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*PROCEEDINGS OF MINI-PLENARY SESSION - COMMITTEE ROOM M46*

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Members of the mini-plenary session met at Committee Room M46 at 10:00.

The House Chairperson, Mr C T Frolick, took the Chair and requested members to observe a moment of silence for prayer or meditation.

**APPROPRIATION BILL**

Debate on Vote No 35 - Science and Innovation:

The MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND INNOVATION: Hon House Chair, hon members, Deputy Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation, Dr Nomalungelo Gina, members of the portfolio committee and the Chairperson of the portfolio committee, our Director-General, DG, Dr Mlungisi Cele, the deputy director-generals who are here, Chairpersons and chief executive

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officers, CEOs, of our entities, officials of the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation, my special guests, including school learners and principals, fellow South Africans.

We deliver this budget vote against the background of a complex set of national and global challenges, some of which include economic stagnation, rising social inequality, challenges to social cohesion, the negative impact of climate change, technological disruptions and new tensions, partly and largely arising from changes in the international situation, including the latest phenomenon of enforcing unilateralism and bullying.

We hold the view that our country must place science, technology and innovation at the centre of government, education, industry and society, if we are to secure our sovereignty and future sustainability.

Our work continues to be guided by our country's National Development Plan, NDP, our 2019 White Paper on Science, Technology and Innovation and the Decadal Plan, and, of

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course, the priorities of government as articulated by President Ramaphosa during the state of the nation address.

In mining we are very proud of the work being done by the Mandela Mining Precinct, which has delivered groundbreaking, technological and knowledge outputs. This includes sensors that enable the detection of loose rock formations at a safe distance and improved understanding of pillar extraction options to maximise the life of mines.

In manufacturing we have established South Africa's circular manufacturing initiative, using new technologies to optimise efficient use of production inputs.

Through our entity, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, CSIR, we intend to complete an industrial prototype additive manufacturing machine, the metallics. This work is targeted for completion in March next year.

In agriculture, our Agricultural Bioeconomy Innovation Partnership Programme, we have leveraged over R300 million and expanded farmer support to deepen the impact of agricultural innovation.

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In health innovation, in May last year, together with the University of Pretoria and other institutional partners, we launched the Nuclear Medicine Research Infrastructure, Numeri, at the Steve Biko Academic Hospital. This state-of-the-art facility intends to advance drug development and clinical research and provide cutting edge diagnostics and treatment in relation to cancer, tuberculosis and other major diseases.

Numeri is the only facility of its kind in the African continent. This facility is part of our 13 research infrastructure facilities and we have contributed R700 million towards the establishment of the Numeri facility.

I will be inviting the media soon to come and see this wonderful facility in Pretoria, together with hon members if they wish to join me.

Through our vaccine innovation and manufacturing strategy we aim to promote the domestic design and development of vaccines targeting corona viruses, Rift Valley Fever virus, human papillomavirus, Respiratory Syncytial Virus and hepatitis B, amongst other diseases. We have made lots of progress on this front. I am happy to say, hon Chair and hon members.

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We will also intensify our efforts to support energy security through, amongst others, our Hydrogen Society Roadmap, the Platinum Valley Initiative, the Green Hydrogen Commercialisation Strategy and the SA Renewable Energy Master Plan.

The CSIR has developed clean coal technologies. These innovative technologies will enhance the efficiency and environmental acceptability of coal throughout the value chain.

*IsiZulu:*

Amalahle nje umnotho wethu obaluleke kakhulu esisazoba nawo iminyaka ngeminyaka. Sifuna ukususa lokungcola kuwona sikwazi ukuqhubeka nokuwasebenzisa.

*English:*

In the digital space, the research firm, Forester, projects that the global digital economy will reach US\$16,5 trillion and capture 17% of global Gross Domestic Product, GDP, by 2028. We are already developing capacity in this area.

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In addition to our foundational digital capabilities research platform, the National Advisory Council on Innovation has already developed - I am pleased to say - a new artificial intelligence, AI, strategic framework, specifically for the National System of Innovation. This work is intended to align with our artificial AI interventions with the National Development Plan, our Decadal Plan and support the work of the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies, which is the lead department in this regard.

Astronomy remains one of our country's top priorities and we are advanced in the construction of the Square Kilometre Array, SKA, and it is expected to be completed by 2030.

I am pleased to say that the total foreign direct investment in South Africa from the Square Kilometre Array Observatory member countries will be R9,5 billion, of which R3,2 billion will be awarded to the SA Radio Astronomy Observatory and the South African industry.

We'll also continue our partnership with the Department of Tourism to implement our country's astro tourism strategy. This strategy has the potential to become a game changer for

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science and tourism. We will scale up the implementation of the Innovation Fund Programme.

During this financial year our target is to support between 10 and 15 venture capital funds through strategic partnerships with, amongst others, our entity, the Technology Innovation Agency.

As part of advancing Indigenous Knowledge Systems, we are implementing the 2019 Indigenous Knowledge System Act and are investing in new Indigenous Knowledge System-based laboratories at the University of Venda, University of Pretoria, and the University of Free State. Our Deputy Minister will elaborate more on our Indigenous Knowledge Systems intervention.

*IsiZulu:*

Siyasebenza nezinyanga zakithi futhi ukuze sibone ukuthi lamakhambi abo uma siwahlola ngabe ngempela ngempela aphetheni. Sinesiqiniseko ukuthi amanye alawo makhambi apethe izinto eziphambili esingakwazi ukusisiza ezifweni nakwezinye izinto.

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*English:*

The development of critical scientific skills remains central to our mandate. To date, we have awarded 288 Research Chairs to 22 universities and national research facilities in various research disciplines.

I am, however, deeply concerned that black researchers and historically disadvantaged universities have not benefited from this initiative in the manner that we had anticipated. To address this, we are working with the National Research Foundation, NRF, to establish Research Chairs that will specifically address these and other transformation deficits. We want to make sure that none of our universities are left behind when it comes to research and development.

Further to this, our National System of Innovation is still characterised by a number of other transformation deficits, including the low participation of women at the highest levels.

In March this year I hosted our country's first summit on the transformation of our National System of Innovation. Under the leadership of our Director-General, Dr Cele, the resolutions

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of this summit are being incorporated into the strategic plan of the department. And I will be providing Parliament with regular progress in terms of updates in this regard.

Embedding innovation at the subnational level, below the national level, is one very critical area which actually can help to enable efficient service delivery.

We will, therefore, continue to pilot innovative service delivery models that support the District Development Model, DDM. Our Deputy Minister will also elaborate further on this.

Chairperson and hon members, our country's foreign policy is underpinned by the values of multilateralism, solidarity, human dignity and the respect of the sovereignty of all nations.

Consistent with this, we will continue to diversify our international relations through Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, Brics, South South co-operation, the European Union, EU, and the G20 partnerships.

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We have learnt the hard way. To depend on one pillar of the world for our science system is a disaster because if some people decide, because they are powerful, to withdraw partnerships and change, our system must not be left wanting.

In other words, one of my key objectives working with the Deputy Minister is to ensure a sovereign science, technology and innovation system.

We'll also continue our support for Palestinian institutions and researchers. This project is making steady progress because we are saying we mustn't only fight the genocide in Gaza, amongst other things, at the international court, is very important, but also we must have collaboration with Palestine so that, that civilization of the Palestinians is saved and it's not destroyed by the kinds of destruction wrought upon those great people by the Israeli apartheid regime.

As part of our country's G20 Presidency we will continue to use our role as Chair of the Research and Innovation Working Group of the G20 to advance our priorities in science, technology and innovation.

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To protect the sovereignty of our research and development agenda, I recently established a working group to advise me on the impact of the withdrawal of funding by the United States, US. And this report has been submitted to me, by the way, I'm taking it to Cabinet first and then I will come and share it with Members of Parliament, MPs, as well. [Applause.]

Now, towards the end of this year we will host the 2025 Science Forum South Africa and the World Conference of Science Journalists.

Inspired by our mantra of placing science, technology and innovation at the centre of government, education and industry and society over the next four years, we intend to scale up our work by doing some of these things: intensifying our efforts to increase the gross expenditure on research and development to 1,5%; accelerating the transformation and expansion of science, technology and innovation; human resources and research workforce, including, amongst others, the Presidential PhD Programme; strengthening coordination and direction of our national system of innovation; maintaining and upgrading key science infrastructure and projects such as the Square Kilometre Array and Numeri; and building strategic

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innovation compacts by aligning the strategic focus areas of our Decadal Plan with the corresponding line departments of government; mobilising additional funding and resources to raise the scale of our key programmes such as artificial intelligence, energy security; space vaccine innovation; manufacturing and - as I have said - the Indigenous Knowledge Systems; increasing public awareness of the important contribution of the National System of Innovation to human development through an aggressive public engagement and communications campaign.

Chairperson and hon members, we table this budget vote as our commitment to take science, technology and innovation to the villages, townships and all the corners of our country. I trust we can rely on the support of all hon members in fulfilling this noble task.

In conclusion, I wish to thank the hon members in the portfolio committee, our Deputy Minister, our director-general, senior management and staff of my department, our entities, our key public and private stakeholders, and most importantly ...

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*IsiZulu:*

... umama wakwami, uNkosikazi uPhumelele owenza, Shandu, ukuthi uma ngivuka ningibone ngimuhle, ngicwebezela nginje nangayo yonke into, madoda. [Uhleko nehlombe.] Ngiyacela ngalamagama ukuyibeka le bhajethi lana. Ngicela niyisekele zingane zakwethu. [Uhleko.]

*English:*

Thank you very much. [Applause.]

Ms T V SHIVITI: Hon House Chair, hon Minister, hon Deputy Minister, hon members of this House, I stand before you today to affirm our unwavering support and commitment to harnessing science, technology and innovation as vital engines of transformation that align with our broader objectives rooted in the principles of national development with our broader objectives rooted in the principles of national development, with our broader objectives rooted in the principles of National Development Plan.

Our intent to leverage Science, Technology and Innovation, STI, to diversify our economy, transcend traditional sectors and foster new industries and markets that can propel South

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Africa towards sustainable development and inclusive growth. In the spirit of National Democratic Revolution, we recognize that merely basing our growth on traditional resources is insufficient for long-term prosperity. Instead, we must innovate boldly by building regional and global alliances that grant us access to knowledge, advanced technology and vital funding opportunities such collaboration which will enable us to tap into international best practices and cutting-edge research, which are essential in financially competing global economy.

As we look to the Medium-Term Development Plan, which allocates a budget of R9,06 billion for the department this current financial year, which reflects a decrease of approximately R744 million from the previous year. This is mainly because of our economy, which is not growing sufficiently to respond to the pressing challenges that the country is facing.

Hon House Chair, despite such shortfalls much remains to be achieved. South Africa space sector, for example, remains underfunded where the SA National Space Agency, Sansa, allocated a relatively low budget of R166,6 million that

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threatens the sector's growth and potential contribution to national security, disaster management and economic development. We must act decisively to rescue and revitalize this sector by establishing dedicated funding streams and fostering partnership with International Space Agency.

Hon Minister, it must be noted that our portfolio committee had partnered with the Portfolio Committee on the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies.

*IsiZulu:*

... hhayi, iyangixaka nje ...

*English:*

... because ours is technology. So, the digital technology part sometimes gives us a problem, but we had partnered with them to make sure that both the department partners to make sure that we realise in our lifetime the launch of communication satellite coming from our own space agency Sansa with the capabilities from this country. So, just to say that we don't need outside capability, we have capacity, and we support that capacity from within.

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To maximize societal benefits, we are committed to encourage the protection, commercialization and socioeconomic utilization of our innovation. Our innovation ecosystem should serve as a catalyst for real world impact, creating jobs and empowering communities. As part of this vision, we should foster the development of innovation clusters and science parks across the country, providing hubs for incubating indigenous ideas and facilitating their transition into viable markets. Moreover, the promotion of local innovation through institutions such as the Technology Innovation Agency, TIA, is crucial. TIA's role in supporting market entry for emerging innovations remain central to penetrating new sectors and boosting local enterprise development, especially in critical industries. Building on these efforts, we understand that fostering a culture of innovation requires active engagement and awareness. Therefore, we should strengthen our efforts in education, advocacy, public participation embedding STI into the fabric of our national identity and development strategy.

A key aspect of our strategy involves developing supportive policies, regulatory mechanism and incentive system that align STI initiatives with sustainable development goals. We recognize that sustainable growth is rooted in resilience

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research infrastructure, which must be upgraded. Despite this promising initiative, we acknowledge that the current shortcomings threaten to hamper our progress limiting resources and critical areas with potentially hinder our ability to compete globally. The underfunded space sector exemplifies this challenge. To overcome this, we propose a comprehensive approach rescue strategy sector like space through targeting funding, enhancing inter agency coordination and prioritizing R&D in areas that promise tangible socioeconomic returns. We must also foster strong public private partnership, hon Minister. Additionally, access to global scientific network must be made more seaming less to foster dialogue, share best interest and accelerate our innovation capacity. This is vital for short casing our innovation on the world stage attracting investment in gaining recognition for our ingenuity.

The full potential of STI economy ecosystem can only be realised if we address current shortfalls with strategic mitigative strategies through increased budget commitment policy reforms and strengthened institutional coordination.

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We must also use Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, CSIR, hon Minister, to assist other departments to understand that there are capabilities within our country that can assist them to get new technologies and new innovations. There are solutions in the CSIR, hon Minister. We have seen when they came to the portfolio committee to present, we have seen the capabilities of the lithium battery that is produced by their centre. We have also seen many programmes, including the carbon capture programmes that can assist us to use coal as a clean energy. Our vision is rooted in accountability responsibility of South Africa. We understand that integration of STI into all sectors is critical to our developmental objective driving inclusive growth, job creation, and poverty reduction by aligning our policies, investments with the goals articulated in Medium-Term Development Plan. We can ensure that our innovation efforts are not mere rhetoric, but outcomes that uplift the socioeconomic conditions. We must also ensure, hon Minister, that we industrialize our economy for the benefit of our people and also to create jobs.

In closing, our strategic focus on STI is not just about scientific pursuit, it is a core element of our national relation to build a more equitable, resilient, prosperous

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South Africa. We call upon all stakeholders to join us in this vital endeavour through strategic investment policy support and active participation in positioning South Africa as a leader in science and innovation. We are committed to ensure that our investment guided by the principle of National Democratic Revolution delivered tangible benefits to our people now and into the future. As the ANC, we support this budget. Thank you. [Applause.]

Mr T S MJADU: Hon House Chairperson, hon members, the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation, I rise today on behalf of the MK party to reject Budget Vote No 35: Science, Technology and Innovation of the 2025-26 financial year. [Applause.]

This budget is not just disappointing it is a betrayal of our national responsibility. It speaks of inclusive growth and innovation-led development story, but it tells a different story in number since 2023 and 2024. The Department of Science, Technology and Innovation has lost R1,4 billion and further R377,5 million has been cut this year yet we are told that science, technology and innovation, STI, is a key driver of economic transformation. How can that be when government is

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cutting its legs out from under it? We are asking STI to lead us through industrial digital transformation and climate resilience while starving it of the very resources it needs. This is not planning it is hypocrisy. The department's responsibilities are growing but the budget is shrinking.

We expect the department to lead the Fourth Industrial Revolution yet many of our rural communities still do not have Internet access. We talk about artificial intelligence, robotic satellites but millions of our people have never use a computer. This is not readiness it is exclusion.

This budget links heavily on private public partnerships, PPPs while PPPs may sound appealing and open doors for big corporations to dominate research and innovation while public interest takes a back seat. For example, SA National Space Agency, Sansa, was told to look for a blended finance to fund its R570 million satellite programme. This is proof that the state is outsourcing responsibilities. Meanwhile the Research and Development, R&D, tax incentive is broken the department has lowered its own targets after failing to process application properly. Where is accountability? Where is the

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evidence that these PPPs benefit the people rather than simply enriching corporations?

Hon House Chairperson, key institutions in our science ecosystem are in a serious crisis. The Council for Science and Industrial Research, CSIR, need R1 billion to repair its infrastructure but receive just R185 million. The SA National Space Agency is expected to run critical programmes like space weather monitoring with R166 million grant. Additionally, the research foundation has lost R840 million in postgraduate funding since last year.

To make matters worse, the department admits that it has reduced funding for black woman researchers it is the inclusive development we were promised. The facts are clear, less than 20% of fulltime professors are black. Black women represent less than 10% in science and engineering faculties. How can we speak of transformation when our best minds are locked out of leadership?

The risks are not only internal we are also exposed on the global state. The withdrawal of the United State of America, USA, funding has created major gaps in research financing and

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yet the working groups are on STI funding has produced no real solutions. At the same time the Sansa partnership with the bankrupt Denel put our space future in danger. There is no backup plan if the deal fails. Why is Denel a failed state-owned enterprise still being trusted with our most strategic projects. This is not just poor planning it is a national risk.

There is also a serious lack of monitoring. The department claims to track 60 performance indicators, but the committee admit that there is no credible monitoring and evaluation system in place. Nine of these indicators are new and the R&D tax incentive targets are downgraded. This is a sign of a system that is collapsing from within.

Hon members, there is a clear urban bias in how science and innovation funds are allocated. The big STI platforms are concentrated in cities, Technology Innovation Agency, TIA, Coega Special Economic Zone, SEZ, the innovation hub meanwhile rural universities and municipalities are left behind. Only 10 to 15 projects reach under-reserved area each year. None are aligned to local government development plan.

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We say we believe in transformation but where is the national pipeline to take black researchers from graduates into stable researcher career. Too many are trained and then discarded. Foreign experts are hired to lead rural science programmes while black South Africans are locked out of the laboratories and leadership.

We must also ask how can long-term innovation like satellite or smart agriculture succeed when they are only funded for 12 months at a time? This budget is not just flawed it is dangerous.

The MK party proposes the following: Firstly, we reject this budget in full until Treasury restore R2,4 billion for student bursaries, full funded Sansa satellite programme with R570 million. Secondly, allocate R1 billion for CSIR infrastructure upgrade. Launch forensic audit into all PPPs in the sector to expose corporate capture of public R&D. Thirdly, cancel all Sana Denel contracts and present the emergency plan to build sovereign space capabilities. Fourthly, compel the STI funding working groups to publish its funding within 60 days. Fifthly, table a rural STI strategy aligned with the local government Integrated Development Plans, IDPs to ensure

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fair geographical distribution. Sixthly, introduce the Innovations Sovereign Bill to make sure public funded innovation stays in public hands.

In conclusion, this budget is antidevelopment, antitransformation, and antiscience it makes inequality worse. It forgets the rural poor and it turns black excellence into a footnote. We believe in science that serve all people not just a few. We believe in transformation that is real not just in words. We believe that our future cannot be built on broken promises.

*IsiZulu:*

Ngiyabonga kakhulu.

*English:*

Mr T R RAMONGALO: Hon House Chairperson, it is a matter of fact that strategic investment in science, innovation and technology is of profound importance to our nation's future. We need to unreservedly without fault and failure ensure that we use this department's budget as a catalyst to foster economic growth and job creation especially for the marginalised communities of South Africa.

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As we gather here today, to deliberate on the department's budget, lest we forget the guiding principles enshrined in our Constitution that clearly advocates for a society build on human dignity, equality and freedom. I do not need to school you on these things. However, there is a certain sense of urgency that calls for this department to use its budget for the advancement and not just for the advancement but as a critical pathway towards fulfilling its constitutional promises.

The South African government has made impressive strides in formulating legislative frameworks such as we see in the decade ... [Inaudible.] ... which outlines our vision for creating an inclusive and thriving economy where all South Africans can benefit from the fruits of innovation. However, these laws cannot only look good on paper they need to be reflected through consistent and concise implementation that is unashamedly done with impeccable diligence because we owe it to the people of South Africa.

We owe it to young and old intrapreneurs like Itumeleng Hlapane the owner of Shade Café in the Vaal who has said to me, and I quote:

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Too many intrapreneurs are over mentored, over trained, over coached and less funded. Though all very important small businesses need capital to compete with their counterparts.

He is correct in his remarks because we cannot shy away from the fact that we need a well-funded robust research and development ecosystem which is pivotal for driving sustainable economic growth.

We need to really focus on how we incorporate this department's mandate to advancing other sectors. We have seen through our oversight visits to our entities how science, technology and innovation, STI, can play a role in assisting other sectors such as green manufacturing, agroprocessing, hydrogen energy and a myriad of other smart technologies.

The ambit of science is also somehow viewed as a litest. We need to dismantle that notion to ensure that it becomes more broad-based to reach even the most rural of communities. We cannot move on the same fragmented and underpowered trajectory. However, we need to look at things like accessibility, cutting the red tape and affordability. Things that inhabit compliance regulations as we carefully craft our budget we must make

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emphasis of how we can harness the power of STI to uplift marginalised communities.

It is important that we invest in things like Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, Stem education so that young people are empowered with the skills that are required in a modern economy. We must do more to empower our universities, our research institutions and tech hubs while ensuring that all these things are accessible to all South Africans regardless of their socioeconomic background.

Other nations like South Korea have successfully transformed their economy through targeted investments in science and technology by allocating a significant portion of its budget to research and development. South Korea has become a global leader in technology and innovation, and it has led to the creation of million of jobs lifting many out of systemic poverty.

Similarly, Germany's focus on green technology and renewable energy has not only advanced their economy but also created sustainable employment opportunities particularly in regions that were previously economically disadvantaged. The same in

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future can be said for this department because it has the power to uplift marginalised communities and break the shackles of systemic poverty we see reflected in society today.

Collectively, we can do so much more so that entrepreneurs in the field of STI surpass the survival phase and actually get to the sustainable phase that will ultimately lead to economic growth.

It goes without saying that the private sector can play an instrumental role in driving this agenda. Government having to incentivise private sector investment in STI can lead to an environment where startups and small business are able to thrive in a market economy.

We have spoken at length about creating an inclusive environment during our many contentions in this committee and how we can encourage women, youth and people with disabilities and those from marginalised communities to become more actively involved in science technology and innovation in order to widen the pool and ensure that everyone is given an opportunity to participate in this space of science.

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Therefore, we strongly advocate for the budget that prioritise projects that lead to economic growth, job creation and community empowerment.

In conclusion, we need to ensure the budget of this department has positive outcomes so that we are able to achieve our strategic objectives in the STI and finally reach a place where we can get to pat ourselves in the back because we would have used the taxpayers' money for their benefit. And get to a place where the economy is cruising nicely. Therefore, let us make a commitment today, right here and now that we will be more responsible in our spending as we foster for an environment where science, technology and innovation actually succeed for the betterment of the people of South Africa.

Thank you. [Applause.]

Dr S S THEMBEKWAYO: Greetings to the president and commander-in-chief of the EFF, commissars, fighters and fellow South Africans. Let us begin this debate by extending our revolutionary invitation to the people of South Africa to join us in celebrating the 12th anniversary of the EFF on the 26th of July 2025 at the Khayelitsha Rugby Stadium here in Cape Town.

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*Afrikaans:*

Alle liewe Suid-Afrikaners word uitgenooi na die EFF se 12de herdenkingsviering wat op die 26ste Julie in Kaapstad sal plaasvind.

*English:*

As outlined in the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation's Strategic Plan, science, technology and innovation is an indispensable driver of solutions to South Africa's complex socioeconomic challenges. The importance of science, technology and innovation in accelerating economic transformation and improving global competitiveness in driving economic growth and sustainable development in South Africa, is undermined.

The recently announced budget cuts have negatively impacted science, technology and innovation, and has far-reaching consequences.

It is for this reason that more research be directed to include more ... PhDs and make specific reference to the need to ensure more research. This cannot be achieved, because programme four that deals with research, development and

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support, has decreased by R200 million in the 2025-26 budget. The research initiatives, innovation projects and international collaboration is therefore negatively impacted. Cuts to research grants and findings can lead to a loss of scientific talents and resources. The continued underrepresentation of black scientists, especially black women, in key scientific fields, remains a serious concern and a clear sign that transformation is far from complete.

South Africa has produced exceptional talents, such as the late nuclear scientist Senamile Masango – may her soul rest in peace – and Nomso Kana, a nuclear scientist who has since led national efforts to expand broadband infrastructure and bridge the digital divide. Leaders like Nomso Kana deserve acknowledgement and support. We do not need Starlink when we have our own black women experts capable of driving technological progress.

In one of the presentations by an entity to the committee, an annual call for applications for funding was done with due date specified, yet it was stated in brackets that it's subject to fund availability. Such annual calls and fund availability constraints may limit the ability of applicants

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to plan for long-term projects or investments. The applicants may face uncertainty about the availability of funds, making it challenging to plan and commit to projects. Such annual calls may create competitive pressure, where multiple applications compete for limited funds, potentially leading to only a few successful applicants.

The department will have to focus on postgraduate development and research support, thereby providing access to innovation research infrastructure. This type of focus will help build a skilled workforce and drive innovation.

In light of the points above, we recommend the following. On increased partnerships, the department and entities should increase partnerships to drive greater investment, while exercising due diligence. On the issue of support for black women researchers, we recommend that the reduction of the target to support black women researchers should be reconsidered so that more black women researchers can also be given an opportunity to excel in this department. The department must further ensure that monitoring and evaluation is institutionalised across all programmes for a better

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assessment of ... impact and to inform future programme design.

The Department of Science, Technology and Innovation should drive successful inclusive economic growth, improve global competitiveness and address societal challenges, with reference to the lack of jobs.

In conclusion, the department's budget cut will weaken its ability to deliver. It must reprioritise spending, boost investment in research and ... to improve efficiency. The EFF rejects this report. Thank you. [Applause.]

Mr S S ZONDO: Hon House Chairperson, Minister, Deputy Minister, hon chairperson and hon members, this Vote arrives at a critical time when the world is confronted by the growth of global instability, environmental crises, economic inequality and rapid digital transformation.

For South Africa, the need to unlock innovation, research and technology development is no longer optional. It is urgent. It is an engine of progress and must not be separated from our

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development agenda, but should be central to the heart of our economic recovery, job creation efforts and service delivery.

The IFP welcomes the department's 2025-26 annual performance plan and the 2025-2030 Strategic Plan. We note the continued alignment with the National Development Plan, NDP, Vision 2020, the Medium-Term Development Plan and the Decadal Plan.

However, planning alone is not sufficient. South Africa continues to underinvest in research and innovation. The department's 2025-26 budget allocation of R9,06 billion must be understood in the broader context of consolidating government expenditure of R20,2 billion in innovation, science and technology, amounting to just 0,9% of the national budget, while this sector is fundamental for long-term development and remains underfunded, relative to its strategic potential.

Minister, it's a shame that we come here to add our points on this budget but eventually you decide to reject it. I think if you should present your own budget and say, I reject this one but I present this option, that would be understood by South Africans.

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Moreover, public-private partnerships should be fostered and match government research and development investments ... private-sector funding at a balanced ratio by 2025. Robust collaboration across all spheres of government, the private sector and academia ... However, all calls for faster implementation and more transparent procurement mechanisms to support emerging black-owned and youth-led technological enterprises ...

The IFP strongly supports the continued focus on youth skill development and innovation hubs linked to universities, Technical and Vocational Education and Training, TVET, colleges and community colleges. Our innovation system must be inclusive, demographically representative and responsive to South Africa's unemployment crisis.

As the department moves forward, we want more streamlined coordination across the department. Science, technology and innovation must be embedded into industrial trade and microeconomic policies.

In light ... the IFP will always support you, Minister, in trying to ... [Interjections.] ... As an IFP ...

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[Interjections.] ... I'm not ashamed, Minister, to support this budget.

*IsiZulu:*

Mkhaya wami.

*English:*

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Order, hon member.

Order, hon member! Hon member, do you want to leave? I can put you outside. Please proceed, hon member.

Mr S S ZONDO: The IFP entered the government of national unity with a strong mind, to say that we are coming here to support the government to make sure that they deliver ... to the mandate that was given to us by the people. We are not in opposition now. We are part of government and we support the strategies that government comes ... to ensure that we deliver ... to the people's mandate. [Applause.] I belong to the IFP, I represent the IFP and I'm talking on behalf of the IFP.

We are here today, Minister Nkabane ... the country is faced by a lot of allegations in ... our state security, and some of the people who are howling at me here once fired the KwaZulu-

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Natal commissioner when they were in ... [Inaudible.] ... of this country. [Interjections.] However, today it has been proven that those who fired him are part of the syndicates that he talked about. I'm not surprised that they are howling at me because the current crisis in this country that we are facing is because of their doing and what they stand for. As the IFP, we support this budget. Thank you. [Applause.]

Ms J S PETERSEN: Hon House Chair, hon members, members of the public, on behalf of the PA, I stand to voice our support for the budget dedicated to Science and Innovation. This is not merely a vote about funding laboratories or advanced technologies, it is an investment in the future of our youth, the prosperity of our nation, and South Africa's rightful place as a leader on the African continent.

Our young people are entering a world transformed by rapid advancements. Artificial intelligence, automation, biotechnology, and the food industrial revolution are reshaping economies and societies. If we fail to equip them with the skills to navigate this new era, we risk leaving them behind. It is not just about creating scientists, it's about

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fostering a generation of innovators, critical thinkers and problem solvers who will drive South Africa forward.

Science and innovation, Minister, are not luxuries, they are necessities. Every great leap in human progress, from lifesaving vaccines to the digital revolution has been fuelled by investments in knowledge and technology. South Africa cannot afford to lag behind. We must be the pioneers on this continent, setting the pace in AI, renewable energy and advanced manufacturing.

To achieve this, Minister, we urge the committee to prioritise two key actions. Integrate AI in emerging technologies into school curricula. Our education system must prepare learners for the jobs of tomorrow. Introducing AI, coding, data science at an early age will ensure that they are not just consumers of technology, but creators and leaders in the field. To position South Africa as South Africa's innovation hub, we must invest strategically in research, infrastructure and partnerships that place our nation at the forefront of scientific discovery.

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Being first on the continent in science and innovation is not just an inspiration, it must be our mission. This Budget Vote is more than just numbers on a page, it is a declaration whether we believe in a future driven by knowledge and bold ideas, or one held back by hesitation and outdated thinking.

Let us choose progress. Let us choose to empower our youth with the tools and funding and the vision they need to lead us into the new era of innovation. As the PA, we support. Thank you. [Applause.]

Dr W J BOSHOFF: Hon House Chair, hon Minister, colleagues in the committee, I think for a country to have a system of science and innovation is a lot like a household having a car, some vehicle of its own. You can do without it. You can catch an Uber, you can hitch a ride with a neighbour, you can use the bus, you can walk. But it's not working so well. You lose effectiveness in your daily operations when you don't have your own system.

Now in that sense, South Africa punches above its weight in terms of the whole system of science, technology and innovation. And this department does a very good job in doing

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so. It is a problem that we have to make do with some R10 billion in a year - a little bit less. That doesn't really speak to or express a commitment to science and innovation, but it requires our scientists to do more with less, and I believe they do so. Most of the work which the department does, it does through institutions and most of it is transferred to the entities within the department.

Now, looking at the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, CSIRO, there's actually too much to say. But what the CSIRO can be commended for is generating more than half of its own funds, meaning that they actually do work which is useful. Because in the end, the market is a very good evaluator of the usefulness of work. We know in the science sector and the whole system of science and technology; you can't measure everything against a direct market value because that sometimes you have to do some ground breaking work or ground laying work which does not have a market right away. But being able to fund more than half of its expenses by earning money is a very good thing.

There are a few things that I would like to point to. The one is the livestock identification and traceability systems,

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LITS, that the CSIRO has developed and it should have been in a position to deal with the foot and mouth disease problem that we have had and that we are definitely going to have again. I would like to know actually where that stands. Also, the National Laser Centre which we learned in the previous term, where do we stand with that? I know there was some strategic partners which we lost and there is a little bit of a problem.

Regarding the National Research Foundation, it has one of the most wide-ranging tasks that any department of any entity can have, from working with the researchers itself up to financing the postgraduate students who cannot be helped by National Students Financial Aid Scheme, NSFAS. That is indeed a demanding task.

Now, as I often have something to say about the Meerkat National Park and the Square Kilometre Array, SKA, I have to say I'm very glad to have learned this morning when I phoned one of the farmers in the area that 80 kilometres of the fence has already been erected. They say that there's a little problem with the rooikat [caracal] which will still pass through it. I won't stand in for that insight, but I believe

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it is true. But it's very good to know that the farmers in the area will have a nicer neighbourly relationship with the Meerkat National Park. And although there's still a lot to say, I have to end now. Thank you very much.

Ms M P KOBE: House Chair, Minister, the Deputy Minister, hon members, fellow South Africans, please receive my warm greetings this cold morning as we debate Budget Vote 35 of Science, Technology and Innovation. Hon House Chair, we as Action SA recognise the undeniable role that Science, Technology and Innovation must play in building a capable, inclusive and future ready South Africa. Yet, we stand here today to vote against Budget Vote 35 because this is not a budget for transformation, but a budget for regression and contradiction.

The department's theme for 2025-26 is to place science, technology and innovation at the centre of government, education, industry and society. A bold vision, but a vision unsupported by resources is just empty rhetoric. The reality is that this budget cuts R377,5 million from a department that is already stretched thin following a R1,1 billion reduction from last year. You cannot grow an economy, create jobs or

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build an ethical state while disinvesting in the very sectors that drive innovation and competitiveness. From underfunding the National Research Foundation and Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, CSIR, to the stagnating and shrinking grants to our research entities, this budget directly undermines South Africa's scientific capacity.

We are particularly disturbed by the continued marginalisation of a young, black and particularly women researchers, despite the national priorities to transform the science system. The reduction in support for black women scientists is indefensible and incompatible with the department's transformation rhetoric. The vague appeals to private sector partnerships do not compensate for a hollowed out public Science, Technology and Innovation infrastructure. Public private collaboration must be built on strength and not desperation. How can the department negotiate as an equal partner when itself its underfunded, understaffed, and structurally unstable.

As Action SA, we note the unresolved issues within South African Maritime Safety Authority, Samsa, the ongoing dysfunction at the Technology Innovation Agency, TIA, and the

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lack of progress in commercialising publicly funded innovation. Promising instruments like the Innovation Fund remain under capitalised and buried beneath bureaucratic delays.

We believe in a government that backs its priorities with funding and a state that enables its institutions. We support science and technology and innovation as a pillar of national development, but we cannot support a vote that fails to fund this very pillar. I thank you. [Applause.]

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION: Hon Minister; hon chairperson of the of the portfolio committee; hon members of the Portfolio Committee on Science, Technology and Innovation; the director-general, DG, Dr Cele; chairpersons of all chief executive officers, CEOs, of our entities; officials from the department; ladies and gentlemen, I greet you. It is my single honour to be part of this Budget Vote 35.

Hon Chair, the President in this seventh administration added innovation as a strategic addition and the focus. That elicited a pivot from the old science and technology to

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Science Technology and Innovation. We have agreed that Science Technology and Innovation, STI, as a system, cannot be an exclusive pastime for elite and most educated nor should it reside within certain sectors at the exclusion of the rest. Our totalising approach is best captured on our new mantra as it was stated by the Minister. Also, I am happy because the member from the ActionSA well captured our mantra as the department where it says, we are placing Science, Technology and Innovation at the center of government, at the center of education, at the center of industry and at the center of society.

Our National System of Innovation, that is the NSI, will require hands-on deck from all different sectors and constituencies. It was Alan Kay who famously said: "The best way to predict the future is to invent it." As the Department of Science, Innovation and Technology, DSIT, we subscribe to this notion from the Science, Technology and Innovation's, STI's point of view. I plead to that even the Members of Parliament, let us subscribe to this and let us invent the future. Let us subscribe to the notion that what we need to do as science would give solutions. We should not pinpoint the challenges and not come up with solutions.

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Chairperson, last year it was my first maiden speech when I came here to Parliament and what I talked to was the establishment by the department where we were talking about the establishment of the Municipal Infrastructure Fund, that is the MIF. I am here today to report that we have done that. We have established this fund and we have started to work with the municipalities in this regard. The fund will allow the municipalities to apply for the funding to implement technology and innovation projects identified by them when they meet those requirements.

Working with the University of KwaZulu-Natal as a partner with the SA Local Government Association, Salga, and the Municipal Innovation Maturity Index, known as Mimi, we host the Municipal Innovation Recognition Awards, the MIRA, to recognise the municipalities adopting technology and innovation in delivering services to the citizens.

We intend to expand the MIF as part of the District Development Model, DDM, support system to municipalities to help build capacities for basic service delivery. I am happy to say that we are even focusing on the rural municipalities and they are taking part of this to making sure that we breach

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the gap between the municipalities delivering services to the society. Again, Chairperson, one of the stuck challenges we seek to address is the industrial relationship with the Science Technology and Innovation. The government is clear that without industrial investment in innovation and that the industry sees itself as part of the national system of innovation, we will not succeed as a country in advancing like the rest of the world.

Accordingly, we are engaged in the process of engaging business leadership in this regard to invest in the STI as the country. I am happy to stand here and say that just in few weeks, we have seen our Minister where he has signed a letter with one of the biggest companies, that is Huawei. What was contained in the letter of intent was to say that we are partnering with them in making sure that when it comes to technologies, having their emphasis on artificial intelligence research and innovations.

Those are one type of the partnership that we are having but it is the process that we are having with quite a lot of private sectors where we are saying, what is it that we can partner with them in making sure that we build the pipeline

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when it comes to the uptake of the stem subjects. Working with the Department of Basic Education we are making sure that when it comes to the uptake of stem subjects we instill the innovation as early as the school level. Also, making sure that we invest in the infrastructure especially in the rural and the township schools. That is the partnership that we are having with the private sector.

Again, hon members, as the department, we continue to advance the work around the indigenous knowledge system. The department has worked in partnership with the University of KwaZulu-Natal, KZN, the University of Limpopo, the University of Venda to pilot the recognition of prior learning when it comes to the qualification of traditional health practitioners. Again, it is one area where we are saying, we want to make sure that when it comes to the issues of the Indigenous Knowledge Systems, IKS, the bioinnovation institution, we make sure that when it comes to the African knowledge that is based there we are working with them.

There are so many other projects that we will come and share with the portfolio committee when it comes to that effect. On grassroots innovation, again, that touches more on the issues

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of innovation the eye that has been added working with the youth programmes that are there. We have quite a number of programmes that are working with the youth, making sure that we upskill and we sharpen the skills. We have programmes in partnership with Green Youth Network and we are partnering with them. The Youth Indabas that we are having we ensure that we empower them. The youth entrepreneurs, we are making sure that we put the youth spotlights global investment, skills cultivation and culture outreach.

It is one programme where we are saying ... I heard the hon member from the PA ... We have quite good programmes to make sure that we upskill our youth. On gender issues, yes, we might not have reached where we want to reach as the department, but at the core center, at the center of the programmes that we are having, the research grants that we are having, we are putting the targets for women with the postgraduate funding. Right now, we have placed them at 55%. We are saying that the beneficiaries must be women aged 55% for now, but there is much more and we know that we must work very hard when it comes to that.

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In addition to that, we have programmes that we are supporting women, like women in science, we have awards when it comes to black women in science, women in hydrogens because this is one intervention that we know that when we talk to the issue of transformation and making sure that we are inclusive when it comes to the issues of science, we cannot leave women alone. Another area where we are saying in this financial year it will be our targeted focus, is to make sure that we include the people living with disability when it comes to the programmes that we are having in science.

In conclusion, let me thank my Minister whom we are working well within the department. Let me thank the director-general, DG, and the whole staff in the department but more especially, let me thank the portfolio committee. When we always come to the portfolio committee it is not always nice and good but what you are always assured of, no matter how hard the meeting will be from the portfolio committee, they will always be lessons that we will look back and say they were good points that we got and we can implement. So, we wish we can keep up the good work and the good relationship that we are having with the portfolio committee. Thank you very much, House Chairperson.

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Mr W M THRING: Hon House Chairperson, the ACDP affirms the strategic importance of placing science, technology and innovation at the centre of government education society and industry to support commercialisation, entrepreneurship and industrial applications in South Africa.

The department's 2025-26 budget of some R9,6 billion decreases by R377 billion after a R1,1 billion decrease in the 2024-25 financial year. These austerity measures due to our growing debt repayments will push entities to pursue public private partnerships to source the much-needed funds.

The ACDP commends the department's efforts to diversify the national system of innovation and the staging of National Science Week, Women in Science Awards and the 32nd General Assembly of the International Astronomical Union including the organisation of the country's first Astro-Tourism Strategy promoting astronomy based tourism.

We call on sites of research and innovation to be better coordinated throughout government departments and express our concern, however, around fragmented oversight, slow transformation and limited rural impact as South Africa's

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gross investment in research and development remains stagnant at a paltry 0,61% of GDP.

This is obviously woefully inadequate for a country not only aspiring to lead in the Fourth Industrial Revolution, but also in the face of tariff wars which must propel us to utilise science, technology and innovation to beneficiate our raw materials and grow employment.

On the partnership of rebuilding research infrastructure with the Palestinians, the ACDP notes the hypocritical stance of government as it breaks from its nonaligned diplomatic policy keeping that policy with Russia-Ukraine. Why is there no support for Christian minority groups in Africa who are butchered by terror cells who call themselves Islamic fundamentalists?

Why is there silence on the 24 million Sudanese children right now facing starvation? Are we anti-black? While supporting the call as the ACDP to help innocent Palestinians as well as Israelis, we cannot support the call of radical Palestinians who chant first the people of the Saturday, Jews, and then we come for the people of the Sunday, Christians.

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The ACDP refuses to be useful idiots to these radical leaders. As kingdom builders, the ACDP supports for call for the students of our country to be prioritised. We will not support this vote. I thank you.

Ms N W A MAZZONE: House Chair, hon Minister, Deputy Minister, colleagues, some new colleagues that we're very happy to have with us on the committee, members of the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation. We stand here today to debate the Budget Vote for the department. A budget that, given the rapid advancements in technology, artificial intelligence, space knowledge and exploration, medical advances, global trading, military technology and human capacity developments, will hopefully in the near future be a larger budget that we must debate and not as we stand now, never enough budget to keep up with our country's ability and progress.

Research and development leads to new technologies, improved processes and a more competitive economy. Ultimately, this will raise the standard of living. Through driving innovation and technology advancements research and development, R&D

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fuels the creation of knowledge technologies and products leading to innovation across various sectors.

This innovation can improve existing products and services and create entirely new markets. For example, the advancements in healthcare technology and manufacturing are often driven by R&D developments. When enhancing competitiveness and attracting investment, R&D allows countries to develop unique technologies and products, making them more competitive in the global market.

This increased competitiveness attracts foreign investment talent and further boosts the economy. Examples include Japan's post World War 2, economic miracle and South Korea's tech boom, both fuelled by significant R&D investment.

When addressing social challenges, R&D plays a vital role in addressing societal challenges like healthcare, energy, and environmental issues. For instance, R&D can lead to the development of renewable energy technologies for new medical treatments, social research, and also part of R&D they can provide valuable insights into societal needs informing policy decisions.

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By fostering a knowledge-based economy R&D indeed contributes to job creation and the dissemination of knowledge, which is a key driver of economic growth in the 21st century. A strong R&D ecosystem attracts skilled workers and creates high value jobs in science, engineering and technology. This shift towards a knowledge-based economy allows countries to move beyond the reliance of traditional economies.

In essence, R&D is not about scientific discoveries. It is a strategic investment that drives innovation, productivity and long-term economic prosperity for a nation. Therefore, the gross domestic expenditure on R&D of just 0,61 and reported declining private sector investment in R&D is of great concern.

The committee welcomes efforts to diversify and increase investment in R&D and specifically notes the departments and entities' will where possible to pursue public private partnerships to source further needed funds. However, when sourcing these private capital funds, both national and foreign, the department and its entities must still be resourced at a level that adequately supports the national

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agenda and allows negotiations to be undertaken on equal footing.

The committee must continue its efforts via joint committee meetings to support the department in entities to forge more effective strategic partnerships with key science, technology and innovation, STI incentive departments and agencies to enhance the uptake of locally developed technologies and improve service delivery, modernised key industries and enhance the capability of the state.

In 2026, joint meetings with various departments to enhance the understanding of the department's functions and capabilities must become a priority. Allow me to conclude by saying this. I want the Minister and the committee to know that I personally will be keeping an incredibly close eye on developments in the South African Space Agency as this is a particular area that has caught my attention for various reasons. Not only am I exceptionally proud of the work that is being done there, but I am exceptionally concerned on the possible abuse that could occur there.

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We need to ensure that the booming private sector economy is working towards the establishment of making world leaders in space technology in our country and fostering them correctly. The department must work with these entities.

Minister, let me make this very, very clear. No state-owned entity under my watch will ever be allowed to abuse funds to keep themselves afloat, to the detriment of any programme that is being funded by this department due to the severe underfunding mandate we are currently sitting with.

I intend to make this my very top priority and if Denell is listening, you are in fact correct, I am talking about you. South Africa is truly alive with possibility, and I am proud and excited to see what the future holds. We have an incredible possibility in science, technology and innovation and we must support our community in every way possible.

Ms T V B MCHUNU: Hon Chairperson, hon Minister, Dr Nzimande, hon Deputy Minister, Dr Gina, members of the portfolio committee, led by our chairperson and all the other Members of Parliament who are present here today, and the department, led by Dr Cele, the Director General, DG.

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Hon members, today, as we gather to deliberate on Vote 35 for Science, Technology and Innovation for 25-26 financial year, we do so amidst the celebration of Mandela Month, a time to honour the legacy of Madiba and reflect on the transformative power of innovation and technology. This occasion reinforces our unwavering commitment to advancing South Africa's economic development through robust support for science, technology, and innovation. Recognizing that scientific progress is vital for building an inclusive, innovative and resilient economy.

Despite the constraints imposed by the sluggish economic growth, this budget underscores our determination to harness the potential of innovation to drive national growth aligned with the broader objectives of the national development plan.

Hon Chair, a central pillar of our Science, Technology and Innovation, STI, agenda is to cultivate a culture of innovation and an entrepreneurial spirit across our societies. We recognise importance of ensuring that marginalized and rural communities are not left behind but instead are woven into the fabric of our nation's scientific and technological progress. To this end, we are committed to ensuring inclusive access to STI opportunities, which entails:

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Integrating science and technology into school curricula, to prepare learners for the realities and demand for the 4th Industrial Revolution. Equipping our youth with scientific literacy and technological skills is not an option but an imperative, as it will empower them to participate actively in building the country's future towards this goal, significant emphasis is placed on developing platforms and programs that inspire and empower youth to pursue careers in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, STEM, fields, fostering expertise, innovation and entrepreneurship at the grassroots level.

In this way, will lay the foundation for self-sustaining innovation ecosystem rooted in our own human capital. And we appreciate what the department is doing.

Innovation must serve the purpose of reducing inequalities and promoting social emancipation, and it is through deliberate strategies, that we can leverage research and technology breakthrough. To uplift the most vulnerable among us.

Hon Chair, we are positioning South Africa as a key player in the global STI landscape by developing strategic international

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partnerships aimed at attracting foreign investments, fostering knowledge exchange and promoting our scientific prowess on the world stage. The department strives to position South Africa as a leader in science, diplomacy and in international innovation dialogues. This approach not only advances our national interest, but also leverages global trends, standards, and expertise to bolster to bolster our domestic research infrastructure and our capacity to innovate at a competitive level.

Hon Chair, we note that the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, CSIR's budget has been increased from 938,4 million in 24-25 financially to 971,1 million in 2025-2026, which is reflecting an increase of 32,7 million, which is in terms of percentage is 3,3 percentage increase.

While this is the modest rise, it signals an acknowledgement of the institution's vital role in our national development, development and innovation agenda. The additional resources are expected to bolster the CSIR capacity to deliver in its mandate, including advancing research sectors such as energy, manufacturing and environmental and management, which are

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critical sectors for realising our economy. In fact, this is the reality about the budget of CSIR, not the other way round.

Moving forward, we must also support small and medium enterprises through targeted research and development R and D, financing and capacity building initiatives. The current budget constraints limit the expansion of these vital programs. But innovation must be viewed as a catalyst for inclusive growth, job creation, poverty alleviation to mitigate financial shortcomings. We advocate for a more aggressive pursuit of public private partnerships and international collaboration.

These collaborations can unlock funding streams, including blended finance models, which are essential to sustain research programs and infrastructure development. This can be achieved through investing in education infrastructure, developing community-based innovation hubs and support mechanisms that enable rural youth and marginalized communities to benefit from technological advances.

Hon Chair, our vision in South Africa STI's future is clear; fostering a culture of innovation, promoting entrepreneurship

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and ensuring inclusive participation across society. The modest increase in the CSIR budget, although welcome, highlights need for prudent expenditure, strategic partnerships, innovative funding models to bridge the shortfall.

Hon Chair, we recognise that the road ahead demands resilience, commitment and ingenuity by aligning our resources and strategies within the framework of the medium-term development plan and by mobilizing all societal sectors. We can realize our goal of knowledge driven inclusive and resilient South Africa that leverages STI for sustainable development and economic emancipation of all its people.

Hon Chair, and hon Minister, we need to move more towards advocating for a mindset in all sectors of the society, in particular, the previously disadvantaged, of creating more employers from previously disadvantaged communities, which is a competent that can be achieved through science, technology and innovation.

And lastly, as we support this budget as ANC, but it's important to highlight that to the entrepreneurs, young

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entrepreneurs, innovators, researchers, scientists that, those that are rejecting the budget, they are simply indicating that you mustn't get any funding and any assistance from the department, which is what we reject. That we must be supporting this budget as the ANC, we support, Chair.

[Applause.]

Mr M S MBATHA: Chairperson, on a point of order: Check please. The budget is not ANC.

The CHAIRPERSON (Mr W M Douglas): Sorry, I haven't recognised the hon member and what is your Point of order? Ok, thank you.

The MINISTER OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION: Thank you very much, hon Chair.

*IsiZulu:*

We Shandu awoke ufunde ukuthula uma kufanele uthule.

*English:*

Let me start by thanking all the parties that supported this budget. Thank you very much. Despite the legitimate concerns from the ANC, the Chair and now the Whip. To all the other

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parties, despite your support, we are aware that we need to address the issue of funding.

*IsiZulu:*

Laba abangayisekelanga sithi lala lulaza bazokwengula niyosifica sesi le phambili khona kunje.

*English:*

We also want to say that everyone acknowledges underfunding, including those who have opposed. We agree with you. There is no disagreement on that. I am glad that some positive suggestions are coming out. Hon Thembekwayo spoke about the need for partnership and so on. I am disappointed with the MKP because the MKP ...

*IsiZulu:*

... ivele ivale nje ithi asiyifuni le nto. Ubone ukuthi manje ungathi kunezinye izimpi enizilwayo esikhundleni sokuthi nibheke la.

*English:*

Now, I also would like to say that we are doing a lot to try and address the issue of underfunding. Very quickly, we have a

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multipronged strategy as a department. Of course, we expect something from the fiscus to increase. But we are under no illusion that if we only rely on the fiscus, we are not going to be able to get our funding. That's why we also have partnerships with the public and private sector, including SOEs where necessary. We are also having partnerships internationally so that we are able to harness these partnerships for purposes of addressing a lot of things that we actually need to do.

I am also planning to go and engage urgently, Treasury on a comprehensive proposal, as well as the IDC and the PIC to say in their funds something must be set aside for science, technology and innovation. To fund those, we are also strengthening the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA) so that it acts as a catalyst for accessing some of these funds outside.

I am very disappointed, hon Thring, that you use this budget to essentially support apartheid, Israel and the genocide that it is perpetrating against the people in Gaza. I can as well ask you a question. What have the Palestinian people done to the Israelis because it's the other way round? The Israelis

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took the land of the Palestinians, and they continue to kill and ambush them. We cannot sit back knowing where we come from, as a country. I am very disappointed. I hope one day the word Christian will be much bigger in your party because Christianity is a particular religion that is based on love and care for your neighbour, not what Israel is doing.

[Applause.]

Now, I do want to say, hon Boshoff, thank you very much. I have always said that we need to work together. There is no contradiction between the farming interests and the interests of the SKA. We have to balance so that we are able to work together. But I would also like to say there is no need to dismiss this budget because it doesn't have enough funding. It sounds like a contradiction to me. As Members of Parliament work with us to get more money also through partnerships, ...

[Interjections.] As a matter of fact, we have been punching above our weight. We have been punching above our weight. The role we played in COVID, the pioneering work of the CSIR, as our Whip, hon Mchunu was saying, the work done by our national Space Science in dealing with floods and also, by the way, increasing the number of women, even publications by women

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from 2005 from 31% to about 45%. So, siyaqhuba. [We are moving forward.] I wish to thank you, everyone.

*IsiZulu:*

Wangifundisa uDlamini, ngiyakwazi ukubona isikhathi.

The CHAIRPERSON (Mr W M Douglas): Members are reminded that two debates are scheduled simultaneously for two o'clock. Today the Public Works and Infrastructure Budget Vote debate will be held in the Good Hope Chamber, while the Health Budget Vote debate will take place in Committee Room 46. That concludes the debate and the business of this mini plenary session, the mini plenary will now rise. Thank you.

Debate concluded.

The mini-plenary session rose at 11:38.