

**Address by Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa on the
Occasion of the Presidency Budget Vote
National Assembly, Cape Town**

23 July 2014

Honourable Speaker,

Honourable Deputy Speaker,

Honourable President of the Republic,

Honourable Members,

It is nearly 18 years since I last stood here to address this house. Much has changed over the years. Sadly many of the people who occupied these benches as members of the first democratically-elected Parliament have left us.

Those who are still here have, in some instances, gotten greyer and, in most instances, gotten wiser. Some, like my colleagues in Cabinet, the Honourable Radebe and Hanekom, have lost all that nature created to cover the skull. Yet they remain as young as they were then.

While much has changed inside this house since I last had the privilege to stand here, most remarkable are the changes that have taken place outside this house – on the streets of South Africa, in our townships and villages, in our classrooms, in our clinics, in our places of work.

The lives of our people have improved. We can today tell the story of a country on the move towards a better life for all.

It is the story of orphaned Lesego from Mothibistad who has passed matric and is now studying engineering through the National Student Financial Aid Scheme.

This is the tale of Fatima from Sophiatown who now has a title deed and clean drinking water.

The story of a country that moved from being a pariah state a mere 20 years ago, to successfully hosting the 2010 FIFA World Cup and now building the biggest telescope in the Southern Hemisphere.

Honourable Members,

In his State of the Nation Address, President Jacob Zuma outlined the programme of action for the next five years. This programme aims to improve the lives of all the people of South Africa through radical socio-economic transformation. It aims to remove all impediments that prevent our people from enjoying the freedom, human dignity, equality and material security promise by the 1994 democratic breakthrough.

This Budget Vote underscores the role of the Presidency in giving effect to this programme meant to improve the lives of our people.

Guided by the vision of building a better life for all, we will dedicate our resources and energies to forge a social compact that brings together all South Africans in pursuit of a common vision for radical socio-economic transformation.

It is a vision that is most eloquently articulated in the Freedom Charter, and which serves as the starting point for the National Development Plan.

It is an ideal in which all South Africans have equal rights and equal opportunities.

It is a vision of a society in which poverty is eradicated and inequality reduced.

It is a vision of an economy that is growing, creating jobs and generating the resources needed to meet the material needs of its people.

Honourable Members,

The work of the Presidency, which includes the responsibilities delegated to the Office of the Deputy President, strategically seeks to advance this vision.

It is centrally concerned with forging partnerships across society to address our shared challenges. It is about building consensus and promoting collaboration.

A critical feature of a successful social compact is that all parties need to recognise that a deal is being struck between the present and the future.

This is how we achieved our democratic breakthrough in 1994. As parties came together to negotiate and eventually agreed on the Constitution, they did so knowing full well that we needed a social compact that addressed the imbalances of the past.

At the same time they imagined a future society, characterised by the values of non-racialism, non-sexism, freedom and prosperity for all.

Key to establishing and sustaining a social compact is trust. Trust requires honest engagement between social partners on the issues that will move South Africa forward.

Once again, history calls upon all social partners to accept each other's bona fides and to work in concert to accelerate transformation and eliminate inequality.

Ordinary people appreciate the call to work together. This is why they came out in large numbers on International Mandela Day in response to President Zuma's clean-up campaign. They cleaned their streets, churches, schools and orphanages.

Working together has become part of our DNA. It is what unites us, what makes us exceptional.

Nowhere is closer alignment and active cooperation more important than in our economy. Our efforts to build social cohesion and promote inclusion depend on our collective ability to address poverty, unemployment and inequality.

In his State of the Nation Address, President Zuma announced that he would soon convene a meeting of the Presidential Business Working Group. This would, among others, seek to remove obstacles to private sector investment in our economy.

Many in our country are eagerly awaiting the outcomes of this engagement.

The President has directed that we engage with Nedlac social partners to seek solutions to the critical challenge of wage inequality.

Among other things this will include the development of a policy framework for introducing a national minimum wage.

Wage inequality extends beyond the promotion of stable labour relations.

It goes to the heart of the economy we are seeking to transform and the caring society we are building.

We need to forge a common position among all stakeholders in Nedlac on what is required to improve the conditions of workers, to address inequality in the workplace, to improve productivity, and to achieve shared, sustained economic growth.

This, we believe, should be at the heart of a new social compact that addresses the interests of all South Africans.

Honourable Members,

We need to broaden the reach and deepen the impact of the direct job creation interventions that make an immediate difference in the lives of the poor and unemployed.

The ANC's election manifesto recognises youth unemployment as arguably the country's single most critical challenge. It says that youth empowerment should be fast-tracked.

Already, our public infrastructure programme is benefiting young people as all contracts have built in targets for youth empowerment in line with the Youth Accord. We call upon the private sector to open opportunities for youth people through internships, mentorships and programmes that support young entrepreneurs. Let us swell the ranks of trainees, artisans and young entrepreneurs in our training and supplier development schemes.

Within the state, we will tackle unemployment and poverty through public employment initiatives like the Expanded Public Works Programme, the Community Works Programme, the Jobs Fund and the Small, Medium and Micro Enterprise (SMME) Support Programme.

These interventions have demonstrated their value in alleviating poverty and creating opportunities for training and work experience.

Going forward, the Anti-Poverty Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) which oversees this work will focus on fewer interventions with the greater impact.

Further, programme managers will prioritise implementation in economically depressed regions where there are limited prospects of private sector employment.

It is proven worldwide that entrepreneurs are unique, as they are innovative, agile respond quicker to market opportunities and are generally more competitive.

Therein lies the opportunity to create jobs and transform the structure of our economy.

We will pursue initiatives to better coordinate the provision of government support to entrepreneurs and reduce the administrative burden they face.

Honourable Members,

The Presidency's commitment to inclusivity, participation and collaboration finds expression in structures like the Human Resource Development Council of South Africa.

The Council advises government on the expansion and improvement of our national skills system.

Collaboration across sectors is necessary to achieve a skills revolution. We therefore support the National Education Collaboration Trust which is a private sector-organised labour-government initiative to improve our general education system.

We call on the private sector to rise to the challenge and continue to build schools and libraries, to train teachers and to give bursaries to our young people.

Another outstanding example of effective collaboration that has made a huge impact on people's lives is the South African National AIDS Council.

Even as we acknowledge progress made in our response to AIDS, we are acutely aware of the challenges that persist. Recent studies, for example, point to a resurgence in infections and diminishing awareness of prevention messages.

As we expand our treatment programme, our focus will be on targeted interventions among high risk groups like young women, farm workers, sex workers, students and people in informal settlements.

We will reintroduce the Mass Communication Campaign to make all South Africans aware of the dangers of unprotected sex, intravenous drug use and other risk behaviour.

The fight against AIDS will only be successful if we simultaneously address social conditions that contribute to the burden of disease. These include poor living conditions in informal settlements and limited access to prevention and care services.

Working together with our social partners in the South African National AIDS Council (SANAC), we will massively increase our medical male circumcision programme.

Drawing on the success we have had elsewhere, we are engaged in efforts to prevent the death of initiates, particularly in the Eastern Cape, through the introduction of medical male circumcision. Our experience shows that it is indeed possible to accommodate cultural practices within this programme.

Honourable Members,

It is fitting that we should pause here to remember those who lost their lives on Air Malaysia flight MH 17.

Compounding the human tragedy of that disaster was the loss on the eve of the 20th International AIDS Conference in Australia of several leading researchers who supported the work of the South African National AIDS Council.

We join the international community in mourning their passing and extending our condolences.

Honourable Members,

Oversight is critical to ensuring that government delivers.

The Presidency will provide strategic oversight over government programmes as part of monitoring progress towards a capable developmental state.

Our task is to support the President in ensuring the achievement of the goals contained in ministers' performance agreements. We will focus on strengthening the chain of accountability throughout the public service.

We will support local government in developing its capacity to deliver basic services. As Deputy President, I will support the Service Delivery IMC by visiting service delivery points to assess progress made in revitalising local government.

We will work with the Minister in the Presidency to monitor the implementation of the National Development Plan (NDP).

We will ensure that departmental Strategic Plans and Annual Performance Plans are aligned with the Medium Term Strategic Framework and the NDP. We will assess how these relate to the popular mandate reflected in the ANC's 2014 manifesto.

We will continue to engage various sectors of society to detail the contribution they can make to the implementation of the NDP.

To this end, I have met the CEOs of major banks who have committed to develop concrete implementation plans that include funding options for our infrastructure programme.

Mr President, perhaps this is the time to call for an end to the so-called investment strike and I am confident that the private sector will respond favourable when we meet them at the Presidential Big Business Working Group.

Honourable Members,

As we seek to collaborate with our social partners to move South Africa forward, so too do we intend to develop a cooperative relationship between the Executive and Parliament.

This informs the approach I am taking as Leader of Government Business.

As members of the Executive, we are first and foremost representatives of our people. We are ultimately accountable, through Parliament, to the millions of South Africans who voted for us on the 7th of May this year.

This requires that we transcend mere compliance with parliamentary rules and practice, and instead locate our accountability firmly in the realm of public interest and public benefit.

Working together and drawing on past experience, we are putting in place measures to ensure that the process of Parliamentary Questions works effectively.

We need to ensure that members of the executive discharge their constitutional responsibilities to promote accountable and responsive government.

We need to ensure that legislation introduced by the Executive is processed timeously and efficiently.

The relationship between the Executive and the Legislature needs to be cooperative, honest and robust. Though we may differ at times, as we must, we need a relationship characterised by trust and mutual respect.

Honourable Speaker,

As President Zuma has indicated, the past 20 years of our democracy has witnessed our country's re-entry into the family of nations as an equal and reliable partner in peace, security and development.

Our participation in various international forums is informed by the need to deepen and consolidate the advancement of the African agenda. We as Africans have defined this agenda to advance the renewal of the political and economic governance of our continent.

In this connection I wish to congratulate the President for his role within the BRICS formation and on the successful establishment of the BRICS development bank.

Within the responsibilities assigned to us by President Zuma we will continue to consolidate bi-national relations with countries like Turkey, Nigeria, Germany, Sweden and the People's Republic of China.

Over the past 20 years, South Africa has contributed to peace initiatives in various regions of our continent and further afield.

We are motivated by our firm conviction that only by working together and solving problems through negotiation, can we achieve peace and prosperity in Africa and beyond.

This informs our involvement in South Sudan and Sri Lanka.

We continue to interact with various role-players in South Sudan to advance peace and stability in this young African nation. This we do in support of the African Union and the UN peace initiatives in the country.

We have just returned from a successful visit to Sri Lanka where South Africa was invited to share its experiences on the truth and reconciliation and constitution-building process with the people of Sri Lanka.

Our delegation interacted with President Mahinda Japaska, members of government and leaders of opposition, including the leadership of the Tamil National Alliance.

In conclusion, Honourable Members, I wish to thank Dr Cassius Lubisi, the Director-General (DG) in the Presidency and Secretary of Cabinet; Busani Ngcaweni, my Chief of Staff; and the entire management team for making my integration into the organisation seamless.

I also thank my new team of advisors for agreeing to serve in what is certain to be the era of radical and far-reaching transformation.

Once more, I extend my gratitude to you Mr President, for giving me the opportunity to serve my country and its people.

To my Cabinet colleagues, thank you for the camaraderie and the cooperation.

When I last stood before this house, we had just adopted our first democratic constitution.

Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela was our President, and we faced the challenge of putting in place the architecture of our democracy whose foundation was laid by successive leaders of the ANC including Chief Albert Luthuli who tragically passed away 47 years this week.

We worked together to craft a common future by adopting a constitution that served the needs and interests of all.

Today, inspired by the life of Madiba and drawing on our constitution-making experience, we need to work together to improve the lives of our people.

We need to forge consensus and promote collaboration.

Working together, we move South Africa forward.

I thank you Honourable Members.

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