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NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES
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PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES

The Council met at 14:03.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Hon delegates, I would like to remind you that rules in particular subrule 21,22 and 23 of Rule 103 applies.

In accordance with Council Rule 229 subrule 1 there will be no Notices of Motion or Motions without Notice.

Hon delegates before we proceed to Question 1, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the President of the Republic of South Africa Mr Cyril Ramaphosa and all permanent delegates present here with us, the MECs and all special delegates and

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SA Local Government Association, Salga, representatives to the House.

Further, I would like to remind delegates that in terms of Rule 229 of the Council Rules the time for reply by the President to the question is five minutes. Only four supplementary questions are allowed per question. A member who has asked the initial question would be the first to be afforded an opportunity to ask a supplementary question. The time for asking a supplementary question is two minutes. The time for reply to the supplementary question by the President is four minutes. The supplementary question must emanate from the initial question that was asked.

Hon delegates, I now call upon the hon President to respond to Question 1 as asked by the hon Mmoiemang. The hon President, you may take the podium.

QUESTIONS - PRESIDENT

Question 1:

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Chairperson, hon members, the development of public infrastructure is essentially

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necessary for effective service delivery and economic development.

This is why we are determined as this administration to massively increase the scale of investment in infrastructure. Through this investments in infrastructure, we have determined that we want to and will turn South Africa into a building site.

However, public infrastructure projects that are delayed or abandoned do have a negative impact on the ability of communities to access services.

Hon Chairperson, to address this challenge, the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure began the identification of delayed and abandoned projects within its portfolio during the Sixth Democratic Administration.

Through a Presidential Proclamation in 2019, the Infrastructure Development Act was moved to the Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure.

This moving of the Act has enabled the Minister to develop a more holistic approach to infrastructure development in all

spheres of government and the private sector through Infrastructure South Africa.

The Department of Public Works and Infrastructure has identified a number of key pillars that drive the infrastructure investment process in our country such as ensuring that we have the institutional arrangements for the implementation of the National Infrastructure Plan for 2050.

One of the other pillars is to ensure that there is better preparation and prioritisation of infrastructure projects. This has been a lack of capacity in a number of our government structures.

Other proposed reforms include multi-year budgeting for infrastructure planning, as well as for infrastructure delivery, and also the speeding up of permit granting and the approval processes.

The task of identifying incomplete and abandoned infrastructure projects is being implemented throughout our provinces.

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The completion of these projects does require dedicated capacity that may not be readily available.

To address this, the department has issued calls for various professionals in the built environment to provide expertise to the department and to collaborate and work with them as required.

One of the mechanisms at an executive level to monitor progress on the identified projects is through our Siyahhlola Programme.

In this programme, site visits are conducted to check the status of projects as well as to see whether the plans that have been put in place are being implemented.

Follow up visits are also conducted after a few months to ensure that the recovery plans are implemented.

This Siyahhlola Programme is bringing stakeholders, such as the local and district municipalities, together to unblock any issues related to bulk infrastructure and outstanding approvals. And through our District Development Model we will be able to make even greater progress in this regard.

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This programme demonstrates effective interventions that can be achieved as we move along, enhancing the intergovernmental working process we have embarked upon. As we move on we are finding that the District Development Model is being strengthened and is being embraced more and more by various key players. Thank you, hon Chairperson.

Mr K M MMOIEMANG: Hon Chairperson, Your Excellency the President, we welcome the implementation of the Siyahlola Programme to address all incomplete delayed or even abandoned public infrastructure as the President in his response has indicated.

Your Excellency, next week the National Council of Provinces will visit all nine provinces to undertake a rigorous assessment of oversight of the incomplete or even abandoned infrastructure projects following the briefing that we had with the three Ministers as part of ministerial briefings this week.

My question is: What support in terms of co-ordination will the President give to the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure and National Treasury in ensuring that there is an undertaking of the holistic cost-assessment and situational

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analysis as well as costs of incomplete delayed projects so that there is accountability to Parliament but also accountability to the people of South Africa on the progress that we are making to make sure that as we launch South Africa as a construction site this chapter is closed? Thank you, hon President and hon Chairperson.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Chairperson and hon Mmoiemang thank you very much for informing me that the National Council of Provinces will be visiting all nine provinces to go and examine the status of activity or progress on projects that have not been taken forward or unimplemented or incomplete.

One of the things that Minister Macpherson the Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure did on his assuming of duties was to come and spend quite a bit of time with me to discuss precisely what his mandate is and to outline to me what the department what he leads together with Deputy Minister Zikalala intends to do.

I was quite satisfied in the focus that they want to bring to bear on their work and in turning South Africa into a construction site. The assurance I gave him was that I would

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lend as much support as possible from the Presidency to ensure that their work rises to a higher tempo. For I could see the great enthusiasm that he has in ensuring that there are building sites all over the country and indeed that through the Siyahlola Programme start tackling incomplete or uncompleted building sites or projects.

I informed him that similarly we would be interacting with Treasury to ensure that Treasury give them as much support as possible to ensure that they do do their work.

We have identified infrastructure as one of the key drivers of economic progress and development in our country and a job creator. So, we will be bringing to bear every assistant measure that we can give them to ensure that this end is achieved.

I am particularly pleased to hear that from Parliament, particularly the National Council of Provinces. You are taking this matter as seriously as you will be by visiting various provinces. It is important that the whole of the state, both Parliament and the executive work together and the executive at all levels national, provincial, local as well as district to ensure that we focus on infrastructure development and also

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address the many projects in our country that lie fallow, that are not been completed and to go to the depth of the reasons why those are like that but also to remove all the impediments to enable those projects to be completed. So, we will be together focusing on that, and I informed the Minister that they have my full support and every measure of assistance that we can give them from the Presidency to enable them to do their work.

I love the built environment, and I do believe that the built environment is a key marker of the progress of any country. Wherever one goes if you see how the built environment is being improved that is when you see that indeed the country is moving forward and there is economic development.

So, we want to see the yellow equipment stron throughout the country and we want to see dust being turned into buildings and into projects that are going to serve the interests of our people. Thank you, hon Chairperson.

Ms T BREEDT: Madam Chairperson and hon President, I was so fortunate when you now said that you are looking at investigation with regards to why these projects are where they are and incomplete. The hon Chief Whip mentioned the

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costs and Treasury involved and that is kind of where my question leads to go, because many of these incomplete and delayed infrastructure projects and you can specifically see them in the Free State have been subject of corruption. In many instances also of litigation. I would like to know whether you and your relevant Cabinet Ministers have instigated any investigations or legal action against individuals or groups involved in extortion or corruption within these infrastructure projects and then just further to say what new programmes or reforms are being proposed to prevent these criminal elements from infiltrating public infrastructure projects and how do you project we stop that in future? Thank you.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Breedts, indeed we are s we begin the process of increasing our focus on infrastructure built are going to be as I said be focusing on why some of those projects have been abandoned and left unfinished, because there are reasons. Some of the reasons have to do with corruption. Some of the reasons have to do with incapacity where either those who were asked to develop those projects either underbudgeted or overpriced. All those will be gone into because we do need to go to the root cause of the

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abandonment of all the projects that now today lie as sore thumbs throughout the landscape of this country.

It is a very sorry sight as one travels around and you see projects that were started and some of them are just foundations, slabs that that have been constructed where houses were supposed to rise and not much has been done or achieved.

So, those are being investigated some of those were focused on by the commission on state capture and some of those are being done by the Special Investigating Unit and some of those are already being prosecuted. There are individuals and people who embarked on these projects fraudulently and they are now facing the might of the law.

So, we are saying that things are going to move forward, and we are going to ensure that those who are responsible for any act of corruption particularly in the infrastructure space where projects have not been concluded will be investigated and followed up.

At the same time the reforms that we are embarking upon are going to be aimed at ensuring that this does not happen again.

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One of those was to reform our procurement process but the other important one because most of these projects are executed at local government level. We are through the Ministry of Co-operate and Traditional Affairs focusing on how to strengthen local government and to make local government work more effectively in the interest of the people so that we close all loopholes for those who may well want to be fraudulent and execute acts of corruption at that level.

So, the reform process that we are involved in is all encompassing and is also going to be focussing on the execution of projects. The focus that the National Council of Provinces is having by visiting provinces is also going to help because it is going to shed light as we are going to from the central national government level on what is done at all levels of government. For when light is shed and when people know that they are being watched and things are going to be followed up it will be reducing the temptation for acts of corruption and fraud.

So, our increased focus on all these matters that have to do with projects is in my view going to lead to much better governance system that will lessen and finally get rid of acts

of corruption in all these matters. Thank you, hon
Chairperson.

IsiXhosa:

Nksz M MAKESINI: Mongameli, ilizwe lethu libonakala
lingaqhubeli phambili kwezi projekhthi kuba abantu abazigqibi
ziyamiswa. Xa ujonga ixesha olwenziwe ngalo olu hlahlo
lwabiwo-mali, lunalo igalelo ekubeni iiprojekhthi zingaqhubeli
phambilil.

Le nto yenza ukuba singajongeki kakuhle sililizwe loMzantsi
Afrika kuba le nto iya ... [Ngokungavakaliyo.] Xa sijonga
amabango ...

English:

... poor planning is a problem ...

IsiXhosa:

... ebangela ukuba iiprojekhthi ezi zingagqitywa ngexesha.
Ukuthengwa kwempahla karhululumente ngendlela engeyiyo yenye
yezinto ezibonakalayo ukuba zinayo inxaxheba kule nto. Naba
bantu sibaqashayo njengabaphathi beeprojekhthi bengenabuchule
beza nale nto singafuni ukuyibona sililizwe, le yenza ukuba

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singakwazi ukuqhubela phambili. Into esifuna ukuyiva nokuyiqonda Mongameli...

English:

... how far are you with that megacity ...

IsiXhosa:

... wawusithembise yona sililizwe, kuba sifuna ukude siyibone ...

English:

... in our lifetime.

IsiXhosa:

Enkosi Mongameli.

English:

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Chairperson and hon Makesini, thank you very much for raising all these matters. Particularly some of what gives rise to the abandonment of projects and as you have enumerated some of the reasons are lack of capacity, are in evaluating projects properly, and that would be possibly technical capacity, financial understanding of evaluating projects properly and the issue

that you raised of corruption. The other issue of course is overpricing.

Some of these projects through acts of corruption and fraud are overpriced and in the end those who are meant to execute them find that they are not able to finally execute them. Of course, the other one is lack of skills where people do not have the requisite skills as you correctly say.

This focus on building cities something that I spoke about and the good thing about it is that as you go through our various provinces, several of our provinces are now beginning to focus on developments that could lead to building cities. Gauteng for instance, is in the process of finalising building a smart city around Lanseria. This was inspired by what I said at a national level.

Other provinces are also beginning to focus on developing new cities. If you look at the area between Johannesburg and Pretoria, what we have done in the 30 years is to develop that whole area largely driven yes by the private sector and this is where for instance just a new built environment area landscape has just risen. Risen and the public sector now needs also to focus on several areas in our country. Gauteng

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in many ways is going to be taking the lead in building a smart city in the Lanseria area. Indeed, many other provinces are beginning to focus on that.

Building a city does take a while. Particularly given all the reasons that you enumerated. As they say Rome was never built in a day! It does take time. However, the important thing is that we are beginning to raise our ambition. We are beginning to see what is possible. Of course, we are constraint by a number of issues including the reasons that you enumerated but the ambition is there. I am beginning to see a number of our provinces beginning to aspire towards having infrastructure built that is going to develop our country. As we focus on infrastructure, we will be building structures both public facilities for our people and the private sector will come in toe as well. So, it is going to be an overarching type of built environment improvement process that we will embark upon. In the end we will be able to turn South Africa into a building site. I see it coming and I see it on the horizon. This is the time in the Seventh Administration when we will begin to gain momentum. For the things we are now focusing on through Infrastructure SA is to focus on capacitating those who can work on infrastructure. Putting in place the financing mechanism, ensuring that we embark on reforms that will

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prevent corruption. Increasing the skills that are going to be needed for increasing our built environment.

So, yes, we are going to turn South Africa into a construction site, and it is going to happen whether you like it or not, it is coming. Thank you very much.

Mr J H P BRITZ: Mr President, it is a sad indictment that 30 years after democracy South Africans cannot travel between cities via train. They cannot even travel 20km from outside the city centre into the Central Business District, CBD, via train. It is therefore clear that current infrastructure is inadequate to deliver this and that the holistic approach is needed for South Africans to have the dignity of a life where they do not need to wake up at 4:30 in the morning just to get to the CBD at eight o'clock in the morning via public transport.

When a functioning rail system would allow them to drastically reduce travel time and cost.

Mr President you just signed a three sphere Western Cape Memorandum of Understanding, MOU, on Police.

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Will you do the same on transport to get our people moving?

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Chairperson, the movement of our people is one of the areas that we are focusing on. This is one of the ways in which we want to reduce the costs of living. The costs of living for our people has largely also risen around their transportation. This in many ways is also due to the apartheid spatial architecture which relegated poor people to faraway places from where they work and in business. We are now focussing on how we can increase and even repair the transport lines. Public transport is one of the defining markers of nearly good developing economy where we can transport people through public means whether it be by busses or by rail is what we are seeking to reform.

Yes indeed, our rail system has fallen into disrepair, but we are in the process of rebuilding it particularly for commuters that is one of the areas that we have been focusing on. Lines that have been closed in several urban areas are now becoming opened. I have had stories of individuals who say my transport costs have now come down considerably because I now can Get on a train and go to work whereas I use to pay a lot of money. In some cases, almost 30 to 40% of people's income go towards transport. So, reducing the costs that people are having to

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incur when it comes to transportation is one of the areas of focus.

Yes, we have taken steps not only to repair rail but also to capacitate levels of government to say yes you can focus on ensuring that the rail system that goes through your area is well run and well executed. That is one of the areas that we focus on yes you asked having embarked on or overseeing the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between three levels of government: National, provincial as well as local when it comes to policing. There needs to be greater co-operation amongst all those levels of government to ensure that in the end we reduce the costs of traveling for our people.

So, yes, the answer is we would like to see enhanced co-operation. This falls within the broad realm of co-operation in government. Intergovernmental co-operation should affect all sectors and not just the Police but various sectors so that we all work together as structures of government to improve the lives of our people. So, transport is one of the areas that yes, we want to focus on. We want to raise our gaze as well so that we have interprovincial travel that is made easier.

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That is why we also approved a project where we will have easier transport between major metros and in-built improved train lines so that our people can travel better. For instance, we are going to embark on travel between Johannesburg and eThekweni or Durban. That is going to be a major commuter artery and between Johannesburg for instance Musina. Many of these areas are going to be focused on as we move on.

So, they are on our radar screen, on our sites and we are going to embark on that as we improve infrastructure in our country. Thank you, hon Chairperson.

Question 2:

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Chairperson, we launched the Presidential Health Compact initiative in 2019. The health compact that was entered into then is a framework of co-operation between critical sectors in our country to improve health outcomes. Through this, we were able to bring together various key role-players in our country, in government, business, labour, civil society, academia, traditional health practitioners, allied health practitioners and patient user groups, including those who manufacture health products. Now, this was a formidable coming together of all these key role-

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players in one of the most important areas that affect our people's lives.

In 2023, we convened the Second Presidential Health Summit and produced what we call the Second Presidential Health Compact for 2024 to 2029. On 22 August, Deputy President Paul Mashatile signed the compact on my behalf, as I had an eye infection at the time, and that was the signing of the health compact that brought together signatories from several sectors. The compact aims to ensure multisectoral involvement in the health system, strengthen the health care system and to prepare it for the implementation of the National Health Insurance, NHI.

Some stakeholders, specifically from business, chose not to sign the Second Presidential Health Compact. They had several reasons why they did not come having come the first-time round. They cited their concerns regarding the National Health Insurance Act and references to NHI in the compact. We believe there is nevertheless good reason for these stakeholders to be involved in the work needed to achieve the aims that are contained in the compact.

Through the compact, we aim to invest in a capable, compassionate, fit-for-purpose workforce in the health sector. We aim to strengthen local manufacturing of health products and ensure health infrastructure meets the necessary quality standards that our people require in the health system.

The compact also seeks to use the capabilities of the private sector to enable equitable access to quality services for all citizens. It seeks to maintain the gains that have been made in the National Quality Improvement Plan to ensure users experience the same quality of care whether in a state or in a private facility. The compact also aims to ensure adequate community engagement and inclusivity in the health sector so as to ensure that other people do not feel excluded where they get inferior health care services. Importantly, the compact aims to ensure that the National Health Insurance is implemented affordably, deriving value for money and also eliminating corruption.

These are the objectives which all stakeholders can support and work towards. We therefore encourage all role-players to be involved in pursuing all these objectives - noble objectives at that, so that we can ensure that we have a

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health care system that will serve all the people of our country.

The implementation of the compact is overseen by a Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Steering Committee that brings together all the key stakeholders that are part of the compact.

All these people who attended the recent signing of the compact agreed on its terms of reference, which includes strengthening the health system in preparation for the National Health Insurance implementation. We hope that all stakeholders will use this forum to engage. Through continuous engagement which is what I am calling for also on the NHI, stakeholders should be able to find each other and to find solutions to some of the problems that still exist.

By working together on the fundamental issues on which we agree we will be able to make a significant contribution towards improving the quality of health care for all South Africans. This, we will be able to do through engagement, through not boycotting but also through talking to each other on a continuous basis. I thank you.

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Mr N H PIENAAR: Madam Chairperson, ...

Afrikaans:

Agb President, ...

Die PRESIDENT VAN DIE REPUBLIEK: Middag.

Mr N H PIENAAR: Minister Motsoaledi took a very belligerent stance despite your indication that you were open to discussions, despite widespread concerns regarding the NHI. Are you, Mr President and Minister Motsoaledi not concerned that the NHI Act is a breach of an individual's right to dignity and freedom of choice as enshrined in section 10 of the Constitution? Thank you, Madam Chair.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: I want to reiterate that the process of engagement is a true hallmark of how I function as President, and how the government that I lead also functions, to the extent that you may well have heard Minister Motsoaledi - I want to assure you that he is one of those Ministers who is open to engagement, to listening, and to talking. And yesterday we had lengthy discussion over lunch, and we discussed this matter and we both agreed and underscored the need for exchanging views with those who may well have

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concerns, and those who have concerned are South Africans whose views we must hear. I should tell you that Business Unity SA, Busa, have written me a long letter where they are raising their concerns, as have others, and they have requested that I should engage them. And I said to the Minister, we are going to meet them and here the concerns that they have been raising over a long time.

Now, the National Health Insurance is now an Act of Parliament. I signed it, having been passed in this Parliament. This Parliament passed the Act, and in doing so, it considered the various inputs that were made by a multiplicity of people through the length and the breadth of the country. In its own wisdom, this Parliament, both the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces in the Sixth Administration, passed the Act. There are still people who want to talk about the implementation of the NHI, and I am open that we talk about how the Act is going to be implemented and to hear the concerns that they have, which is precisely what I am going to do in the coming few weeks. Am I concerned about eroding the dignity and the freedom of choice of South Africans? No. The dignity and freedom of South Africans is guaranteed in our Constitution, and I cannot ever be seen to be violating that, nor can this House, as Parliament, be seen

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to be violating. If any Act or law that we have passed is seen to be violating that, we should all know as South Africans that the Constitutional Court will be the arbiter. It will declare whether that is so or not. But that does not prevent us from examining the views and hearing those who may well have issues. As I said, it is about how we implement and how we strengthen our health system. That is what we need to focus on. Can we have a health system that is going to deliver good health services to South Africans? And rather than just be fetish and be concerned about the notion of the national health system, let us be concerned about how we improve our health system, how we ensure that there is good infrastructure in our hospitals, and how we ensure that our health practitioners are well trained, they execute their work well, and they treat South Africans with great compassion as they go to the health service centres. That should be our focus. I call upon all of us as South Africans to focus on that issue, because that is the critical issue. The costs of health care are what we need all to be concerned about. Costs of health care are escalating all over the world, and whichever country you try to examine, you will find that they are escalating.

Now, our government has determined that we are going to reduce the costs of living, and one of the ways in which that can be

curbed is through the implementation of the National Health Insurance. I want us to work together to see how we make life better for all South Africans and how we reduce the cost of living and the cost of health care for all South Africans. The National Health Insurance therefore gives us a great opportunity to embark on this journey because health care affects everyone, whether you are today healthy, tomorrow you may not be so healthy. So, it is therefore important that we focus on how we can improve our health care system. I invite you and everyone else to join us in this journey of making sure that this is achieved. Thank you, hon Chairperson.

Mr M F MOKWELE: Chairperson, hon members ...

Sesotho:

... kgotsong ...

English:

... Mr President. Chairperson, Your Excellency, my question is: Whether, in light of the recent discovery of widespread corruption involving lawyers, hospital staff, and patients in fraudulent medical negligence claims, government is looking at using the signing of the Second Presidential Health Compact to rally all health care practitioners and professional to fight

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and wage a concerted fight against corruption in the health sector and ensure that there are harsher consequences for those who are involved in grand theft and looting of public resources that would have otherwise been used to expand access to health care for our people? Thank you, Chairperson.

The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Hon President, it was more of a comment. Maybe if you would want to speak to it as well. Over to you, hon President.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Chairperson, a wonderful comment at that, and all I would add is that yes, the issues that you raised, hon member, is precisely what we want to focus on. There have been those who have focused on fraudulent activities or executing fraudulent activities through the health care system, and some of them have been through legal actions and through misrepresenting either patients or whatever, and they have often sought to find loopholes that they can utilize to defraud the system. In many ways, as we often say, that corruption is a crime against the people, because it weakens our health care system. It is precisely this that we now focusing on. I have signed several Special Investigating Unit, SIU, directives to have investigations launched to deal precisely in large measure the health care

sector where we have seen acts of corruption. We want to reduce and eliminate corrupt activities in the health care system, and it is through vigilance and paying more attention that we will be able to do so. So, we want to focus on those who are perpetrating those acts of corruption, and we will find them and deal with them. The good thing is that as we strengthen our criminal justice system, we will be able to find those people and we want to remove as much room for them as possible so that those acts of stealing resources that are meant to improve the lives of the people of South Africa are limited and are eliminated. So, thank you very much for your comment.

Ms S M MOKOENA: Good afternoon, President, the National Health Insurance is facing widespread criticism over its feasibility and potential for corruption. Can the President provide clear details of how the government plans to fund the NHI sustainably and ensure accountability and prevent it from becoming another misguided state programme? What safety measures will be in place to protect it from becoming the same failures that we have seen in the public institution? And I hear the President saying that there will be SIU interventions to catch those who are defrauding the system. However, we would like to know what measures or programmes are in place to

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stop or to curb people from trying to rob the system? Thank you, President.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Several mishaps that we have heard - if I can call them that - were acts of corruption have been perpetrated in a number of ways and by a number of people have taught us and continue to teach us a lot of lessons about what not to do as we deal with the lives of our people in terms of seeking to improve them, as well as dealing with the public resources that we are mandated to manage. Your question is how we are going to fund the NHI. I mean the NHI process of funding is ongoing, and I have often said that that it is ongoing, it has been clearly determined. Our Treasury and our Health Department are working vigorously through a process of precisely doing that. The national health systems in many other countries are usually funded through various means, public resources, and all that. So, we will be able to determine exactly how that is going to be done. But in terms of managing the resources, particularly the funds, we are going to put in place checks, balances, and systems that are going to make it difficult or impossible for those who may well want to engage in corrupt activities. If you look at the Act itself, it has several checks and balances and various mechanisms through which we will be able to manage the

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resources well. Quite often, the scared tactic or issue that has been raised by several people revolves around the management of the fund, the National Health Insurance Fund. How well will that be managed? The government does manage a lot of money and various funds. And yes, in some cases there are fraudulent activities, but they are often found out. Our National Treasury is one of the best treasuries that you can find, and it is going to work together with the Health Department to ensure that we set up a fund that will have good governance measures and systems that is going to ensure that we limit and eliminate acts of fraud. Many people, as I was saying earlier to the hon member, want to talk about that as well. That is why I say yes, we are open to engaging and talking about how the NHI will be implemented. Some of the areas that they raise are about how the fund will be managed, and it is this that we are willing to talk about and to hear what their views are in as far as the management of such a huge fund is going to be like. So, talking to other people, engaging, collaborating, and finding particularly good systems of managing these public resources is precisely what we are going to do. Our main objective is going to be to ensure that we have a health system that is going to deliver a better health to the people of South Africa, and we will therefore want to use various mechanisms to ensure that that becomes a

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reality. So, be rest assured that we will put in place the necessary checks and balances that will prevent acts of robbing the people of South Africa of their resources. Thank you, hon member.

Ms M KENNEDY: Chairperson ...

Tshivenda:

...ndi mathabama, Muphresidennde.

MUPHRESIDENNDE WA RIPHABULIKI: Ndi masiari avhuḍi.

English:

Ms M KENNEDY: President, the reality is that South Africans do not want this health compact as our people living in rural areas, townships, and informal settlement will still be subjected to the same public hospitals and clinics, while on the other side, the affluent ones will have the outmost benefit due to their proximity to their private institutions. Therefore, this Bill will have no impact on the lives of those who suffer under our public health system. So, in light of this, has the President considered opening clinics for 24 hours, and seven days a week? If so, could the President

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please provide details in this regard? If it is not like this, what is hindering this? Thank you, Mr President.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Chairperson, and hon member, thank you very much for your question, I beg to differ with you when you say most people or South Africans do not want the Health Compact. That is not true. As I said earlier, we signed the Health Compact in 2019. And the Health Compact was - if you like - a harbinger - a preparatory process of the development of our health system, leading us to say the National Health Insurance. Many role players, including grassroots organizations, and your traditional health practitioners were there from the rural areas when they signed the Health Compact in my presence. Similarly, with the Second Health Compact, we still had several organizations. And those that I spoke about that did not come are those who raised concerns about the National Health Insurance, particularly its implementation in relation to one or two sections thereof. Even those who have concerns, the concerns go around one or two sections of the National Health Insurance. In the main, most of them say we support, but they also support the principle of universal health coverage, which, by the way, hon member, is - if you like - a dictate from the World Health Organization, WHO, or the United Nations that has said that

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through its Sustainable Development Goals, we must move ... countries must move towards embracing and having a universal health coverage system. This is the journey upon which we have embarked. Now, if anyone thinks that we are mad or have lost our minds, I would like you to know that we are following the global guidance of which we are part of at the international or global level. So, it cannot and is not true that many do not want the Health Compact. You raised an important and specific question about our clinics, which could be open on a 24-hour basis. That is our key aspiration in several areas in our country, the hours of opening are continuing to increase and in support of what you are saying, hon member, is as I go around the country, as we hold in imbizos, these are some of the sentiments that are articulated by our people. They want ever open clinics; they want to be able to have easy access. I agree that, yes, we should have health centres and clinics that will be open and accessible all the time to our people. It is those budgetary constraints that we have where, for instance, opening a clinic means that you need to have three shifts, the morning shift, the day shift, and the night shift, where you need to have people that are always going to be present, and they require relative payment that needs to be made to them. So, as our fiscal position continues to improve, I see us acceding to that type of aspiration that you are

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articulating, which aspiration I agree with. I agree with our people who say we want clinics or health centres that will be open most of the time. So, I agree. It is a question of ability driven by the constraints that we have. So, you will be pleased to know that I agree with you. So, that is one thing that the EFF today can say the President agrees with us.

The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: I am sure hon members; you have noted that hon President was asked completely new sets of questions of which he dealt with diligently. This is indicative of the government that is ready and willing to serve its people. We have noted that, and we appreciate that, hon President.

Question 3:

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Thank you, hon Chairperson. With that accolade I thought you were about to say, President you can go home now. [Laughter.] Hon members, much higher levels of inclusive growth are needed to achieve sustainable employment in our country. That is why this Seventh administration that is made up of the government of national unity has placed inclusive economic growth as its apex priority. However, it will take time for such growth to meet the scale that is needed in our country. This is why a range

of complementary measures are required to address poverty and enable economic participation.

The Presidential Employment Stimulus which we launched during the period of COVID-19, is an initiative that enables support for public employment, livelihood support as well as for enterprise development. The Presidential Employment Stimulus, has contributed to over two million jobs and job opportunities as well as livelihood improvement opportunities since its inception in 2020.

The Social Employment Fund, which is implemented by the Industrial Development Corporation under the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition, has created well over 100 000 jobs. The fund creates work that serves the common good at community level, supporting food security, informal settlement upgrading, combating gender-based violence and femicide amongst many other forms of work.

Subsistence farmers have also been supported to enhance their production. This has contributed to increased levels of production and releasing a number of hectares of farming land under cultivation. Support has also been given to our metros to expand their public employment programmes. We have a former

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amyor of a metro here, the former mayor of eThekweni, Kaunda, who can testify to this. He had extensive discussions with me on the benefits that our people were drawing from this programme in eThekweni. There he is and you can ask him.

Since 2020, as many as 4,5 million young people have registered on the SAYouth.mobi network, which was established by the Presidential Youth Employment Intervention. This platform has enabled young people to access just over 1,4 million earning opportunities as potential employers now utilise this platform to source young people for employment. Many employers now visit that platform as they seek to get young people for employment.

A key innovation is the Jobs Boost Outcomes Fund currently in its pilot phase. Jobs Boost is a programme of the Presidential Youth Employment Intervention. It is led by the National Skills Fund, an entity of the Department of Higher Education and Training. The fund is designed to incentivise effective skills training by paying training providers only when young people have been placed in jobs. In this way, training providers are encouraged to provide skills that employers actually need and ensure that job candidates are equipped to access and sustain employment.

To address poverty and the high cost of living, all municipalities across the country are directed to implement the indigent policies and quite an amount of money has been set aside by the Treasury in this regard. Well over R70 billion has been made available. I used to think it was much less than that but the Treasury has said, President, it is actually quite a lot of money, almost R76 billion. It has been allocated for the year 2024-25 to assist indigent families in our country, thus reducing the cost of living and it will help to support 11,2 million indigent households that need the support. Through this we are enhancing the whole process of assisting our people.

According to Statistics South Africa, only 2,7 million indigent households have had access to free basic services such as water and electricity. We are encouraging and directing our municipalities to ensure that they register more people and not utilise the money for other ends, but to reduce the cost of living for our people through these measures that have been upon.

The Department of Co-operative Governance is working together with our provincial counterparts to support our municipalities to raise awareness on this. These and many other measures are

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exactly what we are doing to reduce the cost of living and to address the scourge of poverty in our country. Thank you, hon Chairperson

Setswana:

Moh J S MANANISO: Dumela Moporesidente.

English:

My question to you is that, are there any initiatives that the government has in terms of covering those who are 35 years and above, those who are marginalised, vulnerable, excluded in terms of the triple challenges of inequalities, poverty and unemployment? Thank you.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Chairperson, yes, hon member. I have been at pains at explaining that our interventions to address the challenge of unemployment should never be seen as limited and only focus on young people who are below 35. They are much broader than that. A very good example is the Presidential Employment Stimulus. When we launched it, we launched it to also encompass all those who are unemployed. In the course of implementing it much as it have been depicted as a youth focussed one, it has also brought in people who are over 35. It focusses, for instance,

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on improving livelihoods, it has focusses on people who are involved in subsistence farming. We have supported hundreds of thousands of our people in improving their economic livelihoods in subsistence farming, in enterprise development and all those have with a view of addressing the challenges that our people are having on an overall basis. The notion that we focus in just only on those who are below 35 is not true. We are focussing on all our people who are facing challenges.

Unemployment has risen in an exponential and horrible manner in our country and we need to focus on all sectors of society and not just focus on youth only. The young people bear the heaviest burden because 60% or so of young people in our country are those that are mostly unemployed and we obviously need to focus on them, but not at the expense and to the detriment of those who are above 35. So, we will focus also on those who are above 35 and open up opportunities for them to eek a livelihood from the growing economy of our country. Thank you, hon member.

Mr B J FARMER: Thank you, Chairperson. Hon President, it is an honour for me in this moment as I was one of the school of thought at the time that was expecting you to follow up Tata

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Madiba in 1999. But as our lives are in the hands of God, he sometimes manage things in another way round. But this is a huge momentum. Hon President, in the light of the question, youth unemployment, with specific reference to the coloured youth, what is your Cabinet's plan with reference to black in general and Africans in particular with particular reference to the coloureds not being seen as Africans, and the challenges it creates to our coloured youths in seeking employment? Thank you.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Chairperson, you say this is a huge monument for you, hon member. This is a very tall moment for me [Laughter.] I often comment about people of your height when I go to South Sudan. One day you must go with me to South Sudan. [Laughter.]

We are all Africans. We are all Africans born and bred on this continent and the utilisation of the term at the height of our struggle as we were prosecuting the struggle in the way that you explain it, was the way in which we focussed on the way the oppression was manifesting itself. Let's face it, African people in our country were African as people and we are the same people. We were facing the sharpest oppression. Indeed,

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people who were coloureds in our country were also facing real hardships and oppressive system. It applied to all of us.

Today, as we move on with our developmental processes we are not focussing on one national group, but we are focussing on all. We are saying we need a nonracial country and a country that seeks to create cohesion in South Africa to unite all the people of South Africa. What the government does, and indeed it is what the society also does, must be to unite all of us. We must embark on the processes that are going to see to the development of all our people, be they white, be they coloured, be they African or be they Indian, all of us need to be able to say, yes, we are developing.

Employment programmes must also focus on that group that you are talking about - coloured young people and all the young people in our country. In fact, you will find that our employment stimulus programme has encompassed all. It is not focussing on one group, but it is an overarching group and it has brought in a number of young people, a number of people right across ten atonal groupd in our country.

South Africa is a country where all of us belong. It belongs to all of us and no national group must ever feel that the one

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is favoured over and above the other. We are all the children of this country and what happened in the past is precisely what we must deal with collectively. As we deal with it, we must never fall into the temptation that one group is favoured more than the other. We want to see development raising all boats. We must see development focussing on all of us. As we do that, of course there will be emphasis that is laid on the circumstances that each of all of us have faced. As we focus on the circumstances that each group has faced it must all lead to the development of all. We are never going to fall into the temptation that says relegate one group to the bottom and raise one group. We are saying we are raising all the groups in our country and make sure that, yes, there is progress that will apply to all the national groups.

If we were ever to just one group we will be violating the precepts of our Constitution. Our Constitution is very clear about equality. It is also very clear about taking measures to engender progress and development of all those who have suffered very, very terribly under the process of inequality and racial discrimination. As racial discrimination affected various groups in our country, we've to redress those imbalances. Those imbalances also affect coloured people in our country as they have affected Africans in our country, and we

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must all therefore develop and become one cohesive that is in the process of development. Thank you, hon Chairperson.

Mr D R RYDER: Thank you very much, Chairperson. Welcome back to the NCOP, Mr President. This time it's the Seventh iteration. The Freedom Charter, there's employment challenges, poverty and inequality as key areas of focus. Mr Mandela also mentioned these challenges when he had his famous debate with Mr De Klerk way back in 1994. These three aspects had since been standard in every single ANC manifesto with President Kgalema Motlanthe to be the first on record to put them together and call them the triple challenges. Anyone who listens to the ANC speeches since will agree that the triple challenges has become one of the stock phrases to be inserted into every speech. But in spite of all this a focus on unemployment is at all times high, poverty becomes as challenging as ever and the Gini coefficient has worsened. The ANC policies are clearly not working and the voters agree, which is why they delivered a government of national unity.

The government of national unity, GNU, is an ideal opportunity to take a look at the new ideas and to be discussed and tested. What has the Cabinet done to evaluate policies to find areas where compromise can be sought with a view to driving

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the GDP growth for the benefit of all South Africans? Thank you, Mr President and Madam Chair.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Thank you, hon Chairperson and thank you hon Ryder. It's good to that you are still one of the old timers of the NCOP. [Interjections.] Yes, indeed! Hon member, you will know of course that when we put together the government of national unity it was underpinned by what we call the statement of intent. The statement of intent contains a clear set of principles. One should never see it as a compromise. That's clearly not a compromise, but it a very clear statement that says we need to focus on what will take our country forward. Those principles include what we need to do from a policy point of view and from an execution point of view. I don't see a compromise in any of those. It is a unity of purpose, a unity of purpose that have brought all those that agree with the principles that are underpinned by our Constitution, the rule of law, respect for the Constitution and seeking the development of the people of South Africa through a growing economy and the creation of jobs. All that revolves around clear policies of what we need to do to execute what we have set out in the statement of intent.

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The statement of intent is really a beautiful document around which 10 parties have coalited to focus on how we will take our country forward and how we can improve the economic situation and how we can create jobs. In the course of doing so we are now developing a clear medium-term development plan that is going to guide the Seventh administration for the next five years where we will work together as a government of national unity.

Last night I had a dinner with various parties of the government of national unity. Each one of the parties that were at that dinner table all confirmed that the government of national unity is here to stay. We recommit ourselves to the government of national unity and we are going to work to implement the statement of intent and everything that is set out in there - that includes improving our economy, growing our economy, creating jobs, making sure that there is continued rule of law, increasing and improving the capacity of the state and addressing the issues of poverty and inequality. There is unity of purpose and unity of commitment when it comes to that.

If you say this is a compromise, it's really a clear commitment to improve the lots of South Africans. Last night

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there wasn't much wine flowing around. No, there was a lot of conversation and recommitment to addressing the challenges that face our country. It was a beautiful evening, and I wish you were there even as a fly on the wall just to see. Thank you very much.

Mrs N N CHIRWA-MPUNGOSE: In a population of above 60 million, 30 million South Africans live in poverty, 18,2 million in extreme poverty, 13,8 million are experiencing food poverty, literal hunger and starvation. Mr President, there were lesser people living in poverty before you became President. There were lesser people unemployed, lesser violence against women and children, lesser murders and lesser femicide. Millions of our children under your presidency experience multidimensional poverty where they are deprived of health care, housing, nutrition, information, water and sanitation. These harrowing statistics have never dropped since you became President. Instead, they continue to rise under your presidency. Poverty has worsened in South Africa since you became the President of South Africa. Whose poverty are you referring to for prioritising? Since 2018 it is not reflected statistically and in the lives of women and children who are at the bottom of the food chain, and whose conditions have worsened since your inauguration in 2018 to date. Thank you.

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The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Hon President, again, I have not heard any question that has been asked. However, if you so wish you may respond to the statement. Whether it is the statement of an intent or what, I don't know, but you are at liberty to respond to it.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Thank you, hon Chairperson. I have listened to the hon member a few times. One thing that she is really good at is having a statistically driven mind. She is very good in reagitating statistics. With the greatest respect, I should say some of the statistics that you put forward are a bit skew and flawed. But with great respect I say, I did not hear any question being put forward. I just heard ... [Interjections.]

IsiZulu:

Nk N N CHIRWA-MPUNGOSE: Ngiyabonga Sihlalo ...

English:

I said whose poverty are you referring to be prioritising?

IsiZulu:

Ngicela ukuthi sikhloniphane. Ngibuzile kuMongameli ngithe ...

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English:

The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: I have not given you an opportunity, but you are already speaking, hon member. You had a reason on the point of order. We have afforded you an opportunity to ask a follow-up question of which you made a statement, and accordingly afforded the President to address you on the issues that you have raised. Over to you, hon the President. You may respond to the statement that has been made before the House.

IsiZulu:

USIHLALO WOMKHANDLU WEZIFUNDAZWE: Inhlonipho ayiqale ngawe sisi.

English:

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Chairperson, it is a pity that the hon member did not allow me to continue because as much as she did not really put a question forward whether I was going to favour her with a precise response to the comment that she made because she seems to be asking which poverty am I referring to.

Of course, we have always said that as the hon member has said earlier that, yes, we face a triple challenge in our country.

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We have never shied away from that. We have never shied away from saying there is rife poverty in our country. There is inequality, and indeed, there is unemployment. These are the challenges that our country faces. These are the challenges that the government of national unity is determined to address. As we entered into the Seventh administration all the 10 parties committed themselves to. In the programme of action, we are aiming and determined to ensure that we reduce incidents of poverty in our country - the poverty that affects millions of South Africans - unemployment that affects millions of South Africans and to reduce inequality. This is what we have committed to doing. If care to know and to listen, the government of national unity is committed to be doing precisely that.

The vigour and commitment that we are underpinning our work with is such that as we grow and embark on more and more developmental initiatives, we will be able to reduce unemployment and create more jobs. Through that we are certain that we will be able to reduce poverty as well and address the challenges of inequality. Thank you, hon Chairperson.

Question 4:

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The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: The policy direction of the Government of National Unity, GNU, was outlined in the opening of parliament address that I made on 18 July 2024. The key constitutive ideas of the GNU are set out in the Statement of Intent, as I have said, which was signed by all the constitutive parties to the GNU.

Those parties agreed to certain basic principles, including a firm commitment to respect the Constitution and the rule of law. The principles included a commitment to promote accountability, transparency, integrity and good governance. The parties also agreed on a minimum programme as the foundation of the work of the GNU. These were developed into priority actions that will form the basis for the Medium-Term Development Plan, MTDP, of our government in the Seventh Administration.

As indicated in the opening of parliament address, the GNU will dedicate the next five years to actions and interventions that advance three strategic priorities. Firstly, to drive inclusive growth and job creation. Secondly, to reduce poverty and to tackle the high cost of living. Thirdly, to build a capable, ethical and developmental state.

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We will pursue growth that is inclusive and transformative. We have said that inclusive growth must support the empowerment of black South Africans and women. We will continue to pursue programmes that encourage broad-based black economic empowerment, BBBEE, employment equity and support to small- and medium-sized enterprises. We will continue to protect and uphold the hard-won rights of workers, and continuously strive to improve the conditions in which they live and work.

In advancing our three strategic priorities, we will, among other things, massively increase the scale of investment in infrastructure, as I said earlier. We will expand the Presidential Employment Stimulus. As part of poverty alleviation measures, we will ensure that local government implements the indigent policy. We will review existing housing policies to enable people to live closer to economic opportunities. Importantly, we will invest in the people of South Africa.

This includes efforts to achieve universal access to early childhood development. It includes the expansion of vocational and technical training in schools as well as in post-school institutions.

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As part of the implementation of the National Health Insurance, NHI, as I said, we will strengthen health care system. To improve the capability of the state, we will work with provincial governments to stabilise local government and improve service delivery processes. We are strengthening law enforcement agencies to address crime as well as corruption.

We recognise that the GNU is comprised of parties from across the political spectrum, representing a range of political and ideological perspectives. However, we have been able to agree on a common programme of action that provides a basis for far-reaching social and economic transformation. This is what we have committed ourselves to, and this is what we are determined to execute to improve the lives of South Africans, with clear determination and an action-oriented approach to doing what is needed to ensure that South Africans get a better life. Thank you, hon Chairperson.

IsiXhosa:

Nksz M MAKESINI: Mandibulele Mongameli ngempendulo...

English:

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... Hellen Zille commented that the government that you lead, in essence is a coalition between yourself and the DA. She also said that ...

IsiXhosa:

...wena uyibiza ukuba nguRhulumente woBumbano kaZwelonke ukuzama ukuzicengezelela kumalungu ombutho wakho angaxolanga ngale nto ubafake kuyo. Uhambisa athi...

English:

... you will never embark on any programme of action ...

IsiXhosa:

... ngaphandle kokunqwala kweDA.

English:

Based on these things...

Isixhosa:

... azithethileyo, ndifuna ukuqonda eli qela ukuba liza kugatya yonke into eniza nayo kusini na...

English:

... regardless of the executive being the majority?

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IsiXhosa:

Niza kuyilungisa kanjani...

English:

... the apartheid, the colonial legacy and make sure that ...

IsiXhosa:

... lo rhulumente uyakwazi ukubuyisela umhlaba ebantwini,
nikwazi ukuqubisana nentswelongqesho...

English:

... so that the challenge that we face as a country...

IsiXhosa:

... siyibeka kwelokulibala? Ndiyabulela.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Chairperson, I must say that the hon member seeks to characterise the GNU as a government between myself and the DA and that is a completely wrong characterisation. It is not a government that revolves around the President and another political party; it is a government of 10 political parties that are involved in a Government of National Unity.

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We have determined, as I said earlier in my main reply, to work together as a Government of National Unity. How anyone, including the person that you referred to, seeks to describe it is just a matter of polemics. It is just somebody who is whistling out there in the wind and trying to paint a particular colour to what we are seeking to do. Those that are involved in the GNU know and this was also confirmed last night when I met all the parties.

We engage with each other with respect, recognition and acceptance of the role that each of the parties play united in the project of improving the lives of South Africans.

Therefore, those who have this notion that it is only myself and the party or two parties are completely wrong, and that is a completely wrong reading of the current situation, and may I say, even a reading of where this country seeks to be going.

We are moving forward as a united government made up of 10 political parties that have agreed to address the challenges that face the people of South Africa working together. The people of South Africa determined and decided that we should work together, and that was the mandate they have given us all to say work together to advance our interest. That is precisely what we are doing.

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I said that we are underpinning everything that we are doing through the Statement of Intent which is very clear in terms of what we need to achieve. We know that having set out a very clear programme of action we will execute that together.

I appointed a Cabinet that is made up of the various parties, some are represented in Parliament and many of them are represented in the executive, and I would like to give you a front row seat to see precisely how that is working out. It is working out so well that everyone who has been appointed in various positions are showing a great deal of commitment not to work for themselves, not to work for their own parties but to work for the people of South Africa. That is the strength of what we are seeking to do, and this is the government that I lead in the interests of the people of South Africa. Thank you very much.

The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Thank you, hon President. We are now ... can you take your seat, hon Gotsell? Thank you. We are now moving to the next follow up question asked by the DA through hon Gotsell. Over to you.

Hon President, can we allow him to ask the question?

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The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Yes, I am at your mercy, hon Chairperson.

Mr N GOTSELL: Mr President, you actually took most of my question by repeating the promise you made to the people of South Africa on 18 July, and you partially repeated it for the lady in the back there. With your permission, I would like to highlight the third priority and that is the promise of a capable, ethical and developmental state. So, if you and your government are then still committed to these priorities, my question to you is: Why is it that Minister Thembi Simelane is still in your Cabinet as the Minister of Justice?

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Chairperson, you will know of course, hon Gotsell, that as soon as the story around herself arose I asked for a report that will outline precisely what the actual situation is. She has just submitted the report to me with all the documents and attachments which I am now studying.

I have publicly said that I would like time and space to examine all this and be able to see how we take this matter forward. So, we embark on various processes, and I think all organisations and entities do embark on processes, and I would

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like you as well, hon Gotsell, to allow this process to ensue.

Thank you very much.

IsiXhosa:

Mnu. M M PETER: Mandibulise Sihlalo weNCOP, Mama Tsipane...

English:

... hon President of the Republic of South Africa...

IsiXhosa:

...molo.

UMONGAMELI WERIPHABLIKI: Molo nakuwe.

English:

Mr M M PETER: My President, my question is so simple; it is just for the clarification of the GNU.

IsiXhosa:

Ndiza kuthetha isiNgesi ke Mongameli...

English:

... today to make things simple.

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IsiXhosa:

UMONGAMELI WERIPHABLIKI: Ndiyasisa nesiXhosa kanti, kodwa ungathetha nangesiNgesi, khumsha.

English:

Mr M M PETER: Thank you, President ...

IsiXhosa:

... ndikhe ndifunde nam ukukhumsha.

English:

In the case where parties in the GNU are unable to reach consensus regarding the implementation of the basic minimum programme of priorities contained in the Statement of Intent for 2024 GNU and the matter be taken to consultation council for mediation, will the council's decision be binding or taken as a recommendation by members of the GNU? The reason I am asking this is because we don't understand the actual gathering of this GNU as we, the same people that are in this GNU, are still challenging you, President, meaning we don't understand what we are in for. Thank you, President.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Chairperson, we have sought to explain over and over what the GNU is all about. It is about

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executing the mandate of South Africans. South African people did not give a single party an outright majority to set up government on its own, which then required that we all put our heads together and say how do we take this country forward.

In doing so, 10 parties got together and said we should work together as the people of South Africa have determined, and decided to form a government of national unity since no single party achieved a fifty plus one majority on its own.

This required a measure of co-operation, and a Statement of Intent was then drafted. I should say that a number of parties were then consulted - nearly all parties that are represented in our Parliament were consulted - and in the end 10 said, very clearly, we subscribe to these principles that are set out in the Statement of Intent and we are therefore committed and determined to work together as the 10 parties.

After the 10 parties agreed to doing so, I then had an opportunity, having been elected the President of the Republic by this Parliament, to appoint a Cabinet that is made up of the majority of those parties, and some are represented in our Parliament. Those members of the executive, including those who are in our Parliament, having signed to the Statement of

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Intent, have set out a clear programme of where South Africa should go on the mandate of the people of South Africa.

As I said earlier, we are all from different parties that have different manifestos and adhere to different ideologies.

However, what unites us is the Statement of Intent and in this statement, we also inserted the governance processes that will govern our relationship in case there are any areas of difference or disputes.

Last night when we met, we decided that in ensuring that we enhance a good working relationship we will have a processing team that will process whatever needs to be addressed by the leaders of all the political parties. That processing team will identify those issues that we need to discuss and resolve from time to time.

Embedded in the Statement of Intent is that if there ever was an area of difference ... let me put it up front: Because we come from different political parties there will always be differences as there are differences in any relationship, whether it is between friends, partners in a marriage or in an organisation or company or even here in Parliament, all over -

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there will always be people who see things differently and we therefore need to find ways of resolving those.

I don't work on the basis that we are going to differ to a point of parting ways; I have often worked on the basis of what Nelson Mandela taught us that for every problem there is a solution, and therefore you try to find the solution. We underpin working together and we confirmed this yesterday that we will find solutions to whatever problems that may arise. Problems will arise and we should never kid ourselves and think that we will not have challenges and problem.

So, when we will find problems, will we take them to arbitration or mediation? No, we will engage amongst ourselves and find each other. We have set up a system that has been tried and tested in solving problems, sufficient consensus. For me sufficient consensus means that we build consensus amongst all of us. We build consensus, convince one another and find solutions for the problems we may have. That is the way that the GNU will proceed forward. That is why I continue to say to our people, support this process that you as the people of South Africa decided we should have through the vote outcome that you landed us with. We are here because the people of South Africa, through their votes, delivered this

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outcome and we must make it work. So, last night we said we are going to make this work, and we will, as we face challenges and find solutions. You will see as time goes on. From tomorrow onwards you will see how we find solutions to continue with this GNU.

IsiXhosa:

Injalo ke kwaye ndiyathemba ukuba undivile. Xa ufuna ndithethe ngesiXhosa ndiza kwenza njalo kodwa ngenye imini. Ndiyabulela.

Tshivenda:

Vho M G MODISE: Vho Phuresidennde, ndi masiari.

MUPHURESIDENNDE WA RIPHABULIKI YA AFURIKA TSHIPEMBER: Ndi masiari a vhudi.

English:

Mr M G MODISE: Piggy-backing on the response, especially from Question 1, has the government put in place to track and monitor the performance of members of the executive of GNU and their individual performances in advancing priorities that have been set aside for the Seventh Administration and implanting the Cabinet Lekgotla resolutions as the basis for Medium-Term Development Plan for transforming South Africa and

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redressing the imbalances of the past? Is there a critical role that the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation is playing in the monitoring of the performance of GNU to ensure that everyone adheres to the Medium-Term Development Plan? Thank you.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Chairperson, the simple answer to those two questions is that yes, we are finalising the performance agreements that every Minister and Deputy Minister must sign with me. The Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation's job is to make sure that we evaluate what we are doing in government - the whole of government - whether we are implementing what we said we would implement.

The Medium-Term Development Plan which is being finalised now is going to set out what we need to do. Thereafter, every department and every member of the executive, through their performance agreements and plans that they have in terms of the departments that they lead, will know exactly what needs to be done. It also sets out the timeframes.

We are determined to move quickly and even raise our ambitions and make sure that we act with greater urgency and

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determination to improve the lives of the people of South Africa. We are facing enormous challenges that require an executive that is agile and determined to move quickly to implement those plans. So, yes, that is what we are going to do. Thank you, hon Chair. [Applause.]

Question 5:

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Chairperson and hon members, a fundamental principle on which our democracy is based is that South Africa, as I said earlier, belongs to all who live in it and are united in our diversity. We are one of the most diverse countries in the world. That has brought all of us who live in this country together over many years. And we have found a good way to live side by side in our diversity and forge a common future as the people of this country.

In making this assertion, we acknowledge the injustices of our painful past where the majority of South Africans were treated unfairly and discriminated against because of the colour of their skin. The Constitution provides for the enactment of laws and other measures to promote the rights of all people, to realise equality and to advance human rights and freedoms.

The Constitution is clear that everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law. To give effect to the equality goals in our Constitution, in the employment sphere, Employment Equity Act was enacted. The Employment Equity Act provides for the fair treatment of South Africans and prohibits any unfair treatment or discrimination, directly or indirectly against any person based on race based on gender, disability, or on any of the prohibited grounds listed in the Constitution. This also applies to job applicants.

Section 5 of the Employment Equity Act prescribes that all employers must take steps to promote equal opportunity in the workplace by eliminating unfair discrimination in any employment policy or practice. Therefore, any employment legislation, policy or practice that unfairly discriminates against anyone based on their race, gender, or any other prohibited ground is illegal. The Employment Equity Act is one of the several measures we have put in place to correct the grave historical injustice of economic exclusion.

The historical discrimination against black people and women in the workplace has produced an economy that does not provide equal opportunities for all. Not only is this unjust, but it

is also limiting the potential of our people in our economy. I often say that the past rulers of this country, had constructed an economy that did not work on all its potential cylinders. Although we have made progress since the advent of democracy, we still have some way to go, although we have taken a number of actions. There is still a lot that needs to be done.

According to the Annual Report of the Commission for Employment Equity for 2022/23, white people account for 63% of top management positions in our country. Yet, they comprise only 8% of the economically active population. By contrast, Africans account only for 17% of the top management positions, even though they account for 80% of the economically active population. The situation is better at the professionally qualified level, Africans account for nearly half of all professionally qualified positions. White people account for a third and Indians and coloureds account for around 10% each. These figures clearly show that while there are areas of progress, we have yet to reach a situation where all people have equal opportunities in the workplace, regardless of race or gender. All people in our country, including from so-called minority groups, should be able to have equal access, as I was saying earlier, to employment opportunities and to equally

contribute to the economic growth of our country, without feeling excluded, without feeling marginalised, but feeling that they are part of the whole of South Africa.

It is for this reason that we say once again that "South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity." Thank you, hon Chairperson.

Afrikaans:

Mnr H J VAN DEN BERG: Agb President, ...

English:

South Africa is yearning for the blessing of a demographic dividend that leads to more employment and less poverty. However, populations go through more than one demographic dividend in the course of their development. In stage one, per capita income increases as we move away from poverty and high birth rates. Stage two can be characterised as middle-income groups who are able to save a little. At level three, a personal group will have money to reinvest into society, which translates into more employment and tax revenue. However, as a diversified nation, not all population groups are at the same levels, and I am not referring to ethnicity.

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The Multidimensional Poverty Index, MPI, identifies deprived groups and districts. This argument then forms the pivot point for government spending and policy and is used to justify discriminative Black Economic Empowerment, BEE, and affirmative action legislation based on race towards a minority group. But it only serves to cripple the functioning of a state body that can now not run towards economic growth, as one leg is impaired and can therefore not help build and play their part.

Hon President, eradicators of poverty are lower birth rates, employment opportunities and employable workforce. Surely now, should we not look at repealing discriminative BEE and affirmative action as we look at the GNU Statement of Intent, namely working toward establishing a nonracial united society and improving the lives of all who live in it. If we, as a nation, desire to go forward, can we now also address this issue ... [Time Expired.]

The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Hon member, I am afraid your time is up. You have not even asked the question yet. So, Mr President, if I may give you the opportunity to respond to the hon member's statement. You may respond if you so wish, Mr President.

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The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Chairperson, thank you very much, and I do wish to respond to the statement. I think the clearly unstated question was, should we not look at repealing black economic empowerment as well as employment equity? And the answer is no. In fact, it will not be to the advantage of this country to repeal these laws that are transformative. I will tell you why I say they are transformative.

You yourself said that we could impair the whole body simply by walking - I am paraphrasing what you said, so to speak - on one leg and one pair of legs. That's exactly what I said that the way our economy was built was to favour one national group in our country. And that is why I say it was not operating on all cylinders and in some ways that is why our economy was not able to come into its full force, because it is like saying people have to participate in a race and you tie the leg of some of the participants and say, "Run!"

So, through these measures, through these laws, we are seeking to ensure that there is equality, there is equal involvement equal participation. Which, if you do not have the encouragement through rules and laws, may in some instances never be done. One of the things that I found really refreshing amongst a number of South Africans including white

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South Africans, is that some of these laws have now enabled them to sit back and say, wow this entity that we are involved in is does not speak to good representation. We need representation, demographic representation. We need women to also be brought up. We also need black people to be brought up to key positions and in many ways that is happening as I encounter a lot of South Africans. And this is not happening just on its own. It is happening because it is being encouraged by the laws, the rules and the regulations that we have put in place, they.

They raise the level of consciousness and attention...

Recently I had a wonderful experience, just to let you know. In the cattle industry, where a cattle society that has always been run only by white men. And they stopped just as they were choosing their next lead. They paused and said, "Wow, we have only ever had this society run by white men. With the awareness, the new laws and regulations that are in place in our country, we now have to include other genders and other people, and that has led to women rising to these leadership positions as well. It has led to black people getting into these positions, which would never have happened otherwise. That alone required legislation. It took regulations. It required the raising of consciousness. I would like to believe

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that there is not much resistance among South Africans. In fact, we should see this as unleashing the power of inclusivity of doing things together. I also see it in the GNU. The GNU has given rise to that.

In the past 30 years ago, we used to have a Cabinet which was all male and all white. Today you see a Cabinet that is mixed, where every South African national group is represented. And that is the beauty of our situation. And I think we should embrace that rather than fear and fear ghosts, fear the unknown. That is what we should move away from. Let us embrace the diversity, the rich diversity that this country has given rise to. We are one nation and let us make this nation work. Thank you very much.

Mr P J SWART: Thank you, hon Chair. Hon President, good afternoon. My question has actually halfway been asked, but if you can just elaborate. I acknowledge your positivity. You feel at ease in the NCOP, as we engage. Mr President, the DA's economic justice policy, and we also know part of the GNU, seeks to create that economically inclusive South Africa that belongs to all of us, free of any superficial differences between her beautiful people. It proposes a just society in which economic opportunities are available to all. And people

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who have the capabilities to make use of those opportunities through an approach, which should address the key drivers of inequality of opportunities, as well as broader socioeconomic needs. This proposal does not use the race as the framework as redress, it uses the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Will your government, after the 30 years of democracy, consider looking into such a policy proposal, a policy that grow South African economy for the benefit of all her beautiful people?

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Chairperson, the answer is quite simple. Yes. Our objective, which is clearly stated in the Statement of Intent, is precisely to develop our country's economy for the benefit of the people of South Africa, working together. That is what we are all about. And it should be about South African inclusivity, about working together, co-operating, addressing the problems and challenges of our country, as a people who have embraced its diversity, its unity and the need to redress the imbalances caused by our past. Our painful and terrible past has divided us. It has favoured one group over another. And that is what we can now resolve, in the most peaceful way possible. In the most amicable way and in the most co-operative way. Without anger, without retribution and with great unity. That is what we need

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to do to make sure we seize the opportunity. And we make more and more opportunities available to the people of South Africa through empowering one another.

I can give you one other example. Even amongst white people who are the most privileged in our country, we also found that the white women, you could say, were relegated to the back. They did not have the opportunities that this new democracy has opened up and many of them, if they dare to be brave, do say yes, this democratic era has opened up opportunities for all of us. A number of those who were privileged in the past do own up that yes, this democratic South Africa has enlarged and opened up more opportunities.

I forever remember the front page of one of the English-speaking business magazines in our country the Financial Mail, years ago, which had a front page that said, ...

Afrikaans:

... jislaaik, dit is lekker.

English:

Something like that. Which was showing how even white businesses are thriving. Yes, white people are also

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progressing, and we don't begrudge them. All we say is include everyone, let us all thrive. Let us all be inclusive and let the women of our country who were the most oppressed... And we often say that black women suffered under the triple oppression that existed because they were women, they were a working class and because they were black. Similarly, a number of groups in our country did suffer under that.

So, this era that we are in, particularly the GNU where we have united, even parties that are completely on the other side of the spectrum, are now committed to working together. I forever remember conversation last night, which revolved around land. Where even those who are on opposite sides, were saying yes, we are finding each other and working together to make sure that land is distributed to our people. That for me is what you could have called a miracle of the past. But this is what defines what we are as South Africa now, working together, moving forward. This is the era where we must embrace all those processes and interventions that unite us rather than divide us. Thank you, hon Chair.

Mr V GERICKE: Hon Chair and hon President, good afternoon, I do dearly wish to have called you "comrade Matamela" this afternoon ...

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The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Why don't you?

Mr V GERICKE: ... but your partnership with colonialist and racist and fundamentalists effectively exonerated you from the title, "Comrade." Be that as it may, Mr President, the EFF ...

Afrikaans:

... in sy beleidsdokumente, stipuleer dat bruin mense ook agtergeblewe is en bruin mense moet dieselfde behandel word in terme van die Wet op Gelyke Indiensnemings. Dit wil egter voorkom, of die praktyk sê vir ons, dat hoofsaaklik en uitsluitlik, etniese swart Suid-Afrikaners baat gevind het by die Wet op Gelyke Indiensneming.

English:

The question is that the Employment Equity Act was introduced to bring about equality, fair racial and gender representation in the workplace. And mostly young white South Africans have fallen prey to the agency selling international opportunities and subsequently left the country with their skills and expertise. Coloureds and Indian minorities have mainly remained in the country in the hope that they will be counted in when opportunities arise, many of whom are still at home with degrees and without employment opportunities.

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The EFF is asking whether the President has considered reviewing the Employment Equity Act, and all other labour related legislation in order to include these groups in active employment opportunities. If so, please provide details in this regard as well as time frames that your government will put in place, Mr President?

Afrikaans:

Ons het kinders, ...

English:

... we have families and relatives. They are qualified, they stay at home with their honour's degrees with master's degrees, yet they do not have employment. Please give us some clarity in this regard. Thank you, Chair.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Chairperson, certainly, the problem of unemployment cuts right across the various national groups. And we cannot now sit here and say it only applies to one group. Of course, because of the history that we have had and structure of our socioeconomic situation, it will affect other groups more than others. And as it turns out, what the hon member is saying, yes, it is happening. But let me say

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that it is not all white young people who are leaving the country, it is not true.

A number of white young people are here in South Africa, and they are finding opportunities. We need to deal with the imbalance which I spoke about earlier in my main reply. But just to get to the point. Opportunities are open to all, and we would like even those who are sitting at home without employment, with degrees and honours degrees, and be they coloured, be they African people or white, they should find space in the economic life of our country.

Our economy has not been growing at the level that will create widespread employment. And this is precisely what we are now seeking to achieve. We want our economy to grow on an inclusive basis so that it can open up opportunity for all. Those opportunities as they open up, must never be seen as being opportunities for a particular national group. We want all opportunities to be open for all. That is why we say South Africa belongs to all who live in it now.

As I was saying earlier, measures and laws like the employment equity, are meant to encourage and enable all of us to empower the people of South Africa as a whole, to accede to the level

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where indeed we have an economy that is inclusive, that serves all and not a particular racial group, as we have had in the past.

If you picture what we had in the past, and picture what we want to achieve, that is when you will see that the measures and the laws that we have put in place are meant to get us there. And they are meant to serve as encouragement, as enabling processes that will get us there. All of it will pivot around what is set out in our Constitution, equality, fairness of treatment and fair and equal opportunity for all. That is what every South African should be absolutely sure about that whether you are a woman, whether you are a man, whether you are disabled, whether you have any other characteristic, the Constitution of our country is there as an enabling and empowering document that protects all and should be seen as enabling all of us to accede to a better life. That is the one guarantee that every South African should have, that I will never be badly treated, that I should never be relegated to the back, and I should never be refused to have opportunities because of the colour of my skin, my national group, the region where I come from, or any other characteristic, so fairness, equality is what our Constitution

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promises us. And we need to work to ensure that it delivers precisely that. Thank you.

The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Hon Dlamini, you are welcome to address the President while seated due to your condition if you so wish?

Ms M DHLAMINI: I can stand. Thank you, Chairperson.

Sesotho:

Kgotso ntate Mopresidente.

MOPRESIDENTE OA REPHABLIKI: Dumelang.

English:

Ms M DHLAMINI: Hon President, indeed, the society that lives inequalities shall never realise its full potential in terms of transformation, be it economically and otherwise. And we can promise the people of South Africa that under the leadership of his Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa and the collective, the leadership we have is quite all right. They do not have to worry. My question is whether the sectoral numerical targets show progress in government's efforts to rally all sectors of society particularly the private sector

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to ensure the fair representation of people of designated groups particularly historically disadvantage people and vulnerable groups at all occupational levels in the workforce and senior management level?

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Thank you, hon Chairperson. Hon member, the laws, regulations and conventions that we are seeking to engender in our body politic are meant to encourage everyone, to cajole everyone to raise the level of consciousness that we are all inclusive rather than exclusive. We are a country that operated on the basis of exclusiveness where many were excluded, and a few were included. That is why in many ways our economy has been operating over many generations on a few cylinders than what it should have been operating on.

You can see that today, as we empower more women in different positions, we find that we are raising the level of performance, be it in political leadership positions in business, we can see that the inclusivity that we are willing to achieve is actually something that benefits us. It is good when we include everyone, it is good when women are involved in all walks of life. It is good if people from disadvantaged groups also participate, people who live with a disability,

people who have been marginalised and people who struggle with a range of challenges. When we include them, we become a better nation, we become better at everything. I firmly believe that we need supportive processes, supportive rules and regulations.

That is why I say the Black Economic Empowerment Act, the Employment Equity Act should never be seen as burdens, but as empowering processes that we must engage in to reach that nirvana, that higher level of existence. And then we will say, yes, we really are this diverse nation that aims to achieve a better life for all. We want to encourage the private sector; we also want to encourage those who in the past have held the view that we are okay the way we are. In all of life's endeavours, it is better if we open up and include everyone. Together and united we are stronger, divided we are weak. Thank you.

Question 6:

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Chairperson, hon members, the growth of criminal extortion in several parts of the country is contributing to a climate of fear, of lawlessness in our country.

Extortion has a great economic cost: disrupting business activity, delaying or halting the construction of infrastructure and generally raising the cost of doing business.

The SA Police Service, SAPS, is directing its response to these crimes to areas where they are most prevalent. For example, the police have established the Eastern Cape Provincial Extortion Forum, specifically to address extortion-related issues in the province. An Organised Crime Task Team has also been established to investigate all extortion cases reported in the province.

A multi-disciplinary approach has been adopted that includes Crime Intelligence and the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation.

A modus operandi and target analysis has been conducted. This has confirmed that the identified gangs are operating in syndicates to commit organised criminal activities.

The cases are, therefore, being dealt with in terms of the Prevention of Organised Crime Act. This focuses on the

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identified gang leaders to neutralise the activities of the syndicates.

The investigation is conducted in collaboration with the National Prosecuting Authority, NPA, and other relevant stakeholders. This includes co-operation with the Asset Forfeiture Unit to ensure that the proceeds of crime are recovered by the state.

The SAPS has also deployed more unified police officers, including certain specialised visible policing capabilities to identified hotspots to provide a visible policing deterrent.

An Extortion Hotline has also been established in the Eastern Cape. This will soon be established nationally.

The hotline enables community members to report any form of crime or violence perpetrated by these criminal gangs to ensure a rapid and focused response.

The Extortion Hotline has received approximately 1 300 calls. These calls have resulted in 36 cases and 11 inquiries being registered for investigation by the Organised Crime Task Team.

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In addition, an Extortion and Kidnapping Task Force Forum has been established. This includes or involves all relevant stakeholders including business entities.

The Task Force Forum meets monthly to identify trends regarding extortion and kidnapping, thereby ensuring a well-informed and a collaborative approach.

The growth of extortion syndicates is, indeed, of great concern. It has, therefore, been prioritised by our law enforcement agencies working together with stakeholders across government and across society.

We are confident that by working together, we will be able to defeat these criminals.

As the Minister of Police has said, we are coming after you. And, indeed, I do believe that the vigour and the agility that is being injected in our criminal justice system, we will be able to get on top of this.

And let me say that if look back into history and look at what has happened in a number of countries, some of them are going through the same challenge and some have gone through the same

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challenge; and we will also overcome this challenge. We are addressing it vigorously with a great deal of commitment that has been demonstrated, not only by our Minister and Deputy Ministers, but also by our MECs in various provinces, and our police officials. This is an area that we, indeed, are focusing on, just like we are focusing on a number of other areas to stem the tide of criminality in our country. Thank you, hon Chairperson. [Applause.]

Inkosi M NONKONYANA: Chairperson, hon members, Mr President, good late afternoon.

Chair, I think I must place on record that I observed that our leader of our party and the head of state has been personally attacked by some of the hon members. I would like to place on record that we are not amused about that and we are taking a gravest exception to it.

Now, Mr President, your excellency, thank you very much for responding to this question and for assuring all peace-loving South Africans that, indeed, your government, our government is up to the challenge.

It is clear that extortion is a rapidly worsening problem throughout South Africa. Many townships and rural areas are increasingly becoming a host to a menacing shadow economy with money, services and goods being extorted from an increasingly wide-range of businesses, including spaza shops, nightclubs, construction, transport companies as well as individuals.

Now, the question, arising from your response, your excellency: Is the government looking at rigorous measures to government services centres such as schools, clinics, hospitals and government offices from falling prey to extortionists, gangs and criminals? Thank you, Chair.

IsiXhosa:

UMONGAMELI WERIPHABLIKI: Nkosi yam ndikuve kakuhle. Ndikuvile uthetha ngeendawo zolonwabo zasebusuku. Wazi ntoni ngezo ndawo wena? [Kwahlekwa.]

Hon Chairperson, yes, the answer to the hon member is yes, we are focusing on these types of criminal activities also extending, not only to businesses and other entities, but also to government service centres such as schools, hospitals and government offices. So, that also becomes an area of focus to

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prevent any form of extortion that could happen in all those places.

We are troubled and concerned but at the same time we're taking action by the activities of extortionists and indeed, kidnappers who prey on the vulnerabilities of those who are running their businesses and those who are subjected to kidnappings. We are troubled by that but as I alluded to in my main reply, we are taking action and taking steps to address these challenges. And a great deal of progress will be made and I found that when our police do focus on an area of criminal activity we do make a great deal of progress, particularly when the various legs of our police service, both local, provincial and national, work together, we are able to make a great deal of progress.

Our National Police Commissioner has been, for instance, in areas like the Eastern Cape in a number of occasions where we have found extortion to be rife, and it's not only in the Eastern Cape, it also extends to many other provinces and we are focusing on stemming the tide of extortion throughout our country. And in the course of doing so, we're dealing with criminality, those who want to perpetrate criminal acts are going to be brought to book as our Minister and Deputy

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Ministers have committed. That is something that we are going to do to good effect. Thank you, hon Chairperson.

IsiXhosa:

Nksz N P MCINGA: Sihlalo ohloniphekileyo, bhota nakuwe Mongameli. Mongameli umbuzo wam mfutshane uthi:

English:

Are you going to declare extortion as a state crisis ...

... namhlanje?

Njengoko utshilo nawe Mongameli ukuba intlawulo yesinyanzeliso ixhaphaza abantu besizwe sakho, ude wakhupha ne ...

English:

... task force ...

IsiXhosa:

... yakho usitsho ukuba phaya eMpuma Koloni, ...

English:

... in the home of legends ...

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IsiXhosa:

... ubathumele abantu bakho kuba nawe ubonile ukuba ikhona ingxaki.

Umbuzo wam ke Mongameli uthi:

English:

Are you going to declare extortion a national crisis?

Please, Mr President, use your powers. As lawmakers, I'm also a lawmaker now, and I know that ... we in this House have the power to amend laws. Use your powers in the Constitution, President. If there's a challenge with the law that won't allow you to make this declaration, you have my vote. This will be the first vote of the EFF that will allow with you ...

IsiXhosa:

... ethi into yokuba iextortion maybe ...

English:

...national crisis.

President, people are living in fear, people are not safe. Schools have closed down, the school for the blind and the

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deaf has closed down in Mthatha. Kids are not going to because ...

IsiXhosa:

... bayoyika.

eGqeberha Mongameli amashishini ayavalwa. Umntu xa eneeflethi eziqashisayo kuthiwa kuye ezili-13 zezethu ezintahu zezakho. Loo mntu uza kulibhatala njani ityala lendlu? Ndithetha ngomntu olapha ePalamente mna onazo ezi zinto, utata lo uhleli apha ecaleni kwam. Mongameli loo nto ithetha ukuba ...

English:

... this is a national crisis.

IsiXhosa:

Ndiyakucela Mongameli ukuba ukhe ubamamele abantu kuba ndime apha nje andithenthi ndinguNolubabalo Mcinga ilungu lombutho iEFF kuphela, ndithethela abantu. Mongameli, abantu bayakhala, bayafa, igazi liyaphalala. Amapolisa ayoyika ... [Kwaphela ixesha.] Enkosi, undivile uMongameli. Halala!

English:

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Chairperson ...

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IsiXhosa:

... ndiyavuya ukuva ukuba ...

English:

... if we were to embark on anything ...

IsiXhosa:

... sinayo ivoti yeEFF. [Kwahlekwa.]

English:

Hon Chairperson, indlovukazi has spoken with a great deal of passion and a great deal of deep feeling out of the challenges that we are facing on the issue of extortion. And it is precisely this recognition that has made me give the initial reply that I gave, that we are now focusing our attention more and more on extortion.

She would desire that we declare it as a national crisis. It is a crisis and. I don't know whether you meant to declare it as a state of disaster, but it is a crisis that we are addressing. To have a state of disaster we need to deploy resources and the efforts and the initiatives that we are making and are embarking on now are meant to stem the tide of extortion and we would like to see how the combination of

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every effort that we have embarked upon is going to make an impact. And I do believe that it will make an impact, and we will be able to eliminate this criminal activity.

A combination of our crime intelligence capability, our policing capability, both visible and otherwise, and our various other capabilities through task teams, task forces that we're putting in place will, to a large extent, be able to address this.

And our Minister is embarking on this with a great deal of vigour and focus, or throughout the whole country and obviously the Eastern Cape, Mthatha and Gqeberha, and indeed here in Cape Town as well, we've seen incidents of extortion and in Gauteng and a number of provinces, including KwaZulu-Natal. That is just happening and we are focusing on it.

I do believe that with the measures that the police are putting in place, it will happen. And of course, we want - as I said earlier - through the forums that we are putting in place, we want a collaborative process where we all work together. Because in the main it is our people in the communities who know who the extortionists are, and who know where they operate and it is when we combine crime

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intelligence and the intelligence and information gathering of our own people that we will be able to have these activities stopped.

The hotline that has been set up in certain areas, which will soon be national, is going to help in that regard as well, so that we are able to deal with them as they embark on their activities. So ...

IsiXhosa:

... siza kuyenza njalo ke njengoko sele utshilo Mntwan'omhle kuba nevoti yakho ikhona. Hayi, yonke into iza kuhamba kakuhle.

Ms S M MOKOENA: Chair, I didn't greet you earlier on, I'm sorry. I think I got a bit of nervous speaking to the President for the first time.

IsiZulu:

Sawubona, Mongameli, ...

English:

... good afternoon.

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IsiZulu:

Indaba yokuphanga, ...

English:

... President, has gone far, far worse than just ...

IsiZulu:

... edolobheni noma lapho ekwenziwa khona ...

English:

... normal cause of business. It's now gotten down or streamlined all the way down to ...

IsiZulu:

... ezindaweni zabantu ...

English:

... the rural areas ...

IsiZulu:

... koMhlabuyalingana, koNongoma ...

English:

... even ...

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IsiZulu:

... koMashu, noMlazi.

English:

It's gone as far down as that. But we are more concerned about areas where, like Mthatha, where it is alleged that a Chief was found to have allegedly been part and parcel or a leader of an extortion gang; it's alleged, it is alleged.

We are then concerned about areas where the state has put these Chiefs and Indunas in place and are recognising them and it's now found that those very people ...

IsiZulu:

... izinduna namakhosi ezindaweni zabantu abamnyama yizona impela manje ezenza kube lukhuni kubantu abamnyama ukuthi bahlale ezindlini zabo ngoba sebehhlala ngokusaba. Futhi kubekhona lento ...

English:

... let's face the facts ...

IsiZulu:

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... ngisho namaphoyisa kulezi zindawo, kubantu abangathintwa amaphoyisa, okwaziwayo ukuthi abathintwa ngoba basuke besaba izinduna noma basaba amakhosi. Yiliphi iqhaza esizolibamba njengoHulumeni noma eliphi ithemba esizolinika abantu ezindaweni zabo zokuhlala ukuthi usizo luyeza futhi luyeza ngokushesha ngoba abantu bahleli kabuhlungu ezindaweni zabo? Siyabonga.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Chairperson ...

IsiZulu:

... noma ungathi ubuthukile kancane kodwa uyabona ukuthi, hhayi, angilumi. [Uhleko.] Ngakho awufanele ukuthi uthuke nakancane nje. Ngakho uma siqeda la ngizokuxhawula ukuze ukwethuka kwakho kuphele ngempela.

English:

Hon Chairperson ...

IsiZulu:

imizamo esiyenzayo uma usuyibheka yonke eyokuqinisekisa ukuthi abemininingwane ngobugebengu benza umsebenzi wabo nokuthi amaphoyisa ahamba emgwaqeni nalapho ekuhlala khona abantu bakithi bayawenza umsebenzi wabo.

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English:

... and all these other agencies ...

IsiZulu:

... njengezamaphoyisa ...

English:

... or of criminal justice system, are aimed at ensuring that we stem this tide of extortion and eliminate it. It is a new wave of criminality that, obviously, we've got to deal with. And it has been in the making, having started in certain parts of our country and it's now spreading, as you correctly say. In a way ...

IsiZulu:

... kwaqala ngaley a nto kaMadelangokubona ...

English:

... and then they started just wrecking havoc in building sites and saying that they want 30% of that and so on ...

IsiZulu:

... base beba ithimba lobugebengu embonini yokwakha.

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English:

And we are now going after them. We are also going for the extortionists.

So, what we can say to our people is that with the efforts that we are putting in place, through the various task forums, we will be able to get a good amount of information about how these extortionists work and who they are.

And as you say, unfortunately in some instances, not all, we are finding that there are people who are operating as either officers and police, some of them get involved, they get tempted and they get lured into all these and they don't execute their jobs. We want, in the end, to ensure that we get rid of such tendencies amongst those who are meant to protect our people.

So, we want all our people to work together in these forums that we are setting up so that whatever information is there and available about people who are acting in a way that they are not expected to act, we should be able to deal with, with a view of getting rid of the criminality of extortion.

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So, we will get there and we will be able to give our people the assurance that as we deal with these extortionists we will reduce incidents of criminality throughout the country. Thank you, Chairperson.

Mr F J BADENHORST: Mr President, *déjà vu*. Eleven months ago in this very House you were asked a similar question to the one being asked by iNkosi Nonkonyana today.

The original question emanates from your 2020 state of the nation address where you said, Mr President, "special units will be established in every province to combat this scourge of construction mafia."

Your response, Mr President, at that time included reference to the establishment of 20 economic infrastructure task teams throughout the country with 946 experienced and knowledgeable members from police units like crime intelligence, visible policing, detective and forensic services and the Hawks. Their processes, resources and intelligence were to be integrated, working with other role players including the National Prosecuting Authority, NPA, Finance Intelligence Centre, FIC, relevant government departments, the SA Revenue Service, SARS, and state-owned enterprises, SOEs.

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You, furthermore, assured this House that more than R37 million was going to be made available between 2022 and 2024 financial years to combat this.

More significantly, Mr President, you concluded by assuring the law-abiding taxpaying citizens of South Africa the following, and I'm quoting again: "So, all these matters are now being focused on vigorously. We are going to go after those gangs, we are going to go after those people who hijack building sites and all that."

Mr President, despite these promises made nearly a year ago, activities of the construction mafias has increased, the practice of extortion has proliferated, in fact, they now also target small businesses through the so-called business forums.

From, as mentioned before, the school for the deaf and blind in Mthatha to a 64-year-old Kraaifontein grandmother who sold food in the side of the road, that was her only crime.

Mr President, talking all that has been said today into account, do you not think it's a fair assessment to say that you have failed to deliver on the promise you made last year with these pivats of extortion and misery? Thank you.

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The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Chairperson, hon Badenhorst is taking the advantage of sitting very close to where I am and in a very direct way, trying to intimidate me. And I want to say to you, I will not be intimidated by you. [Laughter.]

But hon Chair, hon Badenhorst and hon members, indeed, hon Badenhorst is raising a very important issue which we've been addressing for all this time.

We are making progress and obviously, because of the enormity of the problem and how widespread it has become, there's so much to do and the progress that we are making is being done step by step. And as we move forward, I do believe that, yes, progress will be made.

Many of the things that you are saying, setting up the task teams, are being done and have been done. And the vigour that I spoke of is being more and more injected in what we are doing.

If you look at, for instance, the activities of our key and top police officials in a number of provinces, that is already beginning to show itself and our Minister of Police and his deputies are already becoming so hands on, on what needs to be

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done. And this is a problem that, obviously, is also a challenge that we face with regard to the lack of economic growth and where there is lack of economic growth, criminality becomes one of the byproducts.

But it is a byproduct, a horrible one, that we need to deal with. And which is precisely what we have determined and decided that we will do.

So, we are having to deal with a multiplicity of problems. And when it comes, for instance, to deploying very experienced police officer and those who will focus on this, of course, we are training more and more police and bringing them into the group of those who are well experienced, does take time as well, but we are addressing it.

The construction mafia criminality, we are also addressing and focusing on it. In a number of areas, I'm told, it's beginning to taper down; talking to people who are involved also in in the sector, but it is still uncomfortably high. We still need to do much more and what I can say is that this is an ongoing task that we need to continue tackling.

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Hon Badenhorst, we will remain focused and we will remain with the vigour and inject even more vigour that is required to deal with this. We will succeed. My view is that, yes, much as you might say, we are not showing the desired results, but there will be results and we will be able to show progress as we move on.

And yes, I keep hearing Government of national Unity, GNU. Yes, the Government of National Unity and the combination of the skills and the experiences and the efforts that all of us will make, we will be able to get on top of this and succeed in bringing down the levels of criminality and extortion in a number of areas in our country.

And I do repeat that, yes, we are coming after the criminals, and that they are being dealt with, with the various interventions like Operation Shanela, we've been able to bring behind bars many, many, many of those who have perpetrated a number of acts of criminality. And our prisons are now burgeoning.

Yesterday, Minister Groenewald was saying 'I'm getting an influx of so many people in our prisons'. That shows that we now have another added problem, an added problem because we

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are becoming effective. We are now going after the criminals and putting them behind bars and that is why the doors of Dr Groenewald's prisons are now opening and adding more and more people.

So, many efforts are being made. We are not at a standstill and this will take time but we are on it ...

IsiZulu:

Siphezu kwabo!

English:

Thank you very much.

The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Hon President, once again, we would like to take this opportunity and thank you for taking your time and present yourself before the NCOP for the response to oral questions. And I'm sure that honourable Members will agree with me ... hon President, you may take your seat in the meantime ... [Interjections.] ... order, hone members! The House is still in session.

Having said that, hon President, we wish you all the best in your endeavour in making sure that you transform the

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livelihood of South Africans. We know that you have committed yourself to transform and change the lives of our people, and accordingly, come before Parliament, give account of the work that has been done by government, not only yourself, but also your Ministers have followed suite on the commitments that you have made. And for that, we remain indebted in making sure that we do execute our responsibility of holding executive accountable as Parliament.

Having said that, hon members, I would request that we take a 15-minute suspension of the session to allow the President to make his way out. We will then come back to finish the business of the day. Thank you.

The Council suspended at 17:06 for 10 minutes.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORT OF SELECT COMMITTEE ON SECURITY AND JUSTICE - DRAFT NOTICE AND SCHEDULE DETERMINING THE RATE, WITH EFFECT FROM 1 APRIL 2023, AT WHICH SALARIES, ALLOWANCES AND BENEFITS ARE PAYABLE TO CONSTITUTIONAL COURT JUDGES AND OTHER JUDGES ANNUALLY, FOR APPROVAL BY PARLIAMENT IN TERMS OF SECTION 2(3) OF THE JUDGES' REMUNERATION AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT ACT 47 OF 2001, DATED 4 SEPTEMBER 2024.

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CONSIDERATION OF REPORT OF SELECT COMMITTEE ON SECURITY AND JUSTICE - DRAFT NOTICE AND SCHEDULE DETERMINING THE RATE, WITH EFFECT FROM 1 APRIL 2023, AT WHICH SALARIES, ALLOWANCES AND BENEFITS ARE PAYABLE TO MAGISTRATES ANNUALLY, FOR APPROVAL BY PARLIAMENT IN TERMS OF SECTION 12(3) OF THE MAGISTRATES ACT 90 OF 1993, DATED 4 SEPTEMBER 2024.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORT OF SELECT COMMITTEE ON SECURITY AND JUSTICE - DRAFT NOTICE AND SCHEDULE DETERMINING THE RATE, WITH EFFECT FROM 1 APRIL 2024, AT WHICH SALARIES, ALLOWANCES AND BENEFITS ARE PAYABLE TO MAGISTRATES ANNUALLY, FOR APPROVAL BY PARLIAMENT IN TERMS OF SECTION 12(3) OF THE MAGISTRATES ACT 90 OF 1993, DATED 4 SEPTEMBER 2024

Ms J S MANANISO: Thank you, Chairperson, hon members and fellow South Africans. One would want to take you in confidence with regards to this report, that it is based on factual contents by the members. I want to thank the collective of our select committee because we made it a point that within three months, in two days of discussing this matter, we are dealing with. I want to thank the collective chairperson as well, under your leadership, for actually responding to this issue with the agility it deserves.

Hon House share, the ANC rise in support of the report of the Select Committee on Security and Justice: On the draft notice and schedule tabled in terms of section 12(3) of the Magistrate Act 1993, determining the rate at which salaries are payable to magistrates annually; and on the draft notice and schedule submitted in terms of Section 2(3)(b) of the judges' remuneration on Conditions of Employment Act of 2001, determining the rate at which salaries are payable to constitutional court judges and judges annually, dated 4 September 2024. Hon Chair, allow me to quote our former Deputy Chief Justice Moseneke, in his judicial memoir titled, All Rise, made the following remarks:

Easily, 80% by volume of civil disputes and criminal prosecution are heard in the magistrate courts. They are grassroot courts. They are very busy courts, without which the judicial system of our country will be grinded to a halt. We all owe a big debt of gratitude to these judicial offices, in every district and region, who work with inadequate resources and remarkably high caseloads.

Chairperson, in terms of the Magistrate Act of 1993 and the Judges Remuneration and Conditions of Employment Act 2 of 2001, magistrates and Constitutional Court judges are entitled

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to annual salaries and, as such, allowances of benefits as determined by the President from time to time after considering the recommendation of the Independent Commission for the Remuneration of Public Office Bearers.

Chairperson, the Independent Commission for the Remuneration of Public Office Bearers recommended a salary increment for all categories of public office bearers, including judges and magistrate as follows: A 3% increase in 2023-24; and 2,5% increase for 2024-25. Hon members, the President, however, made a determination in respect of magistrates to accept the recommendation of 3% for 2023-24, but recommended 4,7% for 2024-25.

Hon members, I would want to take you in confidence that, as a team of this select committee, we are very worried in terms of how this percentage has escalated. I remember and I can recall that this issue was asked by hon Billy from the DA, to understand how does that 4,7% come into the fore in terms of the determination of the President. We were given facts by the independent commission that this process was exhausted, and they have made sure that all the legalities were followed.

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Hon Chairperson, regarding correspondence to the committee, we report that on 15 April 2024, the Judicial Officers Association of South Africa, Joasa, submitted a letter to Parliament which expressed concern about the delays in finalising and implementing the major review. The major review seeks to bring equity and fairness to the public office bearers' remuneration.

The major review is also meant to consider roles and responsibility, the effect of inflation and the potential disparities in renovation. The major review was to be undertaken by the Independent Commission for the Remuneration of Public Office Palace.

Hon members, on 23 July 2024 the Judges Association of South Africa wrote to the chairperson of the committee, requesting that the committee approves the draft notice only to the extent that it makes a 2023-24 financial year determination and disapprove the 2024-25 financial year determination, and then refer it back to the President.

On 27 August 2024, a letter was received from the lower court remuneration commission requesting that they make a presentation to the committee on their concerns, including the

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delay in the publication of annual proclamations and the declining morale amongst the judiciary. The committee wrote to the LCRC and requested that they make a written submission to the committee instead of listing all their concerns for the committee to consider.

Chairperson, on 24 July 2024, the committee received a briefing from the Deputy Minister in the Presidency and the Independent Commission of the Remuneration of Public Office Bearers. The independent commission advised the committee that all stakeholders have had been consulted in respect of their commendations for salary increment, and that the major review will be completed by the end of August 2024.

At this meeting, the committee resolved to seek a legal opinion in respect of this matter raised by Joasa. On 30 August 2024, the select committee received a letter from the judiciary, pleading with the committee not to proceed with the briefing session scheduled for 4 September 2024 until the President had given consideration to the request made by the Chief Justice in respect of the 2024-25 financial year, for the President to reconsider and revise the determination to be in line with the 4,7% adjustments made in respect of all magistrates.

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On 4 September 2024, the committee received the legal opinion which advised that there was no legal impediment preventing the committee from fulfilling its statutory obligation, to either approve in whole or in part and disapprove the notice in respect of the judges. However, the committee agreed to the President's determination for magistrate, and agreed to the 3% for the judges, for the 2023-24 financial year.

Chairperson, the committee noted the concerns of judges. The committee supports the notion of parity with the judiciary moving forward and hopes that the President will consider the proposed increase for 2024-25. The committee noted that it would like to make a rational and informed decision regarding the salary increment of judges. The committee, therefore, deferred the matter of the judges' salary for 2024-25 to a later meeting and undertaken to write to the President to obtain clarity regarding his decision in respect of the judges' salary for 2024-25.

The committee agreed to invite the Office of the Chief Justice to a meeting, to understand their work and operation, as part of the committee oversight functions. In respect of these magistrates' concerns, the committee agreed to write to the Department of Justice and ask the department to appear before

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the committee as an introductory meeting, to follow up on matters raised in correspondences of magistrates on the process of review of the Magistrate Court Act and the single judiciary.

Fellow South Africans, I hope that you are noting and taking into consideration that the committee wants to be consistent in terms of the decision that are undertaken, so that, at least, they are taken to task on their responsibility and accountability. So, we are dealing with this matter as it comes, case by case, based on the facts.

On recommendations in terms of the magistrates, the Select Committee on Security and Justice, having considered the draft notices and schedule determining the rate, with effect from 1 April 2023 and with the effect from 1 April 2024, at which salaries, allowances and benefits are payable to magistrates annually, for approval by Parliament in terms of section 12(3) of the Magistrate Act 90 of 1993, referred to it on 15 July 2024, recommends that the council approve the said draft notice and schedule.

Hon Chairperson, in terms of the judges, the Select Committee on Security and Justice, having considered the draft notice

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and schedule determining the rate with effect from 1 April 2023, at which salaries, allowances and benefits are payable to the Constitutional Court judges and judges annually, for approval by Parliament in terms of Section 2(4) of the Judges' Remuneration and Conditions of Employment Act 47 of 2001, referred to it on 15 July 2024, recommends that the Council approve the set draft notice and schedule.

Chairperson, we want to emphasise the point made by the President that all the citizens of South Africa are enjoined to respect, protect and promote our Constitution and the rule of law by respecting and protecting judicial authority of our courts. This is important to ensure that our constitutional democracy continues to thrive.

Hon Chairperson, as the ANC and the collective, we support this report. We want to say that we are on course.

IsiXhosa:

Siyaqhuba! Siqhubile!

English:

There are many that still need to come forward to the select committee. We would respond to it with agility, without fear

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and without shame, because we are capable women and men who are ready to ensure that the GNU delivers better for all. I thank you.

Declarations of Vote:

Inkosi M NONKONYANA: Chairperson and hon members, on behalf of the province of legends, realizing the importance of that arm of the state judiciary, particularly the Magistrate. We have no hesitation in supporting the recommendations by the committee on Standing Committee on State Security and Justice. Thank you, Chairperson.

Ms M DLAMINI: Thank you very much, hon Chairperson, as Free State, we duly support.

Ms J S MANANISO: Thank you, Chairperson, we are not conflicted. In line with constitutional mandate, we want to support on the bases that it is about human rights and parity.

IsiZulu:

Mnu M BILLY: Sibonge Sihlalo njengesifundazwe saKwaZulu-Natali siyaqinisekisa ukuthi silitholile ithuba lokuthi silubheke udaba. Siyavumelana nombiko obekwe uSihlalo, ngalawo mazwi siyaseseka isiphakamiso esiphambi kwethu kwi-NCOP. Siyabonga.

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Sepedi:

Mna M F MOKWELE: Modulasetulo, re le Limpopo ...

English:

...we are supporting. Thank you.

Ms S NXUMALO: Thank you very much, hon Chairperson, on behalf of Mpumalanga Province the place of the rising sun, we are in support to the increase of the remuneration of our Judges. They are entitled to this; it is a matter of bread and butter to them. So, we are in support. Thank you.

Mr S P MABILO: Thank you, Chairperson, as the Northern Cape, we support 100% the report as tabled. It is a compelling case that we cannot shy away from. It is a step in the right direction. We support.

Ms S L SITHOLE: Thank you, Chairperson, and greetings to your good self and the Chief Whip. As North West, we are in support. Thank you.

Mr F J BADENHORST: Chairperson, the Western Cape will support.

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Declarations of votes made on behalf of the Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape, North West.

Voting:

IN FAVOUR: Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape, North West, Western Cape.

Report adopted in accordance with section 65 of the Constitution.

DRAFT NOTICE AND SCHEDULE DETERMINING THE RATE, WITH EFFECT FROM 1 APRIL 2023, AT WHICH SALARIES, ALLOWANCES AND BENEFITS ARE PAYABLE TO MAGISTRATES ANNUALLY, FOR APPROVAL BY PARLIAMENT IN TERMS OF SECTION 12(3) OF THE MAGISTRATES ACT, 1993 (ACT NO. 90 OF 1993), DATED 4 SEPTEMBER 2024.

(Consideration of Report of Select Committee on Security and Justice)

Debate concluded.

Question put: That the Report be adopted.

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Voting:

IN FAVOUR: Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape, North West, Western Cape.

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Debate concluded.

Question put: That the Report be adopted.

Voting:

IN FAVOUR: Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape, North West, Western Cape.

Report agreed to.

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Report adopted in accordance with section 65 of the
Constitution.

The Council adjourned at 17:41.

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