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PROCEEDINGS OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

The House met at 14:01.

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

NEW PARTY CHIEF WHIP

(Announcement)

The SPEAKER: Hon members, firstly, I would like to inform members that we have a new Chief Whip of the MK party, hon Mr Mzwanele J Manyi. Order, hon members and Minister. Thank you.

QUESTIONS TO THE PRESIDENT

Question 1:

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Speaker, sovereign wealth funds are by their nature often used by many countries around the world to harness national resources for economic as well

as for social development. They are often used to preserve and to grow a country's wealth for the benefit of future generations.

In a document that was published in December 2021, by the National Treasury they describe some of the features of a sovereign wealth fund. And they say that such a funds often a state-owned company that would accumulate resources for capital investment through a dedicated revenue instrument or instruments. It would then invest these resources in different asset classes. Countries with sovereign wealth funds, and there are a number of them around the world, often maintain surpluses in their current accounts and balance sheets or balances. This provides the fiscal space to establish a sovereign wealth fund.

At present, with our current fiscal position, with substantial current account and budget deficits, it is currently not the most opportune and favourable time for us to establish a sovereign wealth fund. However, there are a number of options under consideration.

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Funding for service delivery remains under pressure for us. Additional resources are required to improve the recruitment of key personnel such as police and teachers. We also need to increase investment in the maintenance of basic service infrastructure.

In light of these realities, the most appropriate policy path for us is to use any additional resources at this moment to reduce the debt burden that our country carries and improve the delivery of services.

Several countries use revenue from the exploitation of their natural resources to establish and sustain sovereign wealth funds. In our country however, the public revenues or royalties that we derive from mineral resources have historically not been very reliable or have they been very consistent. We have therefore suggested that one of the possible routes towards the establishment of a sovereign wealth fund is through the reform and consolidation of state-owned enterprises. This is the route that a number of countries have used and one example that I got to know of was Singapore through Temasec, Dubai and the United Arab Emirates, UAE, through their investment the Dubai Fund.

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We are working to implement a new centralised ownership model for our state-owned enterprises. As I said in the opening of Parliament address, the establishment of a state-owned enterprise holding company will give us greater capacity to build a sovereign wealth fund. This has been done successfully by other countries whose sovereign wealth funds have built up capital from the high performance of the state-owned enterprises rather than from the fiscus.

While the conditions do not currently exist to establish the immediate establishment of a sovereign wealth fund, this is an objective to which we should continue to work. Such a fund could help to ensure that the national wealth of our country is effectively used to support economic and social development for years to come. I thank you, Madam Speaker.

Xitsonga:

Tat M J MASWANGANYI: Ndza khensa, Xipikara. Muchaviseki Puresidente, hi ku vona leswaku tiko ra Afrika-Dzonga ri na swicelwa na leswaku matiko man'wana ma tirhisa swicelwa leswi, xana a mi swi voni leswaku tanihi tiko leri nga fuma hi swicelwa hi fanele hi tirhisa swicelwa leswi ku sungula

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"sovereign wealth fund" [nkwama wa vuvekisi bya rifuwo ra mfumo]?

Tshivenda:

Muphuresidennde vha tea u pfesesa u ri zwiko zwa minerala zwi shumisiwe. Ri a zwi pfesesa u ri muvhuso a u na masheleni. Ndi ngani ri sa shumisi lupfumo lune ra vha nalwo lwa zwiko zwa minerala kha u ita "sovereign wealth fund". Ndo livhuwa, Mulangadzulo.

Xitsonga:

PURESIDENTE WA RIPHABILIKI: Ndza khensa, Xipikara. Tatana Maswanganyi, migodi ya hina yo tala ya yona yi le mavokweni ya vuvekisi bya le xihundleni. Kusuka loko swa migodi swi sungurile laha tikweni yo tala a yi kalangi yi va migodi ya mfumo wa hina. Tiko ra hina ri kuma mali eka migodi leyi loko va humeas xibalo na loko ri kuma "royalties" [tihakelo to tirhisa nhundzu ya munhu un'wana]. Lexi i xibalo xin'wana xo hlawuleka lexi hakelaka hi migodi leyi. Loko hi yi hlanganisa hinkwayo ku va na mali yo aka "soverigh wealth fund."

Matiko man'wana va endlile migodi yi va ya vona. Va endlile swin'wana ku endla leswaku migodi yi va ya vona. Hina laha

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tikweni ra hina loko migodi yi sungula hi 1867 yi vile ehansi ka mavoko ya vavekisi. Mfummo wa hina wu kuma xibalo. Na "royalties" hi nga swi kota ku ti tirhisa ...

English:

... where mining companies do earn quite a lot of money, and the taxation hereof is quite substantial. So are the royalties. The royalties are what could be used to accumulate the sovereign wealth fund. Now the taxation obviously goes to the revenue fund which then helps to fund together with other taxes that either we pay as individuals and companies pay to fund everything that the people of South Africa need.

By agglomerating various state-owned enterprises, that are obviously going to start working better as we move on and make quite a lot of profit, we argue that that gives us a platform and a foundation to build a sovereign wealth fund rather than take money from the fiscus - the money that is always utilised to fund a whole range of initiatives that government embark upon. It would be good to set aside money which some of which could come from royalties and from the profits that these companies make. That would then build a sovereign fund.

Other countries have used it successfully even where mining companies are, for instance, owned by private individuals. They have been able to utilise those earnings, and they can be categorised into many categories if you like, and those can be used to build a sovereign wealth fund.

We are committed to create a sovereign wealth fund and we believe that the architecture that we are putting together now will be able to assist us in building a sovereign wealth fund. This we will be doing for future generations because it takes a while to build a facility like a sovereign wealth fund. Thank you, Speaker.

Mrs W R ALEXANDER: Thank you very much. The DA acknowledges that there may be some benefits through a sovereign wealth fund, but we have a serious concern about the implementation and management, especially with the proven track record of mismanagement and corruption within the state-owned enterprises. The potential for a sovereign wealth fund to become a burden to an already stretched taxpayers or the possibilities that the government might avert resources from practical programmes such as infrastructure, is deeply troubling. Mr President, given a concern raised around the

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potential of mismanagements in the country already stretched financial challenges, could you please elaborate on the potential funding resources of the sovereign wealth fund. How will government plan to fund such an initiative in the light of South Africa's current high levels of national debts and already strained fiscus?

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Thank you, hon Speaker. If we put together an architecture that is well structured, we would argue that you do not need to utilise money from the fiscus to create a sovereign wealth fund. Therefore, the concern that you have that there would be a tax burden on taxpayers to create a sovereign wealth fund would not apply. As I said in my opening reply what you would do is to use the proceeds that would come from the assets that the government holds or the state owns as it flows through dividends and other processes. In that way you then begin to aggregate a sovereign wealth fund.

We do have what you could argue is a fund, a big fund, and it is the biggest on the continent, the Public Investment Corporation. That in a way is similar to what you could say is a sovereign wealth fund. And to an extent that it is a

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sovereign wealth fund, it is owned by pensioners - people who work for government. That has gone way beyond R7 trillion and it is the largest on our continent.

To my recollection, the concern that you have about money being wasted and being corrupted, there hasn't been such. It is well run, and it invests its money very, very effectively in bonds and in equities and it also support economic development by funding a number of business development projects. That is well managed. What we would seek to do is, from the proceeds of state-owned enterprises we would then build a sovereign wealth fund. I would like to believe that with good corporate governance processes the money should be well managed and akin to what we have been doing thorough the Public Investment Corporation, PIC, up to now. So, I don't really see much of a difference.

What will the money be used for? The money will be used for, yes, economic development. Sovereign wealth funds are used for that and in some cases, they even declare dividends to the state so that the National Treasury could carry on with its other normal funding activities. Thank you, hon Speaker.

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Mr W M THRING: Thank you Speaker. Mr President, it is well known that sovereign wealth fund has the ability to improve the wellbeing and the standards of living of the citizens in the country which develops such a fund. Some 12 African countries have already established sovereign wealth funds which put South African position behind our African counterparts. South Africa is well endowed with natural mineral resources, and these should be used not only to grow our economy, but also be used to protect our citizens from both endogenous and exogeneous financial shocks to our economy. Mr President, South Africa is facing a deficit on our national Budget, the debt to the GDP of over 74% and as well some failures in implementing what you could call the structural reform that our economy needs. How do you intend to overcome these impediments and others which serve as deterrents to a sovereign wealth fund?

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Thank you, hon Speaker. As I said the establishment of a sovereign wealth fund is a process. I think now we have gone beyond talking about our wish and our desire to establish a sovereign wealth fund. It is now generally accepted that like other countries we should have a sovereign wealth fund. I was giving the example of the

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sovereign wealth pension fund that we have created overtime over a number of years, which is the PIC. But that one is owned by pensioners, people who work for the state. We now want to create a sovereign wealth fund which will be owned by all the people of South Africa. As I said, one of the best ways and right now it is the most efficacy way to set up sovereign wealth fund through having a state fund enterprise holding company which will then be able to draw dividends from its well operating state-owned entities. A number of countries have done so. Dubai Investment Fund is one of those and indeed Singapore and many other countries are able to draw dividends from those well-operating companies that operate in good industries that make money. The money then goes to the sovereign wealth fund.

Yes, we have a deficit, we have a debt burden and obviously that has to be funded through the taxation process that's underway or borrowings. The sovereign wealth fund would be funded through dividend that would flow from our state-owned enterprises. Right now, many of our state-owned enterprises are in the doldrums. We accept that. Processes are underway to reposition them. When they are repositioned, and this would take time, we will then be able to draw dividends from them.

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The dividends will then flow into the sovereign fund and start building it up and it will then have a developmental approach to assist in developing our economy. That is the broad architecture and that's why I say we have gone beyond a desire and wish and we are now getting into building the bolt and nuts of how this sovereign wealth fund could operate. Thank you, hon Speaker.

Ms T L MARAWU: Thank you very much, hon Speaker. Mr President, the ATM firmly believes that any economic initiative undertaken by the government must prioritise the upliftment of the poor and the dispossessed who have been excluded from the economic benefits of our nation's wealth. In light of this, how will government ensure that the establishment and the operation of the sovereign wealth fund directly confronts and reduces the stuck economic inequalities in our society? What specific measures will be put in place to guarantee that the benefits of this fund are equitably shared amongst the most vulnerable and marginalised members of our communities? Thank you, hon Speaker.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Thank you, hon Speaker. An answer to that question is really the heart of the matter.

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Will the sovereign wealth fund benefit the majority of the people of South Africa? The answer is, yes. The sovereign wealth funds are meant to achieve precisely that purpose and they should be seen as contributors to economic development. They should also be seen as vehicles to which the state can invest money that is in surplus, that it can utilise for various economic projects. It could be specific economic sectors that it can focus on, and it could be funding or surplus money that it utilises to invest in other countries, in other companies as well as a number of such sovereign wealth fund now today do. In Singapore, Temasek is one of those and the Dubai Investment Fund is one of those and many others. They utilise the fire power that they have through the money that resides or held by the sovereign wealth funds to foster economic development. We would see this as another important arm that can enhance the economic development of our country.

Sovereign wealth fund in my view is the way to go and we now have a better architectural opportunity to be able to do so rather than to continue talking about it without knowing exactly how it would source money and how it would be structured.

I guess I should add that if we ever get to a point where we have a huge Budget surplus, where our debt has evaporated or has been extinguished, then you will have sufficient fire power to even divert some of the money to a sovereign wealth fund. We are many, many years away from that. We need to deal with the revenues that we get either from companies, personal income tax or many other sources of tax. We need to deal with our existential expenditure challenge as well as servicing our debt. Setting up a sovereign wealth fund is then a project we work on as we improve our state-owned enterprises. Thank you, hon Speaker.

Question 2:

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Speaker, hon members, for our economy to grow we need an efficient and well-functioning economy, but more particularly a well-functioning logistics system.

It is very important if the goods we produce are to be globally competitive for us to be able ... as we produce our goods to be able to know that they have a channel through which they will travel to our ports, to our places of ... for

our destination. This is why we have focused on the logistics sector as part of our broader agenda for economic reform.

For many years our rail system and ports have suffered from underinvestment, particularly in infrastructure, in equipment and in the maintenance of that equipment as well.

This has contributed to deteriorating performance of our economy. This trend was exacerbated during the state capture period. Funds were diverted away from pressing infrastructure needs.

The poor condition of our rail network and the inefficient operation of our port terminals now represent - what I would call - a binding constraint on economic growth and job creation. This has implications for key sectors of our economy such as mining, agriculture and manufacturing as well.

We are urgently working to restore our logistics system and to restore it to world-class standards. A number of our port outlets used to be amongst the best in the world, but they have deteriorated over time.

As a result of Transnet's limited balance sheet and our constrained fiscal resources, we need to mobilise capital for this from the private sector where the money is.

During the Sixth Administration, Operation Vulindlela together with the Department of Transport commissioned research on the opportunities for private sector participation in the logistics sector.

This research found that there is significant appetite for private sector investment in ports and rail. It also found that a clear and consistent legal and regulatory framework is needed to unlock this investment. It requires a level playing field for private operators.

This work itself informed the development of the Freight Logistics Roadmap and the Private Sector Participation Framework for the rail sector. And the roadmap was developed through consultation of the various key players in that sector, ranging from business, even labour, and government.

Significant progress has already been made in implementing the Freight Logistics Roadmap which was also approved by Cabinet in December 2023.

Transnet has published a draft Network Statement for the rail system. This will enable private rail operators to access the network for the first time.

Transnet is undergoing a fundamental restructuring process to separate infrastructure from operations. This is through the establishment of the Rail Infrastructure Manager and the National Ports Authority as independent subsidiaries of Transnet.

Private sector participation is being introduced also in container terminals. This is starting with an equity partnership between Transnet and an international terminal operator for the Durban Pier 2 Container Terminal.

A dedicated Private Sector Participation Unit has already been established by the Department of Transport to identify and develop further opportunities for private investment. These

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opportunities would be realised through concessions, joint ventures as well as other models.

At the same time, we have made it clear that port and rail infrastructure will remain in public ownership, even as competition is introduced in the operations.

We are, therefore, very clear that this is not a process of privatization, it is the process of concessioning, enabling those with money which, currently, our Transnet balance sheet cannot support, to bring their money in and to invest to make our ports and our containers terminals much more efficient.

We are confident that through these efforts and by implementing the Freight Logistics Roadmap we will enable massive new investment in our ports and our rail system. This will unlock economic growth and create jobs.

I saw how a number of companies, particularly one company that made investment commitment at the investment conference the previous year and last year, how they have already invested well over R500 million.

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I was able to go to the port of Durban and to see the container terminal that they had already built, which is now working very efficiently. And the container terminal works in a way where the producers of goods bring in their products and they are contained at the port and thereafter this container manager is then able to allocate shipment times and all that. And all that has required quite a lot of money, but in the end they rent the space from Transnet and Transnet is able to continue its other important work of the reforms they've embarked upon.

So, it creates a mutually beneficial partnership between a state-owned entity and the private sector, which in the end increases efficiency and will in time take our ports back to the global standards that they used to occupy. Thank you, hon Speaker.

Mr G MICHALAKIS: Mr President, noting that logistics such as ports and freight rail are causing major economic issues that cost the economy billions of rands a day and further prevents the creation of new jobs.

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Will you, Mr President, commit to a timeline for the implementation of structural reforms in freight rail ports and logistics, and if not, why not? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Madam Speaker, yes, the answer is yes. This is a process that we've committed ourselves to, to introduce and also to implement those reforms. If we do not implement the reforms that we've set out, then we are actually relegating to no growth or low growth dispensation of our economy. So, this is a must do.

Our ports, as you will have seen in a report that was published last year, have really declined, have gone right to the bottom and they used to belong amongst the better ones in the world and certainly the best on our continent. So, those reforms must be embarked upon.

Yes, there are time-based type of reforms, but one is not able to put a finger on exactly when each of the reforms will happen. But they are happening as we move on, and it is also a question of mobilizing the financial resources that are required. But more importantly of getting the equipment, quite a bit of the equipment that we have on our in our ports is ...

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[Inaudible.] other ports are using really fantastic modern-day equipment, technologically well-driven and using G5 and many other; and now they're moving to Artificial Intelligence, AI.

So, we need to step up and move in that direction as well so that we are then able to handle goods that either arrive or goods that we are able to export. And in the process of all that, jobs are created. Many more jobs, not only at the point of export or point of import, they are created in the back end where those goods are made, because once we improve our 50 then able to be made as entrepreneurs and businesses have a sense that we've got a channel that works.

Right now, with the decline of our rail capacity, we used to export, for instance, 82 million tonnes of coal. We have now gone down through our Richards Bay coal terminal to 40 to 50 million tonnes.

Now, it's the improvements that we have to make on our rail to enable locomotives to come back and be able to transport. So, the miners mine the coal, mine the iron ore and mine all these

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... they lie fallow in their yards because there is no way that they can be transported efficiently and on time.

So, the reforms that we have embarked upon are meant to correct all this and to make sure that our logistic system works better and we are able to export and indeed to import goods as much as we possibly can. Thank you, hon Speaker.

Mr S D SELAMOLELA: Mr President, investments by both private and public sector in our rail and ports to improve efficiency is crucial for economic growth, not only in our country but also in the continent.

Now, my question is, Mr President: How will these investments create a gateway and integrate African markets to boost a well-integrated network of ports and logistic infrastructure to achieve economic growth here at home and in the continent? Thank you.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Madam Speaker, the reforms that we have embarked upon are the type of reforms that will not only open up the gateway, that we are, but we will enhance it and it will also have a beneficial impact on other countries

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on the continent, on the subcontinent, that is our region as well as on the continent as a whole.

We continue to be recognised as the gateway into Africa because we are the most industrialized country on the continent and we've got good infrastructure. Infrastructure that has over the years really run into disrepair. So, the reforms we have embarked upon are aimed at revamping that infrastructure.

We have been, as the country, chosen by the African Union, AU, to be the champion of infrastructure and that is the position we occupy at the AU level and living up to that position means that we should be the repository of coming up with the ideas of how infrastructure, particularly logistics on our continent and in our region can be improved.

Many countries rely on South Africa to have or to continue having the best infrastructure. And the countries as far afield as the Great Lakes, as far afield as the Democratic Republic of Congo, DRC, still rely on our own logistics capacity. So, therefore, we need to ensure that these reforms

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continue to benefit us, but also benefit other countries as they are very, very reliant on us as well.

So, in the end what we do here is not only beneficial for us but it is also beneficial for other countries in our region and indeed, on the continent as well. And we will continue ... and it is for that reason that we should continue with those reforms because for us it's almost do reform or you die, and if we don't reform it basically means we are clearly imposing a death sentence on our own economy, and that is a route that we should never take. We should only take the route that will enhance the growth of our economy and lead to the creation of jobs, which is precisely what we are focusing on. Thank you, hon Speaker.

Ms O M C MAOTWE: Hon President, there's this false and misconstrued idea that for state-owned entities, SOEs to function optimally, effectively and efficiently you need private sector participation or involvement. And that idea has been debunked by the recent experiences with Eskom, where we come from heavy loadshedding, which was as a result of your deployment of a useless Minister who had no clue what Eskom is all about, including the management team that was there.

We've seen now with the new Minister and the engineers who are there in the form of the board, Chairperson and the chief executive officer, CEO. But it has turned around Eskom. We now no longer talk about loadshedding.

So, what makes you think that the private sector is actually the answer?

You correctly said, earlier on, that Transnet used to transport 82 million tonnes of coal, which has now dropped to 14 million tonnes. But that is as a result of management.

So, why are not bringing competent, experienced, well-qualified management teams to revitalise our ports and our railways without you handing over our assets to private sector? Which is basically you're saying we need white supervision for government to operate optimally. Thank you.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Speaker, I'd like to make it clear once again that the process of the reforms we have embarked upon is not about handing over state assets, in terms of ownership. It is co-operating with the private sector, where money resides.

The private sector has money ... [Interjections.] ... no, no, no ... right now, for instance, Transnet's balance sheet is constrained. We had a situation where Eskom, and still have a situation where Eskom, has a negative balance sheet and the Treasury has had to bail out Eskom for something like R450 billion.

Now, that's a burden. That's a burden that the people of South Africa will continue to carry over the next few years where money that should be utilised quite effectively to improve education, to ensure that our health facilities are better, is then diverted to put into a state-owned enterprise. And what we are arguing is that we must lessen the dependence of our state-owned enterprises, and where we can co-operate with the private sector, and where they can put their money into a state asset they should do so.

I'll give you a very good example. The N3, which is like the real artery of our economy, was built through a partnership, a public-private partnership with the private sector. They helped us built that road and their concession will soon be

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coming to an end and the entire road, that is the N3, will then be handed over to government.

Now, that's a smart partnership and what we are saying is that develop smart partnerships. What we would have had to do, the fiscus would have had to layout quite a lot of billions of rands to build the N3, and private sector was ready to come ...

Now, I think last year I did say that I went to Beitbridge, and I went to the Zimbabwe side Beitbridge, having been to our side of Beitbridge. Our side of Beitbridge is quite a sad situation to look at. When President Mnangagwa took me to their side of Beitbridge I found that they had built one of their top, top, top-class facilities and I asked him 'How did you do this?' He said 'No, President. All we did, we gave a concession to the private sector. They've built this facility for us and we are going to take ownership of this facility. In 15 years it will be ours.' And they have built a world class facility.

Now, that is being smart. That is being smart by utilizing other people's money ... [Interjections.] ... on our side, so

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you know, so that as you respond in the way you do, so you know, on our side we have now decided that we are going to have public-private partnerships to improve our own entry points, be it in Beitbridge, be it in Lebombo and all over.

What does that do ... [Interjections.] ...

The SPEAKER: Order, hon members! You have asked the question, it's being answered, you may not like the answer because it's a point of debate. Let's allow the President to finish his answer. [Interjections.]

Order! ... [Interjections.] ... You can guide him later, not now. Order!

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Speaker, thank you. It adds quite a lot of excitement though, because it enables people to think through issues. Because when you have to deal with the reality of our own situation, where we've had quite a bit of underdevelopment and where we can say we will work with those who have the resources, and in the end, end up with, yes, the most fantastic border control situation that I saw on the Zimbabwe side and which is already earning the money because

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the flow of goods and people through that facility is much more enhanced, it's much more modern and that's precisely where we need to go.

To modernize our own infrastructure, we do need to utilize the finance, the capital that we can get from other players, be it development funding institutions, be it sovereign wealth funds. That is where we can get the support and through private-public partnerships that work for the benefit of all. Thank you, hon Speaker.

Mr S L NGCOBO: Hon President, in 2023 a surge of 1 500 to 1 600 trucks daily transporting commodities to the port of Richards Bay caused extensive infrastructure damage and strained the uMhlathuze Municipality's budget.

This crisis underscores the state's failure to maintain the rail network, forcing reliance on overburdened roadways. Despite high level government intervention, the ports' capacity remains inadequate.

Mr President, what has government done to repair and extensively safeguard the rail network, to protect it from

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obvious and deliberate tampering to benefit the trucking industry? Thank you very much, Speaker.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Speaker, it is generally known that as our rail system has deteriorated it has led to the increase of trucks on our roads, and our road network is now under enormous pressure from trucking as the trucks have increased, ferrying goods up and down from the coast to inland and from inland to the coast; they damage our roads. And this was so ably articulated by Premier of the Northern Cape who said that their road network continues to be damaged by trucks from the mines right to the port, in a way where the road just continues to deteriorate year in and year out.

That is the challenge that we are facing and the efforts that we have embarked upon of reforms are aimed at precisely improving our rail network, and also improving security on that network because there have been security lapses that have led to vandalization, the uprooting of rail lines. And some of those have been with the participation of some well-established companies that have, through the scrap businesses that they embark upon, just been peeling off our rail lines and utilizing them for scrap steel.

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Now, that requires enhanced security, which our reforms are also dealing with because that's part of the road map that we are working on.

Now, with the co-operation of all key role players, we are finding that a number of corridors are now being opened, they are being restored, and this applies to not only for goods, but also for passengers including the Passenger Rail Agency of SA, Prasa, corridors are being improved as security is enhanced as well as the security on our important rail arteries between Mpumalanga, Gauteng and also in the Northern Cape right through to the coast.

So, those are being enhanced and also now beginning to work more effectively on the rail line from Gauteng right through to the Eastern Cape. So, that is a project that is underway and it is what we want to see as a great improvement as we go on with our logistics improvement through the reforms that we have embarked upon.

So, in time, and soon it should be, even the issues that hon member is complaining about, through uMhlathuze and all that,

will be handled and will be restored to a position where they were, where goods in our country should now be transported through rail rather than through roads.

And of course, the road users, the trucking industry has seen a gap and an opportunity which they have taken up, but it is also damaging the roads and therefore, we need to ensure that there's a good balance and the balance should be more tilted towards utilizing our rail rather than our road. Thank you, hon Speaker.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Before we proceed, the hon Reddy's hand is raised on the platform. Hon Reddy!

Mr V G REDDY: Madam Deputy Speaker, will the President take a question?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon Reddy, in terms of the rules ...

[Interjections.] ... members, order, members! I will deal with this matter ... [Interjections.] ... members, order! Members, order! I cannot reply to the hon Reddy.

Hon Minister ... hon Ministers on my right-hand side, could you please calm down!

Mr President, please take your seat.

I would like to respond to the hon Reddy.

Hon Reddy, I do know that you are a new member and in terms of the rules we do not allow questions in or on the time of questions. You had the opportunity to submit questions in writing. So, I would also request your newly appointed Chief Whip to guide you in terms of the Rules of Parliament. Thank you.

Question 3:

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker. Hon members, Africa stands at the centre of our foreign policy. We are firmly committed to strengthening the African Union, AU, Southern African Development Community, SADC, as instruments of peace, stability, integration and development in our region as well as on our continent.

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Our country plays a leading role on several continental platforms and issues. For example, we are the chair of the Presidential Infrastructure Champion Initiative, as I said. We are currently the AU champion on pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response. South Africa has been working closely with other countries towards the full implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area. This is set to eliminate trade barriers, and to boost in intra African trade and to advance prosperity for all on our continent.

We continue to work within the AU to end several ongoing conflicts on our continent and to restore constitutional and democratic government, to countries that have recently experienced coup d'états.

We are currently involved in supporting the people of Mozambique, the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, DRC, South Sudan, and other countries to enhance and to ensure that there is peace and stability on our continent.

As the African Union Chair in 2020, South Africa led the continental response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This involved overseeing a continent-wide strategy, setting up of innovative

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online platforms to access essential medical supplies, mobilising the international community to address issues such as debts of African countries, and also to secure vaccines.

South Africa has consistently championed the African agenda on the world stage. Our country successfully advocated for the inclusion of the AU as a fully-fledged member of the G20. We have indicated that we will place the interests of the African continent prominently on the agenda of our G20 presidency next year.

South Africa has also stressed the value of Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, and the United Arab Emirates, BRICS, alliance to advancing Africa's developmental agenda. And as Chair of BRICS last year, our country invited representatives from other African countries to attend the summit that was held in Johannesburg. Forty-six African countries attended including twenty heads of states and governments. So, we continue as a country to pursue an independent foreign policy.

Through our foreign policy, we aim to promote our own national interests which is based on the protection and promotion of our national sovereignty and our constitutional order. The key

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pillars of our foreign policy include the promotion of human rights, peace and stability and the strengthening of trade and investment ties with other countries.

Since the advent of democracy, South Africa has taken a position of non-alignment as we deal with global matters. This means that we have chosen not to align ourselves with any of the major global powers or blocks. Instead, our country strives to work with all countries for global peace and development. We are guided by our own values and principles, and we are committed to advancing the development and prosperity of the continent that we call, home. Thank you.

The LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Dr M J Hlophe): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Mr President, the question is this, what is your administration doing to support the implementation of the ruling of the International Court of Justice in respect of the Israeli - Palestinian issue, particularly in the light of the ongoing brutality in the area?

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Deputy Speaker, as the hon member knows, we have continued to act at the International Court of Justice. Having initiated the action last year, we

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have continued to approach that court with further pleas and submissions to the court to make further rulings and to tighten up what they ruled in our favour last year. In doing so, we have been fortunate to be joined by a number of other countries that have voiced and articulated their support for the case that South Africa initiated.

We are now in the process of preparing almost a 500-page case, which will be presented to the court, where we will be taking steps to prove that what we had approached the court on last year is the reality that Palestinians are living under. It is where we will be submitting, not only video proof, photographic proof, but also great witness to our assertion that the genocide is unfolding and underway in Gaza.

All this is done, as the hon member knows, not only to support the people of Palestine, but also to ensure that we live up to our own values and principles of respect for human rights and justice. But also, to continue to advocate that the only solution to the horror that is taking place in Palestine is to give the Palestinians the opportunity to establish their own independent state and to govern themselves, and to establish a state of Palestine in which they can live side by side with

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the state of Israel. All these matters are various initiatives that we continue to take. Including the very same matters that some of the members are shouting about now. These are matters that, as the government we are in the process of dealing with.

When we started this court case, we were told that the initiative we have taken is completely irrelevant. It amounted to nothing. And when the International Court of Justice ruled in our favour, it shuts all those detractors up. And we continued in our resolve to proceed with this case because it is quite a historic case, which demonstrates the empathy and the compassion of the people of South Africa towards the people of Palestine. We will continue with this, - And in the next few weeks, we will be submitting the real substance of our case, which our lawyers have been working on.

And you might recall, - And I continue to call you, hon Judge Hlophe. You will recall that we did set up a team that is composed of some of the best brains in the legal field and international team that is working on these matters. So, we are confident that we have a solid case to prove that genocide has happened and continues to happen in Palestine. Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker.

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Mr N L S KWANKWA: Comrade President, thank you very much. The deadly clashes that have been raging for years in South Kivu and North Kivu provinces of the eastern DRC, have forced thousands of civilians to flee their homes, and dozens have been killed. There are fears that more regional towns might fall to the advancing M23.

Hon President, the question is this, whether in line with aspiration number four of Agenda 2063, of building a peaceful and secure Africa, South Africa has considered pushing for an AU facilitated DRC peace summit which would combine the Luanda and Nairobi processes that are currently underway into one. As a way of finding a lasting solution to the conflict and resolving the diplomatic crisis between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Thank you, Sir.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker. Yes, our country remains committed to ensuring that there is a peaceful outcome to the conflict that is raging in the eastern DRC. Two weeks ago, I travelled to Angola to meet João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço who brokered a ceasefire between the DRC and Rwanda, and in the course of our discussions we both

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confirmed that the only way to resolve that conflict is through a peaceful negotiation that will result in a permanent ceasefire.

We were grateful that the two countries have agreed to ceasefire, and I am informed that the ceasefire continues to hold and there are preparations underway to hold a process that will combine both the Nairobi and the Luanda process in a way that we will be able to forge a permanent peace.

As you well know, South Africa continues to be invested in this entire process of finding a peaceful solution. We are part of the SADEC Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo, SAMIDRC, that is located in the DRC with the specific purpose of ensuring that the fighting comes to an end, and that there is peace in that part of the DRC. We are looking forward to the various initiatives that are underway to ensure that, yes, the fighting stops.

The good thing is that the need for peace has now been embraced. And the other good thing is that it has been embraced that there needs to be a get together by the belligerent forces to get together to forge a peaceful

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settlement. We have long concluded that there is no way that the conflict in the DRC can be resolved through a continued armed conflict. It can only be resolved through a peaceful solution. And that is precisely what we are working on, both diplomatically, politically and in other ways, engaging the various parties that are there.

Earlier on, I had travelled to Rwanda, when they commemorated 30 years of the genocide that happened there, and in the course of that visit, I had extensive discussions with President Paul Kagame and the desire for peace was clearly expressed during our discussions. Thereafter, I also saw President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni Tibuhaburwa and the same was articulated. So, we now have rising consensus that we need to resolve that conflict through peace.

The peace that needs to be installed will bring an end to the nightmare that ordinary people are suffering on the ground and as South Africa, we will continue to play a key role as we have always done so since the time when President Mandela was president. We have sought to broker peace, and we will continue to precisely do that, and we will be working through the various organisations or structures of the AU itself, as

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peace and security commission, as well as SADC and where President Lorenzo is also leading the Luanda process. We will continue being well connected and engaged with that entire process. Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon Manyi, you raised your hand. I will now recognise you.

Mr M MANYI: Deputy Speaker, towards the end of last year it was a spirited attempt, or rather, a spirited effort not to shape the rules of this House in order to improve the decorum and all of that. So that you do not have a situation where when the President is addressing, then there is a whole flurry of point of order. And all of that.

If you then have a situation where, despite those rules, to try and maintain order in this House, you then have a President that was part of an impeachment process that now continues to mock our party leader here in Parliament. He has a problem ... [Interjections.] ...

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is a point of debate. It is not a point of order.

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Mr M MANYI: ... The President cannot continue to keep mocking our party leader as a judge when he knows that they participated in a process to unfairly impeach him. Now he impeaches him on the one side and then mocks him again. It should not be allowed.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon Manyi, that is not a point of order, and it is dismissed. We will now proceed. Hon President, we still have another point of order from hon Dlakude.

The DEPUTY CHIEF WHIP OF THE MAJORITY PARTY: Hon Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. According to the Order Paper, today is Questions to the President. It therefore does not allow anyone to make statements other than the follow up questions. So, if the hon Manyi had something to say against the President, he must bring it in a substantive motion to this House. Thank you very.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: You are quite correct, that is the process. Hon Manyi, if you do have a point to be made, you should bring it in a form of a substantive motion. But in any case, I have dismissed that point. We will now proceed with

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the third Supplementary Question, and it will be asked by the hon Maimane.

Mr M A MAIMANE: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. Hon President, firstly, I want to celebrate our stance as consistent since the democratic history of our country on facilitating human rights in the continent. I think we have taken a forthright and a strong position in this regard. What I want to understand is that beyond just proclaiming the statement, how do we reconcile our position in being able to meet with leaders such as Mr Mohamed Hamdan 'Hemedti' Dagalo, who faces some serious allegations on the basis of allegations of genocide in the early 2000 and now continues to wage war in Sudan. Equally so, South Africans were well treated to information about the fact that Zanu-PF were looking to advise during the elections to the South African government. Mr President, given that ... [Interjections.] ...

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Maimane, your time has expired. But you can complete your question in a sentence.

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Mr M A MAIMANE: ... my question is, how do we move from merely speaking about human rights, to condemning acts in Zimbabwe ... [Time Expired].

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order members, the President cannot hear the question.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker. I would like to say to Mr Manyi and Mr Hlophe that if my reference to the title is offensive, I apologise and withdraw. So, it is not a matter to be articulated if one finds it offensive. I suspect that perhaps because of one's legal training, one tends to ascribe certain titles to another person who has had legal training when one sees them. So, I apologise and withdraw.

Coming to hon Maimane's question ... [Inaudible.]

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon President, I have to remind you that it was the hon Maimane's question.

Sepedi:

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MOPRESIDENTE WA REPABLIKI YA AFRIKA BORWA: O a bona gore leleme le la ka le a go rata, bjale le no bolela fela.

English:

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA: ... hon Maimane's question as to why we would continue to meet with people like General Mohamed Hamdan Dagal. As a country, we have often said that in order to promote peace, we should be willing to meet those who are involved in conflict situations. And my predecessors were also involved in this practise. When we mediate peace between warring parties, we are willing to meet with them so that we can understand exactly what is driving them. And also, so that they can understand where we are coming from when we work for peace. So, we do not think we should say we do not meet with this one and we only meet with that one.

You may recall, hon my Maimane that as South Africa we were part of the African peace mission that went to both Ukraine and to Russia. And that meant we were willing to talk to both parties who were involved in the conflict, with a view of getting the two parties to meet so that they can have a peace process. You cannot make peace with just one party that is

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involved in a conflict. You have got to be willing to meet with both parties, and that is precisely what we have done.

You may or may not know that we have met both parties in relation to Sudan. We have met with both generals involved in this conflict and we have conveyed to them the need for peace and our discussions with both were aimed at a peaceful outcome. They have both come to South Africa and I have met them. I would like to think that as we talk to them, the positions that they may have will also be softened towards a peaceful solution. We do not believe that you should not meet with them because they are branded in a certain way.

As a neutral party non-aligned, we believe that it is best to make all efforts to ensure that there is peace in whatever conflict that there is. And that has stood us well and whenever we do so, we are able to give noticed to the other belligerent party so that they should never misunderstand our intentions. They should always understand that our objective is to ensure that there is peace in whatever conflict. That has always been accepted.

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You may remember that last year we were marginally involved in brokering peace between the warring parties in Ethiopia and they eventually came here. And we were able to achieve this by talking to both parties. And making sure that there was peace. In the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo, we are also trying to talk to all the parties involved. So, it is important that we are seen as an honest broker in promoting peace. We should be seen as peacemaker who is willing to bring warring parties together. Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker.

ADV S SALIE: Hon President, please advise whether you are aspiring and ready to become African brother Muammar Gaddafi, Robert Sobukwe, Steve Biko and Chris Hani, who all had clear visions for a United States of Africa under the banner of Pan Africanism?

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: If you understand and follow the foreign policy direction we have taken, it is truly rooted in the promotion of Pan-Africanism. We as a country have embraced a philosophy of Pan- Africanism, if you will, and we have tried to be pro-Africa in everything we do. And sometimes it has seemed like we are the most vicious country that is pro- Africa. We often see ourselves as the country that is

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Africa first and represents African interests. That is why even during the COVID-19 crisis that the entire world was facing, we focused on Pan-Africanism and called on the world to firstly reduce the debt of African countries. To cancel the debts that African countries had. And to have standstill agreements on the repayment of the debt that African countries had.

In that regard, we were less advocating for ourselves but advocating more for Africa, African countries. And when it came, for instance, to the personal protective equipment PPEs, we were able to have a number of those items made ourselves here. But we advocated for our continent as a whole to have better access to PPEs. When it came to vaccines, our approach was full blown pan African. And we were advocating for the continent as a whole, to a point where at times we put the interests of our continent even ahead of our own interests, because we do believe that we are inherently African. And we need to promote the interests of the African continent.

So, in the end, whether we are judged as any of those that you referred to, is a matter of those who will pass that judgment. But we know what we stand for, we stand for Africa. And we

want to advance the interests of our continent. Thank you, hon
Deputy Speaker.

Question 4:

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Deputy Speaker, the concentration of ownership production and market access in agriculture constraints the potential of our economy. It suppresses agricultural output and undermines growth and job creation. It also perpetuate the historical injustice of land dispossession. Agriculture and agro-processing master plan is an important instrument to address this challenge. The master plan aims to build an agriculture and agro-processing sector that is inclusive, competitive, job creating, sustainable and that continues to grow.

Pillar 5 of the master plan specifically seeks to facilitate market expansion, improve market access and promote trade. This will be achieved through amongst other things, strengthening partnerships with established industry associations to ensure that small and medium enterprises can access existing networks that facilitate exports. The master plan itself aims to increase the participation of black farmers in the national fresh produce markets. It aims to

ensure that the National Agricultural Marketing Council and the Marketing Agricultural Marketing Products Act facilitate market access for black farmers.

The government is working with the Perishable Products Export Control Board to assist small scale and previously disadvantaged farmers in complying with food safety requirements. The ability of previously disadvantaged farmers to consistently supply the markets is also a result of low throughput. It is for this reason that the master plan has prioritised producer support as one of its critical pillars. This support includes financing, extension and advisory services.

By 2030, the master plan aims to increase the share of black producers in production of grains from 4% to 20%. In livestock, from the current 32% to 40%. In fruits, from the current 2% to 10% and in vegetables from 15% to 29%. Given the extent of the challenge facing small producers, we welcome the provisional report of the Competition Commission's Fresh Produce Market inquiry. We look forward to the publication of the final report and the recommendations that it will make for

addressing market concentration in the agricultural sector. I thank you, hon Deputy Speaker.

Xitsonga:

Man D D PULE: Puresidente, ndza khensa.

English:

The implementation of the agricultural and agro-processing master plan will result in greater economic inclusion, job creation and food security.

Xitsonga:

Xivutiso xa mina eka Puresidente xi ri: Xana Ndzawulo ya Puresidente yi ta pfunetisa ku yini ku hlanganisa swiphemu hinkwaswo swo hambana swa pulaninkulu ku tiyisisa ku humelela eka xiyenge lexi? Leswi hi xilungu swi vitaniwaka ...

English:

... co-ordination of the different elements to ensure success in the sector. Thank you very much.

Xitsonga:

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Ndzi khensile, Xandla xa Xipikara.

PURESIDENTE WA RIPHABLIKI: Ndza khensa, Muchaviseki Pule.

English:

The National Fresh Produce Market has for the longest time been dominated by existing white privileged farmers. We need to embark on a multiplicity of initiatives that will ensure that black farmers and particularly our small medium farmers do in the end have the opportunity. Firstly, they need to have throughput in terms of being able to produce more of the free fresh produce. They need land to be able to do so and they also need assistance with the inputs that go into farming such as fertilizer and such as the implements. They also need financing in that regard so that they are well financed so that they become serious players in the sector.

They also needs to have the access to market to open up for them. Yes, the state can play a key role through its procurement processes particularly when it comes to either feeding schemes that need to be properly streamlined to enable the procurement to happen. However, when it gets to the markets those markets of fresh produce in the various key

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nodes of our country, they need to properly empower the small medium farmers so that they are able to have better access. As they gain access and space, those markets should then be able to have their products being saleable.

They also need an active empowerment process so that the chain that sell are fresh produce and should be able to procure the produce from the small farmers. So, it is a combination of initiatives that we needs to embark upon to make sure that indeed in the end we reposition small medium farmers, as the main answer shows that we need substantial growth in the various categories. In the livestock category a great deal of progress has been made. We now need to move to the other categories, grains for instance, we are still at the lower level. This is largely due to the fact that many black farmers do not have the land to be able to produce grains which is the typical staple food of the majority of our people. They don't have the capacity to produce that in large quantities.

So, many initiatives are already underway. We do believe that the various departments in government that are aimed at ensuring that we achieve these objectives will help. The Competition Commission report in terms of the sector inquiry

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has helped a great deal to fathom precisely what the problems are. We are hoping that when they come out with their report, we will be able to have clear recommendations that will be able to take matters forward in the interest of ensuring that black people play a key role in this sector as well. Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker.

Mr W A S AUCAMP: Hon President, the expansion of growth and market access in the agricultural industry for upcoming farmers is very important. It will, however, not occur when one part of the industry is sacrificed to the benefit of other part of the same industry. It is of utmost importance that the much needed growth in access to markets for previously disadvantaged small and emerging farmers must take place. It must, however, grow parallel to the growth in access to the markets that commercial farmers who employ millions of people experience.

What assurance, Mr President, can you therefore provide to farmers that the steps that will be taken for the necessary increase in the concentration of access to markets for previously disadvantaged small and emerging farmers will not influence the access to markets that commercial farmers

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currently have, but rather the access to markets for both emerging and commercial farmers will grow simultaneously and in so doing transfer emerging farmers ... [Time expired.] ...? Thank you, hon President.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: I think the operative word here should be, opening up access to all. That process, for instance, is already underway. I gave a very good example with the citrus industry. In the citrus industry you have the established farmers who are churning out quite a lot of citruses. However, we also have the emerging black farmers who are also producing citrus. Now, as we advocate for the opening up of the European market, we do so for both.

We want to advance both but we also want the existing farmers to give maximum support to the emerging farmers through the facilities that they have, for instance, pack houses. Emerging farmers don't have pack houses. They should be sharing space and opportunity, for instance, in facilities or infrastructure facilities to purchase pack houses and such as transportation as well. If we can have both of them grabbing the opportunities that are given rise to with the government

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obviously giving much more assistance to emerging farmers. I think we need to be clear about that.

The government will be biased towards assisting emerging farmers. Existing farmers must never think that this is being done at the expense of their continued success. All must succeed at the same time but with greater emphasis on the government side to support those who were previously held back and who were previously not even allowed to play a key role. I see both being given, yes, the opportunities to rise together. Nonetheless, our emphasis as government will always be on assisting black farmers because they need much more support. Remembering, of course, that the existence of the more established white farmers was done with the great assistance of the previous apartheid government. It was the apartheid government that propped them up that put them where they are today.

So, their own responsibility must be that we must support those that were previously prevented. We must also accept that government will assist those more so that all of us are then able to rise. It is not a question of saying that we want to suppress the one so that the other should grow, we say that

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all must be able to rise together. That is the approach of this government because it is important that we should be able to have an economic system or sector in agriculture that promotes growth. As we promote growth, the bias will always be towards those who were previously disadvantaged. Thank you very much.

Mr S S ZIBI: Mr President, there are many South Africans from rural communities such as mine, in the Eastern Cape, who have access to arable land but zero access to piped water, specifically to where we farm crops and do stock farming.

What measures will the government take to accelerate access to piped water for stock and crop farming lands in rural areas so that when these measures are taken to deconcentrate at the top and when they are supported with modern farming methods advice and other equipment, they too can be part of the formal economy so that they can benefit from the deconcentration of the value chain? Thank you.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Access to water for starters and access to piped water even in the deep rural areas is a very important objective that we have. Remembering that the

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current more commercial agriculture set up that we have in our country really grew because there was a great deal of support to your commercial farmers for channeling water for irrigation purposes to the places where they do their own trade or where they farm.

Therefore, as we support emerging black farmers we do need to lay emphasis on the key important resource in farming, which is water and, of course, the other one is finance the other one is the know how or technical skills which were eroded during the time of dispossession. We need to bring that back. That is why we are focusing on having extension officers training so that they can increase the experience and the knowledge level of our people. On water specifically, as a water scarce country - as we begin to deal with the challenge that our people just in terms of their daily lives - not having sufficient water, we also need to address the water that they should have available for farming purposes.

That is why the water regulatory process is becoming more and more favourable to those who have been previously disadvantaged and, of course, it has to deal with infrastructure. The infrastructure challenge of being able to

go to a water source and being able to deliver water to where our people are, is the key one. That is where financial resources become a big determinant but the willingness and the objective to do so is there. The Department of Water and Sanitation is committed to ensuring that we address this. In the end other departments, for instance, agriculture will also be focusing on ensuring that farming becomes an important - and as it is an important - aspect of our economic growth trajectory.

As we do so, we need to know and have a clear objective of ensuring that water - a key resource in farming - does become accessible to those farmers in the outlying areas. As we address through Water and Sanitation the whole process of giving water to our people by constructing dams and all that, we should be able to address the need that there is amongst our people in the rural areas for the delivery of water where they are, not only for living purposes but also for commercial purposes. Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker.

Mr R A P TROLLIP: Hon President, access to the markets presupposes that there are commercially viable and marketable products available. The emerging agricultural sector that I

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worked in remains emerging despite the targets that you mentioned due to the following; poorly performing comprehensive agricultural support programme and its extension services, 50% underspending on the land development and support programmes where hundreds of millions of rands have been lost.

This is compounded by the fact that no new dams have been built, crumbling road and rail infrastructure, the worst international ports productivity performance by our export ports that compromises the quality and value of all perishable and livestock exports and the banning of South African exports by neighbouring countries.

What will be done differently to reverse these findings of the Auditor-General that say that there is no culture shift in the department and that the legacy report of the past administration in agriculture has reported to the committee saying that nothing is changing, hon President?

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Yes, the challenges are immense, I must admit to that. However, we face a number of challenges, the lack of support to emerging farmers has been

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the bane of our problems over quite a long time and the absence of extension officers. Uh, one country that has done extremely well as I got to know is Ethiopia.

They made it a point to train 40 000 extension officers. Having trained so many, that revolutionised their agriculture and made agriculture a big contributor to their GDP. We have been taking steps to increase the level of extension officers but those extension officers are often young people who themselves know very little about farming. This is where the more established commercial farmers can play a key role in assisting the training and preparation of capacitation of the extension officers that we need.

Every farmer, particularly on the emerging sector needs extension advice on an ongoing basis. On the underspending you are absolutely right, it is something that has also brought us down. Not establishing and building new dams is another challenge. We often want to spend too much money in building dams and yet there are new innovative ways of constructing dams more cost effectively. It means that we need to mobilise engineers who are more attuned to new ways of building dams because, yes, you are right, it is through the trapping of

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water that often ends up in the sea that we will be able to increase agriculture and improve opportunities that emerging farmers can have.

It is because quite a lot of our land lies derelict due to lack of water. If we can - as you correctly say - build new dams that is precisely what we can do. The Department of Land Affairs and Rural Development as well as Agriculture will be focusing on precisely these challenges that we face and making sure that even with agreements between ourselves and our neighboring countries. We have had a challenge between South Africa and Namibia, as well as Botswana. All those matters will now be negotiated so that we continue to have that access as we would want them to have access to our own market with whatever produce that they are able to have.

In some cases, they say that they want to block our products so that they can increase their own capacity. They are much smaller populations and in no time they should be able to produce their own and they will need a market and we should be their market. All these challenges, hon Trollip, are matters that are on our radar screen. They are matters that will be addressed. I would even encourage that our parliamentary

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committees that are seised with matters such as these should increase the tempo of their attention so that at the government level we are able to focus on what is important.

Agriculture can and will be a great job creator. We need to focus on all those sectors of agriculture that can be good job creators and that can lead to development. The continued entry of black emerging farmers into agriculture and into various sectors - I should say that - that is continuing to happen but we need to hasten that pace. You say that there hasn't been much progress, we need to hasten that but in a number of subsectors of agriculture it is beginning to happen. We are seeing more and more activity.

I have just been hugely impressed by seeing how many citrus farmers and how many black farmers are now in the citrus industry and in the citrus industry where they are actually exporting as well. In the sugar industry we are dealing with a lot of small scale farmers particularly in places like KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga.

So, these are small scale farmers that continue needing assistance and support and we need to spread that more to get

into grains and to get into maize. In livestock, there is a plethora of emerging black farmers. So, we do need to get into the other niche areas where black farmers can participate well. Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker.

Question 5:

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Deputy Speaker, in April 2019, I spoke to the residents of Alexandra about the challenges that they faced. I made reference to a programme to build one million houses for the whole of South Africa. It is quite clear from the recording of what I said that these houses were not just for Alexandra. There is simply not enough space in Alexandra to be able to develop and even approach the scale that would amount to one million.

Housing in Alexandra has long been a challenge. Many people continue to move to Alexandra due to its proximity to economic opportunities. This strains existing resources and increases housing demand. There is a lack of available land for development in and around Alexandra itself. This is made worse by land invasions and the growth of informal settlements.

Under these conditions the different spheres of government are working together to address the housing challenges in Alexandra. Plans are underway to build approximately 40 000 houses in Frankenwald and in Linksfield, benefitting the residents in the area and others in Alexandra.

One of the urgent tasks is to relocate approximately 8 000 households that are in the floodlines or plains of the Jukskei River. An enumeration process to establish which households will be affected has been completed. Various land parcels have been identified for relocation. Studies on the suitability of the land have been completed on secured land portions.

One project that is known as the Linksfield development has secured township proclamations for a proposed 10 000 units. The costing and engineering approvals have been obtained. Construction of social housing and open market units has also started. Another project, the Frankenwald development, is currently in the township proclamation phase and is projected to yield 30 000 units.

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The government is actively working to unblock and complete various stalled housing projects in Alexandra. Progress has been made on projects like the Helen Joseph Hostel and the KwaNobuhle Hostel with design approvals and beneficiary administration processes underway.

The City of Johannesburg has obtained an evacuation order to relocate households in flood-prone areas. Environmental assessments are underway to identify affected households and efforts are being made to secure land for relocation. Units have been constructed in other smaller projects like Marlboro Gardens, Marlboro Second Avenue and Madala Hostel.

The specific challenges in Alexandra create a complex environment for housing development. Overcoming these challenges requires a multifaceted approach as well as collaboration between various stakeholders. Progress is being made and government remains committed to delivering housing solutions and improving the living conditions under which our people in Alexandra live. I thank you, hon Deputy Speaker.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Before I give the hon Malema the opportunity to ask the first supplementary question, there is

a request from members in the House that if you're not using your devices to listen to the interpreting, please turn down the volume because we can hear the sound the whole time. That is a request from members in the Chamber. The first supplementary question will be asked by the hon Malema.

Mr J S MALEMA: Deputy Speaker ...

Tshivenda:

Ndi masiari. Ndaa!

English:

I can see that those guys who are working on your eyes are doing a good job because there is some improvement.

President, it is ... leadership to admit when you have made a mistake. You can't come here and say you never promised the people of Alexandra one million houses. You said so. You said you are going to build one million houses for the people of Alexandra, and knowing that you are a legally trained person like you said, you are not an illiterate ... who just speaks without knowing what he's speaking about. As a President, before you take to the stage your back office would have given

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you the necessary information which is relevant to the place where you are.

So, it is important that today you admit that you made a mistake because those people are dying. Some of them stayed at S'tswetla and as a result that land is not for human settlement. When you created that impression, a lot of expectation was made. Here we're dealing with human beings who have feelings. When a President speaks, they have high expectations you know, because they know it's not a ... lesser authority speaking.

Our fighter, Moshe Mphahlele, was killed in Alexandra, fighting for rightful people to occupy the containers. Due to that daily struggle of housing in Alexandra, we lost our honorary commissar during the battle for the occupation of those containers. In his honour and in honour of the poorest of the poor, people who are sleeping with rats, and people who are staying in places where there is no proper sanitation and water, I think it is the correct thing to say, I'm sorry, I miscalculated. I said one million houses instead of 40 000 houses.

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By saying that you did not say it ... you are now becoming a professional politician who can just say this today and turn against it tomorrow, and it's business as usual. So, with the few numbers that you have now, maybe this will help you to regain some confidence in Alexandra. Thank you.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Moshabi, let me start by extending my condolences on the passing of Mphahlele. I had wanted to call you but I then got distracted by a whole number of things. I felt very sad when that incident happened because Mphahlele was an important leader in your party. So, my condolences.

In precisely addressing the point that you are making, we took care to go back to that recording and listened to it. I had a number of people in my office listen to it and interpret it because ...

Sepedi:

... ke boletše ka Sepedi, ka bolela ...

English:

... and, hon Malema, to the extent that it created the impression that I said a million houses for Alexandra, which objectively would not be possible anyway because we just don't have the land there to build a million houses, yes, I will apologise for having made people believe that I meant for Alexandra.

What I really meant was, yes, we would want to build a million houses for the whole country. Of course, as it really turned out we never even reached that target because of a whole number of issues. During the Medium-Term Strategic Framework, MTSF, we succeeded in building 240 000 houses, which is way below what we had wanted.

There are many reasons around the country as to why we have not been able to reach our targets and these are things that we do need to correct because in some cases there has been underspending. Money has been laid out and the entities that are supposed to build those houses often do not do so, and the money is returned.

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The issue of Alexandra is quite complex and has been so for years, and we've had a number of initiatives that were put in place. However, hon Malema, I do believe that with some of the initiatives that I've spoken about we will be able to make progress.

The living conditions of our people in Alexandra are really truly appalling. I should say that it's not only Alexandra. It is in a number of informal settlements which one sees as one goes around to visit our people. You can see that they live with rats and they live where there are no facilities. This poses a huge responsibility on us as government to improve the living conditions of our people.

This is precisely what we are committed to doing as the seventh administration. We will work day in and day out to make sure that we give our people living conditions that are conducive for human beings. So, we will be focusing on that.

However, thank you very much for having raised the issue of the living conditions of the people of Alexandra. I take it seriously and I'm glad that you also take it seriously. Thank you very much.

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Ms B M BARTLETT: Hon Deputy Speaker, the President might answer some of these questions, but hon President, it is of paramount concern that within the 30 years of democratic governance, we have not been able to reverse apartheid's spatial legacy. Within the context of addressing rapid urbanisation, hon President, how will our government ensure that it reverses the legacy of apartheid's spatial planning to address transformation and ensure the quality of human settlements?

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Deputy Speaker, it is true and something that we must admit that in the 30 years we have not been able to change apartheid-initiated social engineering when it comes to the spatial architecture of our country. Poor people continue to live outside and on the periphery of cities and the richer ones live near the cities or in the cities. This is something that we should have focused attention on in order to ensure that poorer people are able to live near to where they work and where there are economic facilities and infrastructure. Instead, we have just imposed more and more financial burdens on them because as they travel to where they work, they spend up to 30%, 40% or even 50% of their income on

travel. So, this is what we need to reverse. This is what we need to change and it is a process.

It really also revolves around the powers and the ability of our local government to be able to focus on changing the spatial development of our country and to reconfigure it away from the apartheid architecture that was put in place. By doing so, we will be able to give more economic power to our people so that they spend less time on the road going to work and more money in their pockets to be able to live a better life. This continues to be a blight from the apartheid past and it continues to demonstrate that the shadow of apartheid continues to cast its shade on our people. It is something that we need to engender from national, provincial as well as at local government level.

We have often been driven by the need to just roll out houses. Having done up to four million, many of them are strewn right across various towns but on the outside and the periphery.

Those have reinstalled the approach of the apartheid government of building dormitories where people just go and live far away from the economic centres. Reconfiguring that and reversing that is going to take quite a bit of time

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because we have aided and abetted what we as the new government and the new dispensation inherited. However, we now need to be more focused that this is what we need to correct. That is why we are making more and more social housing ... within cities. Now the process – and I think it will gain momentum – of reclaiming even disused buildings that are in cities and refashioning them into living abodes for our people will be the best way to go because we will be able to bring more and more of our people into cities. As we have seen in the recent past, which has been going on for quite a while, our people are occupying buildings. We often say it's illegal occupation but they are doing that out of necessity.

Our local governments need to be more responsive and be able to realise that we need to create social houses. We need to create accommodation in the cities rather than get our people to live far away. That, hon Bartlett, will then lead to the improvement of our people's livelihood, which I would like to see. We are determined to proceed on that basis ... our seventh administration embarking on with a great deal of commitment.

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Mr L MPHITHI: Hon President, once again the Department of Human Settlements has seen a baseline reduction of its budget of R3,1 billion for the 2024-25 financial year. This, coupled with a massive housing and overcrowding crisis in Alexandra that as you've pointed out has gone on for many, many years, has led to many land invasions from desperate South Africans who have been waiting for houses for many years. Mr President, can you please tell this House what measures your government will put in place to prevent housing developments from being illegally occupied by land invaders?

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: The development of informal settlements, which starts off as an invasion of various spaces, is a problem that continues to spread around our country. It needs to be stopped and arrested. We can only do so if our local governments ensure that their laws and bylaws are adhered to. Quite often, a number of these settlements are built in very dangerous spaces. Some are built right on the banks of a river, on the floodplain as I said, and others are built on the outskirts of industrial areas where it quite often leads to the invasion of land that should not be invaded. Local governments need to ensure that their own bylaws are enforced.

Similarly, at the provincial level we need to have a proper focus on occurrences such as these because no sooner that they start in a local area that they start spreading throughout a province. Indeed, that is one of the challenges that we face. I would say it is now being faced by many, many provinces around the country.

We do need to focus on housing or human settlements; the type of human settlements that will be able to accommodate the people who need land.

Obviously, hon member, you started with the baseline budget reduction that Human Settlements has suffered. Yes, indeed, the reprioritisation process in government has led to a reduction of budgets for a number of departments and Human Settlements has also been affected.

However, some of it has also happened because we found that monies that are delineated for human settlements are often not spent. There have been areas where we have had money being returned and this has arisen either as a result of land disputes, procurement challenges and many others, where for instance money is not spent in the budget time that it should

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be spent and is finally returned. Some of these amount to quite a lot of money.

Of course, corruption has also played a key role in all of this. So, the multiplicity of challenges and problems needs to be addressed, and they will be addressed because we need to focus on a programme of reducing informal settlements and also focus on reducing land invasions. Land invasions often take place on land that is owned by other people or other state entities. That needs to come to a stop.

Focusing on that, a local government, a provincial government and indeed a national government should be the order of the day. So, that too is a process that we will keep an eye on but at the same time ensure that we do roll out housing solutions so that our people can get a better life.

Of course, one of the areas that our people often raise is that they would prefer to get land, serviced land or serviced stands so that they can build for themselves. Our new approach is now becoming more and more responsive to that, so that we are able to make allocations of land that is serviced so that

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those who want to build will also be able to take up the opportunity. Thank you, hon House Chair.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Thank you, hon President. The last supplementary question will be asked by the hon F Adams. Is the hon member on the platform? It seems as if the hon member is not on the platform. We will proceed to the last question for today that has been asked by the hon Hadebe. The question is about combatting illicit trade and illegal substances between South Africa and Angola. The hon President?

Question 6:

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon House Chair, His Excellency the President, João Lourenço, of the Republic of Angola has accepted my invitation to undertake a state visit to South Africa later this year. The objective of the visit is to further strengthen co-operation between our two countries in various areas: Political, economic, security and social areas as well.

The agenda for the meeting between the two heads of state is currently being developed. It is envisaged that various

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Ministers will assist the two heads of state in preparing for the visit. Within this context, the Ministers will have an opportunity to reflect on safety and security matters, including the trade and transport of illegal substances between the two countries. They would then be able to present a report and recommendations to the heads of state during the state visit by President João Lourenço to South Africa later this year, in December. I thank you, hon House Chair.

Mr N M HADEBE: Hon Chairperson, Your Excellency, recognising the gravity of illicit trade and the illegal circulation of substances and the importance of regional relationship, intervention is needed to address and combat these issues effectively, with Angola being a transition country for many illicit trade activities and illegal substances, and South Africa being a key role-player in this elite illicit activities, I would like to know whether there are any ongoing discussions regarding the enhancement of collaboration between Angola and South Africa's intelligence services to address illicit trade and illegal substance networks, the trading, and the tracking of syndicates. I thank you.

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The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon House Chair, I would like to assure hon Hadebe that the answer is yes. We are collaborating at a deep level on several issues, including on matters that have to do with intelligence to be able to focus more on these syndicates because, as you correctly say, they are there, and that process is underway. It is going to reach - as I said in my earlier head answer - a very important high point during the state visit because our Ministers - as I said - will be able to have processed these things and will have been able to deal with the real factual situation which will then be underpinned by the agreements that we are going to have that will establish a system and processes that will enable us to deal with these matters more effectively. So, yes, is the answer to your question. Thank you, hon House Chair.

Ms N A GCALEKA-MAZIBUKO: Hon House Chair, the AU report on illicit financial flows concludes that the commercial activities are by far the largest contributor to illicit financial flows. Further, that lack of appropriate capacity remains a big challenge in curtailing these illicit flows. Mr President, what is South Africa doing to strengthening the

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legislative and institutional capacity to deal with illicit trade? I thank you.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon House Chair, and hon Mazibuko, our National Treasury is seized with this matter on an ongoing basis, and they are also focusing on the regulatory aspect. But working together within the broad framework that has been set by the African Union as well, you may recall some years ago, former President, Thabo Mbeki, came out with a report that detailed how illicit criminality has been rampant in our continent and how best it can be dealt with at the continental level. So, our National Treasury, in the wake of that report and work that is being done through various structures on the continent, including in our own region, is firmly seized with this challenge and matter, it continues to preoccupy even the officials in our National Treasury.

Legislation or regulations are following in tow to ensure that we deal effectively with this challenge. So, be rest assured that this being an overarching challenge and problem is a matter that is being address. Thank you, hon House Chair.

Mr M M DLAMINI: Chairperson, President ...

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IsiZulu:

... ngoJuni walo nyaka ...

English:

... the Institute for Security Studies said that there are no co-ordinated efforts in the Southern African Development Community, SADC, region to put measures that deals with issues of security, and then that leaves the region exposed to a lot of criminal activities. So, if we can deal with the three countries. Let's start with Angola, one of the biggest oil-producing nations and the coast of Namibia, they have oil deposits and even in South Africa, we have so much potential of oil reserves. Now, have you met with your fellow counterparts - the other Presidents to discuss the issues of security within the SADC region so that we can protect these resources, and not only protecting them from criminal elements, but also to these foreign companies that see this continent as a continent of extraction of resources? Have you sat with them? What are the plans or are there plans in place so that we can deal with the serious security issues? Thank you.

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THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon House Chair, yes, there have been discussions, particularly around focusing on our natural resources and to establish a forum in our region, which will enable us to have common approaches and common frameworks so that when it comes to natural resources, we are able to exploit much more effectively as a whole, rather than just individually. And as you correctly say, several of our countries are finding several key and important mineral resources. In Namibia recently, yes, there is an oil find and more searches are happening also on our Western seaboard to be able to see whether that whole plateau has intrusions in South Africa. And that leads to co-operation and collaboration, not only focusing on criminality, but also focusing on how we enhance our own ability to better exploit the natural endowments that we have as a region, and forum in that regard is being put in place. I know that our Minister of Mineral Resources, each time there is the mineral indaba, he can collaborate with his counterparts not only from the entire continent, but also from the region about a number of these minerals. So, there is an effort at the subcontinental level, but also, more broadly at the continental level. We have raised this at our heads of state meeting where we have also discussed how the management of our resources can be enhanced,

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particularly in countries that are just new in having found these very rare minerals like lithium and all that. So, we are working on approaches that can enhance the management of the wealth that all the countries have come across and have been endowed with. So, yes, that is a process that is underway. Thank you, hon Chair.

Ms L M NGOBENI: House Chair, hon President, I think we can all agree that the time for fluff is over. South Africans demand real leadership. I think the time for rhetoric is over. We have heard what you have just said, but our nation needs to be able to count on you Sir, to stand up for us, especially after we felt so neglected by the previous administrations. We are all concerned about the unchecked flow of contraband goods, illicit trade, and illegal immigration that threatens our sovereignty and economic wellbeing. It is a fact, Sir, that foreign criminal syndicates continue to thrive in South Africa, exploiting our porous borders and weak security. I want to reiterate after the original question, reiterate my original statement that the time for fluff is over. What decisive and enforceable action will this government take to combat these threats and protect our nation? Thank you.

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THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: The South African Police Service has gotten into top gear in as far as dealing with several criminal nodes and criminal activity categories. They have established specialized teams. We have been insisting that we need specialized teams to deal with various categories of criminality, and one of those is being able to deal, yes, with illicit contraband and illicit money flows. So those specialized teams have been set up and are going to be even more active. Yes, you also raised the issue of illegal migration. Yes, for the longest time we have had that as a reality. When we set up the Border Management Agency to guard our borders, particularly where we are most vulnerable on the northern part of the country, we expected that we would see a lessening of illegal flows of people. And their performance, in many ways, is far exceeding even our expectations.

The Board Management Agency was a long time in the making. We took a bit too long to have it established, but now that it is there, it is aiding and supporting the various other agencies that we have. And we are over time going to see a lessening of the illegal migration that has dogged our country for the longest time. And you say, yes, we should go beyond the fluff, and that is the real action that the Border Management Agency

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has been able to do. We may well have spoken about it in the past, but now there is real action. The Border Management Agency is doing quite a lot, and they need to continue being supported. I was there when it was launched. And before it was even officially launched, they had already demonstrated their capability and their prowess, and they are already putting together a ringed fence around the northern part of the country where we have been most vulnerable. The police are tightening up and gearing up regarding their specialized units. And of course, because of the activities of criminality that are so rife in our country, we need more specialized units. Now, for the past three years, we have recruited more police officers into the police leading up to well over 20 000, almost 30 000. Now, over time we faced a situation where the police numbers were going down and population was going up. And we were paying less attention to this challenge. We now are and number of those police officers are now going to be well-trained to go into specialized units that are going to do specialized work, for instance, focusing on syndicates. Soon, the Minister of Police will be going around the country, focusing more on how best our police services, our security services, local government, provincial government, and national government can co-operate and work well together,

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including private security. He is now going to move around the whole country and go to those nodes that have seen greater or enhanced or increasing criminality. And I do believe that in the Seventh Administration, we are going to see several areas where changes will happen and this has been in the making, in the preparatory processes in the Sixth Administration, and it is now going to reach greater fruition in the Seventh Administration. So, your words move beyond fluff and get more action. That is exactly what you are going to see. Thank you very much, hon House Chair.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Thank you, hon President and hon members, that concludes questions to the President, and I wish to thank the hon President.

Business of the day concluded.

The House adjourned at 16:34.