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NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
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PROCEEDINGS OF HYBRID NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

The House met at 09:00.

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

ANNOUNCEMENT

(Rules)

THE ACTING SPEAKER (Mr S L Tsenoli): Hon members, before we proceed, we would like to remind you that the virtual plenary is deemed to be in the precinct of Parliament and constitute a meeting of the National Assembly. In addition to the rules of virtual sittings, the rules of the National Assembly including the rules of debate apply.

Members enjoy the same powers privileges that apply in the sitting of the National Assembly. Members should equally

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know that anything said in the virtual platform is deemed to have been said to the House and maybe be ruled upon.

All members who have logged in shall be considered to be present and are requested to mute their microphones and only unmute when recognised to speak. This is because the mics are very sensitive when you will pick up noise which might disturb the attention of other members. When recognised to speak, please unmute your microphone and where connectivity permits, connect your video.

Members may use the icons on the bar at the bottom of or wherever of their screens, which has an option that allows to put up their hand to raise points of order. The Secretariat will assist in alerting the presiding officer.

To members requesting to speak when using the virtual system, members are urged to refrain and desist from unnecessary points of order.

I would like to add that often times members inadvertently, your microphone comes on, and please be alert and careful and keep watching to ensure that you are not on when you are not recognised.

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The only item in today's Order Paper is questions addressed to the Deputy President. There are four supplementary questions on each question. Each have a given indication of which questions their members wish to pose a supplementary question. Adequate notice was given to parties for this purpose.

The members who will post supplementary questions will be recognised by the presiding officer in allocating opportunities for supplementary questions.

The principle of fairness, among others has been applied if a member asking a supplementary question is unable to do so due to technological difficulties, another member from the same party will be allowed to ask a question on behalf of the member.

When all supplementary questions have been answered by the Deputy President, we will proceed to the next question on the Order Paper. The first question has been asked by hon Ngola to the Deputy President.

QUESTIONS FOR ORAL REPLY - DEPUTY PRESIDENT

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Question 1:

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Hon Acting Speaker, on the 27th of February 2024, I addressed the National Conference on the review of the Integrated Criminal Justice System. At the conference, I emphasised the importance of the government working with all sectors of society to fight organised crime and corruption. I also urged joint action to tackle the intricate criminal web of disruption on construction sites, which poses a threat to human life and thereby hinders economic growth and job losses.

Furthermore, when delivering the 2022 state of the nation address President Cyril Ramaphosa announced that government will establish specialised, multidisciplinary units to address economic sabotage, extortion, construction sites and vandalism of infrastructure. To this end, the South African Police Service has established 20 specialised multi-disciplinary economic infrastructure task teams throughout the country, with 18 to be established at district level and two at provincial level. These task teams are established to enhance existing intervention to safeguard economic infrastructure, with a particular focus on Eskom, Transnet, Passenger Rail Agency

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of South Africa, Prasa, water infrastructure as well as general socio-economic infrastructure.

Hon Acting Speaker, with specification reference to the alleged construction mafias, government is working with the construction industry through the Infrastructure Built Anti-Corruption Forum to fight crime and corruption in the construction sector. The Anti-Corruption Forum provides a platform for strategic interventions to protect the integrity of government infrastructure investments plan through detection and prevention of corrupt activities in the construction sector.

As government, we are strengthening capacity for social facilitation to manage Community ... [Interjections.] ...

THE ACTING SPEAKER (Mr S L Tsenoli): Yeah, go ahead.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: ... Okay. Hon Acting Speaker, I have just said that as a government, we are strengthening social facilitation capacity to meet community expectations and combat crime in construction and other strategic sectors of our economy. In this regard, the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure is piloting

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the Social Facilitation Framework, which was approved by Cabinet in May 2021, to ensure public participation, community involvement and local beneficiation on construction projects.

Hon Acting Speaker, I encourage South Africans to report to the South African Police Service and other law enforcement agencies any unlawful behaviour such as threats or violence and extortion, as well as the destruction of infrastructure that may lead to the stalling of projects. I believe that together we can do more to fight organised crime and corruption for economic growth and prosperity in our country. I thank you, hon Acting Speaker.

Mr X NQOLA: Thank you very much hon Deputy President for that elaborate and concise response. It actually demonstrates the government's working for its people. We are equally delighted on the concerted effort to mobilise communities to ensure that these incidences of crime are reported because government only win the war against crime when working closely with communities. Deputy President, can you enlighten this House and the people at large as to the intent and purpose of this 30% subsidy to local

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businesses through government projects, what was the government trying to achieve? And when is the social facilitation framework expected to be completed?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Hon Nqola, the African National Congress continues to ensure that small businesses co-operatives and other enterprises particularly owned by women continue to benefit from the programmes that government is implementing. You will recall that in the year 2000 Parliament passed the Preferential Procurement Policy Framework that was to ensure that we create opportunities for these small, medium enterprises to be able to benefit from government programmes and other programmes.

Subsequent to that, the Minister of Finance promulgated regulations. So, a lot has happened and as we speak, the NCOP is busy drafting the Procurement Bill, which will address some of the weaknesses identified after the preferential procurement regulations were passed. You will recall that there were challenges with the Constitutional Court. We are now correcting this through the Bill that is now before the NCOP.

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One of the important things I need to emphasise is that we need to continue to condemn strongly the criminality that happens on construction sites with these so-called construction mafias and so on and ensure that the social facilitated framework should assist for government to be able to implement project, particularly the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure which is having a number of projects in various areas throughout the country. Thank you.

THE CHIEF WHIP OF THE OPPOSITION: Thank you very much, Acting Speaker. Deputy President, the construction mafia ecosystem is fuelled by the corrupt relationship between unscrupulous politicians, officials and contractors. And so, to deal with this problem decisively, we must tackle politicians who are enablers and beneficiaries of this. Recently, the Speaker of the National Assembly, Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula is alleged to have received millions to construct her personal residence and she stands accused of 12 counts of corruption and money laundering by the National Prosecuting Authority, NPA. We have written to all parties in the National Assembly, including your party, the ANC. Will the ANC which you lead, Deputy

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President supports this motion in order to restore public trust in Parliament?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Hon Acting Speaker, I am aware that the Democratic Alliance has proposed a motion. Hon Gwarube, from where I sit the Speaker of Parliament is co-operating with the law enforcement agencies. You may also be aware that she has on a number of occasions said that if she was to be charged with these alleged offences, she is prepared to step down. So, my approach is that let us give those processes an opportunity so that we can know exactly what is happening. At the moment there are still investigations, and she is not charged, all that remains allegations. Therefore, I think it would be premature to then ask the Speaker to relieve herself off her duties, when in fact the allegations have not been tested. Thank you very much, hon Acting Speaker.

Mr A M SHAIK-EMAM: Thank you very much, Acting Speaker. Deputy President, criminal syndicates have infiltrated our supply chain process, in this case the construction mafia. But apart from this high level of corruption at the local government level in collusion with politically appointed public sector officials, would you consider extending your

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intervention to the local communities where necessary to conduct forensic audits if there are allegations against any of these appointed officials, etc?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Yes indeed. I think when there are allegations of this nature, we should ensure that there are proper investigations, including forensic investigations where necessary. I think the important thing is to give those who are entrusted with the responsibility of investigating to do so without fear or favour. And that they are not disturbed. We must give them the space they need, because these crimes, especially those of the construction mafia, but even if we find that some of them are aided by those in authority, we must be able to act and act decisively. Yes, hon Shaik-Emam, I would definitely support that. I think the most important thing we need to ensure is that proper investigations are carried out so that no one can say that they are being tried in the media. These are just allegations. We must follow all procedures, but we should leave no stone unturned. I support these initiatives. Thank you very much.

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THE ACTING SPEAKER (Mr S L Tsenoli): The next speaker is hon Gwarube.

THE CHIEF WHIP OF THE OPPOSITION: Are you sure Deputy Speaker?

THE ACTING SPEAKER (Mr S L Tsenoli): Yes, I am sure.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I think she has asked already.

THE CHIEF WHIP OF THE OPPOSITION: I can take a second bite.

Mr B A RADEBE: Hon Deputy Speaker, we should proceed to the next question.

Question 2:

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Hon Acting Speaker, fighting crime and corruption remains a top priority for the ANC-led government. We continue to implement measures to strengthen the criminal justice system, including providing support to the National Prosecuting Authority, NPA.

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Hence, Cabinet adopted what we call the Integrated Crime and Violence Prevention Strategy, ICVPS, in March 2022, which represents a whole of government and a whole of society approach to addressing crime and violence.

In this regard, the SA Police Service, the SAPS, has also developed the Increased Crime Prevention and Combating Action Plan that has been incorporated into the National Policing Strategy, which seeks to give effect to government's commitment towards using an inclusive approach to addressing crime and violence. The strategy includes the implementation of weekly intelligence-led high-density operations within all prioritised station precincts, which is referred to as Operation Shanela. The Ministry of Police monitors progress through Operation Shanela, aiming to reduce violent crime in particular and improve community safety by enhancing a multidisciplinary approach to criminal activities.

To this end, on the 5th of December last year, this House passed the National Prosecuting Authority Amendment Bill, which, when passed by Parliament, will amend the National Prosecuting Authority Act of 1998, and provide, among others for the establishment of an Investigating

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Directorate against Corruption, Idac, as a permanent entity within the NPA.

We have also enacted the Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act of 2004, which enhances measures to prevent and combat corruption in both the public and private sectors.

Furthermore, in May 2020, the Anti-Corruption Task Team and the National Priority Committee on Organised Crime, established the Fusion Centre as a multidisciplinary and collaborative effort by all corruption-fighting agencies that are actively involved in the prevention and combating of corruption.

We remain determined to intensify our efforts to fight crime, and root out corruption and all its causes. We do so guided by the fact that we are a constitutional democracy, and do not interfere with the constitutional mandate and laws governing the work of our law enforcement agencies. We expect all political parties, nongovernmental organisations, NGOs, everybody else and all sectors of our society to do the same. Thank you very much, hon Acting Speaker.

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The CHIEF WHIP OF THE OPPOSITION: Deputy President, despite your commitment earlier this year in February to deal with corruption, there are allegations of corruption that are hanging over your head. The Hawks are currently investigating you and your son-in-law regarding an almost R30 million home in Constantia and the source of those funds. Additionally, there are questions about the use of homes owned by Edwin Sodi, a state capture accused individual. Furthermore, there are questions around the use of the R40 million home in Waterfall by yourself ... [Inaudible.] ... who do business with the state.

Mr B A RADEBE: Point of order, hon Acting Speaker. I think the member knows very well that she cannot put the Deputy President on the spot. If she says ... [no audio] ... anything, she must bring a substantive motion as she has requested you to do. I think that she's putting the horse before the cart by expecting the Deputy President to answer that question now.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr S L Tsenoli): The order is sustained in terms of Rule 85. Hon Gwarube, you should know that. You are a Chief Whip.

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The CHIEF WHIP OF THE OPPOSITION: Deputy Speaker, let me proceed to my question. While these matters are still under investigation and the probes are ongoing, given your commitment, Deputy President, to fighting corruption, will you take the country into your confidence and be brave this morning and give an explanation as to what these allegations are about and the sources of the funds used for them. Thank you. [Interjections.]

Mr B A RADEBE: [Inaudible.]

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr S L Tsenoli): Hon Deputy President, I have ruled on this matter. I have ruled on this matter. Hon Gwarube has no basis to expect you to respond to the platform-generated allegations. That matter is out of order and it cannot be accepted. So, if you don't have any question, we will proceed to the next supplementary question.

The CHIEF WHIP OF THE OPPOSITION: Deputy Speaker?

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr S L Tsenoli): Yes, what's your point, hon Gwarube?

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The CHIEF WHIP OF THE OPPOSITION: Deputy Speaker, the original question pertains to an address the Deputy President gave and the commitment that he made around dealing with corruption. There are allegations that have been levelled against him. All I'm asking him is to take the country into his confidence and provide some insights into that. There is absolutely nothing out of order in doing that. I'm not levelling accusations against him. I'm not besmirching his name. I'm asking him, based on his commitment, if he, on this platform, provide some insight to the people of this country because he has yet to do. I'm not sure how ... [Inaudible.] ... against the rules.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr S L Tsenoli): Hon Gwarube, you are justifying the allegations that you are putting across to the Deputy President by way of a question. ...

[Inaudible.] ... and you should desist from proceeding on that basis. I've ruled on this matter and it's unacceptable that you want to pursue it.

Mr N L S KWANKWA: Deputy Speaker?

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr S L Tsenoli): Yes, sir?

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Mr N L S KWANKWA: Even though you've made your ruling, the norm is to actually put the question to the Deputy President and ask him whether he's willing to answer the question. [Inaudible.]

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr S L Tsenoli): Hon Kwankwa, the first norm is to obey the rules of the House. That's the first rule. You obey the rules of the House first and then we can proceed to the next part of what is appropriate and not ruled out of order.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Hon Acting Speaker, I can assist them.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr S L Tsenoli): Go ahead, if you so wish, hon Deputy President, but remember ...

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Yes, hon Acting Speaker, in order for hon Gwarube not to think that we are running away, I was going to say to her that I received questions from the Ethics Committee after she had complained to Parliament. I will be responding to those questions, which are basically the issues that she is raising. So, perhaps hon Gwarube can wait for that moment. They have given me seven days to

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clarify those issues. So, those responses will definitely come to Parliament next week and hon Gwarube will be free to see those responses. Thank you very much, hon Acting Speaker.

Mr N L S KWANKWA: See? Problem solved.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr S L Tsenoli): Hon Kwankwa, I have words I may use towards you right now ... you dare do that again. You are out of order. There's nothing ... [Inaudible.] ... I told you so. Hon Swart?

Mr S N SWART: Thank you, Acting Speaker. Arising from your response, hon Deputy President, it is the primary role of the state to protect its citizens and the ACDP believes that it is largely failing in this regard, given the high levels of crime that is destroying communities with corruption and other crimes affecting businesses. It seems our nation has lost its moral compass. Does the hon Deputy President believe that churches and other faith-based organisations can play a far bigger role in instilling moral principles and values, self-control, respect for life and property, and if so, what steps will government

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take to approach churches and faith-based organisations in this regard?

The ACDP would like to wish all believers a very blessed Passover. Remember, Good Friday is here but resurrection Sunday is coming.

IsiZulu:

Malibongwe igama leNkosi.

English:

... {Inaudible.} ... name of the Lord, Acting Speaker.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Acting Speaker ...

IsiZulu:

... igama leNkosi malibongwe ...

English:

... hon Swart, you are correct. In fact, it's like you heard me speaking the previous weekend when I spoke in a church in the Free State. This is what I have been saying to churches. The fight against crime and dealing with community issues is not just the work of government but

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it's the work of all of us. In my earlier response I said that we need a whole of government and a whole of society approach, and that is what we should be doing. I can't agree more with you that churches can play a major role in this regard as the moral compass of our society.

One of the responsibilities the President has given me is to actually work with the churches and work with traditional leaders. So, I've spent a lot of time going around the country meeting with religious leaders. Last Sunday in the Free State, I attended three churches and in the North West I attended a number of churches as well. As you said, this weekend is the Easter weekend. Tomorrow is Good Friday. I will be attending churches in the Eastern Cape and I will take forward the message that together as churches, government, the private sector and the whole of society, we can defeat crime if we work together. We can defeat corruption if we work together and support our law enforcement agencies. So, I agree with you, hon Swart. The churches have a major role to play. Thank you very much.

Mr F J MULDER: Hon Deputy President, ultimately the impact of the Deputy President's views on combating crime and corruption will depend on the extent to which they

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translate into concrete actions, policies and reforms, as well as the level of support and co-operation from other stakeholders in the government and society. Political leaders and government have been proven not to be committed or able to address these issues or ...

themselves implicated in corrupt practices which undermine the effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts. Even if the Deputy President expresses strong views against corruption, the ability of government to translate these views into concrete actions may be hindered. How will the Deputy President, government and security cluster rectify this established perception and rebuild the broken trust? Thank you, hon Acting Speaker.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Indeed, I think crime will not be defeated only by us making speeches. So, the hon member is right. You need concrete action. That's why I said earlier in my response that government has come up with what we refer to as a multidisciplinary and integrated approach to fight crime. Apart from what I said about Operation Shanela, we're making sure that other agencies of the state are also well resourced and we are making sure that there's this strong co-ordination. The hon member might know that I'm the chair of the justice, crime prevention

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strategy committee and one of the things we do there is to bring everybody together ... the Defence, police, justice and intelligence, and we indicate to them that we need concrete plans that are integrated. When the police is fighting crime, they need to have intelligence. So, intelligence must support Crime Intelligence. In some areas where police need to conduct raids, they need the army to support them ... the SA National Defence Force.

So these strategies that I've alluded to ... your ICVPS ... ensuring that there is a serious focus on organised crime ... all these are plans that ensure that we actually are on the ground, doing the work rather than just appealing to people. Of course, we have to appeal to people not to commit crime. However, we must take action. I think last year in one of my responses to questions I said that we must also revive the community policing forums in our communities. They must work with the police because the communities themselves should be the eyes and ears of the police on the ground. So, hon member, I agree with you that concrete actions are needed, and in fact, that's exactly what we are doing. Thank you very much.

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Mr A M SEABI: Thank you, Acting Speaker, and thanks to the Deputy President for emphasising that the government of the day is really committed to deal with crime and corruption. Deputy President, the issuing of bail has been a continuous challenge faced by the SAPS. They are often condemned when an accused person who is out on bail commits a crime, and moreover blamed for granting the accused person bail, whereas the issuing of bail is not within their purview.

Can you, Deputy President, kindly indicate whether the review of bail legislation, as you said in February, is taking these concerns, condemnations and accusations against the police into account, and whether the review will examine more severe penalties for an accused person who commits crime while out on bail?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, hon Acting Speaker and thank you, hon Seabi. Yes, the issue of bail is in fact a very worrying issue in our communities and it creates other problems. I was in Mpumalanga sometime earlier this year and the communities complained that there was this criminal who was doing a lot of wrong things ... killing people. The police arrested this

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criminal and then he was out on bail, again and again. It ended up with the communities murdering this person. They actually killed him, which is not something we want to see. Communities are saying we are tired. These criminals get arrested and before you know it, they are back in our streets. So, I agree that the SA Law Reform Commission should carefully look at this issue of actually tightening bail rules or requirements. I think the review of the Criminal Procedure Act, as commissioned by the Minister of Justice, is going to look at exactly this.

We should make it difficult for these hardcore criminals to walk our streets. If we tighten the rules, magistrates and judges will obviously be able to impose these strict rules. We will also look at it through the Justice, Crime Prevention and Security, JCPS, cluster to see if this is tight enough. However, I have heard on numerous occasions that the Minister of Police has also complained about this, saying, look, we work hard as the Police Service, we arrest criminals and then the courts put them back on our streets. So, the reform of the bail conditions and rules is absolutely necessary to tighten the conditions so that criminals must not find it easy to come back into our communities and commit crimes again.

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Question 3:

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Hon Acting Speaker, we are building a developmental state that has the capacity to redirect and manage resources towards resolving the challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality. We equally believe that we need, once again in addressing this matter, the whole of society approach, including working with the private sector to realise this goal of reducing poverty and unemployment as well as to move our society towards a more equal society.

We equally believe that government and the private sector should work together to grow the economy and create necessary employment, and we therefore need to strengthen social compacts. You will recall, hon Acting Speaker, that this is something that the President emphasised, particularly in the state of the address in 2019 that we need social compacts. The private sector, government and other important sectors of society should work together.

During my address at the Seventh Annual Solutions Exchange Conference on 12 October last year, I emphasised the significance of fostering effective collaboration between various stakeholders. I further emphasised that government

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remains committed to increasing private sector investment to promote job creation and building on the existing partnership between business and government to strengthen economic recovery that can create jobs in many industries, particularly your network industries, that includes the energy, transport, and logistics sectors amongst others.

Equally, I stressed the importance of encouraging self-employment and entrepreneurship. Hence, as government we continue to play a leading role in fostering growth by creating jobs through various means beyond the public service. Let me stress that as government we continue to play a leading role in fostering growth by creating jobs through various means beyond the public service. People have the notion that when government talks about job creation it is about employing people in the public service to come and work in various government departments. We much more than that. We support small, medium and micro enterprises, SMMEs, through public procurement especially in the state-owned enterprises, SOEs.

We have also recognised that while we support economic recovery, government should continue to support the

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creation of short-term employment, hence we have programmes such as the President has now implemented. The Presidential Employment Stimulus, the Presidential Youth Employment Intervention, and the Expanded Public Works Programme that is driven by the Department of Public Works.

Hon Acting Speaker, these programmes have been a major success as they managed to create over 1,7 million work and livelihood opportunities, including school assistant positions in 23 000 schools throughout the country. Furthermore, the SA Youth.mobi, a zero-rated platform, has engaged more than 4,3 million young people and secured more than a million opportunities for them. Young people took up more than 84% of the more than 1 million opportunities created, with women accounting for 64%.

The ANC-led government is committed to forge ahead with long term partnerships across all sectors, in other words government, private sector as well as civil society, to pave the path for a dynamic, competitive and fast-growing economy capable of competing with the best in the world while producing much-needed jobs. I thank you, hon Acting Speaker.

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Adv B J MKHWEBANE: Hon Acting Speaker, to the Deputy President, today there are more than a million people who are unemployed. These are people who are willing to work, ready work and are actively looking for jobs but cannot find any. The majority of these are young people who should be entering the labour force as active and meaningful participants. More than 3million of the unemployed have lost hope of ever finding work. When the President says it is not his job to create employment but the task of the private sector, is he not sending a message that he is ... [Inaudible.] ... especially since his term is effectively ending in a few days? Have you and your collective not failed to create jobs in the past five years you were mandated by the voters in 2019? Deputy President, you are speaking about temporary employment, which is not sustainable for the young people. We are talking about permanent employment here. Can you confirm to the South Africans that you have not failed as this collective? Thanks.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Hon Acting Speaker, thank you to hon Mkhwebane. It is true that there are many people in our country who are unemployed, and I agree with you that many of those are young people. That is why I was emphasising

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the fact that the President came up with these initiatives that I alluded to earlier. Your youth employment initiatives, particularly to target young people, with platforms where there are opportunities for them to access. In fact, the good thing is that after COVID we were all worried about the devastations thereof, but the good news is that if we look at where we are now ... in fact, the South African economy has started to grow once again not to the extent that will make us happy and will create the kind of jobs that we need to create, but it is a positive thing that the economy has started to grow again.

What we need to do is to push harder to take that growth even higher. We are discussing that in government, particularly through infrastructure investments. I think we can be able to achieve higher levels of growth. In many of our provinces there are initiatives now to implement infrastructure projects.

I was in the North West recently and I found that there are lot of projects that the government is implementing there. They are fixing roads, potholes, building new

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facilities and this should happen across the country, throughout our provinces.

The statement that the President says it is not the work of government to create jobs or the responsibility of government, may be taken out of context because what we are saying is that primarily many jobs come from the private sector. So, I think what the President was saying is that when people talk about unemployment, they often accuse government of not creating jobs and the President was saying that it is not just the responsibility of government. In fact, the biggest creator of jobs is the private sector. We do create employment as government, as I said in my response, through a number of programmes, but what we do even better is to clean the environment for the private sector to be able to thrive. Their businesses must be working properly, and they will create many more jobs.

So, in short, hon Mkhwebane, we need a collaborative approach where government and the private sector become strong partners in this regard so that together we can create jobs. There should be no finger pointing that government must create jobs and government says no, the private sector ... I think the collaborative approach is

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the way to go and we should be able to deal with this problem decisively.

I would support the initiatives that are already out there, I have already said 1,7 million young people are benefiting from the Presidential Employment Intervention and other programmes. There are already sectoral master plans that are in place and government is supporting a lot of these initiatives. So, hon Acting Speaker, I think it is in fact the role of government to ensure that jobs are created working with the private sector because government alone will not succeed. Thank you very much.

IsiNdebele:

Num G J SKOSANA: Ngiyathokoza ...

English:

Hon Acting Speaker, can you hear me?

The ACTING SPEAKER: Yes, go ahead. We are listening to you.

IsiNdebele:

Num G J SKOSANA: Sekela Somlomo, kuSekela Mongameli ...

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English:

... I am of the view that the question you have been asked demonstrate lack of sincerity. The ANC-led government has consistently called through its policies over the past 30 years for a mutually reinforcing relationship between government and the private sector and other key role players like workers organisations and communities to deal with job creation. So, it is wrong to argue that it is either one or the other who must take the primary responsibility for job creation.

Mhlonitjhwa Sekela Mongameli [Hon Deputy President], please outline the commitment on the creation and sustainability of the 2,5 million work opportunities of delivering public goods and services in communities in meeting the needs for jobs and basic services.

IsiNdebele:

Ngiyathokoza, mhlonitjhwa ...

English:

... Acting Speaker.

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The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Hon Acting Speaker, thank you very much to hon Skosana. You will recall that immediately after COVID-19 the government launched a number of public employment programmes or perhaps I should say a collection of them and that led to what came to be known as the Presidential Employment Stimulus, because we were concerned that government cannot sit back and hope that somebody else will create the jobs that are needed in our country. So, the Presidential Employment Stimulus was then created.

By the way, hon Skosana, that programme has since been extended. So, it is still in place and in March of this year it was allocated a budget of R42 billion because we need to see more activities on the ground. If you look from 2023, this programme has in fact created more than one 1,8 million jobs, so it is quite a very important intervention. If you recall, we also had a job summit. We hosted a job summit in 2018 and came up with a framework that should help us to create employment.

In short, I should say that these initiatives are helping as a number of job opportunities have been created and the interventions cut across many sectors, including assisting

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small and medium enterprises, the township economy and so forth. So, I would say that the current administration has been facilitating the creation of jobs. You will recall that at the investment summit the President announced that we are targeting the investments of 1,2 trillion, and in fact, we have surpassed that target by now. We really have had a very positive response from the investment community, including foreign direct investments that are flowing in since that investment conference and in 2018 and the job summit that looked at how to create employment. We are currently engaged in the review of these commitments that we have made.

As we speak more than R500 billion has already flowed into our economy in many sectors. So, yes, government has been active throughout in this space of ensuring that we create necessary employment and employment opportunities in all our sectors, particularly targeting young people. Thank you very much, hon Acting Speaker.

Ms T BREEDT: Hon Deputy Speaker, it's good to see you. To the Deputy President, I think rather that the private sector creates jobs in spite of the government and not because of but let me get to my question. Are there

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specific official directives on the process and the preconditions for state departments on these so-called partnerships, or the taking of hands with the private sector with regards to job creation? If so, will you make it available to the public? If the answer is no, then it is clear that the objectives of job creation is only a pipe dream and propaganda exercise for the ANC. Thank you.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Hon Acting Speaker, to the hon member, we are committed as government working with the private sector to create jobs. Hence, I emphasise the number of programmes that have been initiated right from the Presidency, and those programmes are doing very well; young people are responding to these platforms, and they get opportunities. The private sector has also been working very well with government since the announcement by the President that we need social compact. You may recall that not long ago the private sector had a meeting with the President where they agreed on coming up with various working groups looking at the energy issues and infrastructure. Those working groups are busy as we speak and they are coming with a lot of master plans in all those sectors to be able to also pull resources together, because that's one important thing. Government has its own

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budget that it brings in and the private sector has resources as well.

So, the private sector plays a very important role in creating employment in issues of trade etc. However, it must always be a partnership. I wouldn't agree with you that the issues of creating jobs is just a pipe dream; it is actually something that we are actively pushing, and the results are there. I just said earlier on that the economy is growing positively, although at the level that is a bit low. We want to see much bigger growth.

As the economy grows, obviously jobs are being created. I will at some point come up with the figures for the current year, once they are out, but all indications are that we are moving into the positive in terms of growth and employment creation. Thank you very much, hon Acting Speaker.

Ms M D HLENGWA: Hon Acting Speaker, to the Deputy President, to an extent we can agree that the only way to reduce unemployment, inequality and hunger is by the government creating an enabling environment of all businesses to flourish. I would like to know, what steps

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is the government taking to ensure simplicity for business operation and legislation in order to encourage employment? Thank you.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Hon Acting Speaker, thank you for the question, hon member on behalf of hon Ngcobo. It is the responsibility of the government to create an enabling environment for businesses to flourish. As I said earlier in in answering this question, that yes, government can create jobs but very minimal. We can employ people in our various state-owned entities and government departments and agencies etc. but the creation of an enabling environment for the private sector to flourish is very important because they are then able to bring much more resources to bear and to be able to employ much more people.

One of the examples I may give, I visited a place recently in the Free State and I managed to go to a farming community to meet the farmers. I was introduced to emerging black farmers who had just acquired a big apple farm, and they are going to extend it with another 100 hectares. When they were giving a briefing, these farmers in the Free State said to me, hon Deputy President, if it

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was not for the support of the Free State government, particularly the Department of Agriculture through the MEC we would not have been able to do this transaction. They said now we own this big apple farm and supply apples in the country and in Europe. They even gave me names of the apples that they supply because I to the actual farm where I managed to see the apples that are being produced there.

Now this is one of the examples that with government intervention we have the success story of business people; these emerging farmers. They said to me, in addition, Deputy President, we also have a processing facility that we now own, of course not 100% - they are with other white farmers in the area - but it's a good partnership.

I did thank the Premier of the Free State and the MEC for that intervention creating that kind of support now our farmers are growing and creating employment and that's a good thing. So, you are quite right, we need to continue these efforts of creating the environment for businesses to be able to flourish. That is just one example of perhaps many stories that are happening throughout our

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country, and these are stories of success. Thank you, hon
Acting Speaker.

Question 4:

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Hon Acting Speaker, last year, we
launched the revised National Strategic Plan for HIV,
tuberculosis, TB, and sexually transmitted infections,
STIs, for the period from 2023 to 2028. The new National
Strategic Plan, NSP, is a blueprint and roadmap for a
multisectoral and people-centred approach to eliminate
HIV, TB and STIs as public health threats by 2030.

Through the SA National Aids Council, Sanac, we have
implemented various interventions that have had a
significant impact in addressing the challenges of HIV.
These interventions include HIV testing services through
our Cheka Impilo wellness campaign, antiretroviral therapy
provision, distribution of condoms, voluntary medical male
circumcision programme, psychosocial support services to
individuals affected by HIV and programmes to address
stigma and discrimination.

South Africa is dealing with coinfection of HIV and TB,
and therefore, our interventions also focus on dealing

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with the TB epidemic. In this regard, we are implementing a TB recovery plan to find undiagnosed people with TB, strengthen linkage to TB treatment, strengthen retention in care as well as strengthening the efforts to prevent the disease. Collectively, these interventions have resulted in a continuous decline in new HIV infections in the country. In 2022, there was an estimated 164 000 new HIV infections, and this number has dropped to 146 784 new HIV infections in 2023.

Our performance towards the attainment of the United Nations Programme on HIV/Aids, Unaid, targets of 95-95-95, is gaining momentum and the country is currently on 95-79-93. This means that 95% of people living with HIV know their status, 79% of those who know their status are on treatment and 93% of those on treatment have suppressed viral loads.

On World Aids Day last year, we also launched the SA Chapter of the Global Alliance on Ending Aids in Children by 2030, which will help to prevent new infections and improve treatment outcomes among children and adolescents. As a country, we have nearly eliminated mother-to-child transmission of HIV. To ensure easy access to treatment

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and to foster retention in care, the Department of Health is implementing a system where clients can collect their medication at various external pick-up points and not only at health facilities. Linked to this innovation is the multimonth dispensing of medication which reduces the number of frequency visits to health facilities by clients. These differentiated models of care also serve to decongest health facilities.

In addition to these interventions, the country is working with academic and research institutions in an endeavour to eventually find a cure for HIV, despite it being a complex process. We continue to educate and sensitise communities against stigma and discrimination which have been proven to be barriers in accessing treatment and health-seeking behaviour by our communities.

Earlier this week on Sunday, 24 March 2024, under the auspices of Sanac, we launched the Situation Room, which is a state-of-the-art data consolidation and visualisation hub built at Sanac offices in Pretoria. This platform can be accessed virtually from anywhere in the world. This is one other measure that will further strengthen our response through evidence-based decision-making.

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We will continue to ensure that communities are at the centre of our interventions, because it is communities themselves who must play a leadership role in the sustainability of our HIV response programmes. I thank you.

Ms M L MOROANE: Thank you very much, Acting Speaker.

Xitsonga:

Ndzi rhandza ku khensa Xandla xa Puresidente eka ku vulavula ka n'wina xikan'we na nhlamulo ya n'wina leyo enta yi tlhela yi dzika.

English:

Indeed, the achievements of the ANC-led government in tackling HIV/Aids are the daily experiences of more than 6,1 million South Africans under antiretroviral treatment and our achievements of the Unaids global targets. The achievement of the 95-95 that you have just elaborated is so impressive to learn and know that we are just 2% away from meeting the 95% target. Fighting the spread of HIV and Aids require all South Africans to continuously check their status. We call on all South Africans to follow the A B C message, particularly the youth so that we can

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increase the use of protections as South Africans to reduce the risk.

Hon Deputy President, what measures are being planned and implemented by your caring ANC-led government to increase the number of persons infected with HIV to be on antiretroviral treatment to achieve the 95% target?

Xitsonga:

Ndza khensa, Xandla xa Puresidente xikan'we na Mukhomela Xipikara.

English:

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, hon Acting Speaker.

Xitsonga:

Ndza khensa, sesi wa mina tlhelo muchaviseki Moroane.

English:

The important intervention is to make sure that more and more people are enrolled in treatment. I think that's very important. The programme like Cheka Impilo is really assisting us with that to get more and more people

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enrolled on treatment. As I said earlier, it's a national wellness campaign. We decided to drive it as a campaign so that we get people who are diagnosed with HIV to be placed on treatment immediately after testing positive.

I did say earlier that there are a number of other programmes. One of them is what we call the Welcome Back campaign. This one is really to say to people as some of them discontinue with the treatment for various reasons. We are trying to use this campaign to get them back for treatment because when they discontinue it maybe because of stigmatisation and other reasons. We do hope that this campaign is going to help us get them back.

I did say earlier that we have also lodged a global alliance on ending HIV/Aids in children by 2030. We are doing our best to ensure that there is accessibility to testing so that we do close this treatment gap particularly on infants, children and adolescents who are living and exposed to HIV, but also pregnant and breastfeeding mothers in particular. We need to attend to them. In this programme we are particularly targeting adolescent girls and women living with HIV. These are some of the interventions that we are busy with. We want to

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ensure that we put as many people on treatment as possible. Where we are now I think the target of 95-95-95 is achievable if we can just reinforce these interventions. We are confident that the combinations of these strategies will assist us to achieve this target of 95-95-95.

We are also working with a number of international bodies. There are a lot of donor organisations that are supporting our work and there is no reason that we would not be able to succeed in achieving the 95% target of viral suppression. By 2030, we do hope that ultimately, we can end Aids as a public health threat. Thank you very much, hon Acting Deputy Speaker.

Mrs M O CLARKE: Thank you, Chairperson. I would like to ask the following. Deputy President, it is evident that nongovernmental organisation, NGO-driven programmes such as the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, Pefar, play a crucial role in completing government's efforts of combating the HIV/Aids epidemic. However, South Africa continues to grapple with the highest rate globally. It is imperative that these vital programmes remain intact and effective. What concrete steps will government take to

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ensure the sustainability and the continued impact of initiatives like the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief and other NGO-driven interventions? Please, provide this Parliament? What resources will be provided to support these programmes? Please, also explain, how government's foreign policy which likely seems to be focused on causing strife with the USA will ensure the continuous programmes of its HIV prevention efforts? It is not enough to simply rely on the existence ... [Interjections.] ... active measures are needed to safeguard the longevity and effectiveness of these programmes. Thank you, Chair.

Mr B A RADEBE: Chair, on a point of order: The Rules are very clear that a follow-up question must be one only, and it must not be of statistical in nature. The member is really putting the Deputy President on a spot. Thank you.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr S L Tsenoli): Hon members!

IsiZulu:

ILUNGU ELIHLONIPHEKILE ELINGAZIWA: Ungenaphi wena manje?

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IBAMBA LIKASOMLOMO: ... ngicela nithule nilale. Okokuqala, akufanele ukuba uvule umlomo wakho ungelwanga.

English:

Hon members, it is a Rule. I said right at the beginning that the first requirement is that we must play by the Rules. If we don't, then we disrupt things. Hon member, the Rule is that you ask one question. Deputy President, please, respond to what you may.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Thank you, hon Acting Speaker. Thank you, hon Clarke. Yes, indeed, the initiatives by NGOs are very important. I'm currently the chairperson of Sanac as appointed by the President and I do work with a lot of NGOs in our programmes including, as I said earlier, international NGOs and donor funding agencies.

Yes, hon Clarke, the levels of HIV in the country are quite high. By 2023 December, we recorded about 7,9 million people in South Africa who are living with HIV. So, it is true that the country remains highly burdened with this disease, but it is not because of the failure of programmes. In fact, my own conclusion is that without the interventions that we are making now, things

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would be worse. We do need to give these programmes a chance to show their effectiveness.

If you had to ask me, will I support initiatives by these various NGOs? The answer is, yes. Let's work together. Our government policy does not create an environment where we don't work with the US. In fact, as we speak, Minister Pandor has just returned from the United States. We continue to work with the US. There is a lot of fundings that come from Unaid and other organisations and there is no indication that those programmes are at risk of any sort. We believe that we will continue to get more donor fundings.

But remember, hon member, we as the South African government are also putting a lot of resources through various departments. We were currently doing it a lot with the Department of Health. At the last meeting of Sanac on 24 March last weekend, it was agreed that the Minister of Health and I must engage Cabinet to ensure that all other departments come onboard with funding. The Department of Social Development has been one of the biggest funders in addition to Health. But we want more other departments to come onboard so that we don't burden just one or two

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departments. We are putting a lot of funding because most of the donor fundings we receive is not used for the operational work of Sanac, but it funds directly the programmes of treatment and all other interventions. The South African government takes the responsibility of funding the operations of Sanac. We estimate that just in this financial year we will spend well just over R56 million on these initiatives. We are looking into that because we want to have a strong secretariat that should not run out of funds. Definitely, we will continue working with NGOs.

Mrs K N F HLONYANA: Thank you Acting Speaker. It's hon Hlonyana, and I will take it on behalf of hon Ntlangwini. Deputy President, there has been a notable reduction in HIV and Aids awareness programmes in the country as compared to previously. The messages of abstaining, condomise and faithfulness are no longer as prevalent as before. Linked with the deteriorating social economic conditions which makes exploitation of young women by older monied men more prevalent, this creates conditions for the rapid spread of HIV. What has contributed to the government's retreat from intensive HIV awareness

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campaigns, and how are you planning to mainstream the prevention messages again? Thank you, Acting Speaker.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Acting Speaker. Thank you very much hon Hlonyana. I take your point that messages like abstention, etc, need to be more and more visible as they used to. As Sanac, we are looking at all those issues. That's why if you look we are running most of our programmes as campaigns to create awareness to really hammer the message home that people must come get tested, come for HIV self-screening. We are focussing on postexposure for fluxes and other interventions.

But I agree with you that we should not drop messages that have worked in the past. We need to actively bring them forward particularly when it targets young people these messages must continue to be on our programmes. We are looking at a number of things like expanding men's health programmes and increasing finding people who are HIV positive because people don't willingly come out for testing. Sometimes we may have places that ... [Recording stopped.] ... that people we don't know of who have HIV. There is going to be a very strong campaign by Sanac to ensure that we create huge awareness in this regard.

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To achieve the 95-95-95 target requires a very strong campaign out there. That's what Sanac is working on as we speak. Thank you, hon Acting Speaker.

Ms M D HLENGWA: Thank you Acting Speaker. Hon Deputy President, while HIV prevention pills are freely available to all South Africans through most public sector clinics, researchers at the Health Economics and Epidemiology Research Office at the University of Witwatersrand have reported that government clinics are often access barrier due to their hours, their long queues, their discrimination and sometimes the prejudicial attitude that drive people away. Having said that HIV prevention pills are freely available to all South Africans through most public sector clinics, however, I would like to know, what work has the government done to ensure that people living in remote areas that are far from the nearest public clinics are also provided with sufficient access to HIV prevention pills on a regular basis? I thank you.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, hon Acting Speaker. Thank you, hon Hlengwa for the question. Hon Hlengwa, you will recall that earlier on I responded to this question. I did allude to the fact that we are nearly

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there in eliminating multireach transmissions to HIV. The reason is because of these programmes that we have come up with.

But you are spot on to say that you have observed these challenges of long queues and people struggling to get medication. Something else to say to people, look you can't get medication because there are long queues and maybe end up leaving. What Sanac is now doing, with the Department of Health and other partners, is to ensure that, because we want to ensure easy access to treatment and foster retention in care, we have agreed that the Department of Health will implement a system where, as I said earlier, clients can collect their medication in various external pick-up points. In other words, they don't only have to go to health facilities. There will be various pick-up points that they can use.

Also linked to this innovation, Sanac has also agreed that the multimonth dispersion of medication is very important. It reduces the number of frequency visits to health facilities. People don't have to rush to the facilities all the time. We do hope that these interventions will help particularly to decongest our health facilities. You

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are quite correct that the facilities do get congested, long queues and people coming all the time. But if you have the multimonths dispensing people don't have to come to our facilities every month. Also, if we make it easy for them to pick-up their medication in different locations then it means that you will do away with the congestion at our health facilities.

That's what we are doing, hon Hlengwa. I do hope these interventions will help. Thank you, hon Acting Speaker.

Question 5:

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Hon Acting Speaker, since I assumed my responsibility as Leader of Government Business I have been working very well with the Presiding Officers of Parliament to ensure that Cabinet Ministers do attend to their constitutional responsibilities in Parliament, that is both the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces.

This is because section 92 of the Constitution stipulates that members of Cabinet are accountable collectively and individually to Parliament for the exercise of their powers and performance of their functions.

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The collective responsibility of Cabinet implies that Ministers are jointly responsible for the conduct of government and must fully account to Parliament as provided for in the Constitution.

Hon Acting Speaker, in my capacity as the Leader of Government Business I do report to Cabinet on status of unanswered questions for oral reply and written reply to both the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces, amongst other matters. And this is done every time Cabinet sits fortnightly; I present this report. This is one of the most effective tools we are utilising to hold individual Cabinet Ministers to account.

So, what we do, Acting Speaker, through this mechanism, Cabinet Ministers with more than 10 outstanding parliamentary questions are required to inform the Leader of Government Business in writing and they must give the reasons for the unanswered questions and indicate remedial action to be taken to address those matters.

Whenever there are more than 10 unanswered questions when Cabinet sits, I take the report to Cabinet and we highlight which Ministers have outstanding questions. And

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in that instance, if they have not given reasons to the Leader of Government Business they have to answer to Cabinet. So, it's the highest level of accountability.

Hon Acting Speaker, in September 2021 the Rules Committee of this House adopted the new mechanisms on delayed replies to parliamentary questions. Amongst other things, the adopted mechanisms enable the Speaker to write to affected Cabinet Ministers on a quarterly basis requesting reasons for failure to meet the deadlines of all questions that are late or not replied to.

Furthermore, the Speaker writes to the Leader of Government Business informing the Leader of Government Business about outstanding replies and correspondence sent to the affected Ministers.

And as a last resort, the Speaker may escalate the matter of unanswered parliamentary questions through a formal complaint to the President. So, that's the last resort when people are not responding positively.

Through the enforcement of these mechanisms, we have observed a tremendous decline on the number of lapsed

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questions where only one question lapsed in the National Assembly during the last parliamentary session in 2023 as compared to 83 that lapsed in 2022. So, it means by end of last year we had improved tremendously.

Hon Acting Speaker, moving forward, we will continue to encourage Cabinet Ministers not only to respond to parliamentary questions within stipulated timeframes, but to ensure that the responses are based on commitments made through government policies because many of the questions that are sent to Cabinet Ministers are about government policies, government programmes, government decisions, strategic plans, Annual Performance Plans, APPs, budgets, etc. So, they should ensure that their responses adequately address these matters genuinely because they address the concerns of our people out there.

So, that's what we are currently doing, hon Singh, and I've seen great improvement to date. I think the system is beginning bear fruit. Thank you very much, hon Acting Speaker.

Mr N SINGH: Deputy President, thank you for that response and I'm glad you mentioned section 92, the responsibility

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of Cabinet Ministers individually and collectively. And whilst I recognize the improvements that you have spelled out to us. I believe, personally, that there's just too much of red tape in bringing to the attention of a Minister that their questions have not been answered on time. And by the time you write to each Minister and look for 10 questions, I think our constituents that implore us to ask some of these questions get very, very depressed and anxious.

Hon Deputy President, we're going to a stage now of questions that will lapse. I know, particularly, like in home affairs, there are questions not ... you know ... people are not getting their queries answered for years. And this is not satisfactory.

So, whilst we have oral questions, the time expires; while we have written questions, while we have all of this.

Hon Deputy President, I'd like to know: Has any Minister faced the consequences in Cabinet for not answering questions on time, because there are some serial offenders that we have? Thank you.

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The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Hon Singh, well, at the moment the Ministers have not really faced consequences. I want to assume that it's because we made a lot of improvements.

One of the things, perhaps, we should do, hon Singh, is because when members ask questions to Ministers, I think there should be a way of these members being able to interact with Ministers and not wait for too long because by the time the matter comes to the Leader of Government Business is when it's clear that this is taking too long.

There are Ministers who have said to me that the reason they take too long, sometimes, is because they have agencies. You'd find that the ... you know ... the Minister of Transport has got other agencies like SA National Roads Agency Limited, Sanral, etc. So, when questions are asked, they have to get some of the information from the agencies and then they get delayed.

But I think if we remove the right tape and ensure much active interaction, people will be able to understand where the blockage is.

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We also don't want to end a parliamentary session with questions that lapse because most of these questions are about changing the lives of our people out there.

I know that currently there are questions that are still outstanding, we dealt with that yesterday in Cabinet. It was only two Ministers that had more than 10 outstanding questions. We've asked them to, please, finalise that because Cabinet will have another Cabinet meeting before we stop for the current term. We are going to try to clip all that. But currently we are standing at only two Ministers that need to deal with outstanding questions.

Ideally, is that by the time we end the term there shouldn't be any question that is outstanding.

But, hon Singh, I think one of the pressures we put on Ministers is that every time Cabinet sits, every fortnight, I give a report on this matter and Ministers are asked to explain why they haven't answered questions.

So, I think that a system is improving. We'll look at how we can continue to improve it going forward. But it's

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much, much better than in 2022. Thank you, hon Acting Speaker.

Ms A RAMOLOBENG: Deputy President, thank you so much for a comprehensive response. There's been a notable improvement in the level of accountability of executive members who attend to their various portfolio committees' meetings and also respond to questions on those portfolio committee meetings and other various matters as part of accountability.

We note that only one question lapsed in the National Assembly during the 2023 parliamentary session, compared to 83 during the 2022 parliamentary session; a great improvement indeed.

We also see a number of Deputy Ministers executing accountability functions in the absence of Ministers. Also, that forms part of accountability and we commend.

Hon Deputy President, as the Leader of Government Business in Parliament, what have you found are areas requiring improvement in relation to the interface between the executive and Parliament? I thank you.

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The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Hon Ramolobeng, indeed, there has been great improvement in accountability. I think one of the reasons why we have this great improvement, we should also give credit to Parliament itself. We have a very active Parliament.

As you said, hon member, Ministers come and attend the portfolio committees and so on, answer questions and where Ministers are not available, Deputy Ministers do come to appear before committees.

So, the active Parliament that we have has assisted to ensure accountability of the executive and we are quite happy with that.

There may be other challenges that we need to look at, for instance, some of my colleagues would have problems because some of the committees would want them to appear on the day the Cabinet is sitting and we're busy trying to look into that because we don't want to interfere with the work of Parliament and the committees. But just to streamline the way we work to ensure that accountability is strengthened but at the same time all members are able to do their work.

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So, as the Leader of Government Business I do believe that the kind of system we have developed at the moment is working, and I work very closely with the Presiding Officers in this regard, and we have a committee that brings us together to look at all these issues.

We do, of course, need to strengthen programming and perhaps this might be dealt with in the 7th Administration because Ministers are very busy, Cabinet and this, committees also want them in Parliament in their sittings. So, we just need to look at how we can strengthen programming to ensure that the executive is able to do its work and also be able to be accountable to Parliament.

I also insist, hon member, whenever there's ...

[Inaudible. ... with, I do inform all my colleagues to be able to be in Parliament or to log-in if the sittings are virtual or hybrid. And where questions need to be answered, Deputy Ministers should go and answer questions and Ministers can't go ... [Inaudible.]

So, that accountability remains strengthened, and I think it will improve with time. Thank you very much, Acting Speaker.

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Ms S GWARUBE: Deputy President, the purpose of asking questions to the executive is to ensure accountability and ultimately, implementation of the interventions that will improve the lives of South Africans.

Last year I asked you in this House about your support for Bills that would stabilize coalition governments at a local, provincial and the national government level. You committed to doing so, you convened an indaba to obtain views from various sectors of the country.

All this while the DA has introduced three Bills that would do exactly that, with provisions that you and your Ministers seem to support. We are more interested in making sure that we stabilize coalition governments than we are about having these Bills tabled as DA Bills.

So, considering that South Africa is likely to have a coalition government at not only a local level but at a provincial and a national level come the 29th of May, will you and your party support these Bills instead of seeking to reinvent the wheel? Thank you.

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The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Hon Acting Speaker, well, I haven't seen the Bills. I'm sure, hon Gwarube, they are somewhere in the system.

Let me just say, hon Gwarube, that you are quite right that we are doing this to strengthen accountability, indeed. And we need stable governments throughout the country and you'll recall that when we had that summit our biggest problem was at local government level, where we had a lot of disruptions and what we actually needed was a framework that should guide coalition governments.

And I think that dialogue or summit did very well. A document was produced, various parties wanted to study it, bring their comment; that is all done now. I did get the report that we need to bring that back to Parliament.

It may well be that the Bills that we are bringing will be in line with what the framework is saying, but that report is coming. I just don't know where it is now in the process, but we had hoped that before Parliament rises, we should be able to adopt that report formally and if there are any Bills that will come through Parliament that

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strengthen that framework, I'm sure many of us will not have a problem with that.

But I think let's get that report to the tabled, adopted, finalized. I will check with my office where it is at the moment so that we can fast track the process and get it adopted by the National Assembly. Thank you, hon Acting Speaker.

Ms Y N YAKO: Deputy President, the problem on unanswered questions is a perennial problem and the executive seems to have its hands tied in the manner it is unable to hold Ministers to account. Amongst the most notorious culprits is the Presidency itself.

By December last year, Mr Ramaphosa had two answered questions, Minister Dlamini-Zuma had 23, Minister Nkandimeng had 17 and Minister of Electricity had not answered 12 of the questions sent to him.

When the Presidency itself shows us gross disregard for answering questions, what message are you sending to the rest of the Cabinet?

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Specifically, what more tangible action can you take to hold these Ministers to account? Thank you.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Hon Acting Speaker, yes, we take this matter very, very seriously. In fact, when there are unanswered questions from the Presidency we get worried, the President and myself. So, we are very hard on ourselves. That's why you'll see in most cases you don't see an answered questions from the Presidency. Because you quite right, if we can sit with hundreds of unanswered questions in the Presidency, how do we tell Ministers to comply?

But I can say, hon member, that we are improving the system as I was indicating now that yesterday with only two Ministers with unanswered questions beyond our limit that we have set. We are working on the basis that we should answer all questions before Cabinet convenes its final meeting for end of this term.

And I do hope that the 7th Administration will find ways to improve the system even much better. Perhaps we might even need to ensure much stricter provision on the turnaround of answering questions.

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Of course, I have to be mindful of the fact that some Ministers have a lot of agencies and when they answer they don't just want to do it glibly, they want to know they get all the information they need so that you give members correct information and you have to get it from the agencies. And sometimes they struggle to get that on time, but I'm sure the system will improve if we are hard on everybody, including the Presidency. Thank you, hon Acting Speaker.

Question 6:

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Hon Acting Speaker, the Department of Water and Sanitation is intervening in municipalities that are experiencing water challenges. The Ministry of Water and Sanitation continues to mobilize water boards to help affected municipalities in implementing improved plans.

In Moqhaka Municipality, the Department of Water and Sanitation is implementing phase two of the project which started in April 2023. On completion, this project will enable the Kroonstad Wastewater Treatment Plant to

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function optimally, thus preventing pollution on the Vaal River. The expected completion date is December 2024.

Hon Acting Speaker, the government continues to support municipalities to address water infrastructure through the Regional Bulk Infrastructure grant, RBIG, and the Water Services Infrastructure grant, WSIG. During the 2023-24 financial year, the Department of Water and Sanitation allocated R10,1 billion to municipalities through the Regional Bulk Infrastructure grant and R4,6 billion through the Water Services Infrastructure grant. In addition to that, a R1,4 billion budget has been allocated under the Municipal Disaster Recovery grant for the 2024-25 financial year, to fund the repairs and reconstruction of the municipal infrastructure damaged by floods in 2023.

As part of our outreach programme, we continue to visit communities around the country to assess service delivery challenges to find lasting solutions, particularly about upgrades of water infrastructure, and the provision of basic services.

Hon Acting Speaker, you'll recall that one of the models we are rolling out is the District Development Model and

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the President has given me a task to ensure that we roll it out throughout the country. So, when we visit provinces, we meet with premiers, MECs, executive mayors, officials, and the administration to deal with various challenges, and one of the challenges that we have been dealing with much more actively is the infrastructure challenge, particularly water challenges. You'll recall our visit to Jagersfontein in the Free State and other areas to deal with this challenge and to help municipalities fix water infrastructure and other infrastructure that is critical for service delivery. I thank you, hon Acting Speaker.

Ms T BREEDT: Hon Deputy President, I fear that you have been misled and that the interventions have not worked. Yes, R105 million was availed for phase one of the sewage works but it is still not working. Two screw pumps both sand pumps were removed, both flow meters and one mixer are not functional, and three air reactors are also not working in Kroonstad, and that after 95 million was spent, another 15 million has been sent for phase two and I tell you, I was there less than a month ago and there is no work being done on that. Your predecessor committed that by 15 December 2021, no raw sewage will flow into the

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rivers and the surrounds and that is still not the case. Businesses nearby like the veterinary clinic spend most of their days ankle-deep in sewage and cannot use their operating rooms anymore. The Minister of Water and Sanitation shrugs his shoulders when you ask him to intervene there. This is a crisis. I want to know, hon Deputy President: What commitment will you make to the people of Kroonstad? And I'm more than willing to escort you and to have you go and see in person what is the state of that wastewater treatment work and how the community is suffering. I thank you.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Hon Acting Speaker, thank you very much, hon Breedt. Hon Breedt, I was in the Free State last week. Unfortunately, I didn't go to Kroonstad. I was in Welkom. I will go to Kroonstad. You can come with me. I will give you the dates when I am going to see for myself this challenge. As I am saying now, they have given you assurance that will be completed end of this year, but maybe it could be done earlier. As a result of the water challenges throughout the country, particularly in various municipalities, we see a lot of problems. The President yesterday asked me to lead what he called a water task team to go and intervene throughout the country. We are

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still working on a schedule. My task team will include the Minister of Water and Sanitation and the Minister of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs. We are going to include the Minister of Police because in some instances we have realized that there's vandalism of infrastructure, like what I saw when I visited Knysna. I found that the pump station was vandalized. We had to make sure we put a security and repaired the burglar doors, and we were able to start pumping the water again. We want the police to be part of this. We are going to include Human Settlements in that team as well. Minister of Electricity because in some municipalities, they'll tell you the reason why they can't pump water is because they don't have energy. They don't have electricity. And as you know, sometimes you must pump water in an elevated environment. In some uphill places where if you don't have strong pumps that are working, that have energy, they can't pump water upstream. So, we're bringing in different Ministries to the task team. We will start our work immediately because the President appointed us yesterday. I have already asked my head of office to start looking at the dates and look at where we should go first. I'm sure you might argue hon Breedts that I must start in the Free State, but we are looking into that because there are big challenges in

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eThekwini as well, and recently in Gauteng. But immediately after the Easter holidays, the team will meet, and it will start visiting various areas in the country to intervene as the President has asked. Thank you very much, hon Acting Speaker.

Ms G P MAREKWA: Hon Acting Speaker, greetings to the hon Deputy President, and thank you, Deputy President, for the response. It shows that the ANC is committed to improving the lives and dignity of all citizens. The work that you intend to do and that you have been doing as the leader, we appreciate. Hon Deputy President, the operation and maintenance of the newly upgraded water and wastewater treatment works are key in ensuring constant provision of clean water and adequate sanitation. Will the hon Deputy President indicate if the ANC-led government will consider as we go forward, deploying artisans, technicians, and engineers to small and struggling municipalities to ensure that this important infrastructure continues to be effectively and efficiently managed and maintained? I thank you, Acting Speaker.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Thank you, hon Marekwa, for the question. We have decided, hon Marekwa, some time ago that

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we should support our municipalities. If you look at some of the challenges, they are needing technical support. The Municipal Infrastructure Support Agent, Misa, is tasked with ensuring technical support. So, they have a technical support service programme that they use to support municipalities, providing technical support in various areas of delivery, and helping municipalities in planning and maintenance. We were very worried that in some of the areas where we have challenges, the challenges are because of lack of maintenance. The Minister of Water and Sanitation was making an example yesterday about the problem in eThekweni, and he said, you know, there's a pipe that runs from a particular area destination to another destination. And he said, sometimes our officials know that there's a pipe there, but they don't go and check if it's working properly, and how many years it's been there. So, the question of planning, maintenance, and making sure that we refurbish ... and that's the message I expressed when I met the Mayor of Knysna that sometimes the problems are because of old infrastructure that needs to be renewed. And I made an example to them and said, I live in Johannesburg and when Deputy Minister Parks Tau was an Executive Mayor of Johannesburg, they started renewing the pipes. I saw that because they were digging

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in front of my home, and I asked what are you guys doing? To which they said, we're now putting the plastic pipes. We are removing the old ones. Most of the old pipes were asbestos pipes in many municipalities, and some were steel. Now, they are not so durable. So, that work is happening. With the task team that the President established yesterday, that I will be leading, we will also be looking at these issues when we meet with municipalities to look at whether they are doing maintenance regularly, whether are they renewing old infrastructure, etc, so that these problems don't recur. Currently, the Misa is helping to capacitate our municipalities and once the task team goes around, we'll either find other solutions such that we are supporting them as I said through the RBIG and these other grants that were put aside to support our municipalities. Thank you very much, hon Acting Speaker.

Mr L J BASSON: Deputy President, considering the critical state of the Kroonstad wastewater treatment works highlighted in the green drop report and Deputy President as we speak, this treatment work is discharging untreated sewage into the Falls River, ending up in the Vaal River. Deputy President, this issue represents just one of many

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wastewater treatment works across the country polluting our rivers and streams. Taking your answer into account, what concrete plans does your government have to effectively halt this widespread pollution and ensure the protection of our rivers and streams for future generations? Thank you, Acting Speaker.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, hon member, for the question. The task team that was set up yesterday, amongst others, is going to immediately look at this. My view, hon members, is that we do need to renew infrastructure as a matter of urgency so that we don't have this problem of pollution that is going into our rivers and streams, particularly because these rivers are the ones that supply the water that we drink in the cities. So, if we pollute the Vaal River, it means the water that comes into our homes would not be given a 100% pass rate that it is clean. So, it is an urgent matter to stop pollution. Sometimes municipalities complain that they don't have the resources to renew infrastructure and that's why we are setting up these grants - the Water Services Infrastructure grant that I referred to earlier - to be able to assist them, and the Regional Bulk Infrastructure grants. These grants must be used to deal

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with this problem because some of our infrastructure when it comes to water, has been there for 30-40 years and has never been renewed or repaired. So, it is an immediate task that we are going to assume to ensure that we stop the pollution. Thank you very much.

Ms Y N YAKO: Acting Speaker, again, with your permission, I'm going to be taking this question on behalf of hon Maotwe. Deputy President, Hammanskraal has not had a proper provision of water for the past decade, the same as Giyani in Limpopo and Makanda in the Eastern Cape. Almost 70% of the municipalities are dysfunctional and in no position to deliver any services to our people. All these problems have been known for several years. The entire country ... [Inaudible.] ... white areas are your service delivery hotspot. What has been done to solve these widely known problems, such as ensuring that municipalities employ qualified and competent people, that corruption is dealt with, and that infrastructure investments are made in municipalities to deliver water and roads? I thank you.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Thank you, hon member, yes, it is correct that we should do our best to ensure that municipalities employ qualified people. As I said, hon

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member, in the meantime, we have asked the Misa to intervene to ensure technical support for the municipalities that may be struggling, but eventually, they will have to bring in people full-time with all those expertise in the municipalities. Yes, we can see that in some areas, these problems could have been addressed earlier on. But as I said earlier the task team will start working immediately after Easter. We will look at Hammanskraal, Giyani, Eastern Cape, and Free State, there were challenges when I was there last weekend, where in some areas the taps have already been installed but the water is not coming out and we want to check what the problem is. So, I'm not saying this task team is going to be a panacea for all the ills, but I think it's a good start. It is a high-level team that will move into provinces and municipalities. We have agreed with the President that where municipalities are failing, where there are big challenges, and they are not able to ensure successful interventions, we should do so as the national government. Not necessarily to take over their functions, but it is for the sake of the people to receive these services, we need to intervene directly as national. I know that sometimes councilors don't like that in their areas, and they say it amounts to taking away their

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responsibilities. We have decided that where we think it is necessary to do so, we will do so to ensure that our people receive the services that they need to receive. Thank you very much, hon Acting Speaker.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr S L Tsenoli): That concludes Questions to the Deputy President. Thank you, Deputy President. Hon members, we wish you well as you break for Easter. Please interact with the people in a respectful manner that ensures we are known for conducting ourselves well despite any enthusiasm we may have about one direction or another. Let's go out and join the people throughout the country and in whatever else is necessary and needs to be done in this period. Thank you.

The House adjourned at 11:19.