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PROCEEDINGS OF VIRTUAL NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES

The Council met at 14:00.

The House Chairperson (Mr D R Ryder) took the Chair and requested members to observe a moment of silence for prayers or meditation.

The House Chairperson (Mr D R Ryder) announced that the virtual sitting constituted a sitting of the National Council of Provinces.

APPROPRIATION BILL

(Policy debate)

Vote No 17 - Higher Education:

The MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION: Hon House Chair of the National Council of Provinces, hon Deputy Chair of the NCOP,

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and other House Chairpersons, Chief Whip of the NCOP, and also hon permanent and special delegates, Members of the Provincial Legislatures who join us today, representatives of the SA Local Government Association, Salga, our Deputy Ministers, our Director-General Sishi, and the senior management of the department, distinguished guests, and compatriots. It is an honour to address this august House on the Policy debate of Budget Vote 17. This debate in the Chamber of the provinces is not a procedural ritual for us. It is the exercise of provincial responsibility for a national project and the building of the post-school education and training system on which the future of our young democracy depends.

We meet in June, the month in which we mark 50 years since the children of Soweto walked out of their classrooms and changed the course of history. They marched, they fell, and they bequeathed to us a country in which the right to learn is no longer up for debate. The youth of 1976 fought for the right to learn. The youth of 2026 demand more. They demand the right to skill, to innovate, to work, and the right to participate meaningfully in the economy of their own country. And we see this Budget Vote as an answer to that demand.

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A month ago, on 26 May, I tabled this Budget Vote in the National Assembly. The day after that tabling, we travelled to this very province, Bellville, the Western Cape, to the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, CPUT, to do the work that follows the announcement. There, the Media, Information and Communication Technologies Sector Education and Training Authority, MICT Seta, opened its 4IR Research Chair Symposium and expo. We further went on to launch the new MICT Seta Research Chair at CPUT, and we showcased six flagship ICT systems working software built by South African researchers in universities across four provinces. These universities are important to name, and the projects in which they participated. An e-recruitment system built at the Vaal University of Technology in Gauteng, a data and knowledge management platform built at the Durban University of Technology in KwaZulu-Natal, the Department of Higher Education and Training-Seta times website, which was built at the University of Limpopo, the MICT Seta intranet, which was built at the University of Johannesburg, and an e-learning career hub, which was built at the Tshwane University of Technology, together with a new 4IR Research Chair launched at CPUT here in the Western Cape. Two of these six systems directly support the Department of Higher Education and Training. These institutions, in these provinces, show that,

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for instance, in Bellville, as we did, this is what a budget must do repeatedly across every province: to turn research into outputs, turn outputs into jobs, turn jobs into the future of young people that they are owed. That is what announcement turning into delivery looks like.

The post-school system we lead was not built overnight and not by any one of us. It is the work of three decades of democratic policy, of Ministers and officials who came before us, of councils and quality bodies, of vice-chancellors and principals, researchers, lecturers and learners, and of millions of South Africans who placed their hopes in education when they had little else. The 2013 White Paper for Post-School Education and Training set the sector on its current footing. The National Student Financial Aid Scheme, NSFAS, the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations, QCTO, the Council on Higher Education, the qualifications authority, the consolidation of Further Education and Training, FET, into Technical and Vocational Education and Training, TVETs, and the establishment of Community Education and Training, CET, as a sector. These are the architecture of our democratic project. What this Vote proposes is not rupture. It is the next phase of work that has been underway for 31 years. We stand therefore on the shoulders of those who came before us,

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and we owe them and ourselves the discipline of doing the work that remains.

This Budget Vote is allocated R149,2 billion in this financial year, 2026-27, which is an increase of 4,8% on the R142,4 billion allocated in the last financial year. The Vote is projected to grow at an average annual rate of 4,4% across the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework, MTEF, reaching R162,3 billion by 2028-29. In total, the department will administer R468 billion over the next three years. But the public is not interested just in the size of the numbers. They are interested in what these numbers do.

In terms of infrastructure within this Vote, two Infrastructure grants speak directly to the provinces represented in this House. The university's Infrastructure and Efficiency grant is allocated R3,9 billion over the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework and is growing at an average annual rate of 10,2% from R1,1 billion in 2025 to R1,5 billion in 2028-29. The TVET Infrastructure and Efficiency grant is allocated R2,1 billion over the MTEF, growing at an annual rate of 69,1%, from R195 million in 2025-26 to R946 million in 2028-29.

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I want to dwell on that second figure because it is the most consequential reallocation in this Vote. A near 70% average annual growth in TVET infrastructure is not a routine line item. It is the practical answer to a generation of complaints that TVET is the forgotten middle of the post-school system. It is also a direct response to what this House, more than any other, has to hold this department for years, that the colleges in our provinces, in the small towns of the Eastern Cape, rural districts of Limpopo, industrial corridors of Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal, the agricultural belts of the Free State, the North West and Mpumalanga, and the mining communities of the Northern Cape need physical conditions worthy of the students who study in those provinces. This Vote begins that work.

University education remains the largest part of this Vote, and rightly so. Our universities carry more than a million students, conduct the bulk of the nation's research, and anchor the professions on which a modern economy depends. But access on its own is not the measure of success. Too many students enter our universities and do not complete, too many complete, and do not find work. The task before us is not only to open the doors of learning, but also to ensure that those who enter succeed and those who succeed find their place in

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the economy. We will therefore continue to invest in student success, in throughput, in postgraduate development, and in the transformation of the academy itself so that the demographics of our professoriate in time reflect the demographics of our country. Transformation is not a threat to excellence, properly understood. It is a precondition for excellence that university systems draw on the full talent of all people, will always be stronger than one that draws on the talent of a few, and will continue to defend institutional autonomy while insisting equally that autonomy is never a shield against public accountability. The public funds these institutions, and the public is entitled to know how they are all governed.

The House will recall that the department moved decisively under section 17(a) to 17(d) of the NSFAS Act to dissolve the NSFAS board and place the institution under administration. Prof Hlengani Mathebula was gazetted as administrator on 4 May 2026, and in the weeks since, he has assumed full executive control, conducted his first in-person engagement with NSFAS staff, and begun stabilizing the institution's operation. A three-month progress report is due and will be tabled before this House in the ordinary course. The NSFAS is projected to support 1,5 million university students and 807 000 TVET

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students from poor and working-class households over the period ahead across our public higher education institutions at a projected cost of R166 billion over the medium-term. Now, I must be honest with this House that the NSFAS has been through a period that no public institution should endure and from which no Minister can claim victory. Stabilization is underway. Recovery is the work of the year. And the 2027 application season, opening in a few short months, is the test against which the public will rightly judge us.

The Sector Education and Training Authorities, Setas, are the cornerstones of the skills revolution that this Vote funds. They cannot continue to operate as they have. And the reform of this system is one of the most important workstreams of this administration. That reform is well underway. Where Setas have failed to perform, we have not hesitated to act, as we have seen, having placed three of these Setas under administration, and six-month progress reports for each have been completed. But as we say, administration is not an end. The objective is to have functioning, accountable institutions that translate the skills levy into measurable employment outcomes. To that end, we are tightening service-level agreements, strengthening governance and council capability, directing Setas to common information systems, and pursuing

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the broader rationalization of the Seta landscape so that these authorities align cleanly with the sector that is driving our economy. But it must also be said that this is why we began in Bellville. That's where Setas has done good work. That work deserves the recognition. The MICT Seat Research Chair is just but one, and there are many of these examples all over where Setas are connecting skilled young people, placing them into internships, ensuring that they are trained as artisans, ensuring that they become professional plumbers, welders, bricklayers, and all sorts of skills that are needed by this economy. That is the standard we must hold every Seta to, and it cannot be seen as business as usual.

Alongside these reforms of the Seta is the reform of the National Skills Fund. And for too long, the National Skills Fund has operated as a grant maker, disbursing funds year after year against applications without always asking the harder questions. What did the nation receive in return? The audit history of the fund itself, frankly, has not been what the public is entitled to expect of an institution holding billions of rands of skills levies in public trust. We are changing this. We are repositioning the National Skills Fund from a passive grant maker to a catalytic outcomes-driven financier of the skills revolution. This means that this fund

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is tied to results, artisans produced, learners placed, enterprises supported, and skills delivered in areas our economy demands. It also means co-investment alongside industry, Setas, and public institutions, rather than funding in isolation. It also means an institution whose books are clean, whose decisions are transparent, and whose impact can be measured. The work the fund already does shows its potential. And through the National Skills Fund, this vote will support worker-initiated training for 4 000 learners, provide 21,000 bursaries for students in high-demand occupations, five Education and Training Programmes in innovation and digital technology for 135 000 learners, including learners from our rural areas. A total of 20,2 billion is set aside for these initiatives over the medium-term. Repositioned correctly, the National Skills Fund can become one of the most powerful instruments of economic transformation in the hands of the democratic state. We intend to make this happen.

The colleges will celebrate what this Vote is intended to sustain. Northlink College, for instance, here in the Western Cape, has its consistent pass rates and strong industry placements. Majuba TVET College in the Northern KwaZulu-Natal, which is embedded in the heavy manufacturing corridor and

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specializes in mechanical and civil engineering. Ekurhuleni East TVET College in Gauteng is a benchmark for artisan trade testing across Springs, KwaThema, and Daveyton. We will also act where we must act. The College of Cape Town and Coastal KwaZulu-Natal TVET College. The College of Cape Town has been placed under section 49, not as a punishment, but as a corrective measure. The students who study at these colleges deserve institutions that work. We are expanding the network. We are working with the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure and Basic Education to repurpose decommissioned facilities to serve further education and training in institutions still underserved. And I want to say a particular word about CETs, the R3,3 billion allocated to the sector that must be a second chance for the millions of South Africans who never finish school, is, frankly, not enough. It is a figure that names rather than disguises the structural underfunding of community education. It is a figure that this department, this House, and the National Treasury will have to revisit. The honest frame, we are not blind to the limits of what education and training can do on their own. Low economic growth, a bias towards capital intensity, and the sluggish performance of our productive sectors, manufacturing, construction, and the agro-processing value also constrain employment, especially amongst young people. Education

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provides the foundation. Skills are formed in the workplace, and technical skills require a thriving industrial sector to absorb them. This Vote will fund the skills revolution, but the skills revolution will only deliver what the broader economy can absorb; that is a project of government, and I charge the National Council of Provinces with its constitutional reach into every province that is well-placed to carry.

In the year ahead, this Vote will produce 22 000 artisans, 91 800 workplace-based opportunities, and 71 808 registered skills programmes. This is the age of the skills revolution. We are poised to make the necessary impetus for our country and our youth to seize the opportunity of an inclusive growth trajectory. The President's state of the nation address directed this department, together with the Minister of Finance, to develop a proposal for new universities and TVET with specialized areas of focus. We are hard at work, sites are being explored, and feasibility studies are being scoped. The work is unglamorous, yes, but it is the foundation of a system that must, over the coming decade, grow significantly beyond its current shape. There can be no successful, sustainable industrialization in this country without skills,

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research, and innovation. And so, this Vote and the proposals that follow it will provide all three.

The NCOP is the Chamber in which the provinces speak to one another and to the nation. And I ask this House, in the moment ahead, to do three things: visit your universities, TVET colleges, and community learning centres, and return to the House and tell us what you have seen. Our work is improved by your eyes.

In closing, at the dawn of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro declared that the project he led sought to build a country of men and women of science. That journey begins and continues with a high-quality education and training system available to every learner in every province. Fifty years ago, a generation of school children gave us a country in which we are free to learn. This Budget Vote begins the work of ensuring that we learn, and it sets us free.

I thank the Deputy Ministers, the director-general, and the women and men of this department whose daily labour is the foundation of everything I have said today. I commend Budget Vote 17 to this House. Thank you, House Chairperson and hon members.

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Mr M FENI: Hon House Chair, Chairperson of the NCOP, Chief Whip of the NCOP, hon Minister Buti Manamela, Deputy Ministers in our midst, MECs from different provinces, Department of Education and all protocol observed, good afternoon. Firstly, before I engage the debate, let me take this opportunity and extend my condolences, on behalf of the select committee, to the present murderers of our colleagues at different localities, especially the one in the Eastern Cape in Gqebera where I'm coming from, Sicelo Mleve, who was murdered while he was executing his responsibilities as mandated by his communities. My condolences is because of the different roles that he had been playing, both in communities and in the education system. Last month, he led a very successful programme, the second chance matric programme. Indeed, the department was invited. He led a very successful programme. Today, I felt that we cannot be quiet. Hopefully, those who committed those murders will be brought to book in no time.

Also, I cannot forget the passing of one of the contributors that have been serving on different boards in contributing and shaping the transformation of the higher education, Professor Thandi Macha Erasmus, the Vice-Chancellor of Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University. Indeed, this is a great loss to our education sector and the nation at large. As I'm speaking

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about her, she will be remembered for her contribution in advancing health care sciences as well as the leadership role she played while serving on various boards as I've already mentioned.

Let me open the debate in celebrating the Youth Month by quoting Frantz Fanon who said, and I quote:

Each generation must, out of his relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfil it or betray it.

It is with this quote that we appreciate the opportunity to debate on Budget Vote 17 of our education sector. The sector is a vehicle through which younger generation of this country must discover its mission to build the South Africa they want to see in the near future. Education and training remain crucial instruments for social justice, transformation redress and economic inclusion aligning with our constitutional imperatives and the developmental agenda of the democratic state.

At the beginning of this year, the Select Committee on Education had the privilege of attending the senior certificate results ceremony in Johannesburg, where we witness

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the class of 2025 achieving a matric pass rate of over 88% the highest in the South African history.

Furthermore, it was revealed that 46%, which amounts to 345 000 learners achieved bachelors' pass. Within that moment, one wondered whether our higher education sector was well prepared to accommodate the growing demand on higher education. One wearing figure was that the University of Johannesburg receiving 450 000 first year application, yet it has the capacity to accommodate only 11% students. This is an admission rate of mere 2,5%. Now, the question we have to ask ourselves is whether we are doing justice to our learners when we ask them to study hard during matric only to have insufficient space for enrolment at the institutions of higher learning. This response can only be addressed by an urgent expansion of access to universities, the Technical and Vocational Education and Training, TVET, colleges and city colleges.

We acknowledge the university infrastructure and efficiency grants allocation of R3,9 billion and the TVET infrastructure at efficiency grant allocation of R2,1 billion over the medium-term. We need to ensure that this allocation is used prudently and for its intended purpose. We also have to be

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honest in arguing that this infrastructure budget allocation may not solve all challenges but if spent well it can go a long way. When considering university and TVET college infrastructure we also call for increased investment in expanding student accommodation and recreation facilities.

Furthermore, there must be an expansion of information and communications technology, ICT, infrastructure within our institution of higher learning to offer blended learning that combines physical classroom instruction with hybrid instruction to help addresses infrastructure challenges.

We also stress that access to institution of higher learning must be accompanied by quality learning, student support, institutional stability and improved throughput rate to ensure meaningful transformation.

The national student fund has become one of our major gains since the democratic dispensation. The massive growth in the National Student Financial Aid Scheme, NSFAS, funding which was initially a student loan has turned into a bursar fund for poor and working class with an allocation of R54 billion in this financial year. This funding is the ANC-led government commitment to ensure that no South African child from a poor

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household is left behind in accessing higher education. However, we continue to call for better stability and good governance within NFSAS. With this amount of funding, we do not expect to see student protest over accommodation, financial exclusion or meal allowances. We will therefore hold NSFAS accountable for disbursing these funds to the rightful beneficiaries and for providing better student support and wellbeing.

We want to stress that despite sustained investment in postschool education and training, baseline reduction over the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework, MTEF, continue to constrain institutional capacity, infrastructure expansion and student success initiative. It is important to sufficiently fund institutions of higher learning so they can contribute effectively to South Africa's social and economic development.

The recent QS World University Rankings revealed that 8% of top 10 ranked African universities are from South Africa. This is a show of global confidence towards our institutions of higher learning which we need to uphold.

One of the areas of concern is the growing leadership instability across the sector, including a high number of

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acting deputy directors-general, DDGs, regional managers, TVET colleges' principals and NSFAS senior management which weakens governance, accountability and institutional performance.

Currently, the now disbanded and NSFAS board has been unable to appoint a permanent CEO at a time when a record number of students needs support. We therefore call for an urgent filling of all senior management posts within the department, entities and public institution of higher learning.

In the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, 4IR, and historically disadvantaged communities continue to experience unequal access to quality infrastructure, internet connectivity, accommodation and learning opportunities. This is reflected in the so-called historically disadvantaged institutions which were eight public universities and university of technologies established during the apartheid era of black, coloured and Indian populations. This continued to grow inequalities within the institutions of higher learning. We therefore call for greater infrastructure allocation and support for these institutions to enable them to reach the same standard of well-resourced universities.

With that being said, we condemn the destruction and burning of infrastructure at the University of Fort Hare that happened in

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October of 2025. No amount of anger and frustration will drive the students to burn down infrastructure. This will deprive the next cohort of students in accessing quality education and good learning governance. We are calling for a responsible student leadership. We call on university leadership to constantly engage with students and to urgently address the frustration used before issues are allowed to escalate. We call for the acceleration of contraction at Hammanskraal university and the Ekurhulele university of science and technology. This will help increase the higher education sector's capacity to accommodate more school leavers. We also call for these universities to be skill based and to offer programmes that are in demand within the labour market.

We, however, would like to express concern about the persistent underfunding of the community education and training ,CET, colleges despite their critical role in supporting unemployed youth and adults through second chance education and skills development. We call for more funding for CET colleges, infrastructure and learning programmes. We further call for CET colleges programmes offerings to be responsive to the skills required to address the needs of the communities as highlighted in our policy document the National Development Plan, NDP, 2030.

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There is an urgent need for stronger co-ordination across the Department of Higher Education and Training branches to improve planning, oversight and implementation of infrastructure and institutional development projects. We cannot allow branches of the department to operate in silos. When we conduct our oversight, we expect all branches to speak with one voice. We also call for the department to exercise effective oversight over Sector Education and Training Authorities, setas, universities and TVET colleges to ensure governance, stability and prevention of the abuse of internationalisation policy, especially in appointments where South Africans have sufficient capacity to perform them. The concentration must be only on scarce skills. We can't continue to have this particular challenge. We see that it is escalating and is a national crisis currently. It is our responsibility at these institutions to ensure that they co-operate with the government policies to ensure that our communities do not feel left behind, especially those who have skills, especially those who are qualifying and especially those who are professionals.

In closing, we call for the positioning of higher education sector to be at the centre of nation building, social cohesion, poverty reduction and inclusive economic

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development. With those words, let me close with a quote by the president general of the ANC, who said:

We are making history, reshaping the diversity of our country because many have given their all for this day to dawn. They perished so that the nation could live.

I thank you, Chairperson. We fully support and we are behind this budget.

Ms J M ADRIAANSE: Hon Chairperson, hon Minister, hon Deputy Minister, hon members and fellow South Africans, good day. You cannot build a house by laying a foundation and never finishing the structure. Basic education, through the early childhood development, ECDs, lay the foundation. Primary and secondary schools build the walls. But it is higher education that places the roof on the house, transforming potential into opportunity, learners into professionals and dreams into a lived reality.

When higher education succeeds, economies grow, innovation flourishes and young people gain hope. It must be a ladder out of poverty. So, the perfect roof of the house of education is to be qualified in a career that ensures a job. But for many

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of our qualified young South Africans, it has become a waiting room for unemployment. This is the uncomfortable truth plaguing this budget. The department speaks about a skilled and capable nation, about economic growth, innovation and opportunity. Wow, how great this sounds. But words are only words until the pudding can be eaten.

In this budget the department has received just over R149 billion. Listen carefully, not million, but billion. Despite this massive budget, we are still hearing the same story of the National Student Financial Aid Scheme, NSFAS, confusion, accommodation issues and shortages, students struggling to register and, worse of all, graduates struggling to find jobs.

Wait for it. Minister Buti Manamela indicated during a press briefing that NSFAS continued to pay bursaries to at least 822 deceased individuals. Something's got to give. We can't keep measuring success by money spent, especially to the deceased. The success lies in measurable outcomes. Those who have completed their studies and are employed and are climbing the ladder step by step out of poverty.

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Howard Hannaford correctly stated: "Education is the escape route out of poverty".

But is our post-school education system truly succeeding? We need to reflect and ask: How many graduates have found work? How many artisans qualified and entered the economy? How many young people moved from dependency to dignity, from welfare to work, from hopelessness to opportunity? Those are the numbers that matter. Our official unemployment rate among our youth sits at 45,8%. Those with less than matric have an unemployment rate at 37,6%. Those with matric, 35,7%. Other tertiary graduates are at 22,2%. Graduates have an unemployment rate of 12,2%. The message could not be clearer. Education changes lives. Yet, despite this, the department itself acknowledges that South Africa continues to face the triple challenges of unemployment, inequality and poverty, and that outcomes across the postschool education and training system remain uneven.

While government talks about building a knowledge economy, support for future academics is moving in the wrong direction. Doctoral scholarships are being reduced. Emerging scholar opportunities are being reduced. Yet we expect more research, more innovation and more economic growth.

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The National Student Financial Aid Scheme, NSFAS, remains top of mind, not for the right reasons, but for all the remedial plans, and wait for it, promises that things will now improve. Students are asked to trust a system that has let them down so many times, believe that the promises might just now hold true this time, that the pudding will be eaten. Believe that the leaking roof of higher education will indeed be fixed this time?

The DA believes that a qualification must lead somewhere. It must lead to a job or to entrepreneurship and a career that will boost South Africa's economy. That is why we support stronger links with universities, the Technical and Vocational Education and Training, TVET, colleges and industry and welcome the move towards an education system of occupational qualifications designed to better align with workplace demands. We support and welcome artisan development, workplace experience and partnerships with the private sector. Training people for jobs that do not exist is not empowerment, it is a waste. Our youth need employable qualifications which will give them a real chance for a better future, climbing the ladder out of poverty, step by step. But remember, you can never climb the ladder of success with your hands in your pockets. I thank you.

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Mr F GADE (Eastern Cape): Hon House Chair, hon Minister and Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training, hon members good afternoon. We welcome the tabling of the R149,2 billion of Higher Education and Training as the Eastern Cape. At the heart of this budget is about hope. It is about opening the doors of young people whose dreams are often constrained by poverty, unemployment and inequality.

For many young people in the Eastern Cape, a university degree, a diploma, a trade qualification is not a simple personal achievement. It is a lifeline. It is an opportunity to change the circumstances of an entire family. It is a chance to break the cycles of poverty that have persisted for generations and created a different future for those who will come after them.

Every year, we meet learners from villages to villages, townships to townships and rural communities who receive excellent results, despite the difficult circumstances mentioned here. They study by candlelight during power outages. They walk long distances as you would understand the rural nature of our province. They overcome challenges that many would consider insurmountable. They understand that

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education remains one of the most powerful tools for social and economic transformation.

This is why we welcome the continued investment on the National Student Financial Aid Scheme, NSFAS and the commitment by government to support more than 700 students across the country. For thousands of young people, in this support means the difference between entering a lecture room and remaining trapped in the poverty cycle that we have outlined above.

Yet, there is another reality that this House requires urgent attention to. Across South Africa, many working families find themselves caught in the middle. They do not qualify for full financial aid, yet they cannot afford the rising cost of tuition fees, accommodation, transport, books, daily living expenses. These are professionals within the public sector, your educators, nurses, police officers, government employees, small business owners, ordinary workers. South Africans who make enormous sacrifices to educate their children. Many sometimes take debts, some depleted their savings, others simply cannot keep up with the costs and watch their children's dream slip away.

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We need a funding model that recognises these glaring realities. The missing middle has become one of the biggest challenges that faces higher education and training institutions in the country. We must develop an innovative funding solution that combines government support, affordable student financing, private sector participation. Nonstudents with the potential to succeed should not be denied an opportunity because their family earns slightly above the funding threshold. This is one of the areas that would need a further engagement, hon Minister and hon Chair through these committees.

The challenge of student debt remains a painful one. Many people complete their studies but cannot graduate because of historical debts. Others are excluded from continuing with their studies despite demonstrating academic potential. As the Eastern Cape provincial government, we took a decision whilst having observed that particular crisis. Working together with the institutions of higher learning in the province, we have contributed initiatives aimed at assisting students burdened by historical debt, so that they can be able to be part of the young people that are entering the mainstream economy in the province.

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We have consistently engaged universities to find practical solutions that allow deserving students to complete their studies, access their academic records, and graduate thereof. We know that every debt cleared is more than a financial transaction. It is a young person being given a second chance. It is a family moving closer to economic security. It is a graduate entering a labour market with dignity and hope.

However, the scale of the challenge requires a national response. We need sustainable mechanisms to address these historical student debts so that the deserving young people are not permanently locked out of these opportunities that the Minister has outlined in this budget.

Hon members, while expanding access remains important, access alone is not enough. We must ask difficult questions about whether our higher education system is equitable, preparing graduates for the realities of today's economic diversification. Too many graduates are at home without employment. Families invest their hopes on these kids, their savings and their sacrifices in higher education only to find that qualifications do not always lead to opportunities.

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This requires an in-depth discussion on the policy alignment between basic education and higher education in the country and streamlining opportunities from basic education to higher education, so that we can be able to resolve the x that is confronting us. The world of work is changing rapidly. New industries are emerging while others are evolving. Artificial intelligence, digital technologies, advanced manufacturing, renewable energy, and data-driven industries are reshaping the economies across the globe now.

Our institutions of higher learning must keep pace with those challenges. Our curricula should be continuously reviewed and updated to ensure that graduates leave our institutions with skills that are relevant and practical, in actual fact and in demand. Universities must work much more closely with industry and government and the private sector. Employers should have a stronger voice in identifying skills required in the economy, while institutions should ensure that programmes respond to those needs.

The success of higher education cannot be measured only by the number of students who enrol or graduate. It must also be measured about how many graduates secured employment, created business, contributed meaningful economic growth for the

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country. We must also fundamentally change how we view the technical and vocational education in the country. For far long, society has created an impression that success only comes through university degrees.

This thinking has deprived the economy of critical skills and has discouraged many talented young people to pursue technical careers. The future of South Africa will be built not only by professional people, academics and accountants, but will also be built by artisans, electricians, plumbers, welders, and mechanics, software developers, and renewable energy specialists. This is why we are strongly supporting greater investment on Technical and Vocational Education and Training, TVET colleges and skills development.

Through our provincial government, we continue to invest in skills development, artisan training, internship, learnership and youth employment. We want young people to acquire not qualifications, but practical experiences that improve their chances of securing sustainable employment. The province's economic future will depend on our ability to produce skilled young people who can participate in these growing sectors, contributing to the building of a competitive economy.

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Hon Chair and hon members, the true value of this budget will be measured by the lives it changes. It will be measured by the young woman from Lusikisiki. It will be measured by the first graduate in that particular family. It will be measured by the young man from Cofimvaba who acquires a trade and starts a business. Education remains our most powerful instrument for building a more equitable society. Thank you so much, hon Chair.

Ms L P MHLONGO: Chair, can I please be allowed to switch off my camera?

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Yes, indeed

Ms L P MHLONGO: Thank you, Chair.

IsiZulu:

Ngicela ukubingelela abahlonishwa, ngibingelele uNgqongqoshe noSekela Ngqongqoshe, ngicela ukubingelela nabo bonke abafundi la eNingizimu Afrika.

English:

I stand before this House not to ... [Interjections.] ...

Chair, there is feedback.

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The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Hon Mhlongo, can you just stand by for a moment, please?

Ms L P MHLONGO: Okay.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): The interpretation facility, you're coming through on the main feed. There is an alternative setting you can choose so that you only come through for the people that have enabled the interpretation. If I can ask you to correct your settings so that the speaker remains uninterrupted. Table, if we can reset the time, please, and give the hon Mhlongo the chance to begin her speech from the start, please. Hon Mhlongo, please continue.

Ms L P MHLONGO: Thank you so much, Chair.

IsiZulu:

Ngicela ukubingelela wonke umuntu waseNingizimu Afrika, ngibingelele bonke abafundi. [Ubuwelewele.]

English:

It is still coming through, Chair.

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The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Yes, interpretation, please. There is a problem with your settings. I would strongly request that you don't interrupt our sitting and perhaps hold off on the interpretation until you've managed to get your settings correct. And if we can ask the Table to just intervene in the background and ensure that the appropriate interpreter is corrected with the settings. Apologies for that, hon Mhlongo. Let us try again, please.

Ms L P MHLONGO: Thank you, Chair. I stand before this House today, not to read figures, but to speak for the child whose name does not appear in this Budget Vote 17. I speak for the young woman in Upington who passed matric with six distinctions, but whose mother sells fruit at the robot because the registration fee is R8 000 and the bank could not grant her a loan. I speak for the boy in Mthatha who was accepted to study mechanical engineering, but who's now sitting at home because the National Financial Aid Scheme, NSFAS, is still processing, while the landlord has changed the locks. And I speak for the student in KwaZulu-Natal in Maphumulo who qualified for a bursary but was told that there's no space after millions disappeared into questionable contract tenders at the same institution. The Minister has come before us with billions on paper, but the question we

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must answer is simple: Does the budget give dignity to the poor, or does it continue to fund exclusion and corruption? The MK Party has considered these numbers. We have listened to students and parents across the nine provinces and have concluded that this budget fails the test. Therefore, we cannot support it.

Let us begin with NSFAS because this is where the betrayal is most painful. Every year, the Minister tells us that more money has been allocated. Every year, the call centre says the system is down. Every year, students are deregistered in July in the middle of exams because their allowances were not paid. It not only delays that are killing NSFAS, but it is also corruption. It is an inflated accommodation contract. It is the direct payment to dodgy service providers while students go hungry. It is the same story in other education entities, from the sector education and training, Setas, to college councils, where tenders are awarded to connected companies, millions vanish, and no one is held accountable.

If billions have been truly set aside for poor students, then we must ask why those billions never arrive on time. Why are they instead feeding a network of corrupt officials and middlemen? The MK Party believes that if this government can

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find emergency funds to bail out state-owned entities that have been looted for decades, then it can find the political will to ensure that no student in South Africa goes to bed hungry while waiting for money that is meant to be their right. We therefore demand a full independent forensic audit on NSFAS and all other education entities, and we demand that any official manager or service provider who has stolen from students be arrested and barred from government for life, because a student's future is not a tender opportunity.

A second crisis that this budget refuses to face is the collapse of TVET colleges. We have over 2 million young South Africans who are not in employment, education, or training, and yet our response is to send them to institutions that have no workshops, no modern tools, and no real relationship with the industry. A student can complete an N6 certificate in electrical engineering in Kimberley, but graduate without ever wiring a real circuit board, and then we act surprised when the same student cannot find work in the mines or in construction. This budget gives TVETs a small increase, but it does not give them a plan. It does not link them to the manganese mine in the Northern Cape, to the agriculture of the Free State, or to the manufacturing that we so desperately need. The MK Party says that a TVET college without an

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industry partnership is not a college at all. It is a warehouse for unemployment. We reject a funding model that treats TVET students as second-class citizens while we pretend that universities alone will solve our skills crisis. The third issue is the soul of education, and this is where the MK Party must speak firmly. We do not support a Eurocentric curriculum that continues to place European history, European philosophy, and European values at the centre of learning, while saying very little about our own African history, our indigenous languages, our knowledge systems, and our contributions to our people.

For 12 years, our children sit in classrooms and learn the names of kings and queens across the sea, but they graduate without knowing the stories of King Moshoeshoe, without understanding the astronomical knowledge of the Khoi and San, and without reading the words of Sol Plaatje and Thomas Mofolo in their own language. That is not transformation; that is the continuity of colonial education. If we are serious about liberation, we must find a curriculum that reflects who we are, that restores pride to every learner, and that teaches our children that Africa had civilisation, had science, and had wisdom long before the coloniser arrived. The fourth issue is the so-called missing middle. The families who earn too

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much to qualify for NSFAS, but far too little to pay university fees without falling into debt. These are the parents who are teachers, nurses, police officers and small business owners. They work very hard; they pay their taxes, and yet their children are punished for the crime of being born in a household that's working too hard but not wealthy. Free education must mean free for the poor and the missing middle. In light of these failures, the MK Party is compelled to make a formal declaration to reject Budget Vote 17 as it stands, because it does not push students first, and it does not rescue TVET colleges. It does not root out corruption in the education entities, and it does not transform the content of education to reflect the African identity.

But our rejection is not mere politics. It is consistent with the position of the MK Party that has always been held, which is the same position that President Jacob Zuma championed when he was the State President of the Republic, that free quality education for the poor is not a favour from the government. It is a right, and it is a foundation upon which a just society must be built. Continuing that legacy, the MK Party declares two things with urgency: Legislation that makes the late payment of NSFAS allowance and corruption within the NSFAS and other education instances a punishable offence because the

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dignity of our students cannot be held hostage by any administrative delay or crooked tenders. Community control of TVET colleges so that the people of each province, including the people of KwaZulu-Natal, can decide which skills their youth need, instead of leaving these decisions to officials who have never set foot there. Therefore, Chairperson, for every student watching this debate, the MK Party sees you. We hear your frustration. We carry your struggle in this House. And we will not rest until education in South Africa is truly free, truly quality, and truly African. The MK Party will never support a budget that forecasts the child of the soil; we reject it. Thank you, Chair.

Ms M KENNEDY: Hon Chairperson of the session, hon members of the NCOP, fellow South Africans, the EFF strongly opposes this 2026-27 Higher Education budget, which is characterised by instability and a lack of decisive leadership.

We cannot talk about the Department of Higher Education and Training without starting to talk about the National Student Financial Aid Scheme, NSFAS. This NSFAS is mandated to provide financial assistance and promote access to higher education for those from previously marginalised and disadvantaged

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backgrounds. However, looking at how this institution is doing, it is doing the exact opposite of this.

The NSFAS fails to address the systematic needs of the majority, with funds often being absorbed by administration and salaries rather than benefitting vulnerable communities. It is a disaster, as it faces issues of fraud, maladministration and weak oversight.

We note that without this concern being prioritised by NSFAS ... will continue leaving graduates with no degrees due to the debts they have, as NSFAS no longer caters for all of the fees the graduates accumulate.

The persistent delays in timely NSFAS payments, the lack of integration with academic calendars and unaddressed inefficiencies continue to jeopardise student access and institutional stability.

On top of this, the Auditor-General flagged unacceptable delays with regard to a finalised university fee regularity framework, which is stalling student debt resolution and affordability plans.

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As the EFF, we demand the cancellation of all student debt, the implementation of free, decolonised higher education, and furthermore, the eradication of favouritism, patronage networks and irregular appointments within the sector education and training authority, Seta.

We cannot overlook the underfunded Community Education and Training, CET, colleges. It's an unfortunate situation of denying impoverished communities the preparation for achieving a better, advantageous future of a knowledgeable generation. Without such better institutions of knowledge, their future is doomed to fail.

The department has historically admitted that Technical and Vocational Education and Training, TVET, colleges lack the physical infrastructure and institutional support needed to absorb the demand. It has aggressively moved to scrap pre-2009 legacy qualifications such as farm management and business administration, without providing immediate, seamless transactions to the outdated curricula.

The issue of infrastructure is a big one facing all higher education institutions and remains one of the most significant

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barriers to higher education, and this is prevalent in TVET colleges as well.

An article by the *Daily Maverick* talks about a second-year student who considered deregistering in March this year due to not having accommodation in Tshwane University of Technology.

The challenge of infrastructure inefficiency leads to exclusion at the point of entry, severe overcrowding and ... campus instability following suit.

When capacity cannot match the mass matriculant output, the structural system will be severely compromised. Thousands of qualifying students are turned away because public universities and colleges cannot accommodate the sheer volume of applicants.

The compromised learning conditions of overcrowded lecture halls, outdated information technology, IT, networks and insufficient laboratory spaces diminishes teaching quality and student engagement.

A deficit in resources and poor living conditions at colleges often spark protests and riots, leading to physical damage to

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existing infrastructure. Severe shortfalls in university-owned housing leave students vulnerable to unsafe, predatory or informal off-campus living conditions.

And ... this inefficient budget, every problem will continue escalating for years to come as long as it is not changed. The high demand for limited resources exacerbates institutional debt and overstrains bodies like NSFAS.

The EFF highly condemns this chronic underfunding of infrastructure, neglect and corruption in TVET and CET colleges. The EFF demands urgent, massive state-led infrastructure upgrades to rescue this sector.

We cannot overlook the insufficient accredited accommodation and rising rental costs. Students are more prone to facing exploitation by private accommodation providers, without ... taking into consideration that most students are dependent on financial aid from NSFAS.

The above point is proven by the recent protests by students from the University of Johannesburg residing at the Thrive Student Living on 5 June 2026. These students expressed their frustration as their landlords kept demanding monthly top ups

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even though their housing was NSFAS accredited. These students voiced their concerns about how their living conditions were still the same despite their landlords demanding more money on the SA Broadcasting Corporation's, SABC's, news platform.

The EFF ... [Inaudible.] ... rejects the practice of outsourcing infrastructure projects to private contractors, which breeds tender corruption, inflated prices and poor quality delivery. We demand that the state takes full responsibility for building, maintaining and refurbishing college facilities, using state-owned enterprises to ensure efficiency and accountability.

We consider the current standard of TVET infrastructure to be vastly inferior to university infrastructure. We have consistently insisted that the Department of Higher Education and Training increases infrastructure budgets to better equip college workshops to stimulate real-world workplaces and ... financial blockages.

The EFF has, for a long time, advocated for free education and the direct transfer of funds from National Treasury to colleges, cutting out intermediaries like NSFAS.

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We are also pushing for the upgrade of ICT infrastructure across all colleges so that they can adequately teach modern skills. We are also advocating for an overhaul of curriculum-supporting facilities, demanding that every TVET college be equipped to teach advanced courses in computer hardware, artificial intelligence and coding.

The EFF does not support such a budget because the department continues to suffer from dysfunction, financial mismanagement and corruption under the current Government of National Unity, GNU, leadership.

The budget fails to address structural underfunding, and ignores the immediate needs of students and the working class. The budget preserves an exclusionary system where millions of students are still locked out of post-school education and training due to the lack of adequate, genuine financial support.

This limited, constrained budget can lead to higher staff-to-student ratios, outdated teaching materials and an inability to attract or retain top-tier academic talent and researchers.

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When institutions lack the funding to align curricula with modern industry demands such as the digital economy or green energy, graduates often face a mismatch between their degrees and job markets.

Studies show that over 46% of unemployed graduates hold humanities or social sciences degrees. Employers in the current economy demand technical and analytical roles, leaving generalist graduates waiting for a longer period to secure employment.

This mismatch doesn't only result in joblessness. Up to 45% of employed graduates in South Africa consider themselves underemployed because their jobs require significantly lower skills than what they studied for.

This 2026 Medium-Term Expenditure Framework budget features baseline reductions. Without an increase, universities and colleges face compromised institutional stability, halted infrastructure development and severely restricted first-year enrolments.

The NSFAS requires adequate financial backing to support the growing number of eligible working-class students. So, as TVET

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and CET colleges have historically experienced structural underfunding, expanding this budget is vital to upgrade workshops, hire qualified lecturers and meet national demands for vocational and artisan skills.

An increased budget is necessary to implement sustainable financial models and loan schemes for working-class and missing-middle students who do not qualify for NSFAS but who cannot afford rising tuition ...

This Budget Vote No 17 must be urgently increased to reverse severe baseline budget cuts, address systematic underfunding and prevent a collapse in critical institutional capacity.

In conclusion, the EFF demands an overhaul of the Skills Development Strategy and the scrapping of the 1% skills levy in its current form, to redirect those funds strictly to empowering TVET colleges. I thank you.

Mr B J FARMER: Hon Chairperson, hon members and hon Minister, I greet you in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

Chairperson, for many South African families, education remains the single greatest pathway out of poverty. They

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believe that if they work hard and obtain a qualification, they will have a better future. Our responsibility in this House is to ensure that that hope is not betrayed.

Hon members, the Department of Higher Education and Training has received a budget allocation of approximately R149,2 billion for the 2026-27 financial year. This significant investment demonstrates the importance government places on education, skills development and youth empowerment. However, hon Minister, the accreditation difficulties faced by agricultural colleges is a serious problem.

A student completing a three-year course at one of these colleges is not given recognition for prior learning when he or she wishes to take their studies further at university level. They are forced to start over from scratch. On our oversight visit to the Potchefstroom College of Agriculture, we were informed that it is only the Elsenburg Agricultural Training Institute accreditation in Stellenbosch that is recognised by Stellenbosch University. If true, how can we, in this day and age, allow such double standards?

The Patriotic Alliance, however, supports investment in higher education because we recognise that South Africa cannot grow

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its economy, create jobs or reduce poverty without investing in people. However, Chairperson, budgets must deliver outcomes. Money allocated must translate into graduates, artisans, entrepreneurs, researchers, technicians and workers who can contribute to economic growth. South Africa cannot afford a situation where qualifications grow while opportunities shrink.

Hon members, one of the most important areas requiring attention is the strengthening of Technical and Vocational Education and Training, TVET, colleges. For too long, TVET colleges have been treated as the lesser option compared to universities. The Patriotic Alliance rejects this thinking. Our economy desperately needs practical skills that build roads, maintain infrastructure, construct houses and support industrial growth. A young artisan is just as valuable to the economy as a university graduate. This is why we support greater investment in TVET colleges, industry partnerships and workplace integrated learning.

Hon members, a further challenge facing our country is the mismatch between education and employment. Thousands of graduates remain unemployed while industries continue to report skills shortages. This tells us that closer alignment

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is required between education providers and the economy. We must ensure that training programmes respond to the needs of the labour market. Higher education cannot operate in isolation from economic realities. Education must prepare young people not only to pass examinations, but to participate in the economy.

Chairperson, we also welcome the growing focus on digital skills, artificial intelligence and technological innovation. The future economy will require new competencies and new ways of thinking. Our young people must be equipped to compete not only within South Africa, but globally. Digital literacy, coding, data analysis and emerging technologies are no longer luxuries. They are necessities. South Africa cannot afford to be left behind in the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Hon members, we must also speak about governance. Institutions of higher learning must be places of excellence, accountability and integrity. Where there are maladministration, corruption and instability, decisive intervention is required. Every rand lost to corruption is a rand stolen from a student's future. The Patriotic Alliance, therefore, supports strong oversight, improved governance and

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consequence management throughout the full school education system.

Chairperson, in closing, the Patriotic Alliance supports Budget Vote 17, but we support it with expectations. We expect accountability, excellence, efficiency, employability and, above all, we expect that every young South African who works hard and pursues education will have a genuine opportunity to build a better future. Investing in education is investing in South Africa. Salute. Thank you, Chairperson.

Ms S MASUMPA: Chairperson, we as the ANC are in support of the Budget Vote that is presented by the Minister of Higher Education. We hope that it will improve the turnout of the education of our young people especially the National Student Financial Aid Scheme, NSFAS. It needs special attention. It will also encourage those children who dropped out and left school because their circumstances did not allow them to get much education.

Can I switch off the video, Chair?

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): [Inaudible.]

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Ms S MASUMPA: Sorry, Chair, I just want to close my video.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Hon Masumpa, I'm afraid that this is not conduct becoming of the House. Can I ask you to get yourself in order and proceed with your speech, please?

Ms S MASUMPA: Alright, Chair, let me continue.

We wish that the budget that has been tabled by the Minister would be able to assist those children that are disadvantaged, especially people that come from disadvantaged areas, and that it will be accessible for all students. It will not cater for some, and as a result of that, as we are going forward to 2027-28, that budget will be able to improve much with the young people to get better education and be able to access better jobs. As the ANC, we welcome the budget ...

[Inaudible.] ... and we are in support of the budget. Thank you, Chair.

Ms N S Du PLESSIS: Hon House Chair, hon Minister ...

[Inaudible.] ...

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The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Hon Du Plessiss, I am afraid you have been muted. If I can ask you to unmute yourself and continue.

Ms N S Du PLESSIS: ... The Department of Higher Education and Training carries the hopes, anxieties and sacrifices of millions of young South Africans. Behind every allocation is a student waiting for funding, a parent stretching a household budget, a graduate hoping for work, and a young whether this country still has a place for them. This department sits at the centre of our struggle against unemployment, inequality and poverty.

The department presents the 2026-27 annual performance plan and budget vote as a decisive system reset. And we welcome any shift from compliance to outcomes. However, the question remains, does this budget match the promise? Budget Vote 17 amounts to R149,2 billion in 2026-27, increasing over the medium term. These are significant resources, but they must be read against baseline reductions, limited operational flexibility, pressure on compensation, declining real growth and reduced funding and infrastructure and skills levy linked programmes.

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The department is expected to expand enrolments, strengthen governance, stabilise National Financial Aid Scheme, NSFAS, improve Technical and Vocational Education and Training, Tvet, colleges, and Community Education and Training College, CET, performance, deliver infrastructure and grow workplace-based learning. This is an ambitious reset given the history of this department.

On universities, the annual performance plan, APP, seeks to expand access, increase graduate output and strengthen research capacity. These are the correct objectives, and South Africa needs more graduates, researchers and innovation. But the department must explain how expanded enrolments and doctoral outputs will be balanced against declining real funding growth.

We are especially concerned that post graduate scholarships targets are reduced while the country speaks of a knowledge economy as well as industrialisation. NSFAS remains one of the most important instruments for social justice, but also one of the greatest sources of anxiety for students and families and unfortunately a massive target for corruption and extraction.

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Repeated remedial plans are not enough, and we must be told what enforcement powers the department has if NSFAS fails to implement corrective actions. Tvet and CET colleges are meant to be at the heart of the skills revolution, yet the Tvet sector turnaround strategy is scheduled for approval only well into the financial year. What happens in the meantime?

How will weaknesses in governance, certification, lecturer capacity, curriculum responsiveness and workman placement be addressed before then? In the case of CET colleges, growth in enrolment, literacy and online learning must be matched by trained educators, digital infrastructure, learning materials and quality assurance. Expanding access without quality is a broken promise.

The Sector Education and Training Authority, Setas, skills development system must be judged by real employment outcomes, not only certificates and short-term placements. Setas are expected to meet high governance and placement targets while skills level revenue declines. The department must explain how these targets remain realistic and we must be able to verify whether reported employment outcomes are sustainable, relevant and linked to the training received.

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Governance and legislation require sharper accountability. The department lists several Amendment Bills including those related to the National Qualification Framework, skills development, continuing education and training, higher education and NASFAS. Legislative reform may be necessary, but it must not become a substitute for implementation, and the department must explain which failures these Bills are meant to correct and what risks may delay them.

Transformation must be defended. Rural districts, townships and historically underserved communities must see visible improvements in access to campuses, student accommodation, accredited programmes, digital learning and workplace opportunities. This budget debate must not end with general assurances. We should require four things from the department. First, a credible explanation on how increased targets will be achieved under reduced baselines. Second, enforceable milestone for NASFAS stabilisation. Third, quarterly reporting on Setas' audit action plans and employment outcomes, and lastly, a transformation recovery plan where procurement targets have declined. It is important to remember that reports alone will not implement the necessary reset in the department. It takes courage and a will for excellence from

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every person in the department both political and official. There have been so many relevant plans over the past 30 years however there have been no or little implementation. Implementation in this department will change lives. It will give a young person hope for a future, a sense of belonging and a real chance to act ... [Inaudible.] ... the international economic opportunities, and where opportunities are ruined due to fraudulent activities, we implore you as a department to catch, convict and clean up. So that the investment of this budget goes towards building the dreams of all and not an elite few.

We have the talent in South Africa. It is an incredible talent pool, and there is passion in this country that needs to be supported. In the words of Tony Leon, "What is wrong with South Africa can be fixed with what is right with South Africa." Let the department build on what is right with South Africa and not break this through mismanagement. Thank you.

Ms L L MASINA (Mpumalanga): Chairperson, let me take this opportunity, to greet the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces, House Chairpersons, the Chief Whip of the NCOP, the Chairpersons and members of the Select Committee on Education, Science and Creative

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Industries, permanent and special delegates, hon members of the provincial legislatures and the MECs in the meeting, and all our distinguished guests.

Siswati:

Sanibonani.

English:

It is both an honour and a privilege to participate in this important debate on Vote 17 on Higher Education. At the outset, from the place of the rising sun, we rise in full support of the hon Minister. We do so in recognition and support of its central role in expanding access, advancing transformation and positioning higher education as a catalyst for skills development, inclusive economic growth and the reduction of unemployment, both in our province and the country across.

We are particularly encouraged that this debate takes place during the youth month ... [Inaudible.] ...

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): MEC Masina, it appears you have lost your signal?

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Ms L L MASINA (Mpumalanga): ... about access to meaningful and equitable education. This debate carries a historic responsibility to ensure that the aspirations of that generation are fully realised. In Mpumalanga, we continue to ...

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): MEC, I think we have lost you once again. Your signal appears to be patchy. Can I suggest that you find a slightly better spot?

Ms L L MASINA (Mpumalanga): ... My apologies, Chair. I think the network is not stable here. Through our targeted learner support, expanded digital learning platforms and sustained investment in e-learning and smart school initiatives, we are equipping our learners, particularly those in rural areas, with the skill required to thrive in the modern knowledge-driven economy.

We are also a consistent feeder to the tertiary education sector. In this regard, the number of learners qualifying for bachelor's degree studies has grown steadily from 21 819 in 2023 to 27 885 in 2024, and further to 28 610 in 2025. This represents a cumulative total of 78 314 learners over the past

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three years progressing into higher education from Mpumalanga province alone.

While this upward trajectory reflects improved and encouraging academic performance and rising aspirations among our young people, it also exposes structural constraints within the school education and training sector. The growing demand for placement is putting significant pressure on available spaces in universities and private colleges, particularly with regards to student accommodation, lecture facilities and academic support services.

For many learners from rural and historically disadvantaged communities in Mpumalanga, access to higher education remains constrained, not by ability but by limited institutional capacity, affordability challenges and geographical location distance. This reality, underscores the urgent need to expand higher education infrastructure, including the establishment and strengthening of institutions within rural provinces such as Mpumalanga.

This further calls for innovative delivery models, including digital and blended learning, to ensure that access is not determined by location. To address this effectively, growth in

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learner throughput must be matched by a proportional expansion of opportunities across the post-school system.

We agree with the hon Minister, that there can be no successful, sustainable industrialisation in this country without skills, without research and without innovation. Therefore, our work is guided by the vision of the National Development Plan 2030, which calls for ... [Interjections.]

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Hon Governor, if I can ask you to mute yourself, please. MEC, I apologise for that interruption. Please proceed with your speech.

Ms L L MASINA (Mpumalanga): ... Thank you very much, Chair. We are saying our work is guided by the vision of the National Development Plan 2030, which calls for an inclusive, high-quality education system that seeks to eliminate inequality, unemployment, and marginalisation. In this regard, Mpumalanga integrated youth development into all aspects of its education programme. Currently, we have got 37,2% of our young children in our workforce actively contributing as educators, as members of school management teams within the system of education.

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We continue to implement programmes that empower young people through bursaries, internships, learnerships, and accredited skills training for out-of-school young people. At the same time, Chair, our promotion of Maritime-based bilingual education affirms the importance of language in learning, identity, and inclusion, directly responding to the historical injustices that shaped the 1976 uprisings.

Siswati:

Kungaba yintfo lenhle kutsi bantfwana betfu bakhulume Siswati nesiNdebele baphindze bafundze ngato letilwimi emabangeni laphasi bate bayocedza tifundvo tabo. Loku kuyintfo lekufanele yenteke sisaphila kantsi futsi ngiyatsemba nekutsi nebantfu baseMphumalanga bangakujabulela loko.

English:

In our province, we also value our strategic partnership with the University of Mpumalanga, which continues to create opportunities for collaboration in research, innovation, and teacher development, further strengthening the post-school education ecosystem in our province.

This partnership enables the province to leverage the university's expertise, research capacity, and human capital

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in support of our development priorities. Key areas for collaboration include but not limited to promoting sustainable agriculture and innovation, enhancing skills development for government employees, supporting environmental sustainability and ecotourism, advancing healthcare research and community programmes, fostering entrepreneurship and job creation, strengthening education through teacher development and curriculum support, and lastly, improving service delivery through technological innovation.

Our premier aptly described this partnership as a gamechanger for advancing the province's economic development priorities. It demonstrates strong alignment between academic excellence and government priorities, with the ultimate goal of improving the lives of our people. Our approach is deliberate, focused and rooted in communities. We are committed to building a system that enables every learner to progress successfully into higher education and beyond, ensuring that no young person is excluded because of their location, lack of funding or circumstances beyond their control.

In conclusion, I want to indicate that we support this budget because it advances the access to higher education, it drives transformation, and it invests in the future of our young

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people. This budget brings us closer to realising the vision of the National Development Plan 2030 and ensuring that the doors of learning and culture remain open to all. President Cyril Ramaphosa clearly stated in his 2026 State of the Nation Address, and I quote:

The Constitution calls on us to work towards a society in which every South African has a fair chance to make a better life for themselves, in which every child receives a decent education and an opportunity to work and thrive.

Let us therefore act with agency and purpose to ensure that there is no young person in South Africa that is left behind. Thank you very much this opportunity.

Ms T BREEDT: House Chair, I hope the interpreting service is working.

Afrikaans:

Die begroting van die Departement van Hoër Onderwys en Opleiding weerspieël 'n edele doel – om meer Suid-Afrikaners toegang tot opleiding, vaardighede, en universiteite te gee. Niemand in hierdie Huis kan teen daardie ideaal wees nie, maar goeie bedoelings alleen is nie genoeg nie. Wanneer 'n

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instelling jaar na jaar misluk ten spyte van 'n al hoe groter begroting moet ons eerlik genoeg wees om te vra of die model self nog werk.

Die Nasionale Finansiële Hulpskema vir Studente, of NSFAS, is die beste voorbeeld hiervan. Die instelling ontvang vanjaar meer as R50 miljard uit die fiskus. Trouens, die departement se begroting wys dat NSFAS se oordrag vir 2026-2027 ongeveer R50,9 miljard beloop, meer as wat aan universiteite self toegeken word. Tog is die NSFAS weer onder administrasie geplaas ...

English:

... again – not because there is a lack of money, not because there is a lack of policy but because there is a lack of governance, accountability, and administrative competence.

Afrikaans:

Die departement se eie jaarplan erken die omvang van die probleem. Dit bevat nou 'n NSFAS remediërende aksieplan wat teen Junie 2026 goedgekeur moet word, asook nege vorderingsverslae oor die implementering daarvan. Daar word selfs gewerk aan 'n NSFAS wysigingswet. Dit beteken die

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regering erken self dat die huidige stelsel nie voldoende funksioneer nie.

Die VF Plus waarsku al lank dat 'n organisasie wat binne enkele jare van 'n relatief klein beursskema na 'n instelling van meer as R50 miljard gegroei het nie bloot met nog geld reggemaak kan word nie.

English:

We cannot continue measuring success by how much money is spent. We must measure success by outcomes. Do students receive their funding on time? Do universities receive payments when they should? Are public funds protected? Can graduates eventually contribute and give back to the system? These are the actual questions that matter.

Afrikaans:

Die tragiese werklikheid is dat NSFAS al jare gekenmerk word deur betalingsprobleme, administratiewe chaos, kontrakgeskille, en herhalende bestuurskrisisse. Intussen raak meer en meer huishoudings afhanklik van die stelsel terwyl die belastingbetaler die rekening betaal.

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Die staat beoog om vanjaar meer as 266 000 tegniese en beroepsonderwys en opleiding-studente deur NSFAS te befonds, benewens die honderde duisende universiteitstudente wat reeds op die stelsel staatmaak. Wanneer NSFAS dus misluk, is dit nie bloot 'n administratiewe probleem nie. Dit raak die studente, hul verblyf, en die toekoms van elk van hierdie honderde duisende jong Suid-Afrikaners.

Daarom glo die VF Plus dat dit tyd geword het vir 'n grondige heroorweging van die model. Universiteite en gevestigde finansiële instellings beskik reeds oor gesofistikeerde administratiewe- en betalingsplatforms. Waarom probeer die staat steeds funksies sentraliseer wat elders reeds beter uitgevoer word?

English:

The role of government should be to fund deserving students, set the rules, and provide oversight. It should not attempt to reinvent a system that already exists and works.

Afrikaans:

Die VF Plus ondersteun toegang tot hoër onderwys. Ons ondersteun geleenthede vir arm en verdienstelike studente, maar ons ondersteun nie 'n stelsel wat miljarde rand jaar na

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jaar bestee waar daar onderliggende bestuursprobleme is wat nie opgelos word nie.

Daar is nie iets soos gratis hoër onderwys nie.

English:

Somebody will always pay the price. When public money is involved, accountability is not optional.

Afrikaans:

Dit is tyd vir 'n stelsel wat studente help, universiteite ondersteun, en belastingbetalers respekteer. Dit is tyd vir verantwoordbaarheid, en dit is tyd vir hervorming. Dit is ons tyd.

English:

It is our time.

Afrikaans:

Ek dank u.

English:

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Thank you very much, hon Breedts. I can confirm that the interpreting service was

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working perfectly well in the background. Hon delegates, let's continue the debate. It is the hon Dr Scheurkogel who has the next opportunity.

Dr I SCHEURKOGEL: Chairperson, hon Minister, Deputy Minister, fellow members, and our fellow South Africans, today I greet you in the name of the DA that celebrates its 26 years of existence. For 67 years, we have been fighting for freedom, fairness, opportunity, and diversity, from Helen Suzman's lone voice in the apartheid government, fighting for equal rights, to the DA's role in national government, changing lives every day. DA, hoi hoi!

We support the budget. We do so because we recognise that South Africa cannot grow its economy, reduce unemployment, or build a capable state without investing in higher education, skills development, and training. These give people the tools to opportunities. The department's annual performance plan contains several objectives that deserve support for the betterment of our youth. We welcome the planned increase in university enrolment to more than 1,15 million students. We welcome the expansion of technical and vocational education and training, TVET, enrolment to 650 000 students and the growth of community education and training opportunities. We

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support the target of producing 22 000 artisans annually and expanding workplace-based learning opportunities. We support the continued development of student accommodation, the expansion of medical and veterinary training infrastructure, and efforts to align skills development with the needs of the economy.

However, Minister, what is concerning is that the Motheo Artisan Academy College in Bloemfontein has plumbers, bricklayers, and electricians who were supposed to graduate this year but have not been placed in workplaces. The hairdressing department has not even made an effort to contact students to do their trade test this year due to poor management and no will by the principal of that school. Hundreds of students are now denied the opportunity for better employment. This is not speculation, Minister. I have personally submitted the petitions to the hon Mokae, the Chairperson of the Select Committee on Public Petitions and Executive Undertakings in the National Council of Provinces.

Millions of young South Africans remain locked out of opportunity and excluded from economic participation. Supporting the objectives of the annual performance plan does not mean ignoring the failures that continue to undermine

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them. The annual performance plan speaks repeatedly about governance, accountability, and public confidence. It sets targets to improve governance across universities, TVET colleges, Sector Education and Training Authorities, Setas, and the NSFAS. It introduces a NSFAS remedial action plan and enhanced oversight mechanisms. However, the obvious question is: Why are these remedial measures necessary in the first place? The ANC is not prepared to tell this House how many opportunities have been lost because of corruption or how many bursaries, accommodation places, and textbooks could have been provided.

The very institution that is the lifeline for students, NSFAS, that exists to fund poor students, is operating from luxury office accommodation overlooking the Cape Town harbour at a cost of approximately R2 million per month. Thousands of students across South Africa simply want an opportunity to study. They are not asking for harbour views or executive parking bays and premium office spaces. They simply want the opportunity to become engineers, teachers, artisans, doctors, or entrepreneurs. This is the real cost of corruption.

The only curriculum the ANC knows is Tenderpreneurship 101. In fact, as the masters of it, they probably offer a master's

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degree in tenderpreneurship too. The ANC calls this redress. We call this betrayal. With every Seta board concoction, with every foreshore rand that disappears, an opportunity disappears as well – a chance, a future.

The ANC has mastered the concept of recycling but not in a good way, more like adding oil to different meals with the taste of previous disasters.

Chairperson ... There I have it.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Are you still on, Dr Scheurkogel? Please continue.

Dr I SCHEURKOGEL: This is not accountability. This is redeployment. That is the ANC version of consequence management, just like Cadre Gigaba that earns a lovely salary as a so-called step-aside, corruption-accused committee chairperson. This sets a terrible example for our youth.

Chairperson, the DA supports this budget because we support students, universities, artisans, TVET colleges, and opportunities. We will continue to oppose corruption where it appears, whether it wears an ANC T-shirt, a MKP beret, or an

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EFF overall. The young people of South Africa deserve more than excuses. They deserve a government that spends every cent as intended for their future.

With that, we support the budget. Thank you, Chairperson.

Mr M F MOKWELE: Hon Chair, hon Minister, Deputy Minister, hon members, fellow South Africans, perhaps, before I venture into my debate, which is the most important debate on Budget Vote 17, I just want to caution hon members to indicate that listening is a skill. The reason why we afforded the Minister the opportunity to start with the debate is for all hon members to listen to the Minister from the outset.

When I was listening to the Minister, he also indicated all the challenges that they have with NSFAS. He even indicated what action the department has taken. I then got to listen to hon member Breedts, in particular, when she was talking about the lack of strong governance. However, the Minister was very clear in saying that immediately when they realised that there are problems, they make sure that they dismantle the NSFAS Board. That is why I am saying that listening is a skill.

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Nonetheless, let me continue with my debate. Let me begin my debate on Budget Vote 17 on Higher Education with the quote from our second democratic Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal, one of the leaders who shaped our current higher education system. I want to quote the Minister during his speech in Parliament in November 2003. He said, I quote:

There can be no doubt that the higher education landscape is well on its way to reflecting the values, ethos and aspirations of democracy away from the false division of apartheid past, which has far too scared our higher education system and limited its ability to truly respond to the current and the future needs of our country."

With that being said, we now have to ask ourselves: How far has our post-education and training sector come over the past 32 years in overcoming the past injustice and creating skills and opportunities to meet the future demands of our economy? Here, I want to emphasise by saying: In 32 years, as the ANC-led government, we are trying to deal with the injustice of more than 100 years.

The capable and developmental state and the oversight of an annual allocation of R120 billion require ethical leadership,

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clean governance, institutional stability and consequence management across the PSC sector. Furthermore, this sector is the backbone of our economy, tasked with producing a skilled workforce and entrepreneurs to take our country forward. This budget must be used efficiently in order for us to realise these gains. This is part of the transformation of Higher Education, which I heard the doctor was also against, which the ANC will always champion.

Taking into consideration the concerns raised during the #FeesMustFall movement, the ANC-led government declared that the NSFAS will no longer be a student loan scheme, but rather a bursary scheme that will ensure all students from poor and working-class households are not excluded from higher education due to their socioeconomic status.

Chair, I want to share the story of the student loan, the Tefsa. I know that most of those who came now, or the newborns, don't know that the President alluded to the fact that the ANC-led government is the government that brought Tintswalo to life. I was listening to hon Mhlongo and those that I know saying that these are the products of Tintswalo, which the President was alluding to.

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It is the ANC-led government that makes sure that the Tefsa is no longer there. It is now the NSFAS that makes sure that even a child from a poor background can get access to education.

The revolution led to the NSFAS budget increasing from R13,8 billion in 2016-17 to R54 billion in 2026-27. This funding has continued to claim substantially over the years to keep up with enrolment demands and policy shifts.

Today, our students have access to quality tuition, accommodation, textbooks, transport, and a meal allowance. Not many countries around the world can offer such comprehensive support for their citizens. Even though I know many of them will deny that here in South Africa, under the ANC, we are the best, especially in Africa or amongst many countries in the world.

We make sure that we realise what has been alluded to in the Freedom Charter, when it says that education will be free for all. However, increased NSFAS funding requires improved internal control, an enhanced system for managing and disbursing funds, greater scrutiny of fund management and strengthening oversight of the distribution of funds to students.

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Any system has its weaknesses and potential threats, as the Minister indicated when he opened this debate. For this reason, we would like to raise serious concerns about ongoing governance failures, which the Minister has already responded to. The administrative instability in NSFAS, as the ANC-led government has already identified those unresolved student appeals, delayed allowance payments, unpaid accommodation and others.

Chair, it is also worrisome that over 12 000 students recently lacked access to meals and accommodation support because their allowances were frozen during the gap investigation, even though they were eligible for funding. Minister, through you, Chair, we are very much disturbed about this issue as a select committee, because this problem denies access to those students who qualify to get this fund.

It is also unacceptable that students have to write exams while at the same time being anxious about where their next meal will come from or whether they will be evicted from their accommodation due to instability within NSFAS. If NSFAS performs its function diligently and ensures that proper systems are in place, there would be minimal academic disruptions and financial exclusions.

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What is even more concerning is that the AG report stated that in the 2024 financial year, the NSFAS received a disclaimer audit opinion. This is the worst audit outcomes possible, meaning that the institution's financial records were deemed completely unreliable and lacked credible supporting evidence. That is why the Minister has taken this harsh action.

Furthermore, the primary findings behind the collapse of financial control at NSFAS included data integrity failure, a high level of irregular expenditure and an accommodation crisis. Some of the detailed findings included in the AG's report are bursary funds paid to 822 deceased students - that is a shame, also; funding for 14 students whose household income exceeded the required threshold; and double dipping, whereby the system failed to detect 321 students who were receiving funding from both NSFAS bursary and social relief distress.

The reason why I bring these figures into my debate is to show hon members that, as the ANC, we are not grandstanding about corruption. We will always expose corruption and eventually deal with it. Furthermore, thousands of students who did not perform well academically continued to receive financial aid. We therefore call for such abnormality to be urgently

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addressed; monies wasted to be recovered; and consequence management should be implemented against those responsible for this crisis.

Given the current challenges of high unemployment in our country, we need stronger oversight and accountability mechanisms over sector entities to ensure that they perform their primary mandate. Here, it is our responsibility. I was listening to hon Kennedy of the EFF. I know that they normally start by saying, "We reject", but this time around, she forgot to say that she rejects the budget. Instead, she indicated the issue of weak oversight.

I was just disturbed because hon Kennedy is also an hon member of the committee that is responsible for oversight in the Department of Higher Education, in which we are doing well. As the select committee, we make sure that we hold the executive accountable for anything. Hence, we are able to mention all these figures without any doubt.

We further need to review programmes and functions of the 21 Sector Education and Training Authorities to ensure that they are responsive to the challenge of combating unemployment and skills mismatch. We also call for the increase of public

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participation and the eventual implementation of the Skills Development and Amendment Bill. We eventually also want to raise concerns over the alleged preferential accreditation practices and gatekeeping within the Quality Council of Trades and Occupation System.

As I move towards concluding my speech, I want to indicate that SAQA continue to play a critical role in safeguarding the integrity of the country's education and labour sector by verifying academic credentials. We therefore approach SAQA for digital transformation and rollout. In closing, we emphasise that public institutions must serve the people diligently, particularly poor and working-class students, who rely on the state for educational opportunity.

If we are to realise the real transformation of our economy, this sector is paramount to our nation's success. With those words, let me leave you with the quote by the world scientist Albert Einstein, who said, and I quote, "I never teach my people; I only attempt to provide the conditions in which they can learn." I therefore call for institutions of higher learning to provide suitable conditions and an environment for learning and innovation.

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As the ANC, we therefore support this Budget Vote 17 without any hassles, and we will continue to hold the executive accountable to make sure that our goals are reached. This means the theme that says, "The Doors of Learning and Culture Shall Be Opened", as set out in the Freedom Charter, which declares that education must be free, compulsory, universal and equal for all children, will be realised. With those two words, House Chair, I thank you.

Sepedi:

Ke a leboga.

The MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION: Hon House Chair, I must say that I need to thank the hon delegates for having participated in this debate. I also listened very carefully, and I think we agree more because there are numerous issues that we agree on than what sometimes the theatre of debate suggests.

Let me start with the MEC Gade, because I think he is correct with regard to the future which we need to build in terms of artisans and technicians. Also, the true measure of this budget will not just be about how much we spent, but also about how many young people find work; how many build businesses; and how many create jobs for others.

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This is precisely what we are strengthening - the market intelligence - so that we train for the jobs the economy actually has. We are doing so hand-in-hand with the Human Resource Development Council. Most of the provinces have launched those strategies. As I said, our TVET colleges are also aligned with the industrial corridors in provinces such as KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, Gauteng, and the Northern Cape. So, we are not training in abstract; we are training where the economy lives.

Secondly, hon Masina and to the ANC members who spoke on issues of youth empowerment and bursaries, I want to encourage provinces to work directly with our Setas and with the National Skills Fund to reach the young people who are currently not reached by anyone. So, the instruments exist. Let us ensure that we use them. I have personally met with the Premiers of various provinces to try and see how we can work out skills programmes that are specifically targeting those particular provinces.

Then, I agree on the question of expanding access using online learning. This will be matched by qualified lecturers. Expansion should be matched by standards. So, we will not open

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a door only to send young people through a qualification that means nothing for the labour market.

On the point which the hon member from the Patriotic Alliance makes on accreditation and articulation: Of course, that articulation is provided within the system. The SA Qualifications Authority is responsible for that. The hon from the EFF delivered a very sustained critique of our infrastructure in our TVET and CET colleges. As I said, we are investing a lot of money into this through the Infrastructure Efficiency Grants. I don't agree that we should scrap the levies and give that directly to the colleges. I think it is a recipe for disaster, and it is a lighter version of what the DA is proposing. So, both, you know, we find quite rejectable.

Yes, we will reform Setas, and we will reform the NSF in order to meet the objective set. We have also said to them that they need to bring ring-fencing resources to support CET colleges and TVET colleges. The 20 to 40% levied are some of the things that we want to look at.

The MK Party says to the House that they are rejecting the R149,2 billion budget. What this means is we are rejecting R100 billion for our universities. We are rejecting the

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bursaries that keep 1,5 million students and over 800 000 TVET students in lecture halls. That is what we are basically saying. We are rejecting the infrastructure that we all have to rebuild in colleges in the poorest communities.

So, we cannot just come to the House and say, no, we reject, without the substantive rejections being presented. You can't just reject wholesale. I think it is quite counterintuitive. It is not the way in which we expect members of this House to come and argue, and just say, "We reject." We are rejecting NSFAS that goes to the students. We are rejecting the opening of the doors of learning. So, I don't think it is a helpful thing.

Finally, the question of the NSFAS and others: We are all right to be angry when students are locked out of a common accommodation while the system processes their application. On issues of exorbitant private accommodation fees: These are real, and they are unacceptable. That is exactly why the NSFAS has been placed under administration. It is exactly these issues that we seek to resolve, including issues around the missing middle and issues around the disparities between TVETs, which, by the way, some of them have been dealt with.

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So, we don't intend to run away from these problems. We intend to deal with these problems, particularly in dedication and in memory of June 16. Importantly, we are also joining the Chair in memory of our late Vice Chancellor of the Sefako Makgatho University. May her soul rest in peace. Thank you so much.

This was quite a healthy discussion. I think those who don't agree with the budget, we will, of course, engage with them. But, you know, you cannot just do that to spite the ANC or to spite the Government of National Unity.

[Time expired.] Sure. Thank you.

Debate concluded.

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP (Mr P Govender): Thank you, hon Minister. Hon delegates, we have come to the end of the debate on Budget Vote 17 for Higher Education. I would like to thank the hon Minister Manamela for his participation in the debate and for the inputs that were made. I also want to thank all the hon delegates who participated in this very important debate.

APPROPRIATION BILL

(Policy debate)

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Policy debate on Vote No 38 – Tourism:

The MINISTER OF TOURISM: Hon Deputy Chairperson, greetings to all the members, the Deputy Minister, the chairperson of the select committee, hon members, Director-General Vele, the leadership of South African Tourism, all the captains of industry, members of the media, distinguished guests and fellow South Africans.

Deputy Chairperson, this evening at 23:00, flight 157 will depart from Madrid's Barajas International Airport in Spain and land at OR Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg at 09:50 tomorrow morning. It will be Air Europa's inaugural flight between Madrid and Johannesburg, operating three times a week. This is an expression of confidence in our travel market growth, and it comes on the back of the Cabinet-approved Tourism Route Development Marketing Plan.

Our strategy seeks to increase direct connectivity, while ensuring marketing support and alignment with provincial route development structures. When those passengers from Spain disembark from the Boeing 787 Dreamliner, they will be welcomed by one of the innovations that reflects our vision for tourism growth called the Smart Visitor Information

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Centre, VIC, at OR Tambo. This is a paperless, technology-driven tourism hub that serves as a one-stop gateway to South Africa, showing our diverse tourism offerings.

We launched it just before the G20 leaders' summit last year, the Smart VIC showcases experiences from all nine provinces, ensuring that visitors are introduced not only to our major destinations but also to the many hidden gems that make our country so unique.

The provincial tourism authorities regularly submit products and experiences to the platform, enabling us to promote a broader range of destinations to both domestic and international travellers.

With a record-breaking 10,5 million international arrivals recorded in 2025, initiatives such as the Smart Visitor Information Centre form part of our commitment to ensure that the benefits of tourism are shared more widely across our country.

We remain resolute that tourism policy is economic policy. Through the R2,54 billion budget allocation for the 2026-27 financial year, we want to ensure that more provinces,

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townships, small dorpiess, and villages benefit from the opportunities that tourism creates.

During the state of the nation address earlier this year, President Cyril Ramaphosa instructed that we must now promote our unique cultural, historical and natural attractions that reflect the country's identity. This can include traditional festivals, local crafts, historical sites and natural landscapes across our country and in rural areas as well. I am pleased to report that we are making progress in this regard.

Through our quarterly MinMEC engagements, I encourage all provinces to submit their annual events calendars to us. The Department of Tourism and South African Tourism will then package and promote these events as part of South Africa's diverse tourism offering. This week, for example, I will be attending on Thursday in Kirkwood the Wildsfees in the Eastern Cape where Eastern Cape will experience the value of this collaboration firsthand. Festivals such as these attract travellers to destinations that are often overlooked. They bring new economic opportunities to local communities who have more unique offerings.

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Our flagship tourism trade shows continue to play an important role in showcasing provincial tourism products to the world. At Meetings Africa 2026, all nine provinces were represented, together with municipalities and tourism businesses from across our country. Similarly, Africa's Travel Indaba continues to provide a global platform for provincial and municipal tourism offerings.

When President Ramaphosa officially opened Africa's Travel Indaba this year, we committed ourselves to modernising and repositioning this iconic trade show for a changing global tourism market. We have since invited industry stakeholders and members of the public to submit ideas to ensure that this more than 30-year-old platform remains relevant, innovative and globally competitive.

The South African National Convention Bureau continues to secure major international and regional conferences for our country. In the 2025-26 financial year, through the bureau we secured 66 international and regional conferences which will be hosted across multiple provinces and municipalities, to name just a few, Bela-Bela, Cape Town, Durban, Grabouw, Hermanus, Johannesburg, Makhanda, Mbombela, Polokwane, Skukuza, Sun City and Tshwane.

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These events are expected to contribute more than R1,2 billion to the economy of our country. These are not merely statistics; they represent jobs for South Africans, opportunities for small businesses and income for local communities.

According to Statistics South Africa's Tourism Satellite Account, tourism sustained over 954 000 jobs in 2024 and we contributed 4,9% to the gross domestic product, GDP, outperforming sectors such as agriculture, utilities and construction.

Economic growth and job creation remain central priorities of the Government of National Unity. The tourism sector has aligned itself with this objective through the Cabinet-endorsed Tourism Growth Partnership Plan. One of the ways we are advancing this agenda is by unlocking investment in tourism infrastructure. Last year we launched the Tourism Infrastructure Investment Summit, showcasing eight bankable projects valued at more than a billion. I am pleased to report that three of these projects have already secured funding.

Building on this momentum, we have opened submissions again for the provinces and the private sector for the second

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Tourism Infrastructure Investment Summit, that will take place in Gauteng on 30 September and 1 October. To date we have already received 22 projects from the public and private sectors, and are currently undergoing screening to ensure they are investment ready.

Government is demonstrating confidence in the tourism sector. We continue investment in the tourism infrastructure. In the 2026-27 financial year, the department will handover various infrastructure tourism projects that it has invested in. to name just a few, there include a R19 million development in the Nyandeni Chalets in the Eastern Cape and Lehurutse Trophy and Bird Hunting camp in the North West. The department injected R20 million. While in KwaZulu-Natal, at the Isibhubhu event facility, the department invested R30 million.

The private sector is equally demonstrating confidence in South Africa's future. Next week in KwaZulu-Natal, the luxury French tourism brand Club Med will officially open its R2,5 billion Safari and Beach Resor. This investment is a powerful vote of confidence in South Africa and in the long-term prospects of our tourism. The launch will come just a month before the 46th Ordinary Summit of SADC Heads of State and Government which will take place in eThekweni, Durban.

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Domestic tourism remains the foundation of this resilient sector. Through our Sho't Left campaign, tourism businesses submit discounted travel offers aimed at encouraging South Africans to explore their own country. In 2025, South Africans undertook 44,7 million overnight trips, generating R111,6 billion in revenue. What is particularly encouraging is that some of our traditionally lesser-visited provinces are recording strong growth.

The Northern Cape recorded the highest growth of 58,4% reaching 1,9 million overnight trips, followed by the Northwest achieved 34% growth, with 4,2 million overnight trips. KwaZulu-Natal has the highest number of overnight trips at 9 million. These figures demonstrate that collaboration between national government, provincial government, municipalities and the private sector is beginning to unlock new tourism opportunities.

As travel patterns evolve, we are also embracing new kinds of accommodation. Short-term rentals are increasingly becoming part of the tourism ecosystem, creating opportunities not only in major cities but also in townships, small dorpiess and villages.

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Earlier this year, we gazetted the Draft Code of Good Practice for Short-Term Rentals, and the response was significant. We received over 6 700 submissions received. This level of public participation demonstrates the importance of creating an inclusive framework for this growing segment of the tourism economy. Once the analysis of public submissions has been completed, I will gazette the final Code of Good Practice.

South Africa's natural beauty, rich history and vibrant culture continue to attract film and television productions from around the world because film tells stories. When those stories are told against the backdrop of South Africa's iconic landscapes, they can also inspire travel.

A study by the Basis Research Institute has shown that audiences who have watched South African content are three times more likely to visit our country. For example, according to streaming service Netflix, the local production *The Polygamist* attracted 7 million viewers within the first two weeks of release. This is organic soft power in the making because every viewer is a potential visitor, and every local location featured on screen is a potential destination waiting to be discovered.

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As we continue welcoming tourists to our shores, let us also welcome film crews, content creators and storytellers because this demonstrates that film and television are no longer merely cultural products; they are powerful tourism assets that shapes perception, influence travellers' decisions and introduce international audiences to destinations that may never have previously been considered.

When South Africa's story reaches the world, and more stories get out to the world about South Africa, the more tourists will come to our beloved country. I thank you for the opportunity, hon Deputy Chairperson and members.

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Thank you very much, hon Minister, for the inspiring way in which you presented the opening of this debate, and it looks very positive for our country in the tourism sector.

Ms H S BOSHOFF: Hon Deputy Chair, hon Minister, hon Deputy Minister, hon members and fellow South Africans, good afternoon. The Select Committee on Economic Development and Trade has considered Budget Vote 38, together with the 2026-27 annual performance plan, APP, of the Department of Tourism, adopted its report and supports this Budget Vote. Tourism

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remains one of South Africa's most strategically important economic sectors because of its ability to stimulate economic activity across multiple industries simultaneously. Its impact extends far beyond hotels and holiday destinations. Tourism supports accommodation establishments, restaurants, transport operators, tour guides, cultural industries, agriculture, aviation, informal traders, and thousands of small businesses across the country.

Importantly, tourism remains one of the few sectors capable of generating employment opportunities across the skills spectrum while creating economic participation in both urban and rural community. Every visitor contributes not only to the tourism sector itself, but also to a broader network of businesses and service providers, creating a multiplier effect that supports economic growth, enterprise development and job creation. At a time when South Africa continues to face severe unemployment and sluggish economic growth, tourism remains a critical contributor to investment, economic activity, and employment. The department enters the 2026-27 financial year with a total allocation of approximately R2,5 billion, compared to approximately R2,43 billion in the previous financial year.

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While this increase is welcomed, the committee notes that the sector continues to operate within a constrained fiscal environment and that funding growth remains modest when measured against inflationary pressures, infrastructure backlogs and the strategic importance attached to tourism as a growth sector. Of the total allocation, which is very concerning, Minister, more than R1,2 billion, approximately 54% of the department's budget is transferred to SA Tourism for destination marketing and promotional activities. This remains the single largest allocation within the Vote and places a significant responsibility on both the department and SA Tourism to demonstrate value for money and measurable economic outcomes.

Marketing expenditure must ultimately translate into increased tourist arrivals, longer stays, higher visitor spending, stronger regional economic activity and sustainable job creation. The committee will continue to monitor whether these investments are delivering measurable benefits for communities across South Africa. The committee notes encouraging signs within the tourism sector. South Africa has continued to experience growth in international arrivals and has exceeded pre-pandemic recovery levels. This progress reflects the

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resilience of the sector as well as the efforts undertaken by government and industry stakeholders.

The committee also notes progress relating to visa reform interventions including the trusted tour operator scheme, the digital visa initiatives aimed at improving accessibility into South Africa. These reforms are important because tourism competitiveness is increasingly influenced not only by destination attractiveness but also by ease of access and visitor experience. The committee further welcomes efforts aimed at expanding source markets and strengthening South Africa's position within an increasingly competitive international tourism market. However, recovery figures alone cannot become the measure of success. The real test is whether tourism growth becomes more inclusive, sustainable and beneficial to ordinary South Africans. Tourism must increasingly create opportunities for small businesses, township enterprises, rural destinations and community-owned initiatives.

The committee remains concerned that many rural communities, townships and smaller towns continue to struggle to participate meaningfully in the mainstream tourism economy despite years of policy commitments aimed at broadening

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participation. Tourism remains one of the most accessible sectors for small business participation creating opportunities for guest houses, restaurants, tour operators, transport providers, cultural enterprises and community-based initiatives. The committee therefore continues to emphasise the importance of ensuring that tourism growth translates into greater participation by small, medium, and micro enterprises, SMMEs, and locally owned enterprises across all provinces.

Under Programme 1: Administration, the committee acknowledges the importance of sound governance, institutional support and financial management. Strong governance remains the foundation upon which successful tourism development is built. The committee therefore emphasised the importance of maintaining effective oversight, strengthening internal controls and ensuring that public funds continue to be utilised efficiently and transparently. The committee also considered the observations of the Auditor-General, AG. While the department has maintained a positive audit outcome, concerns relating to the reliability and usefulness of performance information remain areas requiring continued attention. Performance information must be reliable, verifiable and capable of demonstrating whether public expenditure is translating into measurable outcomes. The committee further emphasised the

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importance of corrective action and consequence management where weaknesses are identified.

Under Programme 2: Tourism Research, Policy and International Relations, the committee notes continued efforts aimed at strengthening tourism research, destination marketing and South Africa's international positioning. The committee observed that many themes reflected within the annual performance plan including township tourism, rural tourism, domestic tourism and transformation have featured prominently within tourism planning for many years. While policy continuity provides certainty, the recurring nature of these challenges suggests that implementation remains the area requiring the greatest focus.

The committee further notes that tourism trends continue to evolve rapidly through digital platforms, ecotourism growth, remote work tourism and changing traveller behaviour. The department must therefore continue reviewing its policy frameworks and strategies to ensure that South Africa remains competitive and responsive to emerging opportunities.

Under Programme 3: Destination Development, the committee welcomes continued investment into tourism infrastructure and

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tourism enhancement projects. The working for tourism programme remains one of the department's most visible interventions and is expected to create more than 19 000 work opportunities over the medium-term. The committee acknowledges the importance of these opportunities, particularly for young people, women and vulnerable communities, while emphasising the need for reporting that demonstrates how temporary opportunities are translated into sustainable employment and enterprise development.

The committee also notes that tourism infrastructure serves both visitors and local communities. Roads, visitor facilities, public amenities and public spaces contribute not only to tourism growth but also to local economic development and community upliftment. However, concerns remain regarding maintenance backlogs, delayed projects, weak intergovernmental co-ordination and deteriorating tourism infrastructure. One matter specifically raised during committee engagements relates to sewer spillages at the Cradle of Humankind and the impact this is having on visitors, staff and the broader tourism environment.

The committee's oversight work continues to demonstrate that many tourism challenges do not originate within the department

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itself but arises from weaknesses in municipal service delivery, deteriorating infrastructure and inadequate co-ordination across spheres of government. The success of tourism therefore depends as much on effective local governance as it does on destination marketing.

Under Programme 4: Tourism Sector Support Services, the committee notes continued support for transformation initiatives, enterprise development programmes and tourism incentives. The committee welcomes interventions such as the Green Tourism Incentive Programme, the Tourism Grading Support Programme, market access support initiatives and broader enterprise support programmes. These interventions remain important in supporting emerging tourism enterprises and improving competitiveness within the sector. The committee further emphasised the need for stronger post-support monitoring and impact assessment.

Parliament must be able to assess whether beneficiary businesses remain operational, whether jobs are sustained and whether public investment is translating into lasting economic value. The committee also encouraged improved transformation reporting so that Parliament can better assess who is benefiting, where beneficiaries are located and whether

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interventions are resulting in sustainable enterprises and meaningful economic participation. The committee remains concerned that safety continues to influence tourism competitiveness. While South Africa offers world-class tourism attractions, concerns relating to crime and visitor safety continue to affect destination perceptions. Tourism growth in townships, villages and rural areas will depend not only on infrastructure investment but also on creating environments where visitors and communities feel safe and welcome.

The committee further notes the importance of strengthening domestic tourism. Global uncertainty, geopolitical tensions and economic volatility continue to affect international travel patterns. South Africa therefore cannot rely exclusively on inbound tourism. Domestic tourism must become a stronger pillar of long-term sector sustainability and a key mechanism for supporting businesses during periods of international volatility. However, domestic tourism continues to face pressure from rising fuel costs, broader cost of living pressures and declining household disposable income. These realities require innovative approaches to stimulate local travel and improve affordability.

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Tourism possesses enormous potential to contribute meaningfully towards economic growth, local economic development and employment creation. However, the true measure of success is whether tourism translates into jobs, investments, sustainable enterprises and meaningful economic activity within communities across South Africa. Tourism cannot succeed through the efforts of the department alone. It requires functioning municipalities, reliable infrastructure, safe communities and co-ordinated action across national, provincial and local government.

The committee welcomes the progress that has been achieved in restoring tourism activity. However, the challenge before us is no longer recovery but implementation. Tourism cannot succeed through the efforts of the department alone. It requires functioning municipalities, reliable infrastructure, safe communities and co-ordinated action across national, provincial and local government. South Africans must see tangible returns from every rand invested in tourism through jobs created, businesses sustained, infrastructure improved and communities empowered.

The committee, hon Deputy Chair, will continue exercising robust oversight to ensure that the considerable potential of

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this sector is translated into measurable benefits for the people of South Africa. I thank you.

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP (Mr P Govender): Thank you very much, hon Boshoff, and I hope you get over that cough soon. Hon delegates, we now move on to the next contributor to this debate and that's the hon Dr Scheurkogel who has seven minutes.

Afrikaans:

Dr I SCHEURKOGEL: Adjunkvoorsitter, agb Minister, agb Adjunkminister, mede lede, en my mede Suid-Afrikaners ...

English:

... what do we sell to the world? Foreign visitors stay for eight to 14 days, and then they fly home believing that South Africa is Cape Town, a game lodge, and an airport in between. I know, Minister, as the former mayor, you will agree that Cape Town is worth the visit, and it works.

Our domestic picture is no better. In early 2025, four provinces – KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Gauteng, and Mpumalanga – took 64% of all domestic trips, whilst the Eastern Cape and the Free State slipped further behind. We are a continent-

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sized country selling an island-sized itinerary. The places that need jobs and dignity the most are the places tourists never see. The Free State is treated as a drive-through province.

Afrikaans:

Net so 'n uur of twee se ry suid van Johannesburg in die Noord-Vrystaat, naby Parys aan die oewer van die Vaalrivier, lê die Vredefortkoepel. Dit is nie net sommer nog 'n mooi plek nie. Dit is die oudste ... Om presies te wees, dit is 2 023 miljoen jaar oud, en dis 290 km groot. Dit is die grootste bevestigde meteoriet-inslagstruktuur op aarde en is in 2005 as wêrelderfenisgebied verklaar deur Unesco, die Verenigde Nasies se organisasie vir onderwys, wetenskap, en kultuur. Dit is die sewende sodanige terrein in Suid-Afrika.

English:

This site should be a tourism magnet that creates local jobs, yet Vredefort Dome has been standing idle since 2005. An amount of R24 million was spent on the building. In 2022, it remained closed and inoperable due to poor planning and lack of political will. The then MEC pledged R15 million, and then again, in 2024, the department, through the Development Bank of Southern Africa, approved a new contract for R24 million.

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So, over R60 million spent and still the residents of Ngwathe are not benefiting from it. It was meant to open this year, but on Saturday, when I was there, the only thing I saw moving was the free-roaming cattle because the fence has been broken, and anyone could access that area because there was no security on site.

Afrikaans:

As ons die Vredefortkoepel regmaak, verkoop ons nie net 'n klipjie nie. Ons skep geleenthede en werk vir die plaaslike gemeenskap. Dit is wat die toerismebegroting behoort te doen. Wat kort ons dus? Ons kort nie skoonheid nie, nie betekenis nie, net organisasie. So, Minister, wanneer sny ons die rooi strik by die Vredefortkoepel?

English:

Rural areas remain invisible because of seven concrete barriers.

First, our last mile access: We have poor roads, few regional flights, and no affordable transfers, making a destination like the Vredefort Dome that is 300 km away, effectively unreachable. To get there from all sides, the potholes look like meteors.

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Second, the invisible product: The rural lodge or activity that cannot be found, booked, or paid for online simply does not exist to the tourist. The budget should support websites, Google Business Profile development, and public-private online booking systems for small tourism businesses.

Third, packaging: Tourists buy routes, not dots. Without a curated, multi-stop itinerary that strings small towns together, each node competes alone and loses. Across the country, provinces have official and provincial tourism routes, but how many of our members here can name one of them?

Fourth, basic services: Water, electricity, clean ablutions, and a cared-for town centre are non-negotiable. If our municipalities are not working for residents, they are not working for tourists.

Fifth, safety and perception: One viral incident erases years of marketing. This is why the Law Enforcement Advancement Plan, LEAP, programme of the Western Cape is making the province a tourism destination of choice. As of 2025, LEAP officers in Cape Town have made over 40 000 arrests since inception in 2020.

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Sixth, skills, finance, and ownership: Rural and community-owned enterprises struggle to access finance and markets.

Seventh, seasonality and thin demand: A flower-bloom town busy for three weeks cannot sustain hotels or staff.

We will not fix this by chasing only foreign arrivals. Domestic tourism is the foundation. SA Tourism calls it the nucleus of the tourism economy. We need permanent Sho't Left-style programmes with shoulder-season deals to undervisited provinces. If we discover our own backyard that turns heritage into pride, events into reasons to visit secondary towns over long weekends, well-signed and safe routes for road-tripping, and investment in township and community-owned tourism, then authenticity and benefit will go hand in hand. This will not be possible until more funds are invested in training and upskilling and resources are allocated to provide experience to students entering the tourism industry.

Fellow members, countries with no gold, no oil, and no diamonds thrive on tourism because they organise their geography. We have richer assets and deeper stories, from the Vredefort Dome to Namaqualand's flowers, yet we are content to sell five postcards. Let this budget end that complacency. Let

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us light up South Africa as a whole so that visitors who come to Cape Town leave having seen the Free State sandstone, the Kalahari sky, and the Wild Coast. I thank you.

Ms N N PIETERS (Eastern Cape): Good afternoon, hon Deputy Speaker, Deputy Chairperson, hon Minister, Deputy Minister, hon MECs, hon members of the NCOP, viewers at home, with your permission, hon Deputy Chairperson, can I switch off my camera?

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Yes, you may, hon MEC.

Ms N N PIETERS (Eastern Cape): Thank you, as Eastern Cape, we continue to position tourism as one of the province's most powerful economic growth sectors, creating jobs, stimulating investments, supporting small businesses, and driving inclusive development in both urban and rural communities. In alignment with National Budget Vote No 38, the Eastern Cape has intensified efforts to develop tourism infrastructure, enhance the destination competitiveness, and unlock the economic potential of our diverse tourism regions, including the Wild Coast, Sunshine Coast, Karoo Heartland, Amathole, Frontier Country, Friendly N6, Tsitsikama, Baviaanskloof, and Greater Addo.

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Tourism remains one of the few sectors capable of generating employment opportunities across multiple value chains, including accommodation, transport, food services, arts and crafts, tour operations, cultural industries, and community enterprises. Every visitor that enters our province supports local businesses, sustains jobs, and contributes directly to household income. During the first quarter of 2026, the Eastern Cape recorded an impressive 1,4 million trips, representing growth of 40,1% compared to the previous period. Visitor expenditure reached R4,1 billion, reflecting a remarkable increase of 144,9% while bed nights grew to R5,4 million, representing growth of 121%.

The province also recorded the second-longest average stay nationally at 3,9 nights, demonstrating that visitors are not merely passing through our province, but are increasingly choosing the Eastern Cape as a destination where they spend more time and money. These are the fruits of our collective efforts. Efforts that have translated into increased occupancy rates for accommodation establishments, higher revenues for tourism operators, improved business opportunities for local suppliers, and greater economic activity within our towns, villages, and cities. Efforts which have ensured that the Eastern Cape increasingly wins the hearts of tourists and thus

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becoming a destination of choice for leisure, culture, heritage, adventure, and nature-based tourism.

We have, as the Eastern Cape Government, further strengthened our international footprint through participation in the African Travel Indaba, which was held in KZN. It is during this globally recognised platform where we seized the opportunity and showcased our unique tourism offerings, engaged with international buyers, and strengthened trade relationships with key source markets, capitalising on the two Eastern Cape tourism MSMEs who were afforded the opportunity to participate and market their products internationally.

Tourism unlocks doors for future business partnerships, investment opportunities, and market expansion. This is precisely what the MSMEs experience. Sport has become a significant contributor to tourism growth and economic activity within our province. The successful hosting of the Rapid Championship Under-20 Tournament in Qgeberha brought international teams from Argentina, Australia, and New Zealand to our shores, while the recent Springbok feature on 20 June 2026 generated significant excitement and visitor movement. These events demonstrate the growing role of sports tourism as a catalyst for economic development.

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The economic benefits of major sporting events extend far beyond the stadium gates. Hotels, guesthouses, restaurants, transport operators, informal traders, and tourism attractions all benefit from increased visitor numbers. Such events create temporary and permanent employment opportunities while injecting millions of rands into local economies.

Sport tourism therefore remains an important pillar in our strategy to grow visitor numbers and diversify tourism offerings. Our reputation as a globally significant ecotourism destination is entrenched in the recognition of Mkambathi as South Africa's 31st Ramsar site and the first Ramsar site in the Eastern Cape.

The successful hosting of World Wetlands Day and Ramsar site celebration, the Ramsar designation is beyond being a conservation accolade. Its opportunities for sustainable tourism development, environmental education, scientific research, and community participation placing a responsibility upon us to ensure that these valuable ecosystems continue to support biodiversity conservation, water security, climate resilience, and sustainable livelihood for surrounding communities.

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Eastern Cape continues to strive to be a destination of choice for tourists by strengthening destination marketing. These exhibitions find expression in our strategic partnership and support for major events such as the National Arts Festival and other flagship cultural heritage and sporting events initiatives which not only attract visitors but also showcase local talent, celebrate our rich cultural heritage, and create opportunities for townships and rural enterprises to participate in the tourism economy, inclusive tourism at play.

Tourism infrastructure remains a critical enabler of growth through collaboration with municipalities, national government, and strategic partners. We continue to invest in tourism facilities, visitor amenities, destination signage, access roads, and tourism products that enhance visitor experiences while ensuring that communities derive direct economic benefits from tourism development. Our objective is to create world-class destinations that are accessible, competitive, and sustainable.

Furthermore, public-private partnerships continue to play a critical role in enhancing tourism infrastructure within our nature reserves and protected areas. These partnerships not only contribute towards improved tourism facilities and

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conservation outcomes but also ensure that communities, neighbouring protected areas derive tangible socioeconomic benefits through employment, enterprise development, and skills transfer.

The transformation of the tourism sector remains central to our development agenda while committed to ensuring that the economic benefits generated by tourism are shared more equitably amongst historically disadvantaged individuals, youth, women, persons with disabilities, and rural communities. Eastern Cape has therefore intensified support for tourism, MSMEs, co-operatives, and community-owned tourism enterprises through targeted enterprises, development intervention, tourism creating support, market access programmes, mentorship initiatives, and capacity-building opportunities. Working closely with the Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency and other strategic partners.

We are creating pathways for emerging businesses to participate meaningfully within the tourism value chain. Particular emphasis has been placed on youth empowerment. Young people continue to benefit from tourism skills, development programmes, experiential learning opportunities, and participation in provincial and national initiatives.

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Mainstreaming of women in every aspect of economic development is not a favour but an obligation. The Eastern Cape Province is working with women in tourism. Eastern Cape to strengthen the participation of women within the sector. We provide a platform for engagement, networking, information sharing, and strategic planning to ensure that women are better positioned to benefit from opportunities within the sector. Tourism is not merely about attracting visitors. It is about building resilient local economies, creating opportunities where people live, preserving our heritage, and ensuring that the prosperity generated by the sector reaches every corner of our province. We continue to build the Eastern Cape we want, the South Africa we want, to ensure a better Africa and a better world. As Eastern Cape we support the Budget Vote. Thank you, hon Deputy Chairperson.

Mr S P MABILO: Hon Chairperson, greetings to the hon Minister, greetings to the hon Deputy Minister, greetings to all the hon members, special delegates and the community at large ...

Setswana:

... dumelang bagaetsho.

English:

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The ANC rises in support of Budget Vote 38. This debate takes place during a historic year in our democratic journey. We celebrate the 30th anniversary of our Constitution, a Constitution founded on dignity, equality and opportunity for all.

We also commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Women's March, a divining moment in the struggle for freedom and justice.

We also commemorate the 50th anniversary of the student uprising in Soweto.

Hon House Chair, these milestones remind us that the work of transformation continues and tourism remains one of the most effective tools available to advance economic inclusion, job creation and community development.

Deputy Chair, tourism is not merely about travel, tourism is about jobs, tourism is about small businesses, tourism is about dignity, tourism is about economic inclusion, tourism is about putting food on the tables of South African families.

As the Minister correctly stated, tourism is part of South Africa's growth engine in action. The success of the tourism

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sector over the past three decades demonstrates the progress that this democratic country has made.

Since 1994 South Africa has transformed from a country isolated from the global community into one of the world's most attractive tourist destinations.

Our natural beauty, cultural diversity, heritage sites, wildlife attractions, actions and world-renowned hospitality continue to attract millions of visitors from across the globe.

Deputy Chair, the numbers speak for themselves. According to the Statistics SA Tourism Satellite Account, tourism contributed a total number of 4,9% to South Africa's Gross Domestic Product, GDP, in 2024, outperforming sectors such as agriculture, utilities and construction.

More importantly, tourism sustained approximately a total number of 954 000 direct jobs to our economy. This means tourism now supports one in every 18 jobs in South Africa. For every 13 international tourists who arrive in our country, one job is created and supported.

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These statistics, Deputy Chair, confirm that tourism is not simply a leisure activity, it is a major economic sector and a powerful instrument for inclusive growth.

Deputy Chair, the resilience of the tourism sector deserves the necessary recognition. The sector has overcome global economic downturns, the COVID-19 pandemic and the increasing international competition. Despite these challenges, tourism continues to recover and expand.

In the year 2024, South Africa welcomed a record of 10,5 million international visitors.

In the first quarter of 2026 alone, more than 2,9 million international tourists visited our country, representing growth of 12,6% compared to the one period last year. These figures demonstrate growing international confidence in South Africa as a tourist destination.

Deputy Chair, domestic tourism remains the backbone of the sector. Domestic tourism expenditure reached a total number of R111,6 billion, exceeding international tourism expenditure, which was R102,2 billion. These figures demonstrate the

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progress we are making and South Africa remains a tourist destination globally.

Therefore, achievements must be supported and goes as well as strengthening job creation and contributing positively towards local economies.

When South Africans travel within their own country they support guesthouses, they support restaurants, tour operators, transport providers, cultural attractions and countless small businesses. Domestic tourism, therefore, remains a critical pillar of our local economic development.

Deputy Chair, one of the most significant developments supporting tourism growth has been government's effort to improve access to South Africa.

The ANC-led Government of National Unity, GNU, understands that if tourists cannot access our country easily, they will choose other destinations. This is why government has prioritised visa reforms and air connectivity.

The Electronic Travel Authorisation, ETA, system has already been introduced in China, India, Indonesia and Mexico. The

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Electronic Travel Authorisation system is the way to go. Travellers from these countries can now obtain visa outcomes digitally within 24 hours.

This is a major step forward in modernising South Africa's tourism system and making our country more accessible. The department estimates that the full implementation of this system could contribute between 80 000 and 100 000 additional jobs.

At the same time, Deputy Chair, government continues to expand air access through new international routes connecting South Africa to key markets. More flights mean more tourists, more tourists mean more spending, more spending means more jobs.

Tourism, Deputy Chair, is uniquely positioned to uplift communities and stimulate local economic development.

The ANC-led Government of National Unity welcomes the continued emphasis on villages, townships and small dorpies [towns]. For too long, tourism opportunities were concentrated in a limited number of destinations.

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Today, government is deliberately supporting tourism development in rural areas, townships and small towns to ensure broader participation in the tourism economy.

The success of projects such as Kgodumodumo Dinosaur Interpretation Centre in the Free State, demonstrates how tourism infrastructure can transform local economies. Since its launch, more than 90 000 visitors have already visited the site, bringing economic opportunities also into the surrounding communities.

Similarly, investment in tourism infrastructure across provinces continues to diversify tourism opportunities and spread economic benefits more equitably.

Deputy Chair, government is also supporting cultural and heritage tourism. South Africa's liberation history, cultural traditions, museums, heritage sites and indigenous knowledge systems remain important tourism assets.

These attractions preserve our history, strengthen our social cohesion and generate economic opportunities and benefit for local communities.

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Tourism, therefore, continues not only to economic growth but also to nation building.

This budget before us reflects government's commitment to tourism growth and transformation.

For the 2026-27 financial year the Department of Tourism has been allocated a total number of R2,54 billion, including R1,27 billion transferred to South Africa's tourism for marketing and sector growth. This investment will strengthen destination marketing, support tourism development, improve competitiveness and drive visitor growth.

The Tourism Growth Partnership Plan, TGPP, adopted by government and the industry provides a clear roadmap towards achieving the National Development Plan, NDP, targets by the year 2030.

These targets include increasing international arrivals to 15 million, increasing domestic tourism expenditure, expanding direct tourism employment to 1 million jobs.

Deputy Chair, the ANC-led Government of National Unity also supports efforts to fast track the amendment of the Tourism

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Act to ensure a more responsive, modern and competitive tourism sector. At the same time, we remain committed to accountability, transparency and clean governance.

Where concerns are raised, investigations must proceed without fear or favour, and public resources must always be utilised in the interests of the people.

Deputy Chair, tourism remains one of the most inclusive sectors of our economy. Tourism creates opportunities for women, tourism creates opportunities for youth and young people, tourism creates opportunities for small businesses, tourism also offers opportunities for people living with disability. It unites and uplifts communities, it drives local economic development and it promotes South Africa to the world.

As President Cyril Ramaphosa correctly stated at the Africa's Travel Indaba, tourism distributes economic activity across communities and possesses enormous employment potential.

For the ANC-led Government of National Unity, tourism is not merely a sector, tourism is a vehicle for transformation,

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tourism is a vehicle for economic growth and tourism is a vehicle for job creation.

For these reasons, hon Deputy Chair, the ANC proudly supports Budget Vote 38. I thank you.

Mr N P MASIPA (Western Cape): Hon Chairperson, members of the NCOP, Minister, Deputy Minister and South Africans at large, today we debate Budget Vote 38 on Tourism with heavy hearts. The tourism sector has lost one of its true icons, a man who embodied entrepreneurship, township tourism and community upliftment.

I speak of Ntate Mzoli Ngcawuzele, founder of the famous Mzoli's place in Guguletu. Born and raised in Guguletu, Mzoli transformed a simple township business into a globally recognised tourism destination. Local and international visitors alike knew that a trip to Cape Town was incomplete without experiencing the unique atmosphere, hospitality and shisanyama culture that Mzoli created.

Springbok rugby players, business executives, celebrities, diplomats and ordinary South Africans all found themselves sharing meals at Mzoli's Place. May his soul rest in peace.

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His success demonstrated that tourism could do when opportunities meet entrepreneurship.

Yet his story also reminds us of what happens when crime, extortion and lawlessness are allowed to flourish because police departments are embroiled in criminal activities. Tourism was the backbone of his business. Like many others, he survived economic shocks and uncertainty, but the combined impact of COVID-19, extortion, gangsterism and crime dealt a devastating blow to township economies.

The Western Cape continues to showcase its natural beauty, cultural heritage and hospitality to the world. International rankings consistently place Cape Town among the world's most desirable destinations. We welcome these achievements. However, behind these accolades lies an uncomfortable reality.

Township tourism and community-based tourism are increasingly threatened by crime, gun violence, gangsterism and extortion. Where is the Department of Tourism in supporting efforts to combat the criminality that is destroying tourism opportunities in our communities? The DA believes in creating opportunities for people to improve their lives through hard work, entrepreneurship and economic participation.

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Opportunity should never belong to criminals. It should belong to entrepreneurs, workers and communities seeking to better their future. Residents are not safe, businesses are not safe and tourists are not safe. Even government officials are not safe in many communities. When visitors fear entering townships, when businesses' owners are forced to pay protection fees and when communities live under the threat of violence, tourism cannot thrive.

The reality is that tourism is being hamstrung by the failure of policing. The ANC has ensured that the SA Police Service remains understaffed, underresourced and often unable to respond effectively to the realities of crime in many communities. This has enabled ANC cronies to loot, with criminals frequently arrested, only to return to the streets and continue victimising businesses and residents.

SA Tourism remains consumed by governance challenges, investigations and leadership instability at a time when the sector requires focus, certainty and execution. Multiple investigations and review processes have raised serious concerns about governance, accountability and financial oversight within the entity.

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The continued expenditure associated with prolonged suspension, the recurring investigation and leadership uncertainty, Minister, raises legitimate concerns about accountability, value for money and the overall stewardship of a key institution responsible for driving tourism growth and attracting investment. For years we have had strategies after strategies, framework after framework and master plan after master plan, yet communities are still asking basic questions: Where are the results?

The department continues to produce numerous strategies, but Parliament struggles to measure tangible outcomes from their implementation. Minister, how many jobs have been created directly as a result of these strategies? How many tourism enterprises have been sustained? How many businesses have been protected from extortion? How many businesses have been retained because safety has improved? These are the outcomes that matter. The National Rural Tourism Safety Strategy is a good example.

Without a clear rural safety framework and measurable implementation targets, the strategy risks becoming another well-written document with limited impact on the ground. This department, Minister, need to take safety seriously and

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demonstrate to tourists its role in safety plan of visitors. The department appears to be suffering from what can only be described as a strategy for deep abundance plans and a shortage of delivery.

The Western Cape has recently endured devastating floods that caused extensive damage to infrastructure, businesses and livelihoods. Many tourism establishments, guesthouse farms, restaurants and attractions suffered losses that will take years to recover from. The Tourism Incentive Programme exists precisely to support tourism infrastructure development and recovery.

The Western Cape rightfully asks whether the department has assessed the damage, engaged affected businesses and considered targeted interventions to assist tourism establishment in rebuilding and reconnecting with visitors ahead of peak summer season? Particularly concerning, is the impact on agritourism. The farming community plays a significant role in the Western Cape Tourism, offering through wine tourism, farm stay, agricultural experience and rural tourism destination.

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Flood damage has affected not only agricultural production but also tourism activities that sustain rural economies. The Department of Tourism cannot stand on the sideline without intervening. Recovery requires a co-ordinated whole-of-government and whole-of-society response. Protecting jobs and rebuilding livelihoods demands all sectors to work together.

Turning to the budget itself, the DA notes the allocation of R2,54 billion for the 2026-27 financial year, an increase from R2,37 billion. We welcome the continued investment in destination marketing through the transfer of R1,278 billion to SA Tourism. We also welcome efforts aimed at improving visitor safety, including the allocation of R300 million towards the Tourism Safety Monitor Programme. However, funding alone is not enough, Minister. The department must demonstrate that these investments are producing measurable improvements in safety of our visitors, business confidence and job creation.

Similarly, Minister, concerns remain regarding transformation funds and empowerment initiatives. Many small business owners continue to report that accessing support remains difficult due to excessive red tape, complex requirements and administrative burdens. The Tourism Equity Fund and related

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programmes cannot succeed if the very entrepreneurs they seek to support abandon applications because the process is simply too cumbersome.

Transformation should empower entrepreneurs, not frustrate them. Tourism is one of South Africa's greatest economic assets. It creates jobs where people live. It supports small businesses. It promotes entrepreneurship. It brings investment into communities that desperately need economic opportunities.

However, tourism cannot flourish where criminals rule. No amount of marketing can compensate for unsafe communities. No strategy can replace effective implementation.

No master plan can succeed where extortion and gangsterism are allowed to destroy businesses. If government is serious about growing tourism, it must become equally serious about taking crime, reducing red tape, supporting disaster recovery and ensuring that public funds translate into measurable outcome. The best tribute we can pay to pioneers such as Ntate Mzoli is not another strategy document. It is creating an environment where the next Mzoli can build a business, employ local people, welcome visitors from across the world and prosper

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without fear of criminals, extortionists or government bureaucracy.

That is the tourism economy South Africans deserve. I thank you, hon House Chair. We do support this Budget Vote. Thank you.

Mr B J FARMER: Chairperson, I hope I'm audible. Hon Chairperson, hon Minister, hon members, I greet you in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Tourism is often viewed as a leisure industry, but for millions of South Africans, tourism is not leisure; it's a job, an income, a business opportunity, keep food on the table, and it is hope. That is why the PA supports this Budget Vote, because tourism remains one of the most powerful tools available to grow our economy, create jobs, and uplift communities. The numbers speak for themselves.

Tourism now supports nearly one million direct jobs, and it continues to be one of the country's strongest contributors to economic activity. It contributes significantly to the gross domestic product, GDP, and creates opportunities across every province of our nation. What makes tourism unique, is that it reaches places where many other industries do not. A mine and

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a factory cannot exist everywhere, but tourism can. Tourism can create opportunity in a fishing village, in a small community and in communities that have too often been forgotten.

For the PA, that is important, because we believe economic growth must not be concentrated only in major cities; it must reach our people. We welcome government's continued investment in destination marketing through South African tourism. We welcome the tourism partnership plan and the focus on domestic tourism and international arrivals, and we welcome efforts to position South Africa as a world-class destination. However, tourism growth cannot happen in isolation. It depends on communities that are able to benefit from visitors arriving in their areas.

One of the greatest threats to tourism remains crime. A tourist who is robbed does not only become a victim; that tourist becomes a negative ambassador for our country. One bad experience can influence thousands of future travellers. The PA, therefore, calls for stronger co-operation between the tourism sector, the SA Police Service, SAPS, municipalities, and provincial governments to improve tourist safety, and visitors must feel welcome and safe.

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As members from the Western Cape know, recent severe storms once again reminded us how vulnerable communities and tourism infrastructure can be. Areas such as West Coast and parts of the Garden Route experienced severe weather impacts that damage roads, public facilities and tourism assets. When tourism infrastructure is damaged, local economies suffer; when visitors stay away, jobs are affected, and when roads are closed, businesses lose income.

This is why climate resilience, infrastructure maintenance, and disaster recovery must form part of tourism planning going forward. We also believe tourism must become a greater vehicle for small business development. Tourism should not only be measured by arrival numbers, but it should also be measured by building sustainable livelihoods from it. South Africa possesses extraordinary assets, our wildlife, beaches, mountains, our history, our cultures, and our people.

Few countries can offer what South Africa does. The challenge, therefore, is not whether we have something worth seeing; the challenge is whether we manage it properly, market it effectively, and ensure that local communities benefit from it. The PA supports Budget Vote 38 because we recognise tourism as a sector of opportunity. We support efforts to

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ensure tourism becomes a true driver of inclusive economic growth.

In closing, let us continue building a tourism sector that is safe, competitive, inclusive and proudly South African.

Because when tourism grows, communities grow; when communities grow, the economy grows; and when the economy grows, South Africans prosper. Salute!

Mr E J MADONSELA (KwaZulu-Natal): Greetings to your good self, hon Chairperson and hon members of this House, the MKP rises to participate in this debate on Budget Vote 38, Tourism. Tourism remains one of the most powerful economic sectors in South Africa. The portfolio committee itself acknowledges that international arrivals reached 10,5 million visitors in 2025, exceeding pre-pandemic levels and supporting approximately 1,88 million jobs across the country.

Tourism is not merely about leisure and travel; it is about economic transformation, job creation, community development, and restoring dignity to millions of South Africans who remain excluded from the meaningful participation in the economy.

Yet, despite these impressive figures, the reality confronting our people tells a different story. The tourism economy

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continues to benefit a small elite, while the majority of our communities remain spectators in an industry that should be transforming their lives.

Villages, townships, and rural communities continue to be excluded from mainstream tourism economy. The question before us is simple, who is benefiting from tourism growth? The MKP notes that the Department of Tourism has been allocated R2,54 billion for the 2026-27 financial year. While government celebrates this increase, the committee itself correctly observed that allocation remains inadequate and does not correspond with tourism's contribution to economic growth and employment creation.

Tourism contributes close to 10% of South Africa's economic activity yet receives a fraction of resources required to unlock its full potential. This reflects government that speaks about economic growth but fails to invest meaningfully in sectors that can create jobs quickly. The MKP is particularly concerned about the continued concentration of tourism benefits in major metropolitan areas, while rural communities are neglected.

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KwaZulu-Natal possesses some of the most significant cultural, historical, and natural tourism assets in Africa. Yet, communities in rural Zululand, uMkhanyakude, Harry Gwala, and Amajuba, and many parts of our province continue to suffer from poverty, unemployment, and underdevelopment. The committee correctly highlights that there is insufficient evidence on how villages, townships, and small towns will benefit from tourism programmes. This is a serious failure.

Tourism cannot be transformed while the communities living next to tourism attractions remain poor; tourism cannot be regarded as inclusive when the local people remain unemployed, while outside investors reap the benefits. The MKP believes that tourism development must be rooted in economic justice. Communities must become owners, investors, and beneficiaries, not merely labourers. Local people must participate throughout the tourism value chain, from accommodation and transporting to catering, cultural tourism, and to tour operations.

The report further exposes serious governance weaknesses within subsistence tourism. More than half of the department's budget ultimately flows to subsistence tourism. Yet, governance concerns continue to emerge. The committee raises concerns about both failure to account properly before

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Parliament, deficiency in performance measure, measurements and weakness in financial management, and inadequate monitoring system. This raises fundamental questions about accountability.

South Africa trust in the institution that themselves struggle to demonstrate transparency and good governance. The MKP cannot support a situation where billions of rands are allocated without clear mechanisms to measure impact, value for money, and tangible benefits for ordinary citizens. The issue of job creation also demands serious scrutiny. Government frequently announces thousands of work opportunities through programmes such as Work for Tourism.

While the programmes receive a substantial increase, these remains to have no effective mechanism to determine whether these temporary opportunities translate into sustainable employment. Temporary jobs may create positive statistics for the government's reports, but they do not solve unemployment. Our people do not need short-term contracts that disappear after a few months; they need permanent jobs, sustainable enterprises and ownership opportunities.

They need an economy that empowers them to build wealth for future generations. The MKP is equally concerned about safety and security. Tourism cannot flourish in an environment where visitors and local communities feel unsafe. The report correctly identified concerns regarding tourism safety programmes. That remains concentrated in traditional tourism hubs, while townships and rural areas receive limited attention.

KwaZulu-Natal has experienced critical reputational damage over the years due to crime, instability and inadequate policing. If government is serious about tourism growth, it must prioritise safety, infrastructure, visible policing and community-based security initiatives. Tourists will not visit destinations they perceive as unsafe, regardless of how much money is spent on marketing campaigns.

The report also highlights the absence of clear strategies to address seasonality, infrastructure delay and lack of measurable outcomes for marketing expenditure. These shortcomings point to a broader governance crisis where plans are announced, budgets are allocated, but the implementation is weak. The MKP believes that tourism should be used as a strategic tool for Radical Economic Transformation, RET. We

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must prioritise heritage tourism, cultural tourism and township tourism that reflects the history, culture and identity of our people.

We must invest in rural tourism infrastructure, road digital connectivity and community-owned tourism enterprise. We must ensure that tourism wealth remains within communities instead of flowing out to large corporates. In KwaZulu-Natal, tourism has the potential to become a powerful weapon against poverty and unemployment. However, this will only happen if government abandon its current top-down approach, and places communities at the centre of development.

In conclusion, the MKP acknowledges the importance of tourism as a driver of economic growth and employment. However, we remain deeply concerned about inadequate funding, weak governance, poor accountability, exclusion of rural communities and the failure to convert tourism growth into a meaningful economic empowerment for the majority of South Africans. Tourism must serve the people, not statistics. It must uplift the communities ... [Interjections.] [Time expired.]

Setswana:

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Rre M K MONTWEDI: Modulasetilo, e re ke tle ke go dumedise, gape ke tle ke dumedise maloko otlhe a komiti le a Ntlo e ya rona ya NCOP.

English:

House Chair, hon members, today we debate the 2026-27 Annual Performance Plan, APP, of the Department of Tourism at a time when the sector should be a catalyst for economic recovery, job creation and rural development.

Tourism has the potential to lift communities out of poverty, stimulate local economies and position South Africa as a global destination of choice.

But, Chairperson, the APP before us does not reflect the urgency of a sector in crisis, it does not reflect the lived realities of communities, it does not reflect the frustration ... but who's this person who's undressing in front of the camera now? What's happening now? ...

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Please continue, hon member!

Mr M K MONTWEDI: The APP does not reflect the urgency of a sector in crisis, it does not reflect the lived realities of communities, it does not reflect the frustrations of Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises, SMMEs, and it certainly does not reflect governance failures that continue to cripple South African tourism.

Tourism is not failing because South Africans are not travelling, tourism is not failing because the world does not want to visit our country, tourism is failing because the institutions responsible for marketing and supporting the sector are failing the people they are meant to serve.

Chairperson, let us speak plainly about the APP target. The target has been repeated for five consecutive years and missed every time. Repeated for five consecutive years and missed every time. We know this to be true as South African tourism has no functional domestic marketing strategy, no provincial partnerships and no credible safety plans. And we are told that this department will support 100 SMMEs through market access programme. But where are the names? Where are the provinces? Where is the budget?

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The target is not costed, not provincialised and not linked to real entrepreneurs like Bolokang Seitshoko in Vryburg, Thorisho Moeng, Yvonne Shopi, Aus-Misisi Radebe and Tiro Mongwaketsi.

This department also tells us that it will implement the tourism safety programme in all provinces. Yet, there are no operational budgets, no SA Police Service, SAPS, integration and no provincial deployment plan.

It claims that it will increase international arrivals by 8%. Yet, it does so with no global brand campaign. With South African tourism in chaos, with no digital strategy, there's no target, it is wishful thinking.

Chairperson, when we speak about tourism, we are speaking about real people, young entrepreneurs, rural farmers and township innovators who are fighting every day to enter the tourism value chain.

Let me now speak about them by name. There's a young boy, Bolokang, who's a young broiler farmer from Vryburg, Bolokang Seitshoko. There's Thorisho Moeng, a vegetable farmer with the capacity but no access. There's Yvonne Shopi, a hard-working

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young woman producer locked out of procurement. There is Aus-Misisi Radebe, a black farmer who has done everything right but remains excluded. There's Tiro Mongwaketsi, a young farmer who can supply lodges today but cannot break through procurement walls.

These are the people the APP should be speaking to. These are the people the department should be fighting for. These are the people who should be benefiting and many other South Africans that remain outside and not benefiting.

Chairperson, the department claims that the sector has transformed ... [Interjections.] ... doctor ... the department claimed that the sector has transformed but the facts tell a different story. As ownership patterns remain unchanged, black ownership has not moved beyond 30% in five years, and in some sub-sectors it has declined.

Procurement remains captured as less than 10% of procurement in major tourism establishments goes to black-owned suppliers. Less than 10% goes to black-owned suppliers, while less than 3% goes to rural producers. This is why Bolokang, Thorisho, Yvonne, Aus-Misisi, Tiro and many others remain excluded.

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Market access programmes are just not reaching real entrepreneurs, and so, we reject the budget of the department that claims to support SMMEs but cannot produce a list, province, budget or any measurable outcome.

We also reject the budget of a department that has ensured that tourism grading remains elitist as township and rural establishments cannot afford grading fees and meet unrealistic requirements.

We reject the budget of a department whose market access support programme benefits the same SMMEs every year and does not include farmers.

We reject the budget of a department whose tourism equity fund was announced with excitement, yet has collapsed under litigation with no single rural entrepreneur benefited.

And we reject the budget of a department that has a women in tourism programme, that is just a concept. It has no budget, no structure and no measurable outcome.

Chaperson, real transformation means procurement from local farmers. It means hotels, lodges and restaurants must buy from

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Bolokang Seitshoko, Thorisho Moeng, Yvonne Shopi, Aus-Misisi Radebe, Tiro Mongwaketsi and many other entrepreneurs that we find in most corners of South Africa.

For transformation is not a workshop, it is a contract. Township and rural tourism must be funded not with pilots, not with conferences, but with capital.

Youth training must lead to jobs, and every programme must include placement, mentorship and procurement.

South African tourism must be stabilised. Transformation cannot happen while South African tourism is collapsing.

The global brand campaign must be restored and must include black-owned creative agencies like World Wide Worx Public Relations.

Minister, we reject this budget vote as you're not doing any of these things.

Chaperson, we must also confront the uncomfortable truth. The role played by the Minister to stabilise the sector has just not been enough. For three years the sector has been crying

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out for decisive leadership. Instead, we have seen delayed interventions, reactive decision-making and silence during governance crisis.

When South African tourism was collapsing under internal warfare, where was the Minister? When service providers like World Wide Worx Public Relations were being victimised, where was the Minister? When global brand campaign was abandoned, where was the Minister? When the tourism equity fund collapsed, where was the Minister? When SMMEs were excluded, where was Minister Patricia de Lille? When rural farmers were locked out, where was the Minister?

Chaperson, leadership must match the scale of the crisis and unfortunately, the leadership provided by the Minister does not match the scale of the crisis that we find in this sector.

Chaperson, the time for excuses is over. The time for selective accountability is over. The time for protecting executives who abuse power is over.

South Africa deserves a tourism sector that works. South Africa deserves leadership that serves. South Africa deserves institutions that honour the Constitution.

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As long as the Council exists, we as the EFF will ensure that no executive, no chief executive officer, CEO, no suspended CEO, no chief financial officer, CFO, and no corrupt network will ever stand in the way of that mandate.

With those submissions, Chairperson ...

Setswana:

... ke rata gore ke go leboge ka nako e o mphileng yone gore le rona re le EFF re tle re tlhagise ntlhakemo ya rona mo tekanyetsokabong e ya ga Mme wa rona e leng Patricia de Lille. Ka a makalo, Modulasetilo, ke lebogile thata.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF TOURISM: Let me, from the onset, just apologise because I don't think that my video will be clear on your side because I'm using a small phone of mine. My gadget has failed me. Thank you very much.

Let me take this opportunity to thank you, Chair, Minister of Tourism, Ms de Lille, the select committee, chairperson, Ms. Boshoff, members of executive council, MECs from all provinces, hon members, our director-general, DG, DG Vele, and his team from the Department of Tourism, distinguished guests.

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For three decades, our Constitution has stood as a beacon of dignity. [Interjections.]

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Hon Deputy Minister, you can switch off your video because we cannot see your face.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF TOURISM: Thank you so much, Chairperson. Yes, I was struggling. I'm using my phone. My gadget just failed me. Thank you very much.

As I have said, Chairperson, we commemorate Youth Month and mark the 50th anniversary of the 1976 Youth Uprising. We are reminded of the sacrifices made by generations of young South Africans who fought for a future founded on justice, equality, and human dignity.

Their courage helped to shape the democratic South Africa we enjoy today and trusted us with the responsibility of ensuring that freedom is accompanied by opportunities, especially for the young people who will inherit and shape our nation's future.

Key to this, our seventh administration is inclusive economic growth and job creation, reducing poverty and high cost of

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living, building a capable, ethical, and developmental state. Premised on the Constitution, we are reminded that democracy must not only secure political rights, but also create pathways to economic participation, social inclusion, and shared prosperity for all South Africans.

Tourism has demonstrated meaningful strides to honour that legacy by creating opportunities for young people, especially women and people with disabilities. Chaperson, as we reflect on our progress, we are reminded that the true measure of development lies not only in national achievement, but in where the opportunities reach our provinces, our districts communities, municipalities, villages, townships and rural communities. This is why the National Council of Provinces remains such a vital institution within our democracy.

Tourism is often viewed through the lens of travel and leisure as alluded to by most speakers who spoke before me. Yet tourism is a comprehensive reflection of effective and efficient service delivery. For example, roads without potholes, clean and safe environment, enabling by-laws opportunities, the sector, and that is why we refer to the tourism policy as a comprehensive economic policy.

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In essence, tourism sustains businesses, supports livelihoods and stimulates local economic activity. A tourist is an investor in the local economy. Every overnight stay, meal purchased, attraction visited, contributes to economic activity that supports South African families. When tourism grows, it improves overall service delivery.

Chairperson, through the tourism growth partnership plan, government and industry have committed themselves to growing international arrivals to 15 million visitors by 2029. And to achieve this, demand-led skills are prioritised as a key focus area to enhance service excellence and to standardise experiences across destination South Africa.

Success cannot be measured only by the number of visitors we attract. It must also be measured by whether the benefits of tourism are felt. This emphasises the importance role of transformation within the sector. The department has successfully re-institutionalised the Tourism Transformation Council of South Africa, TTCSA.

This is also supported by National Treasury's approval for a budget to enhance its function. I am sure the hon Montwedi will be very excited to hear this. Visitors experience South

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Africa through our people, our culture, our heritage, our cuisine, and our creativity.

Inherently, this sector compels the interaction of people from different cultures. This is why the department continues to support tourism development in villages and townships and small dorpias [Small towns], as I have mentioned. It is important for provinces and municipalities to develop event policies to guide the strategic support for hosting of festivals and events, as they play a critical role in activating local tourism economy.

They create reasons for people to travel. They encourage overnight stays. They increase visitor spending. They support accommodation establishment, restaurants, transport providers, artists, performers, crafters, and informal traders. In many towns and communities, annual festivals and events have become important economic lifelines. The likes of Macufe in your province, Chairperson, the Free State, and many other provinces.

A successful festival is not simply an event. It is an economic stimulus package for a local community. Whether it is a cultural celebration, heritage commemoration, food festival,

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music event, or sporting event. These gatherings create opportunities for local businesses while strengthening destination visibility, preserving local culture, and building community.

Chairperson, the District Development Model reminds us about the importance of a collaborative approach. Through the one-plan approach, tourism becomes part of a broader ecosystem of local economic development, infrastructure investment, enterprise development, skills development, and, as mentioned above, tourism is indeed a comprehensive service delivery.

This enables tourism priorities to be integrated into district and municipal planning processes, ensuring that tourism contributes meaningfully to local development outcomes.

Therefore, tourism contributes not only to visitor experience, but also to broader developmental outcomes within district and municipalities.

This integrated approach helps ensure that tourism investment delivers lasting value to communities while supporting developmental priorities of local government. Chairperson, across the country, the department continues to invest in tourism infrastructure that expands participation in the

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tourism economy and unlock opportunities to communities that have historically been excluded from mainstream tourism growth.

Just to mention a few, in the Eastern Cape, Mathontsi Lodge demonstrates how tourism investment can support rural development through a community ownership model that promotes local participation and economic inclusion, which we will be launching this coming week on Wednesday. This project represents an investment of more than R31 million and has created employment opportunities while strengthening the tourism offerings of Amathole District in the Eastern Cape.

In KwaZulu-Natal, the Bhanga Nek Campsites project is helping unlock economic opportunities for communities adjacent to the Isimangaliso Wetland Park while strengthening nature-based tourism experiences. In the Free State, the Kgodumodumo Dinosaur Interpretation Centre has become a significant tourism attraction, recording more than 100 000 visitors within the first year of operation and demonstrating the potential of heritage tourism to stimulate local economic activity. Hon Mabilo, it is now more than 100 000, no longer 90 000. Those are the latest statistics.

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In the Western Cape, the Cape Agulhas Lighthouse Precinct project has enhanced one of South Africa's iconic tourism attractions while supporting heritage preservation and local tourism development.

Chairperson, transformation remains central to our vision for tourism growth. A growing tourism sector must also be inclusive. Transformation is not only about ownership, but also about participation, it is about access, it is about ensuring that more South Africans can enter, benefit and help shape the future of the tourism economy.

Sesotho:

Ke nahana hore ke ne se ke tjholo hore rona re sebetsa mmoho le Lefapha la Matlotlo a naha. Re nkile qeto ya hore re tsoselletse hobane re batla ho bona lefapha lena la rona le fetohile hore batho ba rona kaofela ba be le seo ba se fumanang ka hare ho lefapha lena.

English:

Tourism growth also depends on visitor confidence. As the chairperson of the National Tourism Safety Forum, I remain committed to strengthening collaboration between government,

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law enforcement agencies, municipalities and industries to create a safer tourism environment.

I must also indicate that the issue of the safety of all South Africans is the responsibility of SA Police Service. Hence the safety forum, is led by the SA Police Service together with the department and other stakeholders. Every journey begins with anticipation and with an expectation of safety.

Programmes such as the tourism monitors continue to contribute to visitor support and destination safety, while participation across government helps strengthen our collective response to tourism safety challenges.

A safe destination is a comprehensive destination. A safe destination is a successful destination, and a safe destination is a sought-after destination. Hence, our priority is the safety of our tourists.

The story of tourism is ultimately a story about people. It is the story of a young person finding their first job in hospitality. It is the story of a creative artist, an entrepreneur opening a guesthouse, a tour company, a

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restaurant and many other innovative and technology-based sector solutions.

As we look ahead, our task is clear to ensure that the growth of tourism is matched by the growth of opportunities, that every new visitor creates new possibilities for South Africans and that is the benefit of tourism shared among broadly across our provinces, district municipalities, villages and townships, as I have mentioned.

When the future generation reflects on the choices we made during this period of renewal, they should be able to say that we did more than grow tourism. We used the tourism to build stronger communities, create lasting opportunities and bring the promise of our democracy closer to the lives of our people.

When tourism grows, South Africa rises. When communities thrive, South Africa leads. And when opportunities reach every corner of our nation, the promise of freedom finds its fullest expression and the promise of our Constitution becomes a lived reality of South Africa. Minister de Lille, I know you are trying your best. I'm here as a Deputy Minister. Let us drive this sector.

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Thank you very much, Chairperson.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Thank you, hon Deputy Minister for articulating effectively the programmes of the Department of Tourism. Hon delegates, the next participant in this debate is the hon TB Mathibe, the MEC for Economic Development, Environment and Tourism of Limpopo, the home of Mapungubwe National Park. Over to you.

Mr T B MATIBE (Limpopo): House Chairperson, hon members, hon Minister and Deputy Minister, the permanent and special delegates to the NCOP. Tourism remains one of the most people-centred sector of our economy. That creates jobs, supports families, empowers women, youth, as well as people living with disabilities.

While stimulating local economies, the sector provides pathways for meaningful economic participation. We have witnessed the significant growth in tourism visitation in the last few quarters as a nation, which has translated to considerable economic stimulation, resulting in other direct economic spin-offs for our people.

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As a province, we recognise the National Department of Tourism's introduction of Tourism Growth Partnership Plan, a working compact between public and private sector, with measurable targets to accelerate this growth.

Government and the industry have jointly adopted this plan as a sector growth plan for the future in support to the Tourism Minister's sentiments on: Tourism policy, is Economic Policy.

Limpopo's Economic Development, Environment and Tourism has reviewed and will now be implementing the Limpopo Tourism Growth Strategy. Limpopo Tourism Growth Strategy supports the National Tourism Growth Partnership Plan by driving coordinated destination marketing, inclusive participation, localised economic growth.

It translates national partnership plan goals, such as expanding opportunities and boosting gross domestic product, GDP, into regional initiatives, centred around clustered focused initiatives.

This plan, Limpopo Tourism Growth Strategy focuses on strengthening destination positioning of Limpopo Province by defining and developing a clear destination, positioning

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strategy and architecture anchored in Limpopo's competitive advantage and by implementing a unified, insight-driven destination marketing programme.

It drives inclusive economic growth and employment through tourism, cluster-based tourism development to support inclusive growth, as well as to support Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises, SMME, integration into tourism and value chain and local supply chain.

The strategy enhances tourism products, cluster routes, develop and strengthen priority tourism routes and corridors to improve visitor dispersal with initiative to develop, package and promote market-ready tourism experiences and itineraries.

It advances sustainable, climate-resilient and conservation-led tourism, strengthening biodiversity and conversation linked tourism development as well as integrate climate resilient and disaster risk management into tourism planning and infrastructure.

We are using this strategy to strengthen governance partnership programmes delivery, establish and strengthen

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governance and coordination structure, across tourism system by aligning tourism priorities with municipal integrated development plans, IDPs, spatial development frameworks and provincial planning frameworks, ensuring monitoring and reporting.

And lastly, this strategy attracts investment and unlock tourism opportunities, facilitates tourism investments in priority nodes and routes by developing and packaging bankable tourism projects through prioritised investments pipeline and promoting facilitating public-private partnership.

South Africa's National Convention Bureau secured 66 international and regional conferences expected to contribute over R1,2 billion to the country's economy between 2025 and 2030. The secured Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions, MICE, events are scheduled to take place across the range of cities and towns, including Bela-Bela, Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg, Makanda, and many other cities.

In support of this initiative, Limpopo will be promoting the MICE, sector meetings, incentives, and conference and exhibition by hosting the Africa Tourism Leadership Forum in September this year. This will be augmented by South African

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Principal Association National Conference, Explore Limpopo Tourism Market, and the National Cooperatives Day celebration all set by the Department of Small Business.

The Kruger National Park has officially celebrated its Centenary in 2026, marking 100 years since the formal proclamation of the park in 1926. A year-long festivities are running under the theme "Our Heritage, Our Future". Reflecting on the century of biodiversity protection, tourism and heritage management, a major focus on the celebration is revitalising and implementing historical memorandums of understanding.

Tourism safety remains a critical priority for the growth and sustainability of the tourism sector. A destination's reputation is not only built on attraction offering, but also on safety and quality of the visitor's experience. Tourists who do not enjoy a safe and pleasant experience are unlikely to return and may discourage others.

The department continues to engage on programmes like tourism, roadside awareness campaign. This is a programme embarked on during peak holiday season, Easter and festive period. The

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campaign is a joint operation with other government departments like the Department of Community Safety.

Transformation and community participation are at the centre of our tourism development agenda. The department continues to support community-owned tourism projects, such as homestay initiatives that allow communities to directly benefit from tourism.

On the 28th to the 30th of June, the department will be supporting homestay exchange programmes for 12 community members from Phiring to Makushu village. Building a sustainable tourism sector requires investment in people. We are encouraged by growing participation of young people in tourism sector. To this effect, the department launched Limpopo Youth in Tourism last year. On the 3rd of July, Limpopo Youth will convene their first time coming from across five districts. This is a demonstration of our commitment to empowering young people within the tourism value chain.

Through initiatives such as this, we are building a next generation of tourism leaders and entrepreneurs. The department continues to implement tourism awareness programmes, targeting educators, learners across the province.

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In partnership with the Department of Tourism, we continue to promote tourism awareness in schools through career expo, dialogue, debates for Technical and Vocational Education and Training, TVET's students on current tourism forecasts.

Through initiatives such as this, we are building the next generation of leaders and entrepreneurs. As a department, we remain committed working together with stakeholders to ensure that tourism continues to improve the lives of our people and contributes meaningfully to the growth of the provincial economy.

And as a Province of Limpopo, we support the Budget Vote 38.
Thank you.

Ms S L SITHOLE: Chairperson, Chair of the NCOP, Deputy Chairperson of the NCOP, Minister, Deputy Minister of the Department of Tourism, Chief Whip of the NCOP, House Chairpersons and hon members, I greet you and also say...

Setswana:

... Aforikaborwa, dumelang.

English:

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As the Setswana proverb reminds us that...

Setswana:

Moremogolo go betlwa wa taola, wa motho o a ipetla.

English:

This powerful proverb teaches us that progress requires discipline, accountability and initiative. Therefore, it must pave a path towards tourism growth in our country. It must be guided by discipline in implementation, accountability in governance and initiative in unlocking new opportunities for investment, job creation, and economic growth.

Tourism remains one of the most important sectors of our economy. It creates jobs, supports small businesses, drive investment, promote cultural exchange and contributes significantly to economic growth. Most importantly, it provides opportunities for thousands of South Africans who may otherwise struggle to find employment in a challenging economic environment. It is therefore concerning that the tourism sector continues to face both emerging and long-standing challenges that threatens its growth and sustainability.

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The recent surge in anti-migrant sentiment and related incidents in parts of South Africa has had a direct impact on the tourism industry. The SA Tourism has confirmed growing cancellation of bookings as concerns mount among international visitors regarding the safety and the stability of our country. Perception matters in tourism. A visitor deciding where to spend their money has many options. A negative headline can quickly influence travel decisions. This House must therefore add its voice in condemning all forms of violence and intimidation directed at immigrants and foreign nations. Such accidents damages South African international reputations, undermines social coercion and threatens livelihoods in sectors that depend heavily on tourism.

Illegal immigration remains a legitimate concern globally and for all South Africans. Government has a responsibility to ensure that immigration laws are respected and effectively enforced. However, lawlessness cannot be addressed through further lawlessness. Social revolt, intimidation and violence are not solutions. The only sustainable approach is the fair, lawful and effective enforcement of immigration legislation by the relevant authorities.

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The economic consequence of instability and violence are often felt most severely by ordinary citizen. KwaZulu-Natal, where many of these incidents have been most pronounced, relies heavily on tourism as a key pillar of its economy. The province attracts millions of domestic and international visitors annually who support businesses both large and small. When tourists cancel their booking, it is not only the large hotel groups that are affected. It is the women selling handmade crafts along the beachfront, it is the tour guide who depends on seasonal visitors, it is the waiter saving meals in a local restaurant, it is the taxi operator transporting tourists between destinations, it is a young graduate employed at a tourism information centre and it is the thousands of workers whose livelihood depends on a thriving tourism sector. Every cancelled booking has a ripple effect throughout the economy.

South Africa is blessed with extraordinary tourism assets. Few countries can match the diversity of experience that our nation offers. We boast some of the world's most beautiful coastlines, the iconic Table Mountain, the magnificent Drakensberg Mountain Range, the world-renowned wildlife destinations such as the Kruger National Park, vibrant

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cultural heritage and a site and communities rich in history and tradition.

We all have ingredients necessary to become one of the leading tourism destinations in the world. Yet, despite these advantages, we continue to underperform relative to our potential. The challenges facing South Africa is not a lack of attraction. The challenge is a structural constraint that prevent us from fully unlocking the economic value of this attraction. Tourism businesses continue to face obstacles relating to visa regulations, limited air connectivity, poor transport infrastructure, unreliable municipal services, crime and inadequate destination management. These challenges increase cost, reduce competitiveness and discourage both tourists and investors. If we are serious about growing tourism, we must address these barriers with agents.

We welcome the tourism growth partnership plan and call for its effective implementation. The time for plans has passed. The time for delivery is now.

The story of Mr Thuso Monnagaratoe illustrates both the opportunities and the challenges within the tourism sector. Mr Monnagaratoe is the founder of the Lovisto Tours in Mahikeng,

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in Bokone Bophirima. Like many entrepreneurs, he saw an opportunity to showcase South Africa's rich cultural diversity and the natural beauty of visitors from around the world. His vision is not simply about running a business. It is about creating jobs, supporting local communities, preserving cultural heritage and contributing to economic development. Yet businesses such as his continue to face significant structural challenges. Lengthy visa processes discourage potential visitors. Limited air access reduce connectivity between destination. Inadequate municipal services affect the visitor's experience and undermine confidence in tourism destination. Poor route maintenance, unreliable water supply and insufficient public infrastructure all have a direct impact on tourism growth.

The challenges facing Mr Monnagaratoe are shared by countless tourism operators across South Africa. These challenges are not impossible. They do not require extraordinary intervention. They require commitment, co-ordination, innovation and effective government.

Hon Minister, ensuring the safety of every visitor will strengthen South Africa's image as a world-class tourism destination. Safety is not a luxury. It is the fundamental

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enabler of growth in the tourism sector. The department must strengthen its collaboration with the SA Police Service and municipal law enforcement agencies to combat crime, protect visitors and ensure that tourists feel both safe and are safe while traveling throughout our country. A safe and welcoming environment encourages repeat visits, attract new travellers, boost investors' confidence and support sustainable growth across the tourism value chain. By prioritising safety and security, we can strengthen South Africa's competitiveness and unlock the full potential of our tourism sector.

Tourism has the potential to play a significant role in addressing South Africa's most pressing socioeconomic challenges. It is a labour intensive sector capable of creating employment opportunities across skills levels. It provides opportunities for youth, women in rural communities and small businesses. It stimulates growth in accommodation, transport, agriculture, arts and craft, entertainment and many other sectors. The potential is there and the opportunities are there. What is needed now is leadership, effective implementation and a commitment to creating a safe, welcoming and competitive tourism sector. Let us work together to remove the barriers to growth, unlock investment and build a tourism industry that benefits every corner of our country. If you get

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tourism right, we will create jobs, drive economic growth and improve the lives of countless South Africans. As the ANC, we support Budget Vote 38. I thank you.

Mr P J SWART: Hon Chairperson, hon Minister, Deputy Minister, hon members and fellow South Africans, good evening. The DA recognises the enormous potential of tourism as one of South Africa's most important economic drivers. According to the department's own annual performance plan, APP, South Africa welcomed more than 10 million international visitors in 2025, with continued recovery and growth in both domestic and international tourism markets.

Tourism is not simply about holidays but about the jobs and empowerment it can produce. It is about small businesses, restaurants, guesthouses, tour guides, artists, markets and local economies. Nevertheless, South Africa's tourism industry is not growing fast enough. Not because of lack of potential, but because of weak governance because of corruption, collapsing infrastructure and the failed state administration continue to hold us back.

The APP speaks about inclusive growth, destination competitiveness and an improved visitor experience.

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Nevertheless, a beautiful plan on paper means very little when the reality on the ground tells a different story, hon Minister. How do we attract thousands more tourists when roads are filled with potholes, passenger rail systems are failing, crime threatens visitors, ports and airports underperform, water and electricity crises continue and historical tourist sites are falling apart?

We constantly hear that tourism is a priority, but priorities are not measured by speeches but by implementation. In its APP, the department refers to infrastructure and tourism facilities that must be developed. Our challenge in South Africa is not our ability to make plans in this country. Our challenge is our inability to deliver projects on time, within budget and without mismanagement and corruption.

In my own province, the Western Cape, the upgrading of the southernmost lighthouse in Cape Agula took almost two years longer to complete than planned and became an increased cost. This symbolises a bigger problem in South Africa. While the project delay communities lose income, people lose job opportunities and South Africans lose credibility as a world class tourism destination.

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Tourism cannot flourish in a country where infrastructure is collapsing. No international marketing campaign can hide the damage caused by dirty towns, unsafe streets, deteriorating monuments, weak municipal service delivery and dysfunctional state institutions. We saw this failed clean up in real-time as the G20 approached in Johannesburg.

We must also ask why so many tourism projects were announced over the years, yet so few received sustainable maintenance and long-term support? In previous administrations, it was common to see new buildings without maintenance plans, projects without real local economic impact and public funds being spent without measurable outcomes. Tourism development must become more decentralised.

Local communities, municipalities and provinces that demonstrate good governance, failed safe environments and clean towns should be rewarded with more support and investment. Tourism grows where there is stability, safety, cleanliness, functional infrastructure and public confidence. It is no coincidence that the Western Cape continues to be formed as South Africa's strongest tourism destination.

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That success is built on better governance, stronger financial discipline and greater accountability. The Western Cape has shown what is possible when tourism is treated as an economic growth sector, rather than a government programme. In 2025 alone, R1,5 million international visitors spent R25,9 billion in our province, accounting for a quarter of South Africa's international tourism revenue.

International arrivals grew by 11,1%. Cape Town International Airport recorded more than 11 million passengers, movements, and visitor spending reached record levels in our province. The question for the Minister is not whether tourism can create jobs. The Western Cape has already proven that it can.

The real question is: Why the national government is not replicating these successes across the rest of South Africa?

The APP refers to job creation through Expanded Public Works Programme projects, skills development and support for small, medium and micro enterprises, SMMEs. These are positive initiatives, but South Africa does not need temporary EPWP positions alone. South Africa needs a growing economy. We need investor confidence, policy certainty and a capable state that functions effectively.

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The greatest enemy of tourism in South Africa is not a lack of potential, but corruption. Corruption that steals money intended for infrastructure. Corruption places unqualified cadres in critical positions. Corruption delays projects and destroys international confidence in our country. The DA supports tourism as a powerful instrument for economic growth, job creation and hope.

However, we will never remain silent while taxpayers' money is wasted. Infrastructure collapses and projects fail. South Africa has everything required to become one of the world's leading tourist destinations. The natural beauty, the people, the culture, the history, and the talent. Yes, minister, tourism is growing, but growth is not enough. We remain far from where we should be and far from what this remarkable country can achieve. What is missing is a consistent, honest and capable government. I thank you.

Mr K M ZONDI (KwaZulu-Natal): Hon House Chairperson, we welcome the opportunity to participate in this policy debate on Budget Vote 38: Tourism.

A budget allocation of R409,122 million has been provided for the Tourism Development Programme within KwaZulu-Natal

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Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs for the 2026-27 financial year. This allocation includes transfers to the Tourism and Film Authority and the KwaZulu-Natal Sharks Board, both of which have mandates directly linked to tourism development. The allocation will support the implementation of the province's tourism development mandate and the delivery of key programmes aimed at promoting tourism growth and sustainability.

Of this budget, 66,6% is allocated to our public entity, the KwaZulu-Natal Tourism and Film Authority, in order to intensify the province's efforts to position KwaZulu-Natal competitively within domestic and international tourism and film markets through integrated destination marketing, business and tourism development, investment promotion and creative industry support initiatives. The aim is to deliberately unlock opportunities that contribute to economic activity, investment attraction and growth within the tourism and film industries across the province. These initiatives, hon House Chairperson, unlock opportunities.

These initiatives, hon House Chairperson, have yielded positive results. For example, during the 2025 financial year, international travel to KwaZulu-Natal grew by 13,4% to 806 127

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visitors, generating an estimated spend of R5,5 billion. Of these visitors, 72,4% originated from the African continent.

On the domestic front, overnight trips in South Africa increased by 11,1% to 44,7 million. KwaZulu-Natal remained the number one destination in South Africa, attracting 8,9 million trips and recording tourism growth of 19,8%. Domestic visitors spent approximately R21,4 billion in the province during 2025. Under the current circumstances, tourism's contribution to the KwaZulu-Natal economy stands at approximately 6%.

Hon Chairperson, investment in tourism infrastructure and product development remains a matter of critical importance and is fundamental to unlocking the full growth potential of the tourism sector and driving inclusive economic development across our province. Through deliberate and sustained investment in tourism assets, we can enhance destination attractiveness, stimulate demand and create meaningful economic opportunities for our people.

During the financial year, the department will focus on supporting the infrastructure upgrade of lodges owned by local communities, especially those located within game reserves,

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thus recognising their critical role in driving inclusive economic participation and enhancing destination offerings.

In line with the priorities of the seventh administration, investment in cultural and heritage tourism also remains a key strategic focus, ensuring that the province's rich heritage assets are preserved, leveraged and positioned as catalysts for sustainable growth and community development. Priority projects include, among others, the following.

Firstly, the development of the eMakhosini Valley, known as the Valley of the Kings, located near Ulundi. This 24 000-hectare heritage park serves as the final resting place of seven early Zulu monarchs and offers a profound insight into Zulu history and wildlife. Secondly, upgrades to the Somkhanda Game Reserve, a malaria-free community-owned big five reserve, spanning 12 000 hectares of pristine Zululand bushveld. Thirdly, refurbishments to the Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park Hilltop Camp, which offers panoramic views across the Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Game Reserve, extending to Lake St Lucia and the Indian Ocean.

These initiatives are aimed at boosting destination appeal, deepening community participation and advancing inclusive

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economic growth, particularly in rural areas. This infrastructure and product development programme will further extend to the upgrading of beaches and dams as key strategic assets within coastal and marine tourism. The initiative seeks to diversify tourism experiences through complementary inland attractions and waterways, thereby increasing visitor length of stay and overall expenditure.

Hon House Chairperson, partnerships and collaboration remain fundamental to growing tourism. As the province of KwaZulu-Natal, we continue to invest in building strategic partnerships, platforms that bring tourism stakeholders together to engage on issues of critical importance to the sector and identify opportunities for growth. One such platform is the Provincial Tourism and Investment Committee, PTIC, a legislative structure established in terms of the KwaZulu-Natal Tourism and Film Authority Act. As the chairperson of this committee, I convene mayors from district, local and metropolitan municipalities to assess the state of tourism in our province and, most importantly, to identify opportunities for expansion and investment.

We also continue to support and formalise the establishment of Community Tourism Organisations following the adoption of the

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KwaZulu-Natal Community Tourism Organisation Strategy in 2024-25. The Department also recognises the critical role of tourism in addressing youth unemployment and creating sustainable livelihoods. To this end, 82 tourism and hospitality graduates and students have been recruited to participate in the 2026 Tourism Graduate Development Programme which will last for a period of 24 months.

We are all aware that one of the foremost barriers to entry into the South African tourism industry stems from high capital requirements and limited access to credit, which disproportionately affects small and medium tourism enterprises seeking to compete with established multinational operators. To address this challenge, the Province of KwaZulu-Natal ...

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Hon Zondi, can you stop a little bit. On the side of the information and communications technology, ICT, the timer is no longer there. What is the problem?

ICT? ICT? Hon Zondi will have free reign then if we don't have the timer there. I am going to count to three, if you don't respond, then I will allow him to finish his speech.

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Three, two, one. Finish your speech, hon Zondi.

Mr K M ZONDI (KwaZulu-Natal): Thank you, hon House Chairperson. I could also see that the clock had disappeared, but I am concluding now.

Hon House Chairperson, it is widely acknowledged that tourism is a private sector-driven industry. As such, the interests and insights of the tourism trade remain central to our efforts. If we are to position tourism as a primary driver of inclusive economic growth and job creation, government and industry must work hand-in-hand to build a stronger and more competitive tourism sector for KwaZulu-Natal.

In conclusion, Chairperson, in our pursuit of driving tourism and investment into KwaZulu-Natal and improving regional accessibility, the provincial government, through our Route Development Committee, Durban Direct, continues to pursue new connectivity opportunities. This includes leveraging major infrastructure developments, such as the Club Med resort on the North Coast, to build compelling business cases for new direct flights from various international markets. In this context, we pledge our support to this Budget Vote: Tourism. Thank you, House Chairperson.

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The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Thank you, hon MEC. Can the ICT please ensure that the timer is on.

Can the ICT ensure that the timer is on?

The next participant in this debate is hon H J Van Den Berg from the Northern Cape, the home of the Big Hole. Over to you, sir.

Mr H J VAN DEN BERG: Honourable House Chairperson, Minister and members of the House, imagine a quiet, unspoiled corner of our magnificent South African bushveld. It's dusk. The sun dips low on the horizon, painting the sky in warm hues of orange and purple. Animals stir gently as they prepare for the night, birds settling in the trees, and antelope alert yet calm. In the distance, the warm glow of a campfire flickers, and a delicate plume of smoke drifts in the evening breeze.

This, hon members, is the perfect tourist scene for me, one of peace, beauty and renewal. Around a campfire, stories are shared, bonds are forged, and weary travellers find rest and inspiration. Other tourists, however, seek renewal and rest in world-class hotels or vibrant sporting events. All this is tourism.

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When we return our attention to the Department of Tourism, the scene around their campfire is far from peaceful. The flames are restless, and the smoke carries unease rather than reassurance.

The committee report accurately reflects the current realities, showing persistent leadership challenges and concerns around tourist safety, to name but a few. While we have heard of action plans and programmes, much remains to be done. Minister, before the fire of this debate burns out tonight, let us address the critical issues with urgency and resolve.

First, we urge the immediate appointment of a permanent, competent board for South African tourism. One that comprises of individuals with proven industry experience, not political patronage. Second, the leadership vacuum in the department must be filled with tourism trade professionals who can restore stability and confidence. Third, all outstanding investigations must be concluded without delay, ending the wasteful expenditure on salaries for suspended officials. Fourth, we must halt fruitless and wasteful spending, particularly on contentious media contracts.

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The tourism industry is mature and capable. It's time to harness genuine private sector partnerships and reduce unnecessary state control. The private sector can and does market South Africa very effectively. Our focus should shift decisively to practical initiatives, such as streamlined e-visas, reliable airline connectivity, targeted investment in roads and signage, and the ... [Inaudible.] ... and community-based tourism products.

These are the areas where the department's budget must be prioritised. Above all, the safety of tourists is not optional; it is fundamental. A secure environment supported by effective policing and strong community partnerships is the bedrock upon which visitors can truly find their joy in our diverse landscapes and rich cultural heritage.

Tourism has the potential to be a crown jewel of our economy, driving gross domestic product, GDP, growth, creating sustainable jobs, and fostering meaningful rural development. Let us kindle this campfire with wisdom and care so that its smoke signals a warm welcome to the world, rather than a warning.

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The VF Plus remains committed to holding this department to the highest standards of accountability. We will continue to offer practical government-driven alternatives rooted in economic freedom and service delivery for all South African citizens. I thank you.

Cllr S MABALE-HUMA (Salga): Hon Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the NCOP, hon Minister and the Deputy Minister of Tourism, hon Chief Whip of the NCOP, hon MECs, hon members, throughout South Africa's economic journey, tourism has remained one of the country's most resilient and enduring sectors. While traditional pillars of the economy such as mining, manufacturing, and other industries have faced deadline restructuring or economic headwinds, tourism has continued to create opportunities, sustain livelihoods, stimulate local enterprise, and inject much-needed income into communities across urban centers, townships, small towns, and rural areas. Its unique ability to generate employment, support small businesses, attract investment, and unlock the economic potential of places makes it far more than a sector. It is a catalyst for inclusive growth and local development.

Tourism has repeatedly demonstrated a resilience that few sectors can match. Across the world, when economies have faced

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financial crises, natural disasters, pandemics, or industrial decline, tourism has often been the first sector to recover and the last to surrender.

As global tourism leaders have observed, resilience is embedded in the DNA of tourism. It continues to create livelihoods, attract investment, and sustain local economies even during periods of profound economic uncertainty.

It is against this backdrop that the SA Local Government Association, Salga, welcomes the Budget Vote and commends the Minister for positioning tourism not merely as a sector of opportunity, but as a strategic instrument for economic inclusion, job creation, and social upliftment.

The recognition of tourism as a vehicle for dignity, livelihoods, and shared prosperity resonates strongly with local government, where the benefits of economic activity are experienced most directly by communities, and where the success of tourism ultimately translates into tangible improvements in people's lives. Salga knows with appreciation the continued growth of the tourism sector as reflected in its contribution to GDP and employment.

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Even in periods of economic uncertainty, tourism has demonstrated remarkable resilience, consistently outperforming several traditional sectors of the economy. This confirms tourism's strategic importance as a stabiliser and driver of inclusive growth, particularly for municipalities where alternative economic opportunities may be limited. Of particular importance is the strong performance of domestic tourism, which has proven to be the backbone of the sector.

Salga fully supports the department's continued effort to stimulate domestic tourism, recognising that it provides a critical buffer during periods of global instability and fluctuating international travel trends.

Strengthening domestic tourism ensures that local enterprises, informal businesses, and community-based initiatives remain viable and continue to generate livelihoods.

Hon members, Salga acknowledges the evolving global context, including ongoing geopolitical tensions and disruptions to travel patterns. In this regard, we share the department's cautioned optimism.

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South Africa, together with the broader the South African Development Community, SADC, region continue to offer relatively stability, rich cultural experience, and diverse tourism offerings. These attributes position the country as an attractive destination for international tourism, seeking alternative travel markets in a volatile global environment.

This presents a strategic opportunity that must be fully leveraged through coordinated investment, infrastructure development, and destination marketing aligned across all spheres of government.

Hon Chair, Salga wishes to highlight the importance of the existing partnership between the Department of Tourism and local government. This relationship has been strengthened through the quarterly local government peer learning sessions convened by the department, which serve as an important platform for knowledge exchange, coordination, and capacity building.

These sessions have been instrumental in emphasising the role of tourism in driving local economic development in positioning municipalities as critical enablers of the tourism value chain. Furthermore, they have reinforced the importance

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of municipal investment in enabling infrastructure, including roads, basic services, public spaces, and local amenities that directly influence the tourist experience.

Salga remains committed to deepening this partnership, ensuring that insights from this engagement translate into improved planning, coordination, and execution at the municipal level.

While the progress outlined by Minister is commendable, Salga wishes to underscore a persistent structural challenge, the accessibility and readiness of tourist assets at local level. Across many municipalities, key tourist sites, including heritage areas, cultural attractions, and nature-based destinations remain underutilised due to inadequate infrastructure, poor road conditions, and unreliable basic services. Addressing these constraints is fundamental to unlocking the full economic potential of tourism.

Municipalities play a pivotal role in providing these foundation services, and Salga commits to working closely with the department to strengthen planning alignment, improve service delivery, and ensure that tourism infrastructure investment yields maximum impact. This includes supporting

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municipalities to improve access roads and transport connectivity to tourism sites, ensure reliable provision of water, electricity, waste management, and sanitation services, strengthen local regulatory environments to support tourism enterprises, and enhance spatial planning to integrate tourism into broader local economic developmental strategies.

Salga further welcomes the Tourism Growth Partnership Plan and is clear measurable targets aligned to the National Development Goals Plan.

The plan provides a solid foundation for coordinated action across government and industry. However, its success will depend on effective implementation at local level, where the tourism experience is ultimately defined. Local government must therefore be fully integrated into the execution of the plan, particularly under pillars relating to then infrastructure development, destination management and visitor experience.

In many parts of South Africa, tourism is the economic anchor. It keeps guest houses occupied, restaurants open, heritage assets preserved, local artisans trading and community's hopeful. Long after other industries have contracted, tourism

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continues to circulate income through local economies and sustain places that might otherwise be left behind.

Salga also supports the department's effort to improve ease of access through visa reforms and expanded air connectivity, recognising the importance in attracting international tourists. Equally, we support initiatives aimed at strengthening tourism safety and promoting South Africa's global brand, as these are critical determinants of tourism competitiveness.

Salga supports the department's Budget Vote and affirms tourism as a key pillar of South Africa's economic growth and transformation agenda.

The sector holds immense potential to drive inclusive development, create jobs and revitalise local economies across urban and rural municipalities. Unlocking this potential requires a deliberate and integrated approach that places local government at the centre of tourism development.

Municipalities must be supported as both enablers and beneficiaries of the sector, with a strong focus on infrastructure, service delivery and investment readiness.

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Salga remains committed to working in partnership with the Department of Tourism to build a resilient, competitive and inclusive tourism economy that benefits all South Africans. On that note, I would like to thank you, hon Chairperson. Thank you very much.

Ms J SIDELL (Mpumalanga): Hon Chairperson, hon Minister of Tourism and her Deputy Minister, hon MECs present, all hon members and distinguished guests, I stand before this august House as the representative of Mpumalanga, the place of the rising sun. We meet during Youth Month, which is a reminder that our fiscal policies, economic levers and legislative budget which we debate today must create immediate, tangible opportunities for our young people. They must move from being mere spectators of economic growth to its primary drivers.

Mpumalanga supports the adoption of the national Tourism Budget Vote No 38. As we have constantly maintained in our province, tourism policy is economic policy. Tourism is not a luxury sector; it is a vital lifeline. It accounts for a massive share of our jobs, feeds families in our rural communities and anchors our regional economy.

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Our provincial growth is steadily projected at 1,3% this year, moving towards 1,9% by 2027. Tourism, alongside agriculture, is anchoring this economic defence. Today, through Vote No 38, we are allocating the necessary ammunition to accelerate that momentum.

While we celebrate that South Africa's international arrivals surged back to 10,5 million, we must ensure that the financial windfall of this recovery is felt equitably. The historic reality is that our tourism economy has remained structurally skewed.

Through Vote No 38, we must fiercely advance the geographic spread of tourism. In Mpumalanga, it cannot just be about the mainstream, iconic corridors of the Kruger National Park or the Panorama Route. Our focus is heavily trained on our villages, townships and the small dorpiess.

We welcome the portfolio committee's recommendations to tie national tourism growth partnerships directly to localised small, medium and micro enterprise, SMME, development. From the cultural heritage of the Ndebele people to our hidden gems like Wakkerstroom, our communities must own the tourism value chain. We want to see Tourism Monitors deployed heavily in

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these underserved areas to ensure the safety and security of our tourists, thereby opening new economic pathways for rural youth.

Safety is the cornerstone of sustainable destination marketing. If travellers do not feel safe, they will simply go elsewhere. In Mpumalanga, we recently faced deep heartbreak following the tragic and highly regrettable incident near the Kruger National Park involving the Marias family from Mossel Bay. We send our deepest, ongoing condolences to their loved ones. This isolated but deeply painful event reminds us that we cannot be complacent.

While crime prevention is a broader law enforcement mandate, Mpumalanga is working hand in hand with the national department, together with the National Tourism Safety Forum. We support the allocation of resources within Vote No 38 to strengthen the Tourism Monitors Programme. We need physical, visible deployment, technology-driven safety measures and aggressive local community partnerships to defend our reputation as a world-class, welcoming destination.

Tourism relies on structural access. We celebrate the national progress made on Electronic Travel Authorisation, which allow

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visitors from China, India and across the globe to secure entry within 24 hours. This ease of access directly fills hotel beds and creates jobs in Mbombela, Graskop and across our province.

However, destination marketing must match world-class infrastructure. Through the R2,54 billion allocated under Vote No 38, with over 50% driving destination marketing through SA Tourism, we must see rigorous alignment with provincial infrastructure roll-outs. In Mpumalanga, we are driving critical public-private partnerships, such as those with Graskop Gorge, which recently brought home international acclaim. Our local government spheres must receive support to fix access roads and secure water supply to historic hospitality nodes.

We welcome the fiscal constraints under which this budget is tabled. Because resources are scarce, governance and accountability at entities like SA Tourism must be absolute. Every rand spent on global marketing must produce a direct and measurable return for the informal curio vendor at the Blyde River Canyon and the township guesthouse owner in eMalahleni.

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Let us deploy this budget as an instrument of real, radical economic change. Let us use it to dismantle economic exclusion and restore dignity to our rural communities.

When international and ordinary domestic tourists share their experiences of our pristine wildlife, our unmatched heritage and our warm hospitality, they are telling the world that Mpumalanga, and South Africa, is indeed ready.

Let us pass this Budget Vote, co-ordinate across all provincial spheres through the District Development Model and ensure that the rising sun continues to shine brightly on every corner of our beautiful province.

As the Mpumalanga province, we support Budget Vote No 38.
Thank you very much.

Mr N H PIENAAR: Chairperson Radebe, Minister, Deputy Minister, hon Members of Parliament, and South Africans ...

Afrikaans:

... goeienaand. [... good evening.]

English:

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Evidence increasingly suggests that this budget is highly bloated when one considers the impact on genuine tourism role-players. Let us consider the figures for a moment. South Africa attracts more than 10 million international visitors annually, who spend over R100 billion in our economy. Domestic tourists spend even more, with expenditure estimated at over R110 billion. My ultimate question is this: How much of this tourism activity is directly because of the Department of Tourism? This is the exact question I posed to the department a few weeks ago. I asked for proof, for analytics, for measurable evidence that the department's activities have directly resulted in increased domestic or international tourism. The department promised a written response. Weeks later, we have received absolutely nothing.

The department has a total budget of R2,54 billion. Of that, approximately R1,2 billion is transferred to SA Tourism for destination marketing and promotional activities. In other words, nearly half of the budget is spent on marketing, overseas offices, and international campaigns. As government, we are literally funding the Minister and her department for overseas trips to gallivant across the world. We do so without any proof that there is a return on investment. Neither can the Minister, sounding very much like the Minister of Sport,

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Arts and Culture, provide such proof. Parliament should not simply accept, "Trust us; it works." Show us the figures. Show us the evidence. Show us the return on investment, like the hon Boshoff said.

The irony is that there are two initiatives driving increased international arrivals into South Africa. Those are the Trusted Tour Operator Scheme and digital visa reform aimed at improving accessibility into our country. The only problem is those are not programmes of the Department of Tourism. Those are programmes of the Department of Home Affairs. The DA Minister, Leon Schreiber, has arguably done more to improve international tourism by making it easier to visit South Africa than the entire Department of Tourism has done with its multi-billion-rand budget over numerous years, and that is provable.

Afrikaans:

Minister, jy het presies my punt bewys. Jy het letterlik die helfte van jou toespraak spandeer om vir ons te vertel hoeveel konferensies jy gaan bywoon en watter jy nog wil reël.

Minister, hoe kan jy sukses meet aan hoeveel vergaderings en indabas jy bywoon? Die Minister praat van Club Med. Hul belegging het absoluut niks te doen met die Minister nie. Dis

al so erg dat die Minister bonusse betaal aan haar bestuurspan gebaseer op hoeveel vergaderings hulle bywoon. Bepaal jouself asseblief by die ernstige werk en hou op om die belastingbetaler se geld te mors.

English:

To further emphasise my point, France, Japan, and Italy have one third of the budget for tourism that we do. Yet, they have considerably more tourists annually. People do not visit the Kruger National Park because of a glossy marketing campaign. People do not visit Cape Town because of a department brochure. The hon Modise does not attend the Durban July because the Department of Tourism tells him to do so. They visit because these destinations and events have built reputations of their own.

Even the department's own document admit that they struggle to measure the economic impact of many of their programmes and cannot adequately show how communities in villages, townships, and small towns are benefiting. For a department that spends billions every year, that should concern every taxpaying citizen. This budget is bloated, and a legitimate argument can be made that many, or all, of its functions could be absorbed elsewhere in government at a far lower cost to the taxpayer.

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Afrikaans:

Dankie, Voorsitter.

English:

I thank you.

Ms M G DHLAMINI: Hon House Chairperson, I hope I am visible and audible.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Very clear.

Ms M G DHLAMINI: Thank you, House Chairperson. Allow me to stand on the protocol I have already observed and established. Hon House Chair, I would like to open today's debate on Budget Vote 38 - Tourism by reflecting on the words of the UN Secretary General, António Guterres who said:

It is imperative that we build a tourism sector in a safe, equitable and climate friendly manner and ensure tourism regains its position as a provider of decent jobs, stable incomes and the protection of our cultural and natural heritage.

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House Chair, this is a reminder that there was a time when tourism was completely shut down and many people across the globe were negatively affected in one way or the other.

Tourism is a vulnerable sector susceptible to economy and economic shocks, with women, youth and workers in the informal economy bearing the brunt.

House Chair, when debating in this House in August last year, representing the ANC, I indicated that the tourism sector has yet fully to recover to pre-pandemic levels. It is now showing strong signs of resilience and strength, as indeed, hon Mabilo indicated earlier on. He is correct. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, we are well underway to meeting and surpassing pre-Covid numbers. The economic impacts to research forecast that by the end of 2025, our tourism sector will be able to support 1,9 million jobs, surpassing 2019 levels and marking an all-time high underscoring its role as a key employer and major source of opportunity with the sector accounting for 11,3% of all jobs in South Africa. This is a positive improvement and as the ANC we are delighted that this sector shows positive improvements.

The tourism sector continues to demonstrate the resilience and versatility with the following achievements: Seven-point six

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percent of international arrivals recorded between January and September 2025. Hotel occupancy reached 52%, surpasses pre-Covid levels. The electronic travel authorisation, ETA, system was also launched.

To ... [Inaudible.] ... this achievement of the department, in the state of the nation address of 2026, His Excellency hon President of South Africa, President Ramaphosa, highlighted a further milestone where he recognised that our tourism sector made history last year recording the arrival of 10,5 million visitors. Hon Chair, these are the facts and realities and the work that has been done by the department and the country. We have, indeed turned the corner.

Those who continue to come here and complain, let them come here and complain. We are busy building a country that in future will be one of the best for tourist destination around the globe. Hon House Chair, ANC welcomes the Africa Tourism Plan to grade 5 000 establishments by 2027/28 financial year. This is an incremental increase from the 4 500 graded establishments in the year 2025/26. Another key aspect of creating excellent tourist experiences is to put in place a grading system that ensures high standards and experience of all tourists.

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In the Free State, the following hidden gems were discovered by the province. This will have an impact from the province to the country, the continent and ultimately the whole world.

These gems are as follows: Cathedral Cave in Clarens, Tussen die Riviere Game Reserve in Gariep, Water Tunnels in Fouriesburg, Thaba Bosiu Lodge and Imvelo Safari Lodges. There is a process also to check the maintenance and refurbishment of lodges and nature reserves within the province.

The Vredefort Dome, the national and the provincial Department of Tourism are in the process of finalising soon under the leadership of the Deputy Minister, hon Maggie Sotyu. The hand over of the dome to their province will add as one of the most powerful tourist destinations. As we speak, the process of refurbishing the dome is underway with the work of the province together with the national department. It is not true that in the Free State province, tourism is dead. The province of Free State, like other MECs who came here today and present a compelling case that indeed in different provinces of our country, the MECs together with the Minister and the Deputy Minister are doing a great job in making sure that they profile the country to be the best tourism destination in the near future.

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Hon House Chair, we now know that every Minister or Deputy Minister who does not come from the DA, that Ministry is not working. Only the Ministers and Deputy Ministers that are coming from the DA are the ones that are working. Deputy Minister and the Minister of Tourism, do not be surprised, this is a norm in this House that each and every Minister that does not come from the DA does not seem to be working or doing any impact. That is why your budget votes will be discredited, will be discouraged and they will be propelled as failing budgets which is not true.

As the ANC, we are going to work with all Ministers within the Cabinet that is led by President Ramaphosa despite the political affiliation to ensure that our country does turn a corner in every economic aspect of this country. What is important is that we represent the people who voted us to be here and not necessarily to come here and complain about each other.

Hon House Chairs, I would advise hon Montwedi that the names of the community members that he has and mentioned here, he is at liberty and a responsibility to represent those members. By the way, he is in the better place because he is a member of the committee that deals with tourism. He is supposed to be

coming to the committee and present the cases of this particular community members and ensure ... because he is in a better place to talk to the Minister, the Deputy Minister, through the chairperson and the secretary of the committee to present his people that voted him to be here.

But I am not sure how he is going to do that because his political party forever rejects budget. The very same community members he mentioned quite well here and raising their voice quite well here do really meet funding to mitigate the challenges that he presented here. So, I am advising him to go back to the community and represent those members very well. Do not come here and cry at the wrong funeral and the right funeral for you to cry in representing these members is the committee that you are part of.

Hon Masipa, we know you, my brother. You always claim that the Western Cape is doing well provincially when you debate here when things go well but everything fails if it is the national department. Today, you are not saying the national department, you are saying the ANC. I am sure you forgot that the Western Cape is not led or governed by the ANC, it is governed by the DA. If there is anything that you would claim to have been messed up by the ANC, surely this duration that you have led

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the Western Cape you were supposed to be correcting those things and not coming here and cry at the wrong funeral. The right funeral that you are supposed to be crying for the people of Western Cape is in Western Cape.

Go and tell them, the MEC whom you refer to as the Minister of Police in Western Cape to address the issue of crime so that so that tourism can be able to be a safer place without crime. Go back and tell the MEC which you refer to as the Minister of Tourism to ensure that the Western Cape is profiled as one of the best destinations within the country in tourism sector. In those few words, I would like to wish on behalf of the ANC, the department and the administration a good year ahead. We would work with you whilst we are holding you accountable. We will also guide you, build you and make sure that all the funds directed to the department are really directed to the programmes you have mentioned to us in the annual performance plans, APP, when you were appearing before the Select Committee on Tourism. Thank you very much, hon House Chair. We wish you all the best and the ANC supports the Budget Vote 38 - Tourism.

The MINISTER OF TOURISM: Hon Chairperson ...

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The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Is Minister Delille still on the platform?

Mr H J VAN DEN BERG: Maybe she is muted.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Hon Minister Delille you are muted. Please unmute yourself. Thank you.

The MINISTER OF TOURISM: I am sorry, House Chairperson.

On behalf of myself and the Deputy Minister, the Department of Tourism and SA Tourism, SAT. we really want to thank all of you. Hon Chairperson Boshoff, and the members of the National Council of Provinces, NCOP. We are really humbled and inspired by your input, advice and support. We have never failed in the past to be held accountable, and we will always respect your opinion.

In the time left to me I will respond to the few members. In terms of the Electronic Travel Authorisation, ETA, President Cyril Ramaphosa established an Interministerial Committee in 2023 consisting of the Department of Home Affairs, the Department of Tourism and the State Security Agency. That is where we started to bring together the Trusted Tour Operator Scheme and the ETA. We are working closely with Minister

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Schreiber. We have committed that from SA Tourism and the Department of Tourism that we are now going to market the ETA on all digital platforms in India, China, Indonesia and Mexico. So that we can inform those big source markets that it is now easier to come to South Africa.

Similarly, we are working with the Minister of Sport, Arts and Culture because sports tourism is big in the country with Minister Mackenzie. Next year we are hosting the 2027 Cricket World Cup. We have again assured the Liv Golf for next year. We as tourism we piggyback on these sporting events. We put packages for the visitors and encourage them to stay longer before and after the sporting events.

I am very encouraged by the partnership in the Government of National Unity, GNU, and we are all working together.

Hon Boshoff, I will definitely follow up on the problem at the Cradle of Humankind tomorrow and then we will give you a report.

Hon Dr Scheurkogel, sorry if I pronounced your name Doc, on the Vredefort Dome in the Free State, it can be a mega for tourism in the Northern Free State. We are aware about the

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problems. The director-general, DG, has just given me the latest update of where we are there. The Development Bank of Southern Africa, DBSA, that is the implementing agent, have appointed a service provider and a contractor to implement additional work and scope to make that facility fit-for-purpose. I will definitely send a written report to the hon Dr Scheurkogel as soon as we got all the information together.

Briefly to the hon Masipa, we certainly join you in passing our condolences to the family of our late brother Mzoli. He has shown that even in the middle of a township, that international travellers from all over the world came to visit him. May his sole rest in peace.

The hon Madonsela, I want to assure you from the MKP that there is no crisis on SAT. Under the leadership of the Interim board, that is there, Dr Masito, the Chairperson, they have been to fill all the executive positions, the chief operating officer, COO, the chief marketing officer, the SA National Convention Bureau and also the chief head of audit. We have seen the good performance that is coming out of SAT. That is thanks to the new board that is there.

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Also, the hon Montwedi from the EFF, I just want to remind hon members both him and the Swart from the DA that tourism is the concurrent power in the Constitution. Therefore, I have put emphasis in debate of working together between, national, provincial and local government. We are working together to deal with some of the issues because tourism is no longer recovering. It is growing. We have surpassed the 2019 figures, R10,5 million last year that we recorded is the highest ever recorded in the history of South Africa.

So, on the procurement, I will advice the hon member to read the reports that the department submits regularly to Parliament that we spend 40% of the budget for procurement from women, people with disabilities and also Small, Medium and Micro Economies, SMMEs.

Then hon Swart, despite your imaginary problems and whatever you are unhappy about, we have received just in the first three months of the year more than 2,9 million. So, yes, we do have some challenges, but we are attending to them. Despite that the tourists are coming, and tourism is the decentralised in the Constitution. So, again I will again advice the hon Swart to go and read. The problem is if you do not read you do not have information to base your arguments on. If you can

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read the Statistics SA Satellite Report that came out a couple of months ago, you will be surprised what you are going to find in there. For the statistics do not lie.

Hon Van den Berg, we will be in terms of the appointment of the new board of SAT it will go into the Cabinet cycle for the month of July, and by the end of July I will make recommendations to Cabinet for consideration.

The hon member from SA Local Government Association, Salga, about the maintenance of assets at local government. My sister I agree with you. We do need to do something. I will convene a meeting with Salga and Municipal Infrastructure Support Agent, Misa. I think we need to package all these maintenance projects into one big project and then apply to National Treasury for funding that sits in the budget facility for infrastructure and we can work together on that.

Afrikaans:

Aan die agb lid Pienaar van Limpopo, ek dink hy is net kwaad vir homself. Ek weet nie hoekom hy so kwaad is nie. Ek weet nie of hy honger is of iets nie, maar hy klink soos 'n jaloerse eggenoot, jy weet. Hy weet nie waarom om te kla nie, maar hy is net kwaad, so ek sal nie nog reageer op wat hy gesê

het nie, want dit maak definitief nie eens sin nie. Hy is net kwaad, baie, baie ontstoke. Ek weet nie hoekom nie, maar ek kan help. Miskien kan ons jou stuur vir woedebestuur om jou te help met jou probleme om nie so kwaad te bly nie. Ek wil afsluit.

English:

If I want to conclude by really thanking the private sector that is a partner. It shows that we have a plan approved by Cabinet. It is called the Tourism Growth Partnership Plan. It is a plan conceived by both the public and the private sector. For the public sector know their role and so is the private sector. We are there as the public sector to create the environment conducive for the private sector to create jobs and so there is a plan that we have jointly agreed on and Cabinet has approved. I want to say thank you to the private sector for their partnership.

However, hon House Chairperson, lastly, I do want to thank all of those hard-working workers in the tourism sector. Some of them work long hours within hotels and restaurants. They are the face of tourism when they receive our guests and visitors at guest houses and hotels, and they always have a smile. Ubuntu. You know the welcoming of South Africans we always

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praise for that. I want to say to all of the workers in the tourism sector thank you for all your hard work and I also want to thank you in advance for all your hard work that you are still going to do but to say to you we appreciate your contribution behind the scenes so that we can come to Parliament and report about the successes of the Department of Tourism and SAT. I also want to thank all the MECs lastly, hon House Chairperson for their support and advice. I thank you and God bless. [Time expired.]

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Hon Minister, on the note of Ubuntu your time expired during your speech.

Hon delegates, I would like to thank the Minister, the Deputy Minister, permanent delegates, MECs and all special delegates and Salga representatives for availing themselves. Hon delegates, that concludes the business of the day. The House is adjourned. [Applause.]

Debate concluded.

The Council adjourned at 19:23.