleni can attest to this.

Let us be clear. Our intervention as the ANC is about the people, not politics. While the DA focuses on blame, the ANC focuses on solutions, such as building sustainable infrastructure, holding municipalities accountable through the Portfolio Committee on Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, and Treasury.

We also send a strong message to our communities and the leadership of the Municipality of Johannesburg that the issue of water is something that needs strong leadership, that needs collective leadership.

We also emphasise that the people of Tshwane, like other cities, deserve drinking water without fear of interruption. Thank you.

*IsiZulu:*

Nk N A MTSHWENI: Angithokoze Sihlalo ohlonophekile, ake sikhumbuze le Ndlu ngento ebaluleke kakhulu. INingizimu Afrika yayingenjena, kwake kwakhona isikhathi esihle kakhulu lapho

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khona abantu babethi uma bevula ompompi babo amanzi ageleze. Ngesikhathi uMongameli Jacob Zuma eyinhloko yezwe, iNingizimu Afrika ayizange ibhekane nokuwa kwezinqqalasizinda zamanzi esikubonayo namhlanje ezweni lonke. Namuhla isimo sihluke kakhulu, isimo sihluke ngendlela eyethusayo. Amanzi akhona angcolile. Amapayipi omile. Amapayipi madala, abolile, ayaqhuma futhi awalungiswa. Indle igeleza emifuleni nasemadamini amanzi. Futhi izigidi zabantu baseNingizimu Afrika ziyaphoqelesa ukuthi zithembele emalolini ukuze ziphile.

Sihlalo, uMcwaningi-Jikekelele wezezimali uxhwayise kaningi ngalokhu okwenzekayo komasipala. Unyaka nonyaka u-AG ubika ukulahleka okukhulu kwamanzi ngenxa yezinqqalasizinda ezivuzayo, izigidigidi zamarandi ekusetshenzisweni kwemali ngendlela eyethusayo, ukwehluleka ukugcina izitshalo zokwelapha kanye nenkohlakalo yamanzi esakazekile komasipala kodwa alukho ushintsho. Akekho obhekana necala.

Sihlalo, esikhundleni sokulungisa izinqqalasizinda zomasipala, basebenzisa futhi izigidigidi emalolini amanzi. Le nto yezinqola zamanzi isiphenduke ibhizinisi. Kulo lonke ilizwe imiphakathi ibuza umbuzo ofanayo: Kungani labo ababizwa ngama-mafia amanzi bengaboshwa? Kungani lezi zinkontileka zamanzi

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ziqhubeka unyaka nonyaka kuyilapho amapayipi angalungiswa?  
Kungani izikhulu zomasipala ezikhohlakele zingashushiswa?

Sihlalo, iqembu le-MK likholwa ukuthi isikhathi sesifikile sokuba iPhalamende lithathe izinyathelo. Sidinga uphenyo oluphuthumayo lweKomidi Lesikhashana mayelana nama-mafia ezingqola zamanzi kanye nenkohlakalo ngaphakathi koMnyango wezamanzi komasipala. Abantu baseNingizimu Afrika bafanele ukwazi ukuthi ubani ozuzayo ngenkathi ompompi babo bomile benganawo amanzi ngoba inkinga yamanzi akusikhona ukuba yinkinga yenqalasisizinda kuphela. Kumayelana namadlelandawonye obugebengu adla ngokuhlupheka kwabantu bakithi.

Malunga ahloniphekile, abantu baseNingizimu Afrika nabo bakhathele umdlalo wokusolana wezepolitiki. I-ANC isola omasipala, i-DA isola i-ANC kodwa laba bantu ePhalamende bangamaqembu ahlange. Bawuhulumeni owodwa, obusa izwe lonke. Babusa ndawonye, babelana ndawonye ngamandla, babelana ndawonye ngezikhundla zoNgqongqoshe, babelana ndawonye futhi ngezinzuzo zikahulumeni. Ngakho ke kufanele babhekane ngqo nalesi simo esibucayi samanzi.

Akunakuba khona i-DA ka-Helen Zille ehlasela i-ANC ngaphandle, kuyilapho i-DA ka-John Steenhuisen ihlezi ngokukhululeka

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ePhalamende likaZwelonke bevumelana ngezinto zonke. Abantu baseNingizimu Afrika bakubone ukuthi ipolitiki idlala ngabo. Amanzi akuyona into yokunethezeka, amanzi ayisithunzi, amanzi ayimpilo, amanzi ayisidingo futhi abantu baseNingizimu Afrika bafanelwe uhulumeni ozobenzela iqiniso lokuthi amanzi bayawathola. Njengoba ngikhuluma nawe sihlalo, eMgungundlovu, eMbali, amanzi awekho, eGoli amanzi awekho, izikole ziyavalwa ngenxa yamanzi. Ngiyabonga Sihlalo

*English:*

Mr E V BAPTIE: Chairperson and hon members, the water failures we witness in the City of Johannesburg are due to two main reasons. Firstly, a culture of incompetence, mismanagement and corruption, as we see unskilled officials chosen over technical expertise. The result of this can be seen in Johannesburg's billing crisis, where processing systems do not work, paying residents are overcharged, residents cannot dispute erroneous bills, and all while those who owe are left off the hook. A network of patronage has broken up Johannesburg, as there are those who start to profit from poor service delivery and from the suffering of people.

In Johannesburg, the city would rather pay more than R130 million on water tankers, while abandoning critical

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projects like the Brixton Tower. Fixing Brixton would cost approximately R2 million and provide thousands of residents with regular water supply. But as opposed to delivery, in a time of process, someone must eat. And because someone must eat, we see the second effect, and that is chronic infrastructure neglect. As routine maintenance upgrades, expansion needed to sustain water networks, to meet demand and to prevent outages, are deliberately not prioritised as essential.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr W Horn): Deputy Minister Ncube, please remain muted. Hon Baptie, please proceed.

Mr E V BAPTIE: The excessive leaks bleeding the city of R3 billion in revenue annually are not by accident.

Johannesburg is the richest city in South Africa. The result, or the reality, that 45% of its drinking water floods down the streets shows a deliberate attempt to sabotage basic services. Johannesburg is sadly the face of broken municipalities across our nation, where dysfunctionality has crushed countless opportunities.

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Where I'm from in the southern beaches of KwaZulu-Natal, in the Ugu District, we found the same patterns of neglect, decay and misappropriation. The citizens of Ugu have endured more than two decades of failures. Many live without access to water, and even those who pay for the service go without it for weeks and months without warning, and without a response beyond a complaint reference number.

The South African Human Rights Commission had this to say of Ugu, and I quote:

The Ugu District Municipality had systematically violated residents' constitutional rights to access clean water. The Commission had no hesitation in recommending intervention in terms of section 139 of the Constitution.

I've no doubt they would find the same views in Johannesburg. However, provincial administration in Johannesburg would never work, considering there is a premier who has watched the crisis unfold before with his own eyes. Having sworn to protect Gauteng residents, Panyaza Lusufi has chosen his cadres over citizens. He would rather have halting residents sit for weeks without water and live with broken infrastructure than hold his comrades to account.

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His recent comment on the luxurious hotel showers shows a Premier and an ANC out of touch with the plight of South Africans. The Morero and Lusufi administration will forever be remembered for how they showed their backs to citizens when they needed them the most. As the DA, we say to voters, it does not have to be this way, and together we can get your municipality working.

The incoming Mayor of Johannesburg, Helen Zille, will tomorrow unveil her plan to get Johannesburg working. Her campaign thus far is already doing more than the officials running Johannesburg. After R4 billion meant for infrastructure repairs was taken by the City of Johannesburg from Johannesburg Water for reasons unknown, Helen is going to court to ensure infrastructure plans for residents happen without further delays.

In Tshwane, Cilliers Brink is going after the water tanker mafia. Water tanker costs in Tshwane have ballooned by 455% in the past year, and that while water losses are up by 4%. Mayor Brink will turn this around while the ANC unveils multimillion-rand statues. Anif Husain in eThekweni is pushing to fund water infrastructure. EThekweni continues to lose more than half its water and billions go down the drain, despite

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their presidential working group. Retief Odendaal in Nelson Mandela Bay is ready to return to the helm and restore critical basic services like water so the city's economy can shine across the province. After averting day zero in 2018, the City of Cape Town now has the lowest water losses of any metro in the country.

Hon members, and importantly, dear South Africans, failure can be turned around, but the first step is to vote for that change. The poll this year will determine whether residents live with basic services and rights, or whether more South Africans live in indignity. The choice is clear between more agony from the ANC or delivery from the DA, and we stand ready to get South Africa working. Thank you.

The MINISTER OF WATER AND SANITATION: Hon Chair, let me greet all hon members on this platform in this very important topic. However, I must start by saying, I want to appreciate how hon members have coined this debate. Hon Reddy, hon Khaliphi, and hon vessels, you have been very consistent regarding locating where the challenge is. And you have located it correctly in the manner that I have been saying since 2024 when I took office, to say we are responsible as the Department of Water and Sanitation. Today, I am very happy that 90% of hon members

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who have spoken here agree that the problem is where reticulation and supply or provision of water is supposed to happen. And with that, I am very much grateful to this topic. I will not get into a political debate in the way the DA is doing. The DA with their Hellen Zille ... [Inaudible.] ... down. That is one aspect. I am not going to allow myself to be put in that box. I am the Minister of Water in the country, not a Minister of Water for Joburg, because that is where you want to drag me into. I do not oversee municipalities. Hon Mkhaliipi was very clear, and it demonstrates that we have been in local government for the longest time. And after the Water and Sanitation Indaba, we came with the 14 non-negotiables, which I came and reported about in Parliament. And exactly what members were saying, what must be done as a turnaround is what I have been saying for the past two years, to say, yes, I give bulk water supply to the water boards. However, the water that you see is clean treated water. That is ...

[Interjections.] ...

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr W Horn): My apologies, hon Minister. Hon Baptie, please remain muted unless you are recognized. Hon Minister, please continue.

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The MINISTER OF WATER AND SANITATION: All those non-negotiables, had they been adhered to, we are not going to be where we are today. It is indeed a painful moment that South Africans are going through water crisis, water that is not reliable, water that gets disrupted day in and day out, water that is not enough or unserved communities in the rural areas, because there are certain things that the water service authorities are supposed to do. I reported here in the National Assembly that we have 144 water service authorities as appointed by the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Cogta, but out of 144, 105 are dismal. What else do you expect regarding municipalities? The hon members have contextualised where the challenge is to an extent that they said ring-fence water ... [Inaudible.] ... have been saying that, replace pipelines, insource water tankers. I must report something very positive. On Saturday and Sunday, I was in iLembe District. ILembe District has insourced by procuring 30 water tankers that are in their asset register so that they can intervene when there is a challenge. However, water tankers do not give a lasting solution. There must be a method of intervention for the shortest time. We need proper infrastructure. Hon Mkhaliipi spoke about the funding model. I have been saying that the funding model is not correct. What is short of your good

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constructive inputs is what must be done as soon as possible? Do we think we have to fast-track the amendments, maybe regarding the Constitution, so that when there is a collapse, as we can see now, the national government should be well empowered to intervene. The President is going to chair the National Water Crisis Committee. Already, I have packaged the things that are urgent. Some of the things that you have said here is what is already in my package, about this is how the national government must swiftly move. If we are to have special regulations put in place to intervene, that would be good for all South Africans. As we celebrate Human Rights Month, water is a basic and a fundamental right. I fully agree with you. As we celebrate Water Month, it is not enough if the taps are dry. There is ailing infrastructure, and there is no ring-fencing of water sales. What we have done in Gauteng because of high consumption, we have increased the abstraction licence. However, increasing the abstraction licence might not be a panacea for all the challenges that have been there, because the more you see water on the streets ... the reason why you jump water on the streets is because bulk water supply has been distributed to the entities. However, if that water does not go to the reservoir, then it is a problem. We are trying to assist municipalities, especially around Gauteng to stabilise all their reservoirs. However, that three months

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abstraction does not go without mandates or conditions. We said, once we give you more water, you must show us on a weekly basis, how are you closing major leaks? How are you disconnecting the illegal connections? This morning at seven o'clock, I had a meeting with Limpopo provincial government and Polokwane Municipality because they were experiencing the same thing regarding water supply. We agreed on a clear way forward. In the unserved communities, which are predominantly rural areas, working with all the mayors as well as the public representatives, we are now trying to tap on the groundwater. We are also tapping on water desalination, which is quite expensive. However, we are saying, where can we partner with the private sector to bring services? However, the issue of the skills and the capacity of municipalities ... you are spot on, hon members. I fully agree with you. And this is not an attack to a sphere which is independent from us, but it is the fact that others are unable to collect revenue. What must the national government do when it comes to that? I think there should be a special amendment regarding our Constitution that we need, as a matter of urgency, to fast-track the provision of water. With what we have done as per the mandate in 2025, we are unblocking all the mega projects. Even the Lesotho Highlands, we can report progress. In 2029, the Lesotho Highlands Phase Two will be done. The Vaal Dam is full. That

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is true, Reverend Meshoe. It is full. But if we release water and that water does not go to the reservoir, it might sound as if there is no water. This is an important debate that must not be made a political tool. The claims that the Western Cape government has intervened in Knysna, that is not true. In Knysna, in 2009, on Garden Route, the Department of Water and Sanitation funded nine boreholes and two desalination plants. What happened? It was the DA that was in charge. All those boreholes are dilapidated as I speak now, and the desalination plant was not serviced. So, they are not good, as they say here. And I do not want to make water crisis, which is a pain to our people, a political football here, to say vote DA. Vote DA for what? When they fail to service Khayelitsha just in front of us, Langa, and Gugulethu. So, it is not all gloomy as you claim on this platform. In Knysna, we are intervening because the money that we spent must be spent again. I have been there in January. That they declared later is because they were fearing that already we are there and we did not make political statement. We dealt with the issues that are affecting our people day in and day out.

Hon members, I hereby plead with you that all of us must check what is it that holds us back and be unable to intervene decisively. Our Constitution, as beautiful as it is, has some

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shortcomings. So, we need to look at the Constitution. We need to look at some of the laws that we have passed, which make us not to be able to intervene and support holistically the local government sphere. And I feel pity for all South Africans who do not have water. Whereas I always say, I am on record, hon Reddy, that the water security is in the balance in the country. We are also attending to the drought in the Western Cape as well as in the Eastern Cape. We have water that is also ring-fenced from Katse Dam to assist in the Free State drought as well as in the Western Cape. So currently, we are looking at how do we assist Nelson Mandela Metro and Koega up to the Garden Route because that area is affected by drought. As I said, two years ago, that water crisis is a man-made and a self-inflicted pain by some of the municipalities. However, we must also take into cognizance what hon Mkhali said that some municipalities cannot even collect revenue because they are serving the indigent. At what point do we then revisit the allocation of grants to them? If we continue to allocate the way it is, we are not going to resolve this crisis. This crisis needs all of us to be hands on and assist municipalities to be out of the quagmire that we find ourselves in. Indeed, South Africans deserve better. Indeed, South Africans deserve to have clean water and safe sanitation. As I speak with you now, in some parts of

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Bronkhorspruit where there is an old age home without water. I have mobilized my entities to come here so that we tap on the groundwater. We are tapping on the groundwater. We are going to protect the springs. We are going to resuscitate the windmills, but also, we are making a call that those who may afford to have the water tanks in terms of the container, let them try to have so that we can also harvest water for future use when there is a challenge. Maintenance of every equipment is necessary. And if the equipment or the system of water infrastructure is not maintained, it is duty-bound to collapse. If you do not service your car, it is duty-bound to collapse and not take you far. So, these members who debated here today, they understand exactly our role and the role of municipalities. So, there is a disjunction when it comes to that. When we give bulk ... why ... that bulk does not reach the area where it is supposed to. The area where it is supposed to is in the tap. That is why we are assisting municipalities to build concessions and to build Special Purpose Vehicles, SPVs, so that they can work with the private sector. That money must not go to the coffers of municipalities, but to the coffers of the SPV or concessions that will take care of municipality. That is not privatisation of water ... [Inaudible.] [Time expired.]

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The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr W Horn): Thank you. Hon Moore, I am recognising you to reply to the debate. As I do so, our apologies. I am informed that you were stopped 40 seconds short of your first allocation, We will add that to your time now.

Mr S J MOORE: Chairperson, colleagues, after all the righteous words we have heard today, South Africans will still go home to the same reality. A dry tap, a burst pipe, a sewage spill, a business that cannot operate and a municipality that says, please be patient. But here is the truth. Many of the loudest voices in this House are not spectators. They govern in coalition or outright the very municipalities that are collapsing. You cannot hold a microphone in Parliament and pretend you do not hold power in council. You cannot campaign as an opposition on Friday and govern like an excuse factory on Monday. This crisis has a signature. It is the signature of councils that do not fund maintenance, that use water revenue for vanity projects, that reward failure with redeployment, and that wait for disaster before they act. And it is the signature of provinces that look away until the crisis becomes a headline. So, let us end with a clear standard, colleagues, that the public can measure. Show us your maintenance budget, show us your repair plans, show us your monthly progress, and

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show us the consequences when targets are missed. Because the right to water is not protected by sentiment or speeches, it is protected by performance. And to those in power, I think the message must be equally clear. To Johannesburg Mayor Dada Morero, residents cannot drink excuses, fund repairs, and fix the leaks. To Premier Lesufi, stop telling Gauteng this crisis is under control while communities queue for water. The ANC is so embarrassed by its own failures that it is threatening legal action against the DA for simply telling the truth. Mr Lesufi, using taxpayer funds, taxpayers that are now sitting without water, showers at luxury hotels. His outrage reflects his embarrassment at himself. To Minister Majodina, South Africans do not need more statements. They need enforcement, oversight and consequences for failure. And to every municipality hiding behind spin, publish the data, publish the repairs and publish the truth. Yes, this is an election year. And the question residents must ask is not who spoke the best today. The question is, who fixes the pipes? Where the DA governs, we have shown what disciplined budgeting, transparent reporting, and consistent maintenance can achieve. South Africans deserve that standard everywhere, in metros, in small towns, and in rural communities. If you want reliable water, vote for competent local government. Vote for councillors who put money into repairs and not excuses. Vote for the DA

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because service delivery is not a slogan. It is water in your tap. I thank you.

Debate concluded.

The mini-plenary session rose at 12:52.

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