

UNREVISED HANSARD
MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026
VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 1

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

PROCEEDINGS OF MINI PLENARY SESSION - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Members of the mini-plenary session met on the virtual platform at 14:00.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON Ms Z Majozi took the Chair and requested members to observe a moment of silence for prayers or meditation.

APPROPRIATION BILL

Debate on Vote No 35 - Science, Technology and Innovation:

The MINISTER OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION: Hon House Chair, the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Science, Technology and Innovation, hon members, our Deputy Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation, Dr Nomalungelo Gina, the Director-General of our department, Dr Mlungisi Cele, I don't see him. He's somewhere hiding there. Oh, you are here, Ndosini.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 2

Okay. Deputy Director-Generals of our department, chairpersons and CEO of our entities, our national and international partners who are with us here or at Iziko where they are watching, our special guests, Professor Marivate and as well as Professor George Painter, in particular, I would like to greet the learners from various schools who are really our special guests.

There is no doubt that we have entered one of the most unpredictable and precarious moments in human history. A period that is marked by the erosion of the post-Cold-War global order, global economic strain, rising inequality, climate change, and disruptive new technology. It's also becoming clearer that our future as humanity depends on our willingness to use science, technology, and innovation to advance justice, equality, diplomacy, peace, and not war, inequality, and domination.

I now wish to briefly reflect on progress achieved in the previous financial year with specific focus on the strategic pillars of our decadal plan for science, technology and innovation. On health innovation with KFW, a German bank, we have approved 19 infrastructure projects to strengthen South

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 3

Africa's vaccine development, testing, manufacturing, and regulation, and we are making a lot of progress on this front. The South African Health Products Regulatory Authority granted one of our local companies BioVac approval to begin clinical trials for its oral cholera vaccines.

IsiZulu:

Nobaba abasaba umjovo ke manje sebezokwazi ukugwinya kuphela ipilisi, bangafakwa umjovo. Sonke obaba siyawusaba umjovo.

English:

This strengthens local vaccine manufacturing and supports the African Union's goal of producing 60% of the continent's vaccine in Africa by 2040. On agricultural innovation, through the South African system of systems for agricultural modernisation, we have allocated R19,35 million to a digital platform to improve productivity, climate resilience and inclusion, especially for small scale and emerging farmers. We have also allocated R14,9 million to strengthen bio surveillance, ease livestock export restrictions linked to foot and mouth disease and support the biosecurity hub at the University of Pretoria.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 4

On mining innovation, with the Minerals Council of South Africa, we invested R58 million in modernisation and through the Mandela Mining Precinct, we delivered five software frameworks, 27 guidelines, 14 training sets, 19 technology packages and 34 demonstrators.

On boosting innovation in manufacturing, our entity, the CSIR, launched a Hot Isostatic Press facility in Tshwane to strengthen local manufacturing, improve metal component performance and reduce reliance on offshore processing.

On space science, our country's largest science project, the Square Kilometre Array, received R5 billion from National Treasury to support our hosting obligations, digital infrastructure skills and community development. Our other mega science project, the Southern African Large Telescope, which recently marked 20 years, will undergo upgrades this year, including a new camera detector.

Under our country's astro-tourism strategy, astro-guide training is continuing in the Northern Cape. We do this project in partnership with Minister de Lille in tourism. On building capabilities for the digital economy, we have

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 5

invested R122 million to strengthen ICT infrastructure and expand capabilities in AI, modelling and simulation, blockchain, cyber security, networking and the advanced Internet of Things.

Our innovation fund has partnered with the Public Investment Corporation to co-invest in the PIC early-stage fund of funds. Over three financial years, our fund will contribute R600 million whilst the Government Employees' Pension Fund will contribute R 1,4 billion. This will create a fund of more than R2 billion to support a pipeline of more than 10 fund managers and strategic initiatives.

In support of our country's just energy transition, we approved R3,5 million for the CSIR subsonic wind tunnel facility to secure international accreditation, creating the first such facility in Africa. We also form part of the IMC Hydrogen Economy Inter-Ministerial Committee chaired by the Deputy President. On changing the race, gender, and class profile of our public science system, this remains our top priority.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 6

We supported 3,355 researchers against a target of 2,500, including 1,705 women, 2,208 black researchers and 46 researchers with disabilities. We also announced 41 new research chairs for historically disadvantaged institutions, universities of technology and newer universities, including Sol Plaatje University in the Northern Cape, which was awarded a research chair for the first time in its history.

On the Presidential PhD Programme, we are establishing five national doctoral training hubs focused on mining transformation, biotechnology, the water-food health nexus, AI and machine learning, and the Just Energy Transition. We are also pursuing international training partnerships backed by a R5 million European Union grant and a further R32,8 million secured by our department. I was hoping this five is euros rather than rands.

Our indigenous knowledge systems, we are proud to indicate that the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation, Unesco, designated South Africa's African Institute on Indigenous Knowledge Systems at the University of KwaZulu-Natal as a category two centre. The centre will advance African indigenous knowledge systems within the global

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 7

knowledge base. This is another first for the African continent. The centre will advance African indigenous knowledge systems within the global knowledge base. This is another first, as I have said.

On science engagement, on the 4th of July, we will launch the first instalment of the National Science Month, expanding on what was previously known as National Science Week. Through the National Science Month, we seek to encourage more young people to pursue science and deepen public appreciation of science in everyday life.

I invite all citizens, especially the hon members of the portfolio committee, to join the provincial national science month activities. Delivering this budget vote as we do within Africa month, we wish to reaffirm our commitment to advancing science, technology and innovation across our continent. We helped South Africa to develop the African Union's Science, Technology, Innovation Strategy for Africa, STISA, 2034.

And earlier this year, I attended the launch of the implementation plan of the strategy in Ethiopia, in Addis Ababa. Chairperson and hon members, Africa must change the way

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 8

it engages with itself and the rest of the world. One of the critical tasks in this respect is the building of what we call a sovereign research and development agenda.

By this, we mean a research and development agenda that is designed, funded, and led by Africans. To make this call is not to reject international funding or partnerships, but to advocate for foreign support that is underpinned by equity and fairness and doesn't replace domestic and continental investment in our science, technology and innovation future.

The Ministerial Working Group's report, I'm very pleased on STI in the global environment, in the wake of the US withdrawing some research funds, has been submitted to Cabinet. This report, which means I'm on my way now to also table before the portfolio committee, hopefully in a matter of weeks.

I also wish to use this occasion to acknowledge two distinguished scientists, Professor Vukosi Marivate, he's not here, he's possibly at Iziko, who was recently appointed to the United Nations Independent International Scientific Panel on Artificial Intelligence, and Professor George Painter of

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 9

the Emory University in the United States, whose patents helped produce antiviral treatments for HIV, hepatitis B, adenovirus and COVID-19.

Our department's budget allocation for the current financial year is R10,437 billion. Together with other income, this allocation will be used to expand the scale and impact of our work, and for this reason, over the next three years, through these priorities:

Firstly, we'll intensify our efforts to raise gross expenditure on research and development to 1,5 per cent of the GDP. We are going to accelerate the transformation and expansion of ST&I human resources in our research workforce, strengthening the co-ordination and direction across our national system of innovation through, among others, the inter-ministerial committee on ST&I.

We are now changing from ST&I, so that we are clear that what we are talking about, as well as the Presidential plenary for the ST&I, maintaining support for key science projects, such as the Square Kilometre Array, and strengthening pandemic preparedness capacity.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 10

Forging strategic innovation compacts with ST&I intensive state departments and private sector partners, upgrading critical science infrastructure and developing critical high-end skill including through the presidential PhD programme.

Mobilising more funding and resources to expand the impact of key programmes, such as artificial intelligence, energy security space, vaccine manufacturing, and indigenous knowledge systems.

Continuing to strengthen strategic partnership, especially across Africa and the global south, and increase public awareness about the contribution of our public science system to human development through a stronger public engagement and communication campaign.

In conclusion, I wish to thank our Deputy Minister, our Director-General, our Deputy Directors-General, and the heads of our entity and executives for their support. I also wish to thank the staff of my department, my office and those from our entities for their hard work. I wish to thank our portfolio committee for their critical support and guidance.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 11

Lastly, I wish to thank my wife Phumelele and my children who continued to make it possible for me to serve our country uMaNtombela, hon Mjadu. Chairperson and hon members, Science, Technology and Innovation can build a better, safer, and more prosperous South Africa. I submit. Thank you very much.

Ms L S MAKHUBELA: Hon House Chairperson, hon Minister and Deputy Minister, hon members, chairpersons and executives of our entities, distinguished guests, good afternoon. This budget is about the kind of a nation that we are determined to build. It is about whether South Africa will remain a consumer of import technologies or emerge as a sovereign producer of innovation, industrial capacity, and scientific advancement.

Across the world, nations are investing aggressively in artificial intelligence, in biotechnology, in advanced manufacturing, in digital infrastructure, in renewable energy, and in climate adaptation systems. The nation that leads in these sectors will shape the global economy of the future. And hon members, those that fail to invest decisively will remain trapped in dependency, underdevelopment, and technological subordination.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 12

For South Africa, this moment demands urgency. It demands strategic coordination. Above all, it demands bold, decisive leadership.

Science, technology, and innovation cannot remain isolated from the lived realities of our people. Science must not only be an abstract pursuit, confined in laboratories and academic journals. Science must solve societal problems. Science must drive industrialisation. Science must build productive capacity. Science must create sustainable and dignified work.

The ANC has always understood that a capable developmental state must be anchored on knowledge production, innovation, industrialisation, and scientific progress. We cannot continue to export raw materials while importing finished technologies at a premium cost. We cannot continue speaking about economic transformation while the majority of our people remain excluded from the knowledge economy.

We must deliberately build an inclusive innovation ecosystem in which a young person in Bushbuckridge, in Giyani, in Umtubatuba, in Lusikisiki, in Khayelitsha, or in the deep rural provinces of our country, can participate meaningfully

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 13

and competitively in the modern economy. Geography and historical disadvantage must no longer be the determined factor of our economic destiny. South Africa's investment in research and development remains far below what is required to transform this economy.

Hon members, at approximately 0,61% of the gross domestic product, GDP, we remain significantly below the targeted outline in the science, technology, and innovation decadal plan. This decline is deeply concerning. A nation that under-invests in science, and innovation weakens its future industrial capabilities, its economic resilience, and its developmental sovereignty.

Science and innovation must, therefore, be treated not only as discretionary expenditure, but as a strategic national investment.

South Africa must break from structural patterns of low growth, unemployment, and dependence on raw commodity exports. We must build our own technological, scientific, and industrial capabilities to withstand even external shocks. Without decisive interventions, we risk remaining permanent

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 14

consumers of technologies designed elsewhere while our people remain excluded from a bright future.

The work of our institutions, such as the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, CSIR, and the Technology Innovation Agency remains central to the developmental agenda of our country. The CSIR must continue serving as a strategic engine of industrial modernisation, localisation, and technological advancement. At the same time, Technology Innovation Agency, TIA, must intensify the commercialisation of our South African innovation.

Research output cannot remain trapped in laboratories, in conferences, and in policy documents. Innovation must be visible in our factories, in our townships, enterprises, in our farms, in our digital platforms, in our manufacturing plants, and in our local industries.

The committee, therefore, believes that TIA must deepen its focus on supporting youth innovators and startup businesses in expanding technology incubation, in supporting women-owned enterprises, and in strengthening a public and private partnership within the scientific space.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 15

The committee remains concerned that research outcomes are still not translating significantly and sufficiently into broad-based economic transformation. Fragmentation persists within the national systems of innovation. Coordination between science institutions, industrial policy, and economic plans remains weak. Science must be fully integrated into the South African industrial strategy and developmental agenda.

Hon members, the future economy will belong to the nations that invest boldly in scientific literature, in innovation, in capacity, and in technical skills. We therefore require massive expansion in the education field to ensure that we train new students and our learners at schools in astronomy, in robotics, in coding, and in satellite systems and in artificial intelligence. Because this is not only simply an education intervention, it is a national developmental imperative.

Hon members, transformation must stand at the very centre of our scientific agenda. Transformation cannot remain a slogan forever. Compliance must not only be trapped in statistical reporting and must not be meaningful. Historically, a disadvantaged communities, especially black scientists, which

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 16

are women, youth, and in rural communities, they remain underrepresented across the strategic sectors. And this committee requires decisive and bold steps that will ensure that compliance in ensuring that science is transformed is adhered to.

As I conclude, hon members, the ANC remains firmly committed to building a South Africa where science drives industrialisation, where South Africa creates innovation across centres and science, drives massive employment opportunities. A South Africa where young people see engineering, robotics, biotechnology, astronomy as not a distant dream, but an access to opportunities. A South Africa where scientific advancement contributes directly to economic transformation, to social upliftment, and to nation building.

This budget vote is therefore not merely an expenditure allocation. It is about building a productive force where the developmental state will be at the centre of transformation and innovation. It is about deepening South Africa's sovereignty in increasing the technological world. It is about ensuring that the benefits of science and innovation are shared amongst many in South Africa and are not monopolised.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 17

It is in this reason that the ANC supports Budget Vote 35, and I thank you.

Mr T S MJADU: Hon Chairperson, hon Minister, Deputy Minister, directors, everyone who is here, and the hon members of this House. A country does not fail when the building begins to crack. A country fails when it stops investing in people who can rebuild it.

Today we are debating the 2026-27 budget of the Department of Science, Technology, Innovation. This budget speaks proudly about the future. It speaks about artificial intelligence, new energy, vaccine production, innovation and scientific growth.

Hon Chairperson, there's a big difference between talking about progress and investing in progress. This budget sounds ambitious but the money behind it is too little to match these promises being made.

The department says South Africa wants to increase spending on research and development to 1,5% on gross domestic product, GDP, by 2030. That sounds good, but when we look closely at this budget, we do not see the urgent need to reach that goal.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 18

Government says science is important, but this budget does not fully support science in practicality.

Hon members, science is not just another department. Science affects every part of our lives. When hospitals need better medicine, we need scientists. When we face floods, drought or water shortage, we need scientists. When young people need jobs in technology innovation, we need strong research institutions.

Countries that lead the world today invested heavily in science and technology. Countries like China, South Korea and India made a bold decision many years ago and invested in universities, research technology and innovation. South Africa cannot compete globally if we continue moving too slow.

Hon Chairperson, the department talks a lot about artificial intelligence, also known as AI, but where is the major investment in computer infrastructure? Where is the strong support for young scientists and researchers? Where is the clear plan to stop skilled graduates from leaving the country? Where is the plan to create more research jobs? Without these things, AI remains just a nice idea written in documents.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 19

Hon members, one of the biggest problems in this budget is that there's too much focus on meetings, plans and coordination and not enough focus on action. The budget speaks about framework, partnership, commitment and discussions, but many laboratories are still struggling with all the equipment.

Many post-graduate students struggle to get funding. Many researchers face uncertainty about grants and support. A country cannot develop through meetings alone, Minister. At some point, government must decide, do we want to talk about innovation, or do we want to become innovative? Because those are not the same things.

Hon Chairperson, if this budget truly focuses on the future, it will strongly support young scientists and researchers, postgraduate students, local inventions and patents, innovation centres in townships and in rural areas, water and environmental research, energy, technology, advanced manufacturing, artificial intelligence, infrastructure, and job creation through science and technology. Instead, Chairperson, this budget feels more like a maintenance budget than a transformation budget.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 20

Hon chairperson, the department also speaks proudly about pandemic preparedness and vaccine manufacturing. But we learned an important lesson, during the COVID-19 pandemic. A country without strong local scientific system struggles during a crisis.

Science cannot only become important during emergencies. We cannot wait for another disaster before we invest seriously in science. Scientific progress takes years of consistent support, plan, and funding.

Hon Chairperson, this budget also affects the poor. When water systems fail, poor communities suffer. When hospitals lack innovation, poor communities suffer. When graduates cannot find opportunities, poor families remain trapped in poverty. Science is not only about laboratories and universities. Science is about improving people's lives. A weak science budget increases inequality instead of reducing it.

Hon members, the world is changing very quickly. The global economy is now driven by artificial intelligence, biotechnology, advanced manufacturing, green energy, and digital technology.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 21

Countries that lead in these areas will become strong economically. Countries that fall behind will depend on technology created elsewhere. South Africa must decide whether we want to become creators of technology or permanent buyers of technologies from other countries. Right now, this budget does not position South Africa to lead.

Hon Chairperson, South Africa has talented young people. We have skilled scientists; we have innovation and potential but lack bold investment and urgent action. This budget speaks beautiful about the future, but numbers show hesitation. It praises innovation with words, but too careful on funds.

History will not remember how many meetings we held or how many plans we wrote. History will remember whether we built a country able to compete in the modern world. Unfortunately, this budget does not rise to that challenge. And for that reason, hon Chair, we reject this budget.

IsiZulu:

Sengihlala phansi mhla ka-4 Novemba 2026 ngicela wonke umuntu avotele uMkhonto weSizwe. UMkhonto weSizwe yiwona ozokhulula abantu, yiwona ongeke udayise abantu, yiwona ozonyusa le

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 22

sikhwama seSayensi futhi ozobeka uMnyango weSayensi phambili. Ngithi kubantu bakithi emakhaya abavotele uMkhonto weSizwe bengabe besayivotela i-GNU.

English:

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majosi): Hon Mjadu, relevance to the budget speech.

IsiZulu:

Mnu T MJADU: UMkhonto weSizwe uzoqinisekisa uzofaka imali kakhulu kuSayensi. Ngiyabonga kakhulu Sihlalo.

English:

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majosi): I thought since you warned us about time when the hon Makhubela was speaking, you would also look at your time when speaking. We will now recognise the hon Ramangalo.

Mr T R RAMANGALO: Greetings to the hon Minister, hon House Chairperson, colleagues, since 2024, when I became a member of this committee, we have asked questions about the Minister has to ensure that gross expenditure on research and development, RND, grows, especially because business investment and RND

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 23

continues to decline. This raises serious concerns about the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of South Africa's scientific capability.

We have extensively argued about the department's plans to position science and innovation to be seen as a strategic economic player as opposed to how its current existence is downplayed as a mere discretionary expenditure item. We have set and listened to several entities raising alarming concerns about aging infrastructure and lack of maintenance budgets at national research facilities.

The National Research Foundation, NRF, and SA National Space Agency, Sansa for example, have identified massive infrastructure funding gaps.

We continue to ponder on why as a country do we continue to import technologies in sectors where local public research institutions exist with the technical capabilities to actually do the work.

We have even went further to probe onto the more controversial questions around for example the Special Investigating Unit,

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 24

SIU, investigations into the development of vaccines to raising concerns about the partnerships between Sansa and Denel imploring reassurance that there will be governance protocols put in place to safeguard and ensure that obvious things like compliance are adhered to so that we do not have to stress about transparency requirements.

The reality we are faced with here is that investment into science, technology and innovation, STI, is fragmented, is fragmented and isolated. Leading to entities struggling when they have the potential to thrive and be drivers of the economy. This needs to be corrected.

Today we debate Budget Vote No 35 of the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation at a moment when the world is not standing still. The globe is racing through an error of artificial intelligence, AI, quantum computing, biotechnology, space innovation and green industrialisation. The rest of the world is doing groundbreaking work while we are still here trying to convince you that STI can play a crucial role in contributing to the growth of the South African economy.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 25

Hon House Chairperson, we need to position science at the centre of economic development and not as a side character but as a main character. It obviously goes without saying science is the engine room of sovereignty, industrialisation and competitiveness. There needs to be a working synergy between our department and other departments like trade and industry, energy, security, health care, agriculture, housing and so forth.

The department's budget increases from R9,4 billion to around R10,4 billion. On paper, this sounds impressive. Of particular concern, however, is that while infrastructure intensive programmes such as the Square Kilometre Array, SKA, receive major investment support, institutions responsible for innovation diffusion, human capital retention and commercialisation continue to face resource constraints. This creates the risk of South Africa developing high level scientific infrastructure without sufficiently translating research out puts into jobs, industrialisation and inclusive economic growth.

How do we expect to build a knowledge economy on a spaza shop approach to investment? Fragmented investment hampers the

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 26

great potential South Africa's research and innovation sectors hold. That is why this budget debate cannot merely be about allocations and line items, it must be about the national ambition because the truth is: Science policy, is economic policy. Innovation policy is industrial policy. Research investment is job creation policy.

When we invest in local vaccine production, we invest in health sovereignty. When we invest in AI capability, we invest we invest in economic competitiveness. When we invest in astronomy and space science, we invest in high tech manufacturing, engineering and skills development. Lastly, when we invest in township innovators and rural technology ecosystems, we invest in inclusive economic growth Thank you. [Applause.]

Dr S S THEMBEKWAYO: Hon House Chairperson, the EFF reject Budget Vote No 35. We reject this budget because we take science, technology and innovation more seriously. This department speaks about artificial intelligence, AI, sovereign space capability and digital transformation as if these things exist outside the material conditions of our people. You cannot speak about artificial intelligence while many

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 27

townships, schools still do not have functioning science laboratories.

You cannot speak about digital transformation, while municipalities themselves cannot maintain basic information and communication technology, ICT, infrastructure.

You cannot speak about the future economy, while thousands of young science and engineering graduates are sitting at home unemployed.

These contradictions run throughout this budget. The report warns that South Africa's research and development expenditure continues to decline especially from the private sector. Every government talkment tells us that science and innovation are central to industrialisation, economic growth and the energy transition but when it comes to actual investment, science suddenly becomes negotiable.

The department says South Africa must reach 1,5% of gross domestic product, GDP, expenditure on research and development, yet every year, we move further away from that target. Why? Because ... [Inaudible.] ... luck sanctions of

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 28

South Africa capital have no long-term commitment to national development. Capital is on strike.

Mining houses, pharmaceutical corporations and major technology companies continue extracting profit from this country while investing very little into domestic science capability. They would rather import technologies patents and systems that build productive capacity here at home and government simply accept this.

The 93% of this department's budget goes towards transfers and subsidies. That immediately tells you that the department itself is increasingly hollowed out, while entities remain under pressure from aging infrastructure, weak commercialisation, skill losses and governance instability.

The committee report itself warns about the erosion of scientific capability. That should worry all of us because once a country losses scientific capacity, rebuilding it takes decades.

Hon House Chairperson, go to a village school in the Eastern Cape or Limpopo and ask whether this innovation economy has

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 29

arrived there. You will find learners expected to pass physical science without laboratories. You will find schools where coding is discussed but there are no computers. You will find learners sharing textbooks while government speaks about future industries. Then government acts surprised when the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, Stem pipeline remains weak. The department celebrates Richard Chess and postgraduate targets, but you cannot build a scientific superpower on top of a collapsing education system.

Hon House Chairperson, the EFF is not opposed to hydrogen development, the Square Kilometre Array or the space science. However, we reject the prestige without developmental grounding. Government proudly speaks about green hydrogen exports to Germany while millions of South Africa continue to live with energy poverty, collapsing municipal grids and rolling blackouts.

So, who exactly is this transition for? Because if South Africa becomes nothing more than an exporter of green energy inputs to Europe, while our own people remain energy insecure then this is not transformation. It is a greener version of the old colonial model.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 30

The committee reports also warns about technological dependence and geopolitical instability. That warning must be taken seriously.

South Africa speaks about sovereign capability, while many strategic technology ambitions remain dependent on foreign financing, partnership and foreign controlled systems. A sovereign nation cannot build its scientific future entirely on the assumption that global powers will always co-operate.

Hon House Chairperson, government also speaks about local vaccine manufacturing while procurement systems continue favouring multinational pharmaceutical companies over domestic production that states might buy what the states build. The EFF therefor calls for increased domestic investment into research and development. Binding procurement commitments for locally development technologies and investment into township and rural science education.

No country industrialises without scientific capacity. No country becomes sovereign while technological dependent and no country build a future economy while neglecting the material

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 31

conditions of its own people. For these reasons, the EFF reject Budget Vote No 35. Thank you, hon House Chairperson.

Mr S S ZONDO: Hon Chairperson, greetings to you, the Minister, Deputy Minister and hon members. The IFP welcomes Budget Vote 35 in recognition that South Africa cannot thrive through or dismantle the constraint of inequality without turning science into a practical tool of development.

In the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, 4IR, this department becomes increasingly important to our country's sovereignty, development and long-term economic future. Given our high youth unemployment rate, shortcomings in service delivery and slow industrial growth, the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation, DSTI, must be a vessel for us to do more than merely produce reports and research papers. It must help us build solutions that create jobs, strengthen public service, improve competitiveness and expand the productive capacity of the economy.

This is why the IFP welcomes the department's alignment within the National Development Plan and the Medium-Term Development Plan. These frameworks correctly place a dynamic science and

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 32

innovation ecosystem at the very heart of our national agenda for inclusive growth and job creation. However, for this ecosystem to truly serve our people, it must be directed towards the front line of our daily struggle.

We specifically welcome the privatisation of research in energy, health and agriculture. These are critical areas where innovation moves beyond research institutions to make material differences by lowering the cost of energy, securing our food supply and strengthening the public health of our nation. At a time where artificial intelligence, AI, is evolving at an exponential rate, we must optimise this digital foundation to ensure that the 4IR is translated into local jobs and tangible economic sovereignty for every South African. As such, we must confront the reality that without a decisive leap in the AI economy, South Africa risks a permanent technology dependence on foreign platforms to utilise our national data for their own strategic gain.

The IFP, therefore, calls for a strategy that will treat our data as a sovereign asset to be nurtured. We do not need a plan that simply adopts foreign tools. We need an immediate

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 33

reinvestment in the local digital sector and cybersecurity that secures our 4IR within our borders.

Lastly, we note the concern – the financial pressure faced by the institution within the system. The Human Sciences Research Council faces pressure to retain senior researchers, maintain infrastructure and secure external income. Furthermore, National Advisory Council on Innovation remains limited by financial and human resource constraints. These programmes speak to whether South Africa will be able to build the scientific and institutional capacity needed for long-term growth, inclusive industrialisation and meaningful social progress. We encourage that these financial deficits, which are induced by the geopolitical funding crisis, be compensated with increased public service partnership.

IsiZulu:

Kulokhu okungenhla engikushilo i-IFP ...

English:

The IFP supports Budget Vote 35. Thank you, Chairperson.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 34

Mr E HENDRICKS: Hon Chair, Minister, Deputy Minister, chairperson of the portfolio committee, hon members and all departments present, I rise today on behalf of the Patriotic Alliance to debate Vote 35: Science, Technology and Innovation - a Vote that speaks directly to the future of our economy, our competitiveness and our ability to solve challenges facing South Africans.

Science and innovation are the engines of progress, yet our system continues to neglect the very researchers, innovators and entrepreneurs who could drive transformation. Research funding remains inadequate. Brilliant scientists and innovators are left scrambling for resources, while laboratories and universities struggle to keep up with the pace of global standards. Vote 35 must prioritise investment in research and development, because without it, South Africans will remain a consumer of technology rather than a producer.

There is a lack of support for previously disadvantaged innovators. Much like in agriculture, the system often seems like it is set up for them to fail. Emerging innovators from rural and township communities face barriers to funding,

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 35

mentorship and market access. Minister, Vote 35 must ensure inclusivity so that innovation is not the privilege of a few, but opportunity for all.

We must strengthen technology transfer. Too many research breakthroughs remain trapped in academic journals instead of being commercialised to create jobs and industries. Vote 35 must bridge the gap between research and the marketplace, ensuring that innovation translates into economic growth. Hon members, the DSTI is not a luxury, it is a necessity. A nation that fails to innovate is a nation that falls behind.

Minister, Vote 35 must deliver funding, inclusivity and commercialisation to ensure that South Africans are not left behind in the global knowledge economy. Let us commit to science and innovation systems that empower our people, transform our economy and secure our future. We support, Chair.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): Thank you, hon Hendricks. The way you looked at me, I thought you were saying something else. I will now recognise hon Boshoff.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 36

Dr W J BOSHOFF: Hon House Chair and hon colleagues, I must say, I wouldn't have thought while listening today ... but this is a very exciting topic. Science is about knowing stuff, technology is about doing stuff with tools and innovation is about doing new stuff with tools, with new tools, without tools or with no tools.

So, these three things are actually very important in the economy because the economy is the natural endowment paired with what humans add to it. And this is what this is all about.

But this department doesn't get enough money, and that's actually the summary of what everybody has said.

Now, just to put it into perspective, the department gets about R10 billion out of a national expenditure of just around R2 trillion, and that is very little.

In fact, the entities within the department generate some R3,1 billion of their own. The National Research Foundation, NRF, R232 million, the Human Sciences Research Council, HSRC, more than half of its total expenditure at R326 million, the

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 37

Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, CSIR, generates about 76% of its total expenditure with R2,6 billion. The Technology Innovation Agency, TIA, which is a little bit of a problem child within the department and which maybe get should get the deadline somewhere, generates some R54 million, and SA National Space Agency, SANSA, generates some R221 million, which a quarter of the expenditure, which is a very good number because they don't do cheap stuff.

Let's put it in a more perspective, the Skills Development Levy, which takes 1% of all working South Africans' salary, collects about R27 billion. That means nearly three times what this department gets. R22 billion of that goes to the Sector Education and Training Authorities, Setas, which most of it is wasted. Then the R5 billion to the National Skills Fund, which wastes a little less, but also a lot. And with that money, this department could have performed miracles, not real because it's a science department, unfortunately.

Yet, what should we do? There's no room for new taxes, there's nothing else that we can tax and still have the economy growing. We need to use money better.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 38

Now, one place to start is that the National Research Foundation, which has to fund amongst many tasks they have, they have to fund postgraduate students. Now, that should easily fit into the present budget of Higher Education where R54 billion is going to National Student Financial Aid Scheme, NSFAS, whether they also don't work with money in a very neat way. And they only train people for a three-year degree, which means they are ready for their professional qualification but not yet for the working place.

Also, increased or enhanced tax collection should collect more money which could be put in a special fund, exactly for the use by this department in science and innovation.

Now, if there was a little bit more time, one could go on, but there's not. So, I thank you.

Dr T K S LETLAPE: House Chair, the Minister, the Deputy Minister, the Director-General, DG, all protocols observed. I can't help but just tell a small story that as a young boy we had no science laboratories, labs, so, whatever the teacher was talking about you had to imagine. Sadly, it hasn't changed much for the majority of our citizens.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 39

When we have a system that produces children that can't read for meaning, what can we do? Because innovation comes from those very children that are sitting in desperate environments, but there's no enabling structure for them to come through.

When you see some of the people that were innovators, they came from poor backgrounds. You don't find many innovators that come from cushy backgrounds. But our children that in that position are given no chance to come through.

One of the challenges that we have in South Africa is that we have too much government. So, there's never enough money where it is needed. We have this habit where instead of keeping something as a department, we make it a Ministry. We then wonder why there is no money to do the things that need to be done.

We talk about fragmentation and integration, the one thing that I've learned in Parliament is that most things don't happen in this country because they go to die in Inter-Ministerial Committees. Because when you have too many Ministries, too many bosses, you can't really get things done.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 40

One of the challenges that we have is that competency was a requirement for me to practice as a doctor, but competency is not a requirement for me to be a Member of Parliament, MP. And until that changes, we can't guide the nation properly.

Hon Minister, I plead with you that the one thing that you can do is to leave this Parliament with a template of what are the signs of an efficient government, so that we have units that are based on evidence gathered from the best performing governments that are ... [Inaudible.] ... when you have a government that is bigger than your industries, you are in trouble. Unless we can ensure that industries become the biggest employers, and not government, we are going nowhere slowly.

So, unless we get to a position where we stop talking about transfers, insufficient money, and we do not talk about the wastage in too much government that can't govern, we are not going to succeed as a people.

So, I urge you, Minister, if we can't have labs in the townships, if we can't have labs in all communities, if

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 41

children can't learn about science on Grade R, we are not going anywhere.

So, we cannot support a budget that doesn't change the reality that we have. We got to change direction, we got to change paradigm, and this department should be able to lead in that. Thank you, Chair.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION:

House Chair, let me take this opportunity to greet our Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee, hon Makhubela and all the members of the portfolio committee. Greetings to you, Minister, to the Director-General and all the Deputy-Director Generals and also greet all the chairpersons and the chief executive officers of our entities that are here, exco and officials of our department, greet all our special guests that we are having today, ladies and gentlemen.

Hon Chair, it is indeed our humble honour to table this budget of about R10,4 billion that we are here to present today with the Minister. We continue to work hand in glove with the political leadership to ensure that the department pivots the system to address the grand challenges that the Decadal Plan

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 42

has identified. We argue that Science, Technology and Innovation cannot afford to be beneficial only to the elite and leave the rest of the society, especially townships and rural people, including women and people living with disabilities, youth underserved.

The department is beginning to be proactive and deliberate in going out and engage society, education, and industries, and this includes our proactive approach at the sub-national level of government to locate Science, Technology and Innovation, STI, at the centre of all the important endeavours that we do. This is the world we find ourselves living in, where science, technology, and continuous innovation are the locus of social development. And so, this department is at the cockpit of catalysing STI-driven development.

As we grab the bull by its horns in an attempt to seek the implementation of the Decadal Plan, we know that it is not a walk in the park. The huge challenges facing the National System of Innovation is the systemic underfunding as it has been alluded to. And looking at that South Africa still remains at the bottom of all the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD, countries when it comes to

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 43

the funding of Research, Development, and Innovation, RDI. And we are trying, we are making steps, and we are always taking even the advice and the views from the portfolio committee and our entities as we work towards this.

With this grim picture of system underfunding, we have chosen to steam ahead and make use of the minimum in our disposal rather than pausing until the system is well funded. I am reminded of Gillian Flynn, an American author who said, I quote: "Pivoting requires immersion, not just observation"; she advised us that "The only way to make sense out of change is to plunge into it, move with it, and join the dance." As we join the dance as the Department Science, Technology, and Innovation we are taking STI to sub-national level. When we talk of sub-national level that include education and society, in order to give concrete expression of the Decadal Plan, we have also established structured way of working directly with all the district municipalities and metros in our country within the context of the District Development Model. We are mapping out this programme in line with the developmental needs of the districts by infusing a science, technology, and innovation in order to make sure that the municipalities do function accordingly because they are at the coalface of the

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 44

service delivery of our country and science is playing a critical role when it comes to it.

And also, when it comes to the relationship that we are building with industry as we have all alluded to the fact that we are underfunded when it comes to the investment that they do when it comes to Research and Development, R&D.

We appreciate the fact that without industry investment in innovation, we will not succeed as a country in advancing in tandem with the rest of the world. Accordingly, we are engaging closely with business leadership investment with regard to investing our countries' STI and there are so many reports that we are still going to be given even to Parliament as to say what we are doing in making sure that private sector is being engaged.

Also, when coming to issue of building a very health pipeline when it comes to taking up the stem subjects working with the Department of Basic Education, we are hosting District and Circuit-level Schools clusters. We are having public engagement when it comes to science taken innovation where we are taking out the issue of science literacy because without

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 45

the community understanding the essence and the importance of science, even if we can deal with the learners at schools, we must make sure that even the communities themselves, they do understand what is needed of them. So, it's one other matter that we are taking care of as to say working together with the Department of Education what is that which we can do to make sure that we change the face of Science, technology, engineering; and mathematics, STEM, profession in South Africa looking at our profile and the profession of our pipeline is overwhelmingly white. We know there are a lot of males, and it is very urban. So, we are saying let's take everyone. Let's us not leave anyone behind. Those are the problems that we are engaging on.

I also like to tell a little bit on the Indigenous Knowledge System as the Minister has touched on. I am very proud to say today we have worked with the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Northwest University, and University of Venda to pilot the Recognition of Prior Learning, RPL, qualification for Traditional Health Practitioners.

Our highlight when it comes to Indigenous Knowledge Systems, IKS, work is that a total of about 96 students graduated with

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 46

their Bachelors of Indigenous Knowledge Systems from the University of North West. This programme has been funded by the department and has been growing exponentially over the years. We are really grateful out of that.

We really recognise and we know that when it comes to the Grassroots Innovators, we are going all out. We are engaging the communities when it comes to this regard, and working together with Technology Innovation Agency, TIA, we have established about 13 Living Labs, nine Centres for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, and mLabs in four provinces. These Labs are centres that provided physical space and innovation infrastructure for innovators to ideate and progress their prototype solutions to market through the offering of structured innovation support, training, and a combination of technical and innovation skills.

We know that we are not where we want to be. But we are proudly to say the work has started and we still need to scale our plan C to see to it that we leave no one behind.

This budget Vote demonstrates our shift from the old way of thinking where more attention must be paid to sciences and

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 47

research. Whilst these areas remain important, as the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation, we are making a strategic focus on innovation and technologies in strengthening the system of national innovation. We are making headway in this mandate; we will leave no one behind.

We fully understand that when it comes to grassroots innovators, they contribute and they are the vital role players when it comes to the innovation system of our country and the economic growth and also making sure that when it comes to the sovereignty of our country, they really contribute quite a lot.

I would really like to take this opportunity to thank Minister Nzimande, for whom we are working very well together with the department led by our Director-General and all the Deputy Director-Generals, the senior management of our department. But also, the commitment that we find from our entity in making sure that we are all together in changing the face of our science sector in our country and make sure that everyone, and we are deliberate in making that.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 48

So, to the whole STI family, we are really want to thank you. And also, let me thank the Portfolio Committee for their support, their oversight role, they are making sure that we are accountable at all the time and transparent at all the time. But really, we are really appreciate the views and the comments and the ideas they always bring to us, more especially as they continuously support us in making sure that more and more funds, we get for this department looking at the challenges that we are facing. Thank you very much, Chairperson.

Ms N W A MAZZONE: Minister, that was what they call a small but enthusiastic crowd. Minister, Deputy Minister, Chairperson, friends on my committee, the department who I'm happy to say are also friends, especially Mr Mjadu, in an increasingly unstable and competitive world, science, technology and innovation are no longer just on the periphery of policy discussions; they form the very nucleus. They are matters of sovereignty, competitiveness and national resilience. This report correctly recognises that science, technology and innovation sit at the centre of economic growth, industrialisation, energy transition and state

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 49

capability. I'm happy to say that everyone who has spoken here today has recognised this.

The report, however, repeatedly warns of declining research development expenditure, aging infrastructure, loss of specialist skills and weak co-ordination across the national system of innovation.

Nowhere are these pressures more visible than at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, CSIR, and at the SA National Space Agency, Sansa.

The CSIR remains one of South Africa's most important strategic assets. I cannot highlight that enough. It supports advanced manufacturing, energy innovation, mining technology, cyber security and industrial development. It is one of the few institutions capable of translating scientific capability into practical economic outcomes. They are astoundingly fantastic.

Yet, this report makes it clear that the CSIR faces mounting pressure from aging infrastructure and increasing dependence on more contract income. The report warns that the CSIR may

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 50

struggle to maintain existing capabilities over the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework.

This should alarm everyone ... every member in this House, because one strategic scientific capability lost is one ... extraordinarily difficult to rebuild. Scientists leave, engineers immigrate, infrastructure decays and eventually a country becomes permanently dependent on importing technologies it should have developed itself.

The CSIR should not be forced into survival mode while simultaneously being expected to thrive ... industrialisation and innovation. A capable state requires capable scientific institutions.

The same applies to Sansa which is tasked with helping South Africa transition from an emerging space nation into an intermediate space nation. This is strategically very important because space capability today underpins weather forecasting, agriculture, disaster management, telecommunications, navigation systems and national security.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 51

Despite funding constraints, Sansa has performed impressively. It hosts Africa's only 24-hour operational space weather centre. It generates foreign contract revenue. It continues developing the Earth Observation Satellite, EOSat, programme, but again warning signs are there.

There is a projected funding gap of more than R2 billion in Sansa's strategic programme, bearing in mind the department has R10,4 billion in total. Critical infrastructure requires maintenance and high-end technical skills remain difficult to retain.

The report also correctly raises concerns regarding the growing uneasiness between Sansa and Denel. Now, let's be clear. South Africa absolutely requires technological capability, but Minister, let me be the broken record and hopefully someone will eventually listen. Parliament is entirely justified in demanding transparency and accountability regarding this partnership, because Denel's governance history raises understandable concerns. And, when civilian space programmes and defence-linked infrastructure begin overlapping, transparency becomes non-negotiable.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 52

The committee was therefore correct to demand written clarity on the EOSat-1 partnership and the high-tech arrangements. Let me guarantee everyone in this room that we will get clarity about where Denel and Sansa stand, and we will get clarity as to why letters are being written between the Ministry and Sansa about these issues.

Another issue that runs through this department is fragmentation. Too many entities ... operating in silos, too much duplication, too many institutions ... competing for shrinking resources, but all the time we're told that there is co-ordination. I'm not seeing it.

South Africa no longer has the fiscal space to tolerate inefficiency. We cannot have multiple entities separately attempting commercialisation, innovation, financing and overlapping on strategic work. A constrained state requires strategic focus, not institutional sprawl. What South Africa needs is a coherent, properly co-ordinated innovation ecosystem with clear mandates, reduced duplication and measurable outcomes.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 53

Most importantly, the department must fundamentally rethink how it views and funds science innovation expenditure, because investment in science is not consumption spending. It is nation-building spending. Countries that underinvest in science eventually lose technological sovereignty. South Africa must cut through the clutter with focussed spending.

I say this with sincere ... and complete sincerity. We wish this department and its entities nothing but great success moving forward. I thank you.

Mr V A NKOSI: Hon House Chairperson, hon Minister, hon Deputy Minister, my fellow hon members, I would like to first congratulate Mzwakhe Leftist Nkosi, PhD graduate from Mpumalanga, University of Mpumalanga in my district constituency. Hon Minister, I would like to also to thank or appreciate National Research Fund which is continually assisting young people in the country, even going down to the rural university like the University of Mpumalanga and finding Mzwakhe Leftist Nkosi. Today he is a PhD graduate. Thank you.

Today, as we gather here to deliberate on Budget Vote 35 for the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation for the

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 54

fiscal year 2026-27, we recognise that this is or this as a critical juncture to reposition the national system of innovation as a powerhouse for inclusive growth, sustainable job creation, and the eradication of the triple scourge that continues to afflict our nation - which is poverty, unemployment, and inequality. Our commitment to transformation with the key scientific institutions such as Academy of Science of South Africa, ASSAF, and the South African Council of Natural Scientific Profession, SACNASP, reflects the steadfast dedication to advancing the state agenda for social justice and economic emancipation, aligning with the broader mandate of a developmental, ethical state.

Hon members, at the heart of this endeavour lies a firm recognition that transformation must transcend symbolic representation or mere numerical redress. While we acknowledge progress made, such as Assaf achieving 35% Black and 33% women membership, true transformation demands a profound and deliberate paradigm shift. It is imperative that entrenched conservatism within these institutions be vigorously addressed. Traditional academic mindsets, which have historically resisted the state's vision for inclusivity and social equity must be reshaped through targeted aggressive

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 55

strategies.

In this context, transformation is not merely progressive optics, it is the moral and practical realignment of science to serve the lived realities of millions of South Africans currently marginalised by the systematic barriers. From an ANC policy standpoint, this transformative agenda requires comprehensive legal overhaul. We call for a thorough review and alignment of the mandates of Assaf and SACNASP, ensuring that their statutory roles unequivocally support South Africa's national developmental priorities. The forthcoming Natural Scientific Profession Bill must not only regulate the scientific professions but must actively become a catalyst for transformation to empower these bodies to be engines for social and economic change, rather than mere custodians of conservative academic traditions.

Hon House Chair, SACNASP's commitment to aligning registration and lifelong learning initiatives with priority three of the Medium-Term Development Plan, building an ethical and developmental state is in line with our policy to embedded inclusivity in all levels. Academy of Science of South Africa strategic planning for 2025-26 to 2029-30 must extend this

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 56

commitment reflecting demographic realities in every council for decision and adversary report, thus holding these institutions accountable to our nation's transformation goals. Moreover, it is non-negotiable that leadership and adversary roles within these entities visibly prioritise women, youth, and persons living with disabilities, which are demographics that our democracy pledges to uplift.

The ANC applauds innovative initiatives such as SACNASP's Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, STEM, Programme and ASSAF's Frontiers Planet Prize for young scientists. Nonetheless, we insist that these initiatives must be scaled with urgency ensuring inclusivity moves beyond tokenism. Our youth should not remain passive recipients but must be actively involved in shaping science and technology policy at the highest echelons. This approach aligns with our broader youth empowerment strategy, which insists on fostering agency, innovation, and responsibility among the next generation.

Academic excellence and social relevance are complementary, not conflicting objectives. Reinforcing this duality remains a cornerstone of the ANC policy aspiration. Upholding high

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 57

academic standards is imperative. However, these standards must explicitly be applied through the lens of addressing South Africa's critical socioeconomic challenges. Foremost among them is unemployment and inequality. We must therefore demand that Assaf and SACNASP incorporate clear measurable transformation metrics directly linked to socioeconomic impact. These metrics must be integrated into every annual performance plan, ensuring transparency, accountability, and public scrutiny in aligning academic output with national needs.

Central to this transformative vision is the fostering of robust, inclusive partnership. The ANC inventions a national system of innovation that transcends institutional silos by depending on collaborations among government, industry, and civil society. Alliances such as the SACNASP's partnership with the Gauteng department of agriculture and the City of Cape Town illustrates that potential for science to enhance service delivery and create employment opportunities. We stress that adequate strategic funding is vital for partnership to thrive. These investments align with the allocated budget, though not sufficient given a proposed plan.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 58

Finally, to the opposition parties who sit here today and decry the politicisation of science, your silence on the historical exclusion of black and women scientists is defending. To suggest that the state should not have an agenda for its science councils is to suggest that we should remain a country of two worlds. The ANC will not allow our scientific resources to be used to maintain the status quo of inequality. We are not interfering, we are intervening to ensure that allocated resources serve many, not the few.

In conclusion, Assaf and SACNASP must be the vanguards of a new era where the integrity in science is measured not only by scholarly achievements, but by their tangible contribution to job creation, social equity, and national development. The ANC proudly supports this budget and calls on all stakeholders to commit this transformative vision for our nation. Together, we will ensure that science works for all. I thank you.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr Z Majozi): Thank you very much, on Nkosi. Hon Njadu, today I can see that you have been appointed to assist me. I will now recognise the hon Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation to close off the Budget Vote.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 59

IsiZulu:

UNGQONGQOSHE WEZOBUCHWEPHESHE, ISAYENSI NOKUSUNGULA: Yimi loyo, Mjadu, ngizalwa uDlamini mina, Mzizi, uJama uSjadu, Cubungulashe.

English:

Hon House Chair, let me start, first of all, by thanking all those who supported this budget vote. Which means at least we have got quite a significant number and members of this portfolio committee who know where we are going and where we are supposed to go.

I want to thank you, Chair, for very important points you made amongst those ... you are pointing at the right thing that there isn't enough commercialisation. We share that with you. That is why amongst other things we are seeking to strengthen it here. And we are also working closely looking at what the National Intellectual Property Management Office, NIPMO, is doing in the department, as well as strengthening our working relationship with our entities.

IsiZulu:

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 60

Baba u-Mjadu, ngiyavumelana nawe ukuthi asingakhulumi nje, asenze. Kodwa ngibale izinto eziningi la esizenzayo. Uma ubheka nje inkulumo yami neyaSekela Ngqongqoshe, zigcwele izenzo. Manje angazi noma ubungalalelele noma ubuzitshela ukuthi noma singathini uzofunda le nto oyibhale phansi. Kuningi, ngikushilo la, angifuni ukukuphinda ngoba besengisithathile isikhathi sami.

English:

Let me say that we agree with weaknesses I mean there were many weaknesses that you are pointing out, is that our funding is not enough, we agree there. But the challenge to all those who say that, including Dr Thenjekwayo, let's not be perpetual lamenters.

We are very keen as the Ministry and the department to hear proposals like other members were doing, and not to be lamenting all the time. In fact, hon Thenjekwayo, I can write your speeches without even blinking because I know exactly what you are going to say. These issues that you are raising are big, they are important, the issue of science infrastructure in schools, laboratories and all that.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 61

That's why amongst other things we are working closely with the Department of Basic Education to say, together how do we tackle these challenges? Because it is in our interest that the Department of Basic Education must be strong, must produce more science students because then, we have got students in the pipeline.

IsiZulu:

Kodwa, hhayi, le nto yokukhala, ungaphawuli nokuthi kuthiwani. Hhayi, mina ayingiphathi kahle. Ngithe ngiyabonga kubo bonke lapho aseke lesi sabelomali sethu.

English:

Hon Boshoff, we welcome the fact that you are thinking also, at least. So, we would like to hear more of your views. With four minutes you are perhaps you are unable to ... I would even be willing that we meet, let's hear what you are thinking about, how much more money can we raise and also share what we are actually doing on our side.

Hon Mazzone, I think that ... I see this issue Denel and SA National Space Agency, SANSA, worries you to know and ... why don't we agree that ... let's have a time and sit down. Let me

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 62

hear properly, because I don't want to think I'm hearing you when in fact, I'm not. Maybe even discuss it, Chair, in the portfolio committee, that you come and do a presentation, director-general, DG, on that, so that we must just get around these issues.

But the issue of duplication is also our concern. That's why what we have been doing now, we are meeting individually with our entities because we want to understand in-depth what are they doing, where are the overlaps, how do we deal with this?

Also, by the way, the DG is leading a very important programme of writing, signing a shareholder agreement between the department ...

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): Hon Minister, can you please hold for a second.

Members that are invited to come and listen to the budget vote, the rules of the House are that we are not allowed to use our phones and record or take videos. So, please can we abide by the rules, because you are not Members of Parliament, MPs, but you have been invited to come and listen to the

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 63

budget vote. And what you are doing now is incorrect. Can you please refrain from doing that!

Hon Minister!

The MINISTER OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION: Hon House Chairperson, I was saying the DG has been working on shareholder agreements so that we are able to tightly hold our entities to account. I think that's making good progress.

Now, to end, I would like to say congratulations to your PhD graduate, Mphazima [hon V A Nkosi's clan name]. We need PhD graduates in buckets, in thousands, if not millions as a country.

Thank you very much to everyone who participated.

IsiZulu:

Siyabonga.

English:

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majози): Thank you very much, hon Minister.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026

VOTE NO 35 - SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Page: 64

Hon members, we have come to the conclusion of the debate and the business of the mini-plenary session, and also I would like to thank you for attending the budget vote and being so much of a nice Members of Parliament today. The mini-plenary will now rise, and the assistance of hon Mjadu. [Laughter.]

The mini-plenary session rose at 15:34,