



**PARLIAMENT**  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES**  
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**OPENING REMARKS BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES, HONOURABLE N. A. MASONDO, ON THE OCCASION OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION FOR THE COMMITTEES OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES**

**VENUE:** VIRTUAL      **DATE:** 01 MARCH 2022      **TIME:** 09H00

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Programme Director

Deputy Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces, Honourable Sylvia Lucas

House Chairperson for Committees and Oversight, Honourable Jomo Nyambi

House Chairperson for International Relations and Members' Support, Honourable Winnie Ngwenya

Chief Whip of the National Council of Provinces, Honourable Seiso Mohai

Chairpersons of Committees and Whips

Permanent Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Programme Director, allow to state at the beginning that I truly appreciate the opportunity to address this year's Strategic Planning Session for NCOP Committees. This is a very important exercise in that it gives the Committees the space to plan their work, taking into account amongst others the State of the Nation Address and the Budget Speech.

This session takes place shortly after we have passed the halfway mark in the life of the 6th Parliament. It is a critical juncture at which we can say we are able to recall the work done so far and to re-assess our priorities.

Notably, the session takes place after a period of about two years of operating under severe constraints imposed by the lockdown measures to fight the Covid-19 pandemic. Needless to say, this is a period during which many lives were lost. It is also a period during which the local and global economies suffered setbacks, thus compounding our efforts to strive for inclusive growth.

As a consequence, we witnessed the deepening of poverty, unemployment, and inequality. These occurred on the back of a phase of fierce onslaught on the integrity of our public institutions as they were positioned to advance state capture.

It is during this period that we also witnessed the revival of our public institutions, such as the National Prosecuting Authority and the South

African Revenue Service, turning conditions of despair into opportunities for renewal.

## **2. THE ROLE OF COMMITTEES**

Programme Director, for purposes of emphasis, let me restate the role and functions of Committees.

Parliamentary Committees facilitate the detailed scrutiny of the work of Parliament through the processing of draft legislation, overseeing the Executive action including the budget, promoting public involvement, facilitating cooperative governance, and the processing of international matters. The different committees have one or more of the following functions:

1. They monitor and oversee the work and budgets of national government departments and hold them accountable;
2. They consider and amend Bills, and may initiate Bills;
3. They consider private Members' and provincial legislative proposals and special petitions;
4. They consider international treaties and agreements;
5. They examine specific areas of public life or matters of public interest; and,
6. They take care of domestic parliamentary issues.

In terms of the Constitution, the Committees have the power to summon any person to appear before them, to give evidence or to produce documents. They may require any person or institution to report to them. They may also receive petitions, representations or submissions from any interested persons or institutions.

### **3. REPRESENTING THE INTERESTS OF PROVINCES**

I am indeed happy that since 2019, our Committees in the NCOP have been able to undertake work that has assisted us to keep our focus on the mandate of this House. For example, the Committees:

1. Have processed the Bills from national government looking, among other things, at their impact on the provinces;
2. Have processed a number of reports, including reports on the allocation of nationally raised revenue to the three spheres of government;
3. Have monitored interventions in the provinces, which is an opportunity to build our own capacity to contribute to the promotion of cooperation and collaboration among the spheres of government;
4. Have followed up on Executive Undertakings and reported to the House; and
5. Have followed up on the issues that emanate from the Ministerial Briefings. The Ministerial Briefings have been structured to equip all the Delegates, irrespective of their Committee affiliation, with the necessary information on matters of national importance.

However, I must also admit that if the Committees are the key sites of the work of Parliament, we must accept that they also play a big role in influencing the content of what we do. Part of this work is in the form of questions.

#### **4. QUESTIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE**

The questions that we put to the members of the Executive play a key role in assisting us to direct the NCOP towards achieving its mandate of representing the interests of the provinces.

One has observed that at times we fall short of the requirement to appropriately channel our questions. This is evident when we engage the members of the national Executive on matters over which they have little or no control.

For example, in the quest to assist local government, we often pose questions to national Ministers on matters that are within the purview of municipalities. In so doing, we miss the opportunity to engage national government on matters that pertain to their own areas of responsibility in supporting the same municipalities.

The Constitution states that Members of the Cabinet account to Parliament for the exercise of their powers and the performance of their functions.

Therefore, our oversight and the push for accountability should be undertaken in a manner that takes into account the principles of cooperative government and intergovernmental relations, including the need for all spheres of government and organs of state to exercise their powers and perform their functions in a manner that respects the geographical, functional or institutional integrity of government in another sphere.

## **5. THE WORKSHOP ON COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS**

Programme Director, last month we successfully held the Workshop on Cooperative Governance and Intergovernmental Relations. Among other things, the aim of the workshop was to understand the basic precepts of cooperative governance and intergovernmental relations for purposes of ensuring effective and efficient service delivery to communities.

The inputs that were made during the workshop were indeed valuable. It became clear that among other things, the NCOP has to work hard to contribute to the promotion of trust among the spheres of government. Also, it became clear that there is value in the NCOP identifying some key issues and developing an action plan for their achievement.

Moreover, using the lessons from experience, we seem to have the opportunity to find a way of mediating between the spheres in relation to the disputes that often lead to interventions. This is the work that we do already, albeit upon receipt of a notice of intervention when we are required

to approve such action. It is evident that the interventions should indeed be the last resort as they do not guarantee the achievement of the desired results, as we all know.

## **6. LOCAL GOVERNMENT WEEK**

Programme Director, the Local Government Week programme assists us to understand the challenges and best practices in the sphere of local government. This provides us with the necessary information to identify areas where we can support local government, through overseeing the implementation of Section 154 of the Constitution, in as far as it relates to the role of national government.

In this context, we welcome this week's holding of the 6<sup>th</sup> SALGA National Conference, the first conference since the local government elections held in November 2021.

The conference will deliberate on a range of issues affecting municipalities, including the building of inclusive communities, supporting socio-economic development and achieving sustainability through infrastructure investment and maintenance, sustainable service delivery and spatial transformation. It is also expected to elect the new National Executive Committee, which is a leadership we are expected to work with till the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> Parliament.

It is therefore important that we continue to reflect on the issues that SALGA has already deposited with us, especially during the Local

Government Week programme held in 2020, and to support new initiatives that are aimed at facilitating progress in the fulfilment of the constitutional objectives of local government.

## **7. ISSUES FROM SONA 2022**

Programme Director, in his State of the Nation Address this year, the President of the Republic, Cyril Ramaphosa, committed government to the pursuit of the priorities identified in the 2021 SONA, which include:

1. Overcoming the Covid-19 pandemic;
2. A massive rollout of infrastructure;
3. A substantial increase in local production;
4. An employment stimulus to create jobs and support livelihoods; and,
5. The rapid expansion of our energy generation capacity.

Further, he announced a number of interventions which we can support through ensuring oversight and accountability. These include:

1. Amendments to the Electricity Regulation Act;
2. Rehabilitation of the passenger rail network in 10 priority areas;
3. Finalising the move to digital signal by the remaining provinces by the end of this month and facilitating the rapid deployment of broadband infrastructure across all municipalities;
4. Reviewing the mandates of water boards, to ensure that they serve municipalities in terms of the District Development Model;



5. Reviewing the Business Act and legislation affecting Small Medium and Micro Enterprises and to reduce red tape;
6. Upscaling of the Welisizwe Rural Bridges Programme to deliver 95 bridges instead of the current 14;
7. Upgrading 685 kilometres of rural roads over the next three years;
8. Continuing the implementation of the masterplans in sugar and poultry industries that are contributing significantly to increased investment, improved production and transformation;
9. Finalising the mining exploration strategy and supporting the development of upstream gas industry;
10. Meeting South Africa's climate targets, which are at the moment compatible with limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius;
11. Increasing the number of direct beneficiaries from the Presidential Employment Stimulus programme to one million, including recruiting 10 000 unemployed young people for paper records digitisation at Home Affairs;
12. Using the Social Employment Fund to create further 50 000 work opportunities in areas such as urban agriculture, early childhood development, public art and tackling gender-based violence;
13. Revitalising National Youth Service to recruit 50 000 young people during the next year;
14. Approval of the Expropriation Bill by Parliament, which is anticipated this year;
15. Expanding the provision of input vouchers to reach 250 000 small-scale farmers this year;

16. Consideration of the creation of special court rolls for state capture and corruption cases;
17. Developing and driving a national response plan to address the weaknesses identified by the expert panel on the July 2021 unrest;
18. Recruiting and training an additional 12 000 new police personnel, a matter the NCOP has already quizzed the Ministry of Police on;
19. Re-establishing community policing forums;
20. Facilitating public participation in the development of the National Security Strategy;
21. Continuing with the work to ensure universal health coverage; and
22. Finalising the framework for the professionalisation of the public service.

These are some of the very important interventions that are necessary to create the conditions for turning our economy around and contributing to the creation of jobs.

## **8. EXAMPLES OF WHAT AND HOW WE CAN PRIORITISE**

Programme Director, there are many ways of what and how we can prioritise. One is that Committees may need to look at their mandates and re-assess their work keeping in mind what they would like to achieve by the end of the term, which is about two years away.

Keeping in mind the issues raised by the President during SONA, some of which I have just referenced, we need to find a way of using oversight to facilitate high-impact interventions.

The launch of the District Development Model (DDM), to give effect to the vision of a Joined-Up government, provides us with an opportunity to proactively interrogate, for instance, the cooperation and collaboration of the different spheres of government and organs to attend to the challenges that impact service provision. We can start by looking at the following examples:

1. The challenges in the OR Tambo District Municipality - where the DDM was launched by the President in 2019 - which led to the decision by the Eastern Cape government to dissolve the municipality in terms of section 139 (1)(c) of the Constitution last year. The decision was subsequently set aside by the Mthatha High Court;
2. Assessment of the progress in the implementation of the DDM in eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality, and Waterberg District Municipality, which are DDM pilot municipalities together with OR Tambo District Municipality;
3. The City of Johannesburg has over the years faced a crisis of power supply and general electricity problems, particularly in Soweto, which is overrun by high electricity demand and a history of non-payment for services. There have been several commitments at different levels, which do not find expression on the ground.

These are just a few examples of what the NCOP can prioritise before the end of this year, in its quest to promote co-operative governance and intergovernmental relations.

## **9. PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY**

Programme Director, as I have alluded at the beginning, the work of the NCOP includes parliamentary diplomacy. This entails engaging in dialogue on key international issues, such as the advancement of peace, cooperation, and human rights, at bilateral and multilateral levels.

This means that Committees need to deal with the issues that pertain to the global environment. For example, the recommendations in the *COP26 Special Report on Climate Change and Health* propose a set of priority actions from the global health community to governments and policy makers, calling on them to act with urgency on the current climate and health crises.

These are some of the matters that we need to monitor in the global context and how our own government is responding to them.

## **10. CONCLUSION**

Programme Director, as I have already indicated, we are now beyond the halfway point in the life of the 6<sup>th</sup> Parliament.

There are a number of things we may have wanted to pursue, but this is the moment to re-examine and to ensure that we prioritise those interventions that will benefit the people in a much more meaningful way.

It is important that in the conduct of our oversight we are guided by the Constitution, which gives us the authority to oversee the national Executive. In doing so, we must ensure that we promote the principles of cooperative government and intergovernmental relations, which are already articulated in chapter 3 of the Constitution.

I am hopeful that this will be a productive session and that in the end we will have a clear indication of where we want to focus our work for the remainder of the term.

With these few words, allow me to thank you once again for the opportunity to address this session.

Thank you