TUESDAY, 25 AUGUST 2026

_____

PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

_____

The House met at 14:00.

The Speaker took the Chair and requested members to observe a moment of silence for prayer or meditation.

The SPEAKER: Hon members, before we proceed, I would like to remind you that the virtual plenary is deemed to be in the precinct of Parliament and constitutes a meeting of the National Assembly. In addition to the rules of virtual sittings, the Rules of the National Assembly, including the rules of debate, apply. Members enjoy the same powers and privileges that apply in a sitting of the National Assembly.

Members should equally note that anything said on the virtual platform is deemed to have been said to the House and may be ruled upon. All members who have logged in shall be considered to be present and are requested to mute their microphones and only unmute when recognised to speak. This is because the

UNREVISED HANSARD

microphones are very sensitive and will pick up noise which might disturb the attention of other members.

When recognised to speak, please unmute your microphone and, where connectivity permits, connect your video so that we can see your presence. Members may make use of the icons on the bar at the bottom of their screens, which has an option that allows a member to put up his or her hand to raise points of order. The Secretariat will assist in alerting the Chairperson to members requesting to speak.

Lastly, when using the virtual system, members are urged to refrain or desist from unnecessary points of order or interjections. Hon members, we understand that some of you might have challenges with connectivity and, therefore, where the bandwidth might be a problem, maybe just showing your face in the beginning and then requesting to close if that is your challenge will be acceptable.

Today, the only item on the Order Paper is questions addressed to the President. Parties have given an indication on which questions their members wish to pose supplementary questions. Adequate notice was given to parties for this purpose. The members who will pose supplementary questions will be

UNREVISED HANSARD

recognised by the presiding officer. In allocating opportunities for supplementary questions, the principle of fairness, among others, has been applied. When all the supplementary questions have been answered by the President, we will proceed to the next question on the Question Paper.

QUESTIONS FOR ORAL REPLY

THE PRESIDENT

Question 13:

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Speaker and hon members, South Africa remains a respected member of the African community of nations and a principled Pan-African actor. We continue to participate actively in continental as well as regional bodies and processes. Whilst some African countries have raised concerns about antimigrant actions by some groups in our country, as a government, we have firmly and publicly rejected xenophobia, Afrophobia, vigilantism, and all forms of discrimination against people from other countries.

At the regional and continental level, we have reinforced South Africa’s commitment to Pan-Africanism through co-operation with the Southern African Development Community, SADC, the African Union, and partner states on migration

UNREVISED HANSARD

governance, regional integration, and burden-sharing. We have had direct engagements with a number of heads of state and government to explain our position and our approach. Last week, at the 46th Ordinary SADC Summit that we hosted in eThekwini, we took the opportunity to brief the leaders of the region on the situation in the country. This we did without being asked to account or to explain. We took it upon ourselves to put the matter on the agenda. I also addressed it in my inputs, and we explained precisely what the situation had been in our country. In its Communiqué, the Summit called for a co-ordinated and multidimensional dialogue at regional level to address the underlying drivers of migration and develop comprehensive, sustainable, and effective responses.

Through our Comprehensive Approach for Migration Management, we have emphasised that migration challenges must be addressed through the rule of law, respect for human dignity, and the strengthening of state institutions — not through unlawful actions targeting foreign nationals. An important part of this approach is the reform and modernisation of South Africa's migration governance framework. This includes strengthening border management, addressing corruption within the immigration system, improving legal migration pathways, and implementing the Revised White Paper on Citizenship,

UNREVISED HANSARD

Immigration and Refugee Protection. These measures are intended to enhance public confidence in the state's ability to manage migration effectively whilst upholding South Africa's constitutional and international obligations.

Our country continues to advocate for collective African solutions to the drivers of migration, whilst engaging diplomatically to address concerns about developments in the country. Our Minister of International Relations and Co-operation has travelled to a number of countries as my envoy to meet a number of states, heads of state, and heads of government. At times, it has been quite challenging to synchronise the diaries of heads of state. He was well received in Ghana. He was well received in other countries. We have had discussions even at my level with various heads of state that articulated their deep understanding for what has been happening here. They have wished us well, and they have said they are willing and able to support South Africa as it deals with this difficult problem. They have also characterised it as a complex problem, meaning there is deep understanding of the challenges we are going through.

Whilst other people might have thought that we are being snubbed and being isolated, actually the contrary has been the

UNREVISED HANSARD

case. As we have sat down to explain precisely the challenges we are going through, we have found, to our pleasant, pleasant appreciation, that there is understanding, and there is support. A number of countries are saying they are willing to work with us to have this problem resolved. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms O M C MAOTWE: Speaker, may I please request that IT accept the hon Malema? He's been in the lobby for some time. He would like to take his question, but he's in the lobby.

The SPEAKER: Thank you. IT, can you assist us? Accept the member who is said to have been in the lobby.

Ms O M C MAOTWE: Thank you, Speaker. I think they allowed him in and removed him again, but he said they are allowing him back in once again. He's ready to take up his follow-up question, Speaker. My apologies.

The SPEAKER: Alright, is the hon Malema in the meeting now?

Mr J S MALEMA: Speaker, I'm in the House. I was struggling. I was on and off.

UNREVISED HANSARD

The SPEAKER: Yes, they did indicate to us. Your hon members did indicate there's been a challenge. No, sorry about that. We apologise profusely. Can you please take your follow-up question?

Mr J S MALEMA: On Question 613?

The SPEAKER: The follow-up question is on the first question, the one you asked.

Mr J S MALEMA: Oh, alright.

The SPEAKER: It is Question 13 on migration.

Mr J S MALEMA: Thank you very much, Speaker. Mr President, the level of violence perpetrated against African foreign nationals in this country over the past few months has a face. We know who the instigators and the perpetrators of these violent acts are.

In certain instances, we've seen perpetrators unleashing their violence against African immigrants in the presence of the police. Yet not one of these perpetrators or instigators has been arrested. This gives the impression that this violence

UNREVISED HANSARD

is, in fact, state-sanctioned violence against African nationals. This hardens the attitudes of our sister nations on the continent because to them, and to many of us, these are not isolated actions of vigilante groups but rather actions aided by the state.

Why have the perpetrators of this violence not been arrested and prosecuted? What is even worse is the two of them came to meet with you. You should have locked them up that day when they came to meet you. Thank you.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Speaker, I thank the hon Malema for the question. The issue of the instigators of these violent actions that have been taken against people from other countries is a matter that is being processed. The Police Service has informed us, and all security apparatus has informed us, that they are following all that up. They are getting all the reports and evidence. A number of other people have been arrested. Of course, those others who were seen to be leading these processes are also people who are of direct interest to the police. That is a process that is going to be followed up on.

UNREVISED HANSARD

We are obviously concerned about the actions that had been taken against many Africans in our country. We have made it clear that those who violate the law, those who transgress the various precepts of our laws, need to be dealt with. In a number of cases where, for instance, incidents of violence have even resulted in injury or in death, we are going to be following all that up and ensuring, indeed, that those who have perpetrated those acts are followed up on.

There will be arrests, and there will be charges that will be preferred against those who have done so. So, that is a matter which the police, as well as the prosecuting authority, is going to be following up without any doubt. Thank you, Speaker.

Mr R SMITH: Speaker, to the President: March and March's campaign may have cast a spotlight on the issue of illegal migration, but the Presidency and the Department of International Relations and Co-operation have failed to address the root cause of the decades-long influx of cross-border travel to our country — the dictatorial and oppressive regimes that plague many of our neighbouring states and deprive their citizens of freedom and opportunity.

UNREVISED HANSARD

We cannot keep using respect for state sovereignty as a convenient excuse not to address brutal dictatorships next door. This matter remains diplomatically sensitive, but it can no longer be ignored or brushed aside. When will you take seriously and actively address the backslide of democracy in our region and the growing threat of authoritarianism and state collapse that is placing the burden of mass migration on South Africa’s doorstep?

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Speaker, we have, in our analysis of the reasons why people throng to our country, addressed the issue of South Africa being seen to be an economic oasis. The fact that it is being seen and perceived by people as this economic oasis where they can get a better life in South Africa is what has attracted a number of people to our country. Now, what makes people leave their own countries is given rise to by a variety of reasons. People leave because they feel that their lives are in danger, they leave because they are refugees seeking security elsewhere, they leave because the economic situations are dire and want to come to better locations where they can advance their economic challenges, and they leave for many other reasons.

UNREVISED HANSARD

What we have to be mindful of is that we need to advance the interests of South Africans. That is why we have taken the steps that we have taken to make sure that those who are in our country are properly documented, that they have the necessary papers that put them here, and that employers who employ people who are not documented need to be dealt with in terms of our laws. The processes that ensue in various other countries in terms of their governance is a matter that the citizens of those countries are firmly the owners of and the drivers of.

We respect the sovereignty of other countries, and, as we respect their sovereignty, we want them to respect our own sovereignty. So, we will deal with other countries with respect, we will deal with other countries with recognition of what they are and what they stand for, and we will act in tandem with regional bodies that take views and positions on various activities that take place in various countries. Where there are challenges in other countries, it is the regional bodies that will take a firm view of what needs to be done, as we have done in even the recent past, where there had been challenges in a number of our neighbours. Lesotho is one case in point, Mozambique is another case in point, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo is another case in point, and

UNREVISED HANSARD

even Zimbabwe has been a case in point, and now Madagascar. We act in accordance with the decisions of our region.

We are not lone rangers. We know that we belong to a community of nations, and even as we address the issue of migration, we have made it a point that we need to address it collectively. We are very pleased that that approach has been well accepted and well embraced, and we have taken a view that that is what we need to do going forward. So, we are a product of our region, we are a member of our region, and we must act in unison with our region. Thank you, Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The third supplementary question will be asked by the hon Ismail-Moosa. Hon Ismail-Moosa, can you please unmute so that you can take your supplementary question? Can we move to the hon C T Nontenja?

Ms C T NONTENJA: Speaker, for decades, many African governments, including South Africa, have tolerated entrenched corruption, a lack of service delivery, and the failure to build inclusive economies, particularly in the SADC region. Failing economies created fragile states where opportunities became scarce and institutions turned weak, leaving citizens poor and helpless.

UNREVISED HANSARD

This has resulted in waves of inter-African migration, driven not by choice but necessity, with South Africa unfortunately hosting approximately 3 million undocumented immigrants, drawn by the country's stronger economy and infrastructure, whilst grappling with the present economic and social concerns and a deepening unemployment crisis. The March and March movement is a consequence of a symptom of a bigger African migration problem. Mr President, what initiatives have you taken to engage other African state leaders, particularly in SADC, to find effective and comprehensive measures to curb this crisis without blaming South Africa as a scapegoat?

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Speaker, as I said earlier, we as South Africa raised this matter as they say, *mero motu* — on our own. Without being prompted by any of the leaders at the summit, we raised it and put it on the agenda. It was not on the agenda, so we put it on the agenda and then took the time to explain what had happened. We put on the table the actions we are taking.

We also took it further and called upon the region, and indeed the continent, to join us in addressing this matter. We did say that the issue of migration cannot be handled by any one country alone. It needs collective action, and it requires

UNREVISED HANSARD

that we should work together. In doing so, we should look at the reasons why migrants from our various countries on the continent feel propelled to leave their countries to go to other countries.

We did say, for instance, that we have been the biggest recipient of migrants from a number of countries on the continent, where a number of migrants leave their countries and cross a number of borders of other countries and go right across a number of other border gates coming to South Africa. There was sensitivity in terms of understanding that. We then did say this requires that all of us should address this matter. We cannot sit on the side of the table without getting involved in the discussions. The discussions, no doubt, will lead to the management not only of migration, but it will lead to the reasons why people leave. It will inevitably come down to economic management in the various countries. It will inevitably come down to social structures or architecture of assistance in those countries. It will inevitably also touch on issues such as health and a whole number of others, including security.

So, our approach therefore is that no one country can handle migration on its own. It needs to be a process and a challenge

UNREVISED HANSARD

that should be addressed by all of us acting together without pointing a finger at any one of us. That's precisely what a number of leaders of countries have said, that we shouldn't do so. Others have actually come out to be fully on the side of South Africa, and they've even opined that South Africa is under attack. In the past, people have always lived side by side. Now this issue has been seen as a fault line. Those who want to use other people to achieve their own ends are utilising this to tarnish the name of South Africa but also to weaken South Africa.

They have actually actively said they will work with us as a country, as they have always enjoyed our support whenever they faced other challenges. So, you can rest assured that we are dealing with this matter actively. We are dealing with it in a way where we avoid the pointing of fingers at one country and say this is a common problem amongst all of us, and we need to handle it together. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: Thank you, hon President. We now have the ... Let me check first whether the hon Ismail-Moosa is back on the platform. If not, we'll go to the last supplementary question. Let's proceed. Hon J S Malema, you can take your last supplementary question.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Mr J S MALEMA: Speaker, through you to the President: There is no doubt that this has caused so much damage to South Africa's relations with our sister African nations that view this as state-aided violence. What concrete steps is your government taking to ensure prosecution to protect foreign nationals living in South Africa and to reassure the continent that this government does not condone xenophobia? Can you commit to a timeline on how and by when you are going to act on those perpetrators?

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Speaker, the commitment I can make is that those who are perpetrating and have perpetrated acts of violence against foreign nationals are going to be dealt with. The police and the prosecuting authorities have been given the responsibility to make sure that anyone who commits criminal activity in our country is followed up on and that they are brought to book.

That, in terms of our adherence to the rule of law, is exactly what we expect to happen and what will happen. The timeline I would ordinarily like to give, but it really depends on the speed and the determination with which they will work. That will determine precisely the timeline. This is a very sensitive matter, and our neighbours and our fellow African

UNREVISED HANSARD

heads of state and government, and indeed their citizens, are looking at South Africa and how we manage this process.

It is on the basis of that that they will be able to see our seriousness in terms of dealing with the issue of migration. We have said the rule of law must apply and those who have done wrong or continue to do wrong must be dealt with. That is what we have said to them, and a number of them have said they understand how complex this issue might be. So, we are processing that in that manner.

It’s been interesting, as we have also found that we observed activities by a number of forces outside our country that have been bringing to bear their influence in this whole process. Those foreign or sister countries on the continent have realised that, and they have said they know and can see that quite a bit of this, certainly not all of it, but quite a bit of this is being propelled and instigated from outside of South Africa. We have said that’s precisely what we are following up on as well. We are following those threads and those threats as well.

So, it’s a complex problem. It’s a multifaceted problem, but we are at work and working it through and deciphering

UNREVISED HANSARD

precisely the various roles played by our own people as well as those we perceive to be outsiders wanting to disturb the stability in South Africa by getting South Africans to seem to be at war with Africans from other nations. Thank you, hon Speaker.

Question 14:

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Speaker, South Africa continues to play an active role through SADC to support Madagascar's return to constitutional governance through sustained diplomatic engagement, mediation, and oversight of the transition process.

This support includes the deployment of the SADC Panel of Elders, led by Her Excellency the former President of Malawi, Dr Joyce Banda, which undertook three missions to Madagascar, at the instance of SADC.

The community also expanded the mandate of the SADC Panel of Elders to facilitate dialogue, consensus-building and reconciliation among key stakeholders.

Approval was given for the deployment of a SADC Liaison Office in Antananarivo to support the implementation of the Programme

UNREVISED HANSARD

for the Refoundation of the Republic of Madagascar, electoral reforms and the organisation of the referendum and the general elections.

South Africa and SADC maintain that the reform process, dubbed the re-foundation process, must remain inclusive, transparent, impartial and time-bound.

The process should serve as a pathway to advance the restoration of a full constitutional order and the establishment of a democratically elected government.

In this regard, SADC continues to engage all stakeholders to encourage adherence to agreed commitments and to support conditions that are conducive to a peaceful and credible transition.

The completion of the transition remains guided by the sovereign will and democratic aspirations of the people of Madagascar.

The ultimate objective is to restore constitutional governance, strengthen democratic institutions and ensure long-term peace and stability in Madagascar. We are

UNREVISED HANSARD

continuously observing the processes unfolding in Madagascar at close range to ensure that they do indeed lead to the outcome that we have alluded to. So, the situation is being managed to good effect, and SADC remains firmly involved in the management of the situation in Madagascar. Thank you.

Mr M NTULI: Madam Speaker, good afternoon to you. Good afternoon, Mr President, and good afternoon to all fellow hon members. Mr President, my follow-up question - and I am glad that the Speaker mentioned that the question had been prepared long before the successful SADC Summit that you and the government will lead, hosted in our country in Durban a week or so ago.

What I would like the President to clarify is whether there are any specific commitments that the summit decided on and probably also some new timeframes within which, in the opinion of the region, the restoration of constitutional democracy in Madagascar should have been achieved. I am asking this question because I would imagine that this matter occupied centre stage in the discussion in the recently held SADC Summit in Durban. Thank you very much.

UNREVISED HANSARD

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Speaker, yes, there have been timeframes that SADC has given for the return of constitutional normalcy. We have also endorsed the process being supported by the panel of elders. And we have given a time frame of 12 months and certainly not more than 24 months. So, clear timeframe lampposts have been put in place.

And the effect of having the Panel of Elders means there will be continuous engagement between Madagascar and SADC without SADC overly interfering in the sovereignty of Madagascar. But SADC will satisfy itself that there is movement forward.

One of the things, of course, we have had to recognise is that the people of Madagascar themselves have taken action to get involved in a national dialogue. So, the national dialogue process they have embarked upon, which is Malagasy-led and includes all various formations of Madagascar, is a very, very positive sign as far as we are concerned, giving us confidence that there will be an outcome that should be within the time frame that has been put forward. So, the transition timetable that was announced by Madagascan authorities themselves has given us confidence. And we do hope that that will be adhered to. So, thank you very much.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Ms P MKHIZE: Madam Speaker, given that the Republic's credibility as interim chair of SADC rests on its moral authority to demand constitutional accountability from Madagascar, how does the President reconcile that role with his continued refusal to submit to full public accountability on the Phala Phala matter, including the outstanding findings on possible violations of section 34 of the Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act and section 89 of the Constitution? And does he accept that this unresolved matter undermines the very credibility SADC now requires of the Republic? Thank you.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Speaker, the matter that Parliament is dealing with is a preserver of Parliament and will continue to be dealt with by Parliament. And I have always said that, in the end, Parliament and indeed the various other structures of our criminal justice system and judicial system must deal with this matter to the fulfilment of the various principles that we have enshrined in our Constitution.

So, as far as I am concerned, that matter is being handled, and I have always said we should leave it there in the way that it is being handled. As regards our region, our region

UNREVISED HANSARD

continues to have its own precepts and adheres to the rule of law, and those matters are also well handled in terms of all those processes. Thank you.

Mr C G NIEHAUS: Hon Speaker, Mr President, the removal of President Andry Rajoelina from Office in Madagascar by actions backed by the Army Corps of Personnel and Administrative and Technical Services Military Unit, whose leader, Colonel Michael Randrianirina, is now President of Madagascar, was effectively a coup by the military. The African Union recognised this for what it was - a forceful takeover of power by the military. Despite this position by the African Union, why have you and SADC decided to embrace the coup leader in the person of Michael Randrianirina? Mr President, I am sure you will agree that the optics of this do not look good and do not bode well for making sure that, in all circumstances, those who get involved in coups and who participate in such should be clearly recognised and must be taken to have forcefully taken power by the military. Thank you.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Speaker, what happened in Madagascar is best understood, yes, as a change of government that happened. However, it was a matter that SADC, having dealt with it, felt that it was dealt with within the

UNREVISED HANSARD

constitutional processes in Madagascar, in that the Constitutional Court dealt with the issue of the vacancy that had occurred after President Rajoelina, following the unrest, sought to dissolve Parliament and thereafter fled the country.

And the Constitutional Court, a structure within the constitutional architecture of Madagascar, ruled that a vacancy had occurred and that what followed thereafter was the filling of that vacancy by the current President. And it was on that basis that SADC, having looked at the processes that are now underway, which have been inspired and commenced by the people of Madagascar themselves, felt that SADC must support that process. SADC will stay close to the process, as, from what we can read and see and through our involvement with the Panel of Elders, it will lead to the refoundation of Madagascar and the final confirmation of their constitutional adherence. So, in that context, SADC, having addressed the matter and having dealt with the matter, reached the conclusion that it did. Thank you.

Mr N M HADEBE: Madam Speaker, hon President, once a democratic and constitutional transition has been completed in Madagascar, what mechanisms will SADC put in place to ensure accountability for actions that undermine constitutional

UNREVISED HANSARD

order, while at the same time ensuring that the transition promotes reconciliation, democratic stability, and respect for the rule of law? Thank you.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Speaker, the processes that are underway are being led and managed by the people of Madagascar themselves. We have been clear as SADC that the national dialogue process, the reconciliation process, must be homegrown and must be led by the people of Madagascar themselves.

SADC will play two roles. It will play the role of having an information-gathering process on the ground and the Panel of Elders that will be on hand whenever help is needed. As to the outcomes, what the people of Madagascar will determine in national dialogue is up to the people of Madagascar.

For SADC, all we want to see is peace and reconciliation in Madagascar. The people’s voice must determine the future of the country in a very transparent and democratic way. And we would like to see all sectors of society working together to achieve that end. Interference by SADC is something that we are not going to do. All this must be engineered by the people of Madagascar themselves. Thank you.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Mr M NTULI: Madam Speaker, Mr President, I seem to recall that there was a specific deadline of 28 February 2026 for Madagascar to submit a report on the readiness for the dialogue as well as a draft national roadmap that would have determined the steps to be followed when the dialogue unfolds. I would like to check whether, in terms of your latest record and information, that deadline was indeed met by Madagascar. And if not, were there any specific explanations or information provided to the SADC leadership? Thank you.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Speaker, yes, Madagascar has submitted a plan to SADC. It is a draft national roadmap. In December, the SADC Extraordinary Summit met and formally directed Madagascar to submit two documents by 28 February 2026 - a dialogue readiness report and a draft national roadmap.

It also required progress updates in May, August and November of 2026. So, Madagascar submitted the plan, and Madagascar's transitional authorities subsequently submitted what they called the Programme for the Refoundation of the Republic of Madagascar on 28 February 2026 to the SADC delegation.

UNREVISED HANSARD

It sets out a four-phase process intended to ultimately establish a fifth republic, as they call it, including political institutional reforms and a new constitutional order. Now, this is important because it means Madagascar submitted to the SADC deadline rather than simply ignoring it.

This has given us confidence that Madagascar, with the current government in place, is serious about moving forward to ensure there is adherence to reconciliation. And the fact that there have been three missions by the Panel of Elders in January and February, as well as in May, means that they are accepting SADC's involvement and guidance.

So, we do have confidence that Madagascar will continue on the path and the roadmap, and that they have indeed demonstrated seriousness about taking matters forward. So, we believe that we are on a good course. Thank you.

Question 15:

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: In responding to the water crisis, we are drawing on the experience of our successful response to the electricity crisis. The implementation of the Energy Action Plan brought to an end more than a decade of persistent load shedding. Sometimes people often think that

UNREVISED HANSARD

load shedding only occurred over the past 18 months or two years. We had persistent load shedding on an intermittent basis for almost a decade.

We have taken the same approach of focused, co-ordinated actions into developing the National Water Action Plan. The plan, which is being overseen and co-ordinated by the National Water Crisis Committee, Watercom, which I set up, was developed following extensive consultation with municipalities, water boards and relevant departments.

The National Water Action Plan is based on a thorough analysis of the root causes of the water crisis at municipal level and what needs to be done to address the challenges. It identifies actions that will significantly improve water service delivery in the short term, as well as actions such as legislative and other reforms that will take longer.

Both the Energy Action Plan and the National Water Action Plan are part of the Operation Vulindlela process. The reform programme is being co-ordinated and driven by the Presidency as well.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Now, the challenges in the water sector are caused by deep structural problems at the municipal level. These structural problems include the fact that the revenue from the sale of water is not ring-fenced and it’s not reinvested into water provision. In most municipalities, there is no proper separation of the functions ... water services. Sorry, I dropped my microphone. My apologies ... otherwise, you would not hear me.

So, the functions of water services and authorities are not well set out. The measures being undertaken to improve water services in the short term include projects to increase access to water in unserved communities and the completion of long-delayed water services projects.

We are increasing support to struggling municipalities and strengthening interventions in poor performing municipalities in terms of existing legislation. We are having to deal with when and how national government should intervene as most of our water processes are devolved to our municipalities. When those municipalities fail, we find that the legislative process just gives them the right ... and we are now working on the interventions that need to be taken by national

UNREVISED HANSARD

government to make sure that the water challenges are addressed.

We are also combating corruption and criminality in the water sector, including the theft of metal parts that are put for sale as scrapped metal, and we are also dealing effectively with the whole challenge of the water tanker mafia.

Through the progress that we are making, we are confident that the implementation of the National Water Action Plan will result in the resolution of the water crisis, both in terms of restoring reliable water to deprived communities and eradicating sewage pollution as well.

Importantly, it will address many of the immediate water challenges that communities face, while establishing a foundation for sustainable and secure water supply into the future. This is what we aim to achieve. Thank you, hon Speaker.

Mr G MICHALAKIS: Mr President, it’s appropriate that you did your mic drop just after you admitted that these municipalities — mostly ANC municipalities — are actually performing appallingly. As we speak, the Johannesburg suburbs

UNREVISED HANSARD

of Coronationville, Brixton, Westbury, Hurst Hill, Auckland Park, Melville and Parktown West do not have water.

Again, as we speak, Masilonyana Local Municipality, governed by your party, the ANC, is currently in contempt of court by not providing water to residents for the last three months in Winburg after the Human Rights Commission took them to court last year.

eThekwini, run by the ANC, now loses 65% of its water, rivalled by Mangaung at 60%. In my own constituency, Matjhabeng, also run by the ANC, residents have had to face water shedding for years now due to debt and the failure to maintain infrastructure.

The national water crisis has been continuing for years. It’s a man-made crisis. It’s an ANC-made crisis through poor municipal administration.

My question to you, Mr President, is this. Why did you allow your party, the ANC, to govern municipalities in such a way that we have gotten to this point in the first place? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

UNREVISED HANSARD

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Speaker, the hon member has made a long political speech on a matter that is so important, and completely ignores the measures and the interventions that government is making, particularly national government that has demonstrated that even as there are problems and challenges in a number of areas that affect the lives of our people, we're able to take action to address those challenges.

Now, we've been very fortunate in addressing various challenges. We've built partnerships with labour, with business, with communities, that have brought their expertise to bear, their capabilities to bear, their views to the table, to help everyone address the challenges that we all face.

Now ... this water problem, rather than pontificating, rather than standing with a measure of piousness on pulpits and platforms, it requires the involvement of all so that we can solve the problem. We are also finding great co-operation at the local level, even amongst people who may belong to other various different political parties. They take the view that this is our existential problem. Let's work together.

Of course, the hon speaker is not one who would find it easy to just be invited to work together with all others.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Nonetheless, I would still invite him, for us to work together to address this challenge.

It is when we work together that we are able to address even the most intractable and difficult problems. So, my invitation is issued to the hon member, in that rather than standing on platforms and pontificating, let us say what we can do to work together to resolve this problem, rather than pointing fingers. This is the time to help us all to address the challenges that our people are facing.

I would rather have him say, Mr President, what can we do to make the lives of our people a lot easier? I'd rather hear him say, Mr President, how can I support you so that we address this problem together? This is what I am getting from a number of role players. They come forward of their own volition. They don't pontificate. They don't point fingers. They say this is our country. Let us work together to address the problems. Day in and day out I get those types of approaches.

I have to come to Parliament and hear the hon member throwing insults, pointing fingers. Once again, I invite him. Come, let's work together so that even in the area you come from, Matjhabeng, we should hear you say, I am here, and I intend

UNREVISED HANSARD

and would like to have us work together to address this problem. I want to hear him bring his wisdom. Wisdom is best used when you get into the scrum, rather than standing on the sidelines throwing your words of wisdom. They soon evaporate into air. Thank you, hon Speaker.

Mr M DLELANGA: Mr President, the quarter one progress report on phase two of Operation Vulindlela notes significant progress in focus areas of the National Water Action Plan, including the incorporation of the SA National Water Resources Infrastructure Agency, which is expected to triple annual investments in water infrastructure.

Given that the agency's success relies on the scheduled transfer of staff and assets from the Department of Water and Sanitation and the Trans-Caledon Tunnel Authority by March 2027, what measures are in place to ensure this complex transfer happens seamlessly and on time without stalling bulk water projects? Thank you so much.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Speaker, we are pulling out all the stops and taking all measures to make sure that all these challenges that the member has identified and spoken to are resolved.

UNREVISED HANSARD

The measures that the Department of Water and Sanitation are taking speak precisely to what the hon member has said. I have confidence that we should be able to have all these issues addressed, to show progress.

We have shown tremendous progress with the implementation of the Energy Action Plan. Similarly, I have no doubt that having come up with a clear plan, which was crafted not only by the department but by a variety of role players, we will be able to attend to the various challenges that the member has alluded to. So I have confidence and I'd like to say to the hon member it shall be done. We will make sure that we implement. Thank you, hon Speaker.

The LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION: Good afternoon, members of this august House. Sorry, I'm driving. You will not be able to see my face.

My follow-up question is as follows. Vast platinum wealth is extracted daily from the soil of Marikana, yet this community remains a visual indictment of state neglect. Fourteen years later, the blood has dried from the 16th of August 2012 massacre, but the taps are still empty.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Mr President, the question is as follows. By what exact date will your office introduce a public water service monitoring portal that will enable South African households to not only report water service interruptions, but also allow them to track municipal response and resolution times and independently verify whether progress reports under the newly unveiled National Water Action Plan reflect the daily reality experienced by households on the ground?

Mr Ramaphosa, it is my hope that it will not take you six years to give us the exact date I'm talking about, as it has taken six years for the impeachment committee to finally begin ... [Inaudible.] [Time expired.]

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Speaker, yes, in reference to, say, the public water monitoring portal — the dashboard — as discussed with regard to strengthening the water sector accountability system, parts of that system already exist, but the comprehensive public-facing system envisaged under the new Water Action Plan is being developed. So, parts of it exist.

The department already operates the National Integrated Water Information System, which is publicly accessible and contains

UNREVISED HANSARD

dashboards covering water supply reliability, drinking water quality and wastewater as well.

We now also have a water security dashboard, which covers Gauteng and eThekwini. We will soon be able — and this is not going to take too long — to have a much more comprehensive system.

So, government is developing a public water services performance platform that will enable citizens to track the performance of water systems in municipalities, including water reliability and water quality.

Now, there is a strong case to be made for that. So what I can say is that we are committed to making sure that such a wholesome system that will be able to give such information is established. Thank you, hon Speaker.

Rev K R J MESHOE: Mr President, most interventions that have been taken were stopgap measures rather than systemic reforms. Given that nearly half of the wastewater treatment plants are in a critical state and municipal avenues for water are routinely diverted elsewhere, what concrete accountability measures will be taken to ensure that municipalities ring-

UNREVISED HANSARD

fence water funds and prioritise maintenance over other expenditure to make the crisis action plan successful?

Corruption and mismanagement in the water sector have cost taxpayers nearly R19 billion in 2023-24 alone, undermining drought mitigation efforts by diverting funds from infrastructure repairs and leaving millions without reliable water. With below average winter rainfall experienced in 2025 and serious forecasts for this year, action is needed to mitigate a drought.

What urgent action has been taken or is being planned to address corruption and criminality in the water sector, particularly ... the water mafia? Thank you, hon Speaker.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Speaker, we are taking action on a variety of matters. The scale of the problem obviously requires that we should move beyond just simply allocating the money to infrastructure build, but also deal with the other attendant problems. We will be taking various steps to ensure that every failing treatment works must have a very clear recovery plan. The recovery plan must be aimed at ensuring that there is a responsible authority that will execute the plan. The plan must be a funded one.

UNREVISED HANSARD

However, we should also be able to deal with the challenges that we have experienced, such as the water tankering mafia and corruption in the whole system. These are matters which ... as I addressed this matter right at the beginning, in saying that we are focusing our attention on it.

Obviously, we are very conscious about the fact that when money which is intended to provide water is stolen, communities can rightfully express their dissatisfaction and expect government to take action. That is exactly what we are going to do even more effectively going forward.

So in the end, we're going to measure our success not by how many, sort of meetings Watercom will hold; we are going to ensure that our municipalities that do not have capacity to operate water systems, municipalities where corruption is rife are dealt with, in terms of the officials and even those who participate in corrupt activities. We will make sure that those are addressed.

Ultimately, there is only one measure that matters. When a South African opens a tap, they need to ask themselves does the tap have clean water? If it doesn't, they're entitled to ask what are you going to do?

UNREVISED HANSARD

We therefore need to deal with the part where we organise that they have clean water, but at the same time deal with the failures that lead to this problem of them not having water, either because of corruption or because of water tanker ... that set up a number of structures to steal water and to ensure that our people do not get the water that they deserve.

So, we're going to be taking, and are taking a variety of actions to address precisely the issues that the hon Rev Meshoe has come up with. Thank you, hon Speaker.

Mr G MICHALAKIS: Mr President, it's difficult to ignore your progress if there exists very little to ignore. However, I will take you up on your offer by asking you the question that you suggested.

Mr President, how can I help you to fix the mess that the ANC caused, leaving many South Africans without water as we speak, because you clearly need all the help that you can get? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: I have clearly called on all South Africans to lend a hand to make South Africa work. I call on the hon member who comes from Matjhabeng to step

UNREVISED HANSARD

forward so that we can work together so that we can all see progress in South Africa.

I'm not going to be taking potshots at him and his party in terms of the failures that they are also overseeing. If anything, I will be saying I would like to work with you to address the challenges that are prevalent in a number of areas, including in areas where the hon member's party is in charge of various municipalities, where ordinary and poor people always testify to the fact that they do not get the services that they deserve. So I'm willing and able to work with him.

The question is will he come forward with practical, positive, constructive proposals of working together? Thank you, hon Speaker.

Question 16:

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Speaker and hon members, effective local government is essential to improving the lives of our people, supporting local economic development and creating the conditions for investment and job creation. Now, according to the Constitution, the three spheres of government are distinctive, interdependent and interrelated. While the

UNREVISED HANSARD

Constitution says that each sphere must respect the constitutional status, institutions and powers and functions of government in other spheres, it places a responsibility on national and provincial government to support and strengthen the capacity of municipalities. The strengthening of municipalities is an important priority of this administration.

Regarding the restoration of municipal capacity, we have focused on building a more capable, professional and developmental local government system by strengthening leadership and administration in municipalities. We have been working to improve co-ordination across the three spheres of government, including through the introduction of the District Development Model, DDM. We have undertaken targeted support to municipalities experiencing the greatest governance and service delivery challenges.

In respect of strengthening accountability, government has identified oversight and monitoring and strengthened consequence management. We have supported interventions where municipalities are unable to fulfil their constitutional obligations. National government has also enhanced collaboration between institutions responsible for governance,

UNREVISED HANSARD

financial oversight and combating corruption. Now, looking to the future, we are close to completing a review of the White Paper on Local Government, which envisages far-reaching reforms to this critical sphere of government.

These reforms are directed towards building stable, capable and accountable municipalities that can, in the end, deliver reliable basic services. They are directed towards restoring public confidence in local government and creating an enabling environment for inclusive economic growth and sustainable job creation. I thank you, hon Speaker.

Ms N A GCALEKA-MAZIBUKO: Hon Deputy Speaker, through you to Mr President, let me thank and acknowledge your commitment in providing stewardship to both your party, the African National Congress and the Government of National Unity, GNU. Although it’s early days, there are signs of improvement in operating performance, liquidity management, debt governance, budget practices and infrastructure development. There is still poor implementation of policies like the DDM. This is manifested in limited municipal capacity, inadequate accountability and overlapping responsibilities.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Would you say that the measures that have been taken to deal with these challenges have been effective, and are there any critical areas of improvement you want to highlight? Secondly, our municipalities continue to have persistent challenges of irregular expenditure, financial mismanagement and poor accountability shown by the Auditor-General, AG, reports. Would you say that tighter financial controls and consequence management have been effective, and what needs to be improved? Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Deputy Speaker, yes, there is now measurable progress in executing the District Development Model. However, I must say that implementation remains uneven, and the model has not yet achieved its original ambition of making government genuinely to operate as one across all 52 districts and metropolitan areas in our country. The most useful new information comes from government reporting to Parliament in June 2026, all 44 districts and eight metros now have DDM One Plan. By 31 May 2026, 46 out of the 52 had completed the review of their One Plan, and 43 reviewed plans had been endorsed by the relevant district or metro councils.

UNREVISED HANSARD

More importantly, hon Deputy Speaker, government has begun measuring actual projects rather than merely whether plans exist. In 16 districts evaluated during 2025-26, the government tracked five leading catalytic projects in each One Plan. Results were quite interesting. When we looked at the status of the District Development Model catalytic projects, we found that those that are in implementation are 63%. Those that are in planning or procurement process are 32%, and those that have been completed are rather on the low side but already showing indications that they are on the improving path. Therefore, this is genuine progress. However, the low implementation is also a warning.

The DDM has become reasonably successful at producing plans and identifying projects. The next challenge, in my view, is to convert these plans into completed infrastructure and measurable improvements in people's lives. This is what we recognise is happening. However, at the same time, we are committed to even addressing the second question that you raised, of ensuring that these plans are introduced with adherence to procurement processes. Also, as we implement them, we read our municipalities of the always attendant corruption that always is reported on. Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Ms A M VAN ZYL: Deputy Speaker, it should be obvious that 30 years of tinkering with structures has not solved municipal problems. In many cases, it has made them worse. It should also be obvious that we can have the best structures imaginable, but they will fail to produce the desired results if they are populated by people who are not held accountable. Mr President, in your state of the nation address, Sona, in February, you announced that you would lay criminal charges against municipal managers for broken service delivery as South Africans continue to suffer.

Since February, not a single criminal charge has come from you, and it has taken the DA to lay criminal charges against 10 of the worst municipal managers. Mr President, when will you and your ANC start holding to account your members who abuse the public trust as they try to enrich themselves? Thank you.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Deputy Speaker, yes, people and municipalities have faced criminal action over water and wastewater failures, but there is a significant accountability gap. Prosecutions have generally targeted municipalities as legal entities rather than the individual municipal managers, the engineering officials or the political office bearers. The

UNREVISED HANSARD

scale of enforcement is larger than sometimes appreciated. The Department of Water and Sanitation reported in 2025, that it had criminal charges or cases for sewage pollution against 59 municipalities. Around 40% of those were for Water Services Authorities.

More recent reporting in June 2026, put the figure at 96 criminal cases that are involving 53 municipalities. Therefore, it is not correct that there has not been follow-up. There have also been convictions. In November 2025, Emalahleni Local Municipality pleaded guilty to multiple environmental offences after repeated failures to stop sewage pollution. The court imposed a big fine on them, but that ran to about R600 million or so. There's also been another important case, which goes to disprove what you're saying, of the Thaba Chweu Local Municipality, which pleaded guilty to seven offences under the environmental and water legislation. Therefore, we are seeing action in all this, and I guess that if we look closely, we should be able to see all that.

The Water and Sanitation Department opened a criminal case against the City of Matlosana in February of 2026, after earlier noncompliance concerning wastewater treatment and other failures on pollution. However, there are weaknesses we

UNREVISED HANSARD

must accept, and those weaknesses are matters that we need to look at and to work on. There is work that is being done in this regard. Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker.

Mr J B MTOLO: Hon Deputy Speaker, hon members and Mr President, given that Rustenburg Municipality remains among the weakest performing in service delivery, can the President confirm why structural reforms have specifically reached the Marikana community, whose suffering under state neglect has continued unaddressed since the notorious, concomitant emails of the then Lonmin nonexecutive director that preceded the 2012, massacre of 34 mine workers? I thank you.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Deputy Speaker, I didn't get to hear the question. Maybe you can help me.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Perhaps, hon Mtolo, if you can just ask the question, not the whole preface to the question, only the question, please.

Mr J B MTOLO: Hon Deputy Speaker, given that Rustenburg Municipality remains among the weakest performing in service delivery, can the President confirm why structural reforms have specifically reached the Marikana community, whose

UNREVISED HANSARD

suffering under state neglect has continued unaddressed since the notorious email of the then Lonmin nonexecutive director that preceded the 2012, massacre of 34 mine workers? Thank you.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Deputy Speaker, I wouldn't know immediately exactly how the various parts of Rustenburg delivery processes have happened, but what I can say is that they are attending to the issue of water, because water infrastructure has been a major challenge, and there has been significant investment in the broader Rustenburg area when it comes to bulk water. In January 2026, the government commissioned to upgrade the Vaalkop Water Treatment Works, and the community of Marikana would benefit from that. There is a substantial programme to formalise and upgrade informal settlements in the Marikana cluster

When it comes to roads, there are also projects for the Marikana central business district, CBD, road. There are several actions that are being taken to address some of these. In the end, I would be the first to acknowledge that our people, not only in Marikana but in the surrounding areas, have not been experiencing the level of quality service delivery that they are entitled to expect. Several other areas

UNREVISED HANSARD

around that municipality, the Rustenburg Municipality, there has, however, been investment in terms of expanding the bulk water, as I said, but I don't think that government should measure success by announcing projects. It should be by getting the work done itself. I do believe that several projects are now underway and each of the projects will lead to the improvement of service delivery, also for those areas that the hon Speaker mentioned. Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker.

Dr M A MAIMANE: Deputy Speaker, through you to Mr President, good afternoon. You have gone out and acknowledged the fact that the people of Hammanskraal, that the government failed to provide water for them and as a result 40 people died. The Supreme Court of Appeal found that municipal negligence causally connected the death of a 17-month-old child who fell into an uncovered municipal storm drainage in Uitenhage. The court found that poorly maintained municipal infrastructure, particularly to people living in low-income communities, is an unacceptable danger.

The Khampepe Commission of Inquiry, Mr President, found that the City of Johannesburg and its entities were liable for Usindiso building disaster, in which 76 people died. More than a year, no accountability has been taken. Therefore, Mr

UNREVISED HANSARD

President, these are over 100 South Africans who you and the courts have acknowledged have died due to poor municipal infrastructure.

Will you, Mr President, commit to the people of South Africa that you will hold all of those politically responsible? I take your previous comment about the criminal charges, but this is about you and party leadership and holding those in your party who were presiding over these municipalities accountable so that other leaders can do likewise. Thank you very much. [Time expired.]

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: The answer is yes. Those people should be held accountable. Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker.

Ms N A GCALEKA-MAZIBUKO: Hon Deputy Speaker, through you to Mr President, please elaborate on why the ANC-led GNU has prioritised a lot of investment in infrastructure and how has this strategy contributed to economic growth and development for our people and the economy? I thank you.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Deputy Speaker, well, we prioritise the issue of infrastructure because it is one of the central pillars of our economic programme, and this is

UNREVISED HANSARD

deliberate. It reflects a diagnosis that South Africa's weak economic growth, unemployment and deteriorating service delivery are increasingly consequences of infrastructure constraints. Therefore, the GNU's Medium-Term Development Plan identifies inclusive economic growth and job creation as its first strategic priority and explicitly makes increased infrastructure investment, and access as well as efficiency a key outcome.

Therefore, government wants the gross fixed capital formation in our country to rise from the 15,1% where it is and to rise to 20% by 2029. We should be touching the holy grail scale that was set by the National Development Plan, NDP, of 30% in later years. South Africa cannot grow faster without fixing infrastructure. This is an impossibility. We allowed infrastructure to decline for far too long. Infrastructure in the end, in our view, can unlock unprecedented growth in our economy and it can mobilise the private sector and the public sector to commit to embark on infrastructure projects in infrastructure.

In the end, hon Deputy Speaker, it creates jobs immediately, enables jobs for decades and infrastructure is also an industrial policy instrument. It enables the private sector to

UNREVISED HANSARD

see that the country is going somewhere and to then invest. When a road is built, when the railroad is built, when our ports work, when our electricity is expanded from where it is and its efficiency and its reliability rises because of infrastructure spend, that is when the private sector invests. Infrastructure is essential also to fixing our municipalities. Infrastructure can literally change the geography that apartheid bequeathed to us.

We saw that over the weekend at Riverside where infrastructure has been installed in the form of houses, in the form of roads, and now in the form of, to say, clinics and so forth. That's when it raises the confidence of the people and it also creates opportunities for growth. It is also an answer to a government that is facing fiscal constraints that through infrastructure build, we can start seeing the economy growing. I thank you, hon Deputy Speaker.

Question 17:

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: On 04 May this year, in my capacity as the president of the ANC, I participated in an oversight visit by the ANC National Working Committee to the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality. Following engagements with the ANC regional leadership on the state of

UNREVISED HANSARD

governance and delivery in the metro, including site visits to various projects, I was asked to reflect on the performance of the Mayor, Babalwa Lobishe.

My comments were based on an in-depth assessment of the challenges in the metro, some going back many years and the steps that had been taken by the current mayor and metro leadership to address them. I noted that while progress was being made in a number of areas, we would like to see better and faster progress on key issues that affect the lives of the residents of Gqeberha. Details on the metrics used by the national government to assess the state of municipalities may be sought from the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs. I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon Trollip, you are muted. Please unmute your microphone.

Mr R A P TROLLIP: Hon Deputy Speaker, I beg your pardon. Thank you very much. Good afternoon, hon President. As you said, on 04 May, you visited Nelson Mandela Bay, and a number of media outlets, including SABC News, reported the following with a headline that said, “Ramaphosa backs Mayor Babalwa Lobishe.”

UNREVISED HANSARD

Apart from ongoing service delivery protests and visible decay of Nelson Mandela Bay, the Auditor-General reports the following: Non-revenue water losses at 63%, non-revenue electricity losses of 30%. She found that the expenditure on repairing and maintaining municipal infrastructure amounted to 2,5% of the value of those assets against National Treasury's minimum norm of 8%.

Irregular expenditure increased from R21 billion to R31 billion over the past two years. She found that Nelson Mandela Bay takes the longest of all metros to pay creditors at an average of 189 days against a policy of 30 days. Also, that they have the highest senior management vacancy rate of all the metros. How, Mr President, do you reconcile this with your in-depth assessment and your praise and backing of Mayor Lobishe?

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: As I indicated in my reply, whilst there have been indications of progress in certain areas, there remains challenges in a number of other areas as there has always been. Even when the hon member was a mayor of the same metro himself, it was not all plain honey and roses. There were areas that were positive, there were areas that had serious weaknesses even then. That is what is obtained in many

UNREVISED HANSARD

of our municipalities. There are times when you've got to give encouragement to those who are acting in various positions, but still be able to say, you have not done as well as you should have. There are problems.

In this case, the hon member is alluding to the Auditor-General's report and to many other areas of corruption. In the end, it is an indicative process of saying there is progress. I was taken to projects, may I add, as I said, where I saw for myself projects that were being opened, which were working, housing and otherwise. At the same time, it's a mixed bag that one often encounters. So, the issue is that challenges remain, but there have been some areas where there's been forward movement. Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker.

Ms F HASSAN: Deputy Speaker though you, Mr President, when the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality appeared before the Joint Portfolio Committee of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Cogta and Standing Committee on Public Accounts, Scopa there were a number of service delivery issues that were flagged.

In your assessment, Mr President, what have you found to be the successes of the municipality and what measures have been

UNREVISED HANSARD

put in place to address these service delivery issues? I thank you.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: The successes that I perceived at the time when I visited was housing delivery in certain cases, and it was something that I found quite impressive. No doubt, I was not taken to the many other areas of Gqeberha, but those areas where I was taken to, I could see that there was progress in delivery of houses. I remember this distinctly because I was taken to those areas.

There have been areas where service delivery intervention can be said to be working. But as I said hon Deputy Speaker, with many of our municipalities it's a mixed bag. That is why we have decided to focus on reforming local municipalities because there are areas where there's great performance, and then there are areas where there is debilitating lack of performance in some cases, which would even tempt one to say it erases all the good parts that one would have been exposed to.

In the end, the real, real solution when it comes to all these matters is that we should improve our local government performance metrics. Part of the problems that we have is we

UNREVISED HANSARD

have many of our municipalities that are governed by coalitions. That is where the disagreements and the failures reside. The Local Government White Paper seeks to address many of those. We therefore need to work together to see how best we can reposition local government, because we cannot carry on with the weaknesses that we see in local government.

There are, however, areas and pockets of progress that we see, but there are many more areas of real lack of progress where service delivery challenges persist and where the interests of our people are not well served. In the end, the litmus test regarding a local government entity is about whether people are getting a good service or not. Unfortunately, many of our local municipalities are not really living up to that, and we need to work with them. We at national level have said that we want to support our municipalities.

Some of them are weak or have been weakened by lack of resources, by not getting either the residents to pay. In some cases, it is government departments that don’t pay their rates and taxes to municipalities, but still they expect good services from municipalities, whereas they do not pay, including some government departments.

UNREVISED HANSARD

The Minister of Cogta has been clear and firm on this matter and even saying, there will be consequences if our government departments and entities do not pay the rates and taxes that they should be paying to municipalities. So, the problem is complex, but at the same time, we need to address it regarding coming up with innovative ideas of how we can strengthen local municipalities. Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker.

Mr N S MATIASE: Mr President, under your favourite Mayor, Babalwa Lobishe, the municipality attempted to write about R23 billion of irregular expenditure. That attempt was vigorously rejected by the National Treasury. Under the same mayor, the National Treasury was repulsed by the level of mismanagement that they have decided to withhold funds to the municipality due to chronic underspending and corruption.

Most recently, there is controversy in that over the R25 million transformer lease. Do all of these represent model leadership in your book, hon President? Would you want the conduct of Lobishe and those she is mismanaging the municipality with, to be replicated elsewhere as a good model and good form of governance. Thank you very much, Deputy Speaker.

UNREVISED HANSARD

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Clearly, the improvements that we want to see are that governance should be improved, and that there should be less and less controversy surrounding various people we've deployed in local government. That is what we want to see. In doing so, we would like to see good performance. We want to see real commitment coming from those that we have deployed.

The model of a good municipal mayor is a municipal mayor who oversees a municipality that is being governed effectively, transparently, and in accordance with the rule of law. So, in the end, that is what we would like to see, not only with one municipality, but right across the board. I do think that focusing on one is rather a problem, because we need to focus on the entire cohort of our public officials, and say this is the standard that we would like to see adhere to. We would therefore want everyone to move towards implementing that standard. That is where I believe the focus should really be. Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker.

Mr W W WESSELS: Hon Deputy Speaker, through you, Mr President, I put it to you with due respect that no efforts of the national government to turn around our municipalities will succeed, if the local leadership of those municipalities are

UNREVISED HANSARD

tainted individuals. Given that the parliamentary oversight committees, before which the executive mayor appeared less than two months before your visit to the metro, criticised the mayor openly for a lack of accountability and a failure to implement recovery plans.

Does your endorsement - I do understand Mr President that you were there as the president of the ANC, but you remain the head of the executive. Does that endorsement mean that the executive branch is discounting the structural findings by this Parliament? I thank you.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: No, we do not discount and condone bad behaviour. We do not discount and condone processes that do not enhance good governance. We do recognise where there's been progress and indications of progress moving forward is what we do recognise. Where there have been weaknesses, we point them out and get those who are responsible for those weaknesses to change their ways.

However, if they have committed any form of crime, then that's matter. It requires a different type of approach and a different type of remedial action. In this case, I think we need to deal with the issue of the extent to which there are

UNREVISED HANSARD

weaknesses and ask ourselves whether those weaknesses are weaknesses that need to be corrected.

In the end, we need to have that clear balance and say, are those weaknesses irreparable and do they militate against the interests of the people? But in the end, we need to have that deeper examination of precisely what those are. Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker.

Mr R A P TROLLIP: Hon President, having listened to your responses, I'm now more concerned than ever because being taken to new projects to showcase progress in a failing municipality can clearly never constitute in-depth assessment. How do you explain that the very same mayor was severely and repeatedly castigated in Parliament by Cogta because she, and I quote, "doesn't respond to correspondence?" The ANC chairperson Mkhize said that she doesn't know what she's doing. She was also excoriated for a controversial and unauthorised leasing deal of a transformer to Coega and she was criticised for administrative chaos.

You, Mr President, recently said over the weekend at the ANC Manifesto launch when asking for another chance in government that, and I quote:

UNREVISED HANSARD

Poor performing councillors will not be protected. Those that fail to perform, who act dishonestly, and who abandon their communities will be removed.

Mayor Lobishe has done all of that and she hasn't been removed. In fact, she was paraded with the convicted Andile Lungisa as one of the mayoral candidates. How do you reconcile those comments?

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Deputy Speaker, I have responded in large measure to precisely the approach that I've had, and I have said that, yes, there are weaknesses and challenges in that municipality, as well as many other municipalities. One should never hide from that reality. The assessment in the end has to be measured and be based on, in the end, is the municipality well governed? Has there been criminal activities that have happened that have led to either the stealing of money and fraud and all that? That's what we need to examine as we move on.

Of course, like any other municipality or municipal mayor, there will always be those challenges. It is the scale on which then we should measure not only this type of mayor, but many others as well. So, we are essentially dealing with

UNREVISED HANSARD

municipalities with a mixed bag. As we deal with a mixed bag, we need to examine precisely how we should handle those. Of course, as I said over the weekend, those who do not perform well should be removed. Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker.

Question 18:

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Deputy Speaker, since the announcement during the State of the Nation Address on 12 February 2026, Operation Prosper has achieved tangible and measurable progress in combating illegal mining.

Joint operations by the SA Police Service, SAPS, and the SA National Defence Force, SANDF, under Operation Prosper have disrupted illegal mining in the Free State, Gauteng and North West through high visibility policing, vehicle checkpoints and air support. These operations have resulted in many arrests. It has also resulted in the dismantling of illegal mining sites and the confiscation of firearms, explosives and illegal mining equipment.

Through interdepartmental co-ordination with the Department of Mineral and Petroleum Resources, DMPR, the joint deployment has resulted in the arrest of 1 080 individuals, among them armed suspects and undocumented miners. During these targeted

UNREVISED HANSARD

operations, the deployment seized 19 firearms, over 2 000 rounds of ammunition and 41 commercial vehicles. In addition, it has seized 83 generators, over 1 000 refining drums, nearly 2 000 kg of gold-bearing material and approximately 150 kg of gold. These actions have disrupted the operational and financial lifelines of illegal mining networks.

The DMPR has closed many illegal shafts to prevent the resurgence of these activities and further closures are planned in the future. The SAPS and SANDF continue to secure these locations through ongoing foot patrols, vehicle checkpoints and air to ground monitoring systems. Progress is being made, but because we are dealing with a number of areas where these illegal activities are taking place, progress might seem to be slow even though work is being done. Thank you so much.

Ms M L MOFOKENG: Deputy Speaker and Mr President, South Africans have seen numerous interventions against illegal mining over the years. What is fundamentally different about Operation Prosper that gives government the confidence that this time, we will achieve a lasting reduction in illegal mining rather than another cycle of enforcement, withdrawal and the return of illegal mining? Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

UNREVISED HANSARD

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: I think we are making progress in that we are using a multifaceted approach to dealing with the problem of illegal mining. We are engaging communities near to where these derelict mines are. We are taking steps to deal directly with the illegal miners themselves. We are also dealing with the physical sites where they do illegal mining and in a number of cases, shutting them down so that they may no longer be used. We're also doing this in recognition of the safety element.

These mines that are derelict are not safe anymore. We have seen some deaths that have occurred as a result of mine workers being in places underground that are no longer being used. They call them madala [secret] sites. They are not well ventilated and not well lit. Therefore, it is for their own interests as human beings that we should make this type of intervention. At the same time, we are following the value chain further up to determine precisely who the real kingpins are. Therefore, the multi-sectoral approach that we are using is becoming quite effective. Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker.

Ms L M SCHICKERLING: Good afternoon, hon Deputy Speaker and hon President. Hon President, if Operation Prosper is truly prospering, as you've said, and successfully removing illegal

UNREVISED HANSARD

miners from a site today, there is nothing to prevent that same site from being occupied again tomorrow.

Can the hon President please tell this House what measurable evidence there is, and I want to emphasise measurable evidence, not just words, that Operation Prosper is actually disrupting the criminal infrastructure, syndicates and financial networks behind illegal mining, rather than simply moving illegal mining daily from one location to another? Thank you.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Yes, hon Deputy Speaker, we do believe that it is producing significant operational results, particularly in the way that I have spoken, also against the gangs. It is still too early to say now that it has sustainably reduced serious crime, but we are making progress. We have seen, through the deployment of our soldiers and the police, how we've been able to disrupt a number of these activities.

There's always a danger, yes, that there'll be a reversion to utilising those mining sites again. One of the solutions that has been brought to the fore is that those that we can shut down, we should shut down and seal them more permanently. In

UNREVISED HANSARD

this regard, we need to work with the former owners, the community, and with the SAPS and SANDF themselves. That too is a work in progress. I do believe that we've shaken this tree and we should be able to ensure that we remain focused, even to the risk of the issue recurring and coming up again.

We must be clear that arrests alone in the end are not the real measure of success. The real measure of success, firstly, is whether we will be able to safeguard the interests of our people near those mines. Secondly, whether we will be able to eliminate mining that is illegal and the extent to which we will have closed those mines that give rise to the vulnerability of those people who are either working there illegally or, indeed, are members of the community. Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker.

Mr S S ZIBI: Hon Deputy Speaker, to the hon President: In line with your last answer, isn't it time that government considered a significant appropriation for the permanent sealing and closure of many of these mines, and have the expense recovered from the former owners who, clearly, have not adhered to mine closure procedures as set out in South African legislation? Policing alone, as you say, will not solve the problem.

UNREVISED HANSARD

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Yes, I would agree with hon Zibi that those abandoned and derelict ... and we also deal here with ownerless mines that have unused shafts that have become the basis for illegal mining. Those, yes, do subscribe to physical closure and rehabilitation. That should become a bigger part of our strategy, I would say. It is a complex problem when it comes to the ownerless mines that are old and have many shafts.

You say, shouldn't we get an appropriation from government? I would say, yes. However, we should also recognise that with regard to those ownerless mines, the burden of funding their closure then comes to government. Closure involves a massive engineering expense that we need to take into account.

At the same time, we need to have a balance. What counts more, the lives of people in the area, women who will not be subjected to gender-based violence? Often, that is the main concern that we need to deal with and contend with. We should then approach those who were the owners of these mines to participate in enhancing the proper closure of these mines. My answer to your question is, yes, that's what we should be doing.

UNREVISED HANSARD

If we go on the appropriation route, we should get Treasury to measure what the actual cost would be, to be able to do trade-offs and to see what is best in these circumstances. We should, therefore, use a multi-pronged type of approach which will include closing and dealing with those derelict or unused mines that are now becoming centres of criminality, as gangs are now utilising them for their own ends.

At the same time, however, there is another aspect where we need to ask ourselves about what ordinary people in very good ore-body areas ... a good example is in Sekhukhune, where chrome ore is present nearly all over. Our people ... I once went to a public meeting where they all said to a voice to a man, a woman, and they said, we want you to give us mining licences because we want to extract the wealth that is beneath our soil. Should they be characterised as illegal miners or should we find a way in which we grant them licences, legitimise them and manage them better in that way?

It’s a multi-pronged approach that we need to use to deal with this problem because if we don’t do so, we will always have problems, as has been said already. It’s one of those problems that requires a great deal of wisdom and a multi-type of approach to discourage those derelict mines from being used

UNREVISED HANSARD

for criminal and illegal purposes. Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker.

Dr L W MAHLATSI: Chairperson ...

Sesotho:

... kgotso, Maafrika.

English:

Deputy Chairperson, to the President: Given that illegal mining has evolved beyond a domestic law enforcement problem into a transnational organised crime and illicit financial flow challenge, with potential implications for South Africa's gold supply chain, tax revenue, investment environment, international reputation and the integrity of our legitimate mining sector, how is government measuring the international credibility and effectiveness of Operation Prosper?

Has government engaged with the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime based in Geneva and other relevant international organised crime, financial intelligence and law enforcement institutions to independently assess whether South Africa's intervention is disrupting the criminal network's finances ... [Interjections.].

UNREVISED HANSARD

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, hon Mahlatsi.

Dr L W MAHLATSI: No, no, I'm not finished ... illicit ghost supply chain procedure ... [Time expired.] ... Allow me to ask my question, Deputy Speaker.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon Mahlatsi, you have one minute. You are now in one and a half minutes.

Dr L W MAHLATSI: Allow me to ask this question. It's an important question ... [Interjections]. As a small party, I will never ask an original question until the end of this administration. Why can't you give me a chance to ask a supplementary question? I don't have any original questions.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon Mahlatsi!

Dr L W MAHLATSI: So why can't I ask a supplementary question?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: You can ask a question, but the Rules state that you have one minute, and that is in recognition of the time allocated to each party.

Dr L W MAHLATSI: My time, my time, it says I'm still on ...

UNREVISED HANSARD

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon Mahlatsi, you can take the matter to the Rules Committee if you are not happy with the Rules, but this is now my ruling ... [Interjections].

Dr L W MAHLATSI: I can’t ask an original question and now, I can’t ask a supplementary question? That’s what you’re saying to me.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon Mahlatsi, that is something you take up with the Rules Committee. I have now ruled.

Dr L W MAHLATSI: No, no. You can’t prevent me from asking questions. You’re wrong! You are absolutely wrong, Deputy Chairperson.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon Mahlatsi, I have named you three times. I’m now removing you from the platform. Could the Table please remove the hon Mahlatsi from the platform?

Hon Bergman, I have now dealt with the matter. We will now proceed. Hon President, please proceed with your answer.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Deputy Speaker, what I heard, as he was trying to develop his question, was the

UNREVISED HANSARD

extent of which Operation Prosper was having a negative impact on global impact. We have not been able to measure that. What we do know is that, yes, it is having an impact in South Africa, but it is, as we said, a mixed impact.

People are being arrested and dealt with. The firearms are being removed, but we still need to have greater success in this regard. We will be able to measure precisely the extent to which real progress is being made. We must say that Operation Prosper has been able to bring down the incidences of illegal mining quite drastically because we focused on a number of areas in the Free State, North West, yes, as well as in Gauteng.

It is producing significant operational results, but much more still needs to be done. It is a bit too early to say that it has substantially reduced the serious crime that is given rise to by illegal mining. Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker.

Ms M L MOFOKENG: Deputy Speaker, to Mr President: Beyond arrest and enforcement operations, what specific institutional and measurable mechanisms will ensure that the gains made through Operation Prosper are sustained after the deployment ends, and who will be held accountable if illegal mining

UNREVISED HANSARD

returns to areas that have been cleared? How are we seizing cash proceeds from illegal mining to offset the costs?

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: The various measures that will need to be taken ... that is exactly the question that is given rise to ... [Inaudible.] ... measures through which we can see whether we are making progress. Then there's also the issue of ... [Inaudible.] ... there would be ... Operation Prosper finishes its work. Violent crime should really have fallen in the areas where these mines are, and criminal organisations or gangs should no longer be prevalent in those areas.

We should be able to reclaim the areas that, currently, our people are saying they are not even able to traverse criminal activities, including the financers thereof that must also be destroyed, and illegal mines must stay closed. Those are the measures, I would say, that need to come to the fore and that we would need to have as a sustainability measure. So, work still needs to be done. What we are involved in is that the work is being done.

There is clear commitment from those members of the SANDF that Parliament has agreed should be deployed. There is real

UNREVISED HANSARD

commitment amongst the police who are working on the issue of illegal mining. We are making progress but, of course, we want to see much better progress than what we have. We are committed because this is a problem, a challenge that has been raised by our people, which we need to address.

What we can say we have been able to do is to respond to, if you like, the cries of our people as we deployed the defence force and our police. The criminality and incidents of illegal mining have come down. They do keep resurging, but they're being dealt with. We are making the progress that I've alluded to. I'm confident that we will reach a stage where we will have made greater progress. What hon Zibi spoke about would be, I would say, the Holy Grail, where we will say we have now made real progress. The mines are closed and we've deployed all the resources that we need.

The challenge that we have is that we have a lot of these mines that no longer have owners. These mines were mined many years ago, more than 100 years ago. Where the mines no longer have owners, the owners have either left or enriched other capitals of the world. They did not participate in the rehabilitation of those mines. Those mines are now left to

UNREVISED HANSARD

government to deal with because they are giving rise to a social problem, many social problems.

We must have a multidisciplinary approach to solving this problem. I have no doubt that we will. Some of them will be policy-driven and some of them will be regulatory driven. Some of them will allow our ordinary people to get licences to get themselves involved in a measure of mining, which we should not characterise, as we go forward, as illegal mining.

We need to determine precisely how those products are sold, because as it is now, the products that are eked out of the ground are sold illegally, illicitly and they become part of the illicit economy. The nation never benefits anything in the form of taxes or otherwise. It is a complex problem, but I am confident that we are on the right path and we will resolve this problem once and for all. Thank you very much.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, hon President.

Hon members, that concludes questions to the President, and I thank the hon President. Hon members, that concludes the business for the day and the House is adjourned.

UNREVISED HANSARD

Business of the day concluded.

The House adjourned at 16:35.

UNREVISED HANSARD