

JS 1 – 2024] FIRST SESSION, SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

## REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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# MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

OF

## JOINT SITTING

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THURSDAY, 18 JULY 2024

1. Members of the National Assembly and National Council of Provinces assembled in the Cape Town City Hall at 19:00.
2. The Speaker of the National Assembly and Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces took the Chair.
3. The Speaker of the National Assembly requested members to observe a moment of silence for prayer or meditation.
4. The Speaker of the National Assembly announced that the President had called the Joint Sitting of the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces in terms of section 84(2)(d) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, read with Joint Rule 14(1), to deliver the Opening Address.
5. [19:03] The President of the Republic delivered his address as follows:

Hon Speaker of the National Assembly, hon Thoko Didiza, Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces, hon Refilwe Mtsweni-Tsipane, Deputy President Paul Mashatile, former President Thabo Mbeki, former Deputy President Baleka Mbete, former Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, former Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces, hon Amos Masondo, Chief Justice Raymond Zondo, Deputy Chief Justice Mandisa Maya, Executive Mayor of Cape Town, Mr Geordin Hill-Lewis, various heads of institutions supporting democracy here present, esteemed member of the Order of Ikhamanga, Dr Esther Mahlangu, distinguished guests and eminent persons, members of the diplomatic corps, hon Members of Parliament and fellow South Africans, we gather here this evening in the province of the Western Cape in the sad aftermath of ferocious and unforgiving storms that have caused damage to homes,

businesses and infrastructure, affecting tens of thousands of people across the province.

In recent days we have witnessed runaway fires in KwaZulu-Natal in which 14 people, including six firefighters, lost their lives. The fires also caused destruction of homes, livestock and grazing fields. I spoke to the premiers of these two provinces earlier today, hon Ntuli and hon Winde, and informed them that, as they work to recover and rebuild their lives, the thoughts of South Africans are with all those people who have been subjected to these terrible weather conditions.

Hon members, I have asked the Speaker of the National Assembly and the Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces to convene this Joint Sitting to formally open Parliament on a day that is full of meaning and significance in the lives of not only South Africans but also many people around the world. Today we celebrate the birth of the founding father of our nation and democracy, and a global icon of peace, justice and reconciliation, President Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela.

Across our country and across the world, millions of people are marking this day with deeds of service and solidarity. Through their actions they are giving life to a fundamental truth, that we derive our humanity from the humanity of others.

[I am because of others.]

We are reminded on this day that we have a responsibility to each other, and that our wellbeing and our happiness cannot be separated from that of our fellow citizens, nor from that of the men and women not of our country but of the world.

We are reminded that, as we strive to progress and to prosper, we have a responsibility to ensure that no one is left behind. We, South Africans, are a diverse nation with different histories, beliefs, cultures and languages. Yet, we are one people, and we share a common destiny. It is this common destiny that the people of South Africa have charged this Parliament and this government to consolidate and advance – their destiny.

Exactly 50 days ago, the people of South Africa went to the polls to decide the future of our country. Ahead of the elections they had expressed their concerns and their hopes, their wishes as well as their expectations. Through their votes, they determined that the leaders of our country should set aside their political differences and come together as one to overcome the severe challenges that confront our nation. They sent a clear message that, without unity, co-operation and partnership, our efforts to end poverty, unemployment and inequality will not succeed.

Guided by this directive from the people of our country, political parties from across the political spectrum have elected to establish a Government of National Unity, GNU. In an act that is unprecedented in our democratic history – 10 political parties represented here in our Parliament agreed to craft a common programme to build a better, more equal and more just

South Africa. They have come together despite their differences. And differences they have! They came together because they share a commitment to a nation that is united, prosperous and inclusive.

Through a statement of intent, the parties have made a firm commitment to respect the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and the rule of law, and to promote accountability, transparency, integrity and good governance. They have agreed on a minimum programme as the foundation of the work of the Government of National Unity.

The priority actions that arise from this minimum programme received the full support of the Cabinet lekgotla, held recently, which brought together newly appointed Ministers, Deputy Ministers and premiers from all our provinces. It also brought together local government representatives as represented in the SA Local Government Association, Salga. Directors-general and other key officials were also in attendance.

These are the priority actions they decided on that we outline this evening. Cabinet will be convening a further strategy session to consider the Medium-Term Development Plan – having moved from the Medium-Term Strategic Framework – which will translate the priorities that these parties have agreed to into a detailed plan and interventions that government will implement over the next five years.

The Medium-Term Development Plan will set out a well-defined vision and strategic plan that outlines clear goals and includes specific, measurable objectives and a roadmap for achieving them. These goals will be properly aligned with the Budget, which will support the implementation of these objectives. In all this work, the National Development Plan Vision 2030 remains the defining blueprint for our country's growth and development.

We also draw inspiration from the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union's Agenda 2063 in crafting our Medium-Term Development Plan. The Cabinet lekgotla underscored the determination of all members of the Government of National Unity to work together to advance the interests of all South Africans without pursuing or promoting party political interests. It is about putting the people of South Africa first and foremost and advancing their interest. The lekgotla noted with appreciation the commitment and great enthusiasm with which the newly appointed Ministers, Deputy Ministers and premiers have embarked on their duties. We will have seen many of them throughout the country immediately embarking on their tasks and outlining what their plans are – some with great excitement and some expressing their joy at having been appointed. We should all rejoice as we see them.

Despite the achievements of 30 years of democracy and the work undertaken over the last five years to rebuild our economy and our society, millions of South Africans remain poor, unemployed and live in a highly unequal society. For a decade and a half, our economy has barely grown.

The circumstances of the people of South Africa today require that we act together as the Government of National Unity and all key role-players in our country with urgency, boldly and decisively.

The Government of National Unity has resolved to dedicate the next five years to actions that will advance three strategic priorities. Firstly, to drive inclusive growth and job creation. Secondly, to reduce poverty and tackle the high cost of living. Thirdly, to build a capable, ethical and developmental state.

We have decided to place inclusive economic growth at the centre of the work of the Government of National Unity and at the top of our national agenda. Our experience over the past 30 years has shown that, when our economy grows, jobs are created and, when our economy contracts, there is no job creation and, in fact, some jobs are lost.

The Government of National Unity will pursue every action that contributes to sustainable, rapid economic growth and remove every obstacle that stands in the way of growth. We are determined that growth must be inclusive and transformational. Inclusive growth must drive the redistribution of wealth and opportunity. It must support the empowerment of black South Africans, women and all those who, in the past, had been relegated to the fringes of our nation's economy.

This is part of the constitutional imperative to redress the imbalances of the past and deal with the slow process of development. Through empowerment and transformation, we can ensure that the skills, capabilities, resources and energies of all South Africans are used to the greatest effect.

We will continue to pursue programmes that encourage broad-based black economic empowerment, employment equity and support to small and medium-sized enterprises. We will continue to protect and uphold the rights of workers, and continually strive to improve the conditions in which they work and live.

Inclusive growth demands that we affirm the position of the women of our country and the young people in the economy of our country. Inclusive growth requires that we remove the social, economic, cultural and other barriers to the full participation of persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups in our country.

We will support the growth of rural enterprises and invest in public infrastructure in underserved areas across our land. We will increase funding to land reform, prioritise the transfer of state land and improve post settlement support by strengthening the institutional capacity of responsible structures.

To achieve rapid inclusive growth, we need to fix our struggling municipalities. Growth happens at a local level where our people live and work. Our municipalities must become both the providers of social services and the facilitators of inclusive economic growth. They must work to attract investment in their areas. This approach can encourage businesses to

expand and create more jobs in municipal areas. Investors are generally attracted to areas with reliable and modern infrastructure. Simplifying and speeding up planning and regulatory processes can make it easier for businesses to invest and operate in a municipality, and this often leads to the creation of more and more jobs.

As the national government, we have both a constitutional responsibility and a clear electoral mandate to assist municipalities in the effective exercise of their powers and functions. We will ensure that the institutional structure and funding model for local government is fit for purpose, and that municipalities are financially and operationally sustainable. We will do this because our municipalities have been raising this, over and over again.

We will put in place systems to ensure that capable and qualified people are appointed to senior positions in municipalities and ensure independent regulation and oversight.

As an immediate priority, we will also bring stability to governance in our metros and restore the delivery of services. Many of our metros have faced huge challenges that need to be attended to. We have already begun this work.

When I visited eThekweni Metro earlier this year, I met with residents of the city, with local business leaders and municipal officials. They told me that they wanted to work together to build a city that they could be proud of again. We have since put in place the eThekweni Presidential Working Group to enhance support from national and provincial government to turn the metro administration around, and to fix the problems that they are facing in relation to infrastructure, water and sanitation and focus on attracting new investment. We shall do this because eThekweni ... or Durban ... needs to be restored to its former glory.

We will extend the same approach to other metropolitan cities that face serious challenges so that our cities can become engines of growth and dynamic centres of opportunities for our people.

Over the next five years, working together as the Government of National Unity and drawing on our collective capabilities, we will forge a new inclusive growth path for South Africa by pursuing a massive investment in infrastructure. Significant projects are already underway around the country in areas such as transport, roads, and water in the form of building dams, energy and human settlements.

We will massively increase the scale of investment in infrastructure through a more holistic and integrated approach, positioning Infrastructure SA as the central institution of co-ordination and planning.

We are continuing to simplify the regulations on public-private partnerships. This process has stalled for a number of years, and we are now

earnestly focused on simplifying this very good way of engendering infrastructure investment to enable greater investment in both social and economic infrastructure development.

From our largest metros to our deepest rural areas, we have a clear intention to turn our country into a construction site. We want to see cranes and yellow equipment throughout our country, with roads, bridges, houses, schools, hospitals, and dams being built, and broadband fibre being laid out as new power lines are installed.

We must work to engender a culture of maintenance of public infrastructure and dedicate resources and establish systems to ensure this. The culture of maintaining our infrastructure has declined over the years. We build infrastructure and facilities but leave the maintenance thereof to a time when they have already started to debilitate and collapse. Part of the process must involve engendering a culture of maintenance right from the day facilities are put in place.

As the Government of National Unity, we are resolved to intensifying our investment drive, encouraging and enabling businesses to invest in productive capacity. These investments will lead to increased employment creation for unemployed South Africans, especially for young people.

We will drive growth in labour-intensive sectors such as services – as is happening now – and in agriculture, which has a great potential to create jobs. Our manufacturing ... Yes, agriculture!

Our manufacturing capability has declined over the years. We need to reindustrialise our country and make sure that we can create more jobs out of certain sectors of our economy.

To create more jobs for South Africans we will focus on processing our minerals so that we export finished products rather than raw commodities. It is actually quite sad to see us continuing to ship rock, soil and dust out of the ports of our country, and yet we can process a number of these minerals and ensure that we export processed and finished products. That is what we will be focusing on.

We will pursue a smart industrial policy that focuses on the competitiveness of our economy, and that incentivises businesses to expand our exports and create jobs. We will continue to work with stakeholders to develop and implement master plans to grow important industries, increase investment, create jobs and foster transformation. We will also review the various master plans that we have to see whether they are becoming as effective as we had envisaged.

We are convinced that small and medium enterprises and the informal sector hold the greatest potential for inclusive growth and job creation. We will pay particular attention to supporting small and medium-sized enterprises in our townships, rural areas and in areas that need focus. We will take economic activity to where most of our people live so that more jobs can be created.

Red tape debilitates the creation of jobs. Every department and every public entity has been directed to reduce the undue regulatory burdens that hold back businesses from creating jobs. This is an area that our Ministers will focus on in their work, so that the various entities and structures of government ensure that the regulatory burden they often impose on businesses is eliminated so that our businesses can thrive and be profitable and create more jobs.

We have demonstrated the value of public and social employment in creating immediate work and livelihood opportunities for many of our people. The Presidential Employment Stimulus, the Expanded Public Works Programme and other initiatives under the Presidential Youth Employment Intervention have provided income, work experience and skills development opportunities to many of our people, particularly young people and women. We will expand and institutionalise these programmes so that more and more young people can participate in job opportunities and skills development.

Through the Presidential Employment Stimulus, we have been able to create nearly 2 million work and livelihood opportunities. Yes, this is true. If you go to our schools, 25 000 of them benefited from the deployment of young people who came in as teacher assistants. Through this programme they gained a lot of experience and knowhow, and they got into the world of work. Many of them are now better equipped and able to operate in the world of work.

We see great potential for growth beyond our borders. As we strengthen economic diplomacy with our largest trading partners and potential trading partners, we will prioritise the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area to increase our exports to the rest of our continent. The rest of our continent is actually a wide-open opportunity for South African businesses. As one goes around the continent, one often sees products from other continents outside of our own. This can be a really good opportunity for South African businesses. Sometimes as one goes around, you even see water imported from Europe and Asia. One often asks oneself, why can't this be done on the African continent? This is an opportunity for the most industrialised nation on the continent to export to the rest of the continent. We will do this as part of our foreign policy approach which promotes peace, security, democracy and development across Africa and advances a more just and inclusive world order.

Over the next five years, we will seize the enormous opportunity in renewable energy for inclusive growth. South Africa has some of the best solar and wind resources in the world. As we undertake a just transition towards renewable energy, our country must create a green manufacturing sector centred on the export of green hydrogen and associated products. We must move into electric vehicles and renewable energy components.

We have seen, for example, how the Northern Cape has already attracted billions of rands of investment in renewable energy projects.

Work is underway to set up a Special Economic Zone in Boegoebaai to drive investment in green hydrogen energy projects.

We already have a huge pipeline of renewable energy projects, representing over 22 500 megawatts of new generating capacity, estimated to be worth around R400 billion in new investment. Investments such as these will inevitably create more jobs.

Just this week, we saw the largest private energy project connect to the grid near Lichtenburg in the North West province, with over 390 000 solar panels that will add 256 megawatts to the national grid. We will see more of these projects taking shape across the country in the months and years to come. As these investments reach fruition, more jobs will be created.

Our Just Energy Transition Investment Plan sets out a clear path to invest more than R1,3 trillion in a just transition, including support for workers and communities in Mpumalanga and other coal-producing regions.

Our country is undergoing a renewable energy revolution that is expected to be the most significant driver of growth and job creation in the next decade and beyond. We also have a unique opportunity to position our country as a major player in the digital economy and create jobs in digital services. We will invest in digital identity and payments, expand access to affordable broadband and increase training for young people in digital skills.

As we pursue these new areas of growth, we will continue with the far-reaching reforms that enable growth.

At the same time, we will launch our second phase of Operation Vulindlela, a government-wide initiative that has been essential in supporting and driving reform. It resides in the Presidency, and the Treasury and the Presidency are hard at work to lead the reform process in our country. More importantly, it is a process that has seen the breaking down of silos in government, where various government departments co-operate together to ensure that we drive the reforms that we have embarked upon.

In its second phase, Operation Vulindlela will focus on reforming the local government system, improving the delivery of basic services and harnessing digital public infrastructure as a driver of growth and inclusion. It will also focus on accelerating the release of public land for social housing and redirecting our housing policy to enable people to find affordable homes in areas of their choice.

We will complete the most consequential transformation of South Africa's electricity industry in more than a century. Since the announcement of the Energy Action Plan that I announced here in Parliament in July 2022, we have made tremendous progress in reducing the severity of load shedding that beset our country for a long time. Over the next five years, government



will focus on expanding and strengthening the electricity transmission network that needs a great deal of expansion but that also requires quite a lot of investment.

To drive inclusive growth, we need an efficient freight rail network to carry our minerals, agricultural produce and manufactured goods to market. Through the implementation of the Freight Logistics Road Map, we will continue with reforms to transform South Africa's freight logistics system. The work we are doing with business and unions through the National Logistics Crisis Committee has already contributed to improvements in the operational performance of freight rail and ports.

The wellbeing of our people and the growth of our economy depends on another important issue, which is water. South Africa is a water-scarce country, and our water security is threatened by historical underinvestment in bulk water resources and distribution infrastructure.

We will therefore continue with institutional reforms in the water sector to enable greater investment in bulk water infrastructure and better regulation of water services and sources across the country. This will involve the building of dams whose construction in a number of areas in our country is already underway, ensuring that reticulation also takes place as we build these dams.

Just as business needs water and electricity to operate, a growing economy needs skills. Where the skills we need are not immediately available, we need to attract people with the appropriate qualifications and experience to come and bolster our efforts. In doing this, we will continue with the visa reforms that we introduced in the last few years to attract skills but, more importantly, to also attract investment with a view to growing our tourism sector which is so important.

We will continue to pursue a macroeconomic policy that supports growth and development, in a stable and sustainable manner.

Like many other countries, we have had to borrow money to support our budgetary requirements. We will manage public finances with a view to stabilising debt. We are firmly committed to steadily reducing the cost of servicing our debt so that we can redirect funds towards other critical social and economic needs.

Our second strategic priority as the Government of National Unity is to tackle poverty and the high cost of living. An effective, integrated and comprehensive poverty alleviation strategy is necessary to provide protection and support to the most vulnerable in our society.

Even at a time when many companies are making large profits, millions of South Africans are suffering because of the rising prices of everything they buy. As the Government of National Unity, we will look to expand the

basket of essential food items exempt from VAT and undertake a comprehensive review of administered prices, including the fuel price formula ... to identify ... This we did for a while. When the price of fuel just kept on rising, we were able to find a way in which we could stabilise the price. We will seek to find ways to address this challenge.

Asset poverty is one of the underlying causes of abject poverty in our country and this exacerbates the high cost of living amongst our people. The provision of title deeds for land and housing provides people with assets that they can use to improve their economic position.

Income poverty is also one of the underlying causes of poverty. The best way to deal with poverty is for people to have jobs. We have however made interventions to support the unemployed through a variety of interventions, including during COVID when we introduced the Social Relief of Distress, SRD, grant. The SRD grant has provided a lifeline to millions of South Africans who are unemployed. We will use this grant as a basis as we move on to the introduction of a sustainable form of income support for unemployed people to address the challenge of income poverty.

We must ensure that local governments properly implement the indigent policy so that the old, the infirm and the poor are able to get assistance with the payment of basic services. Importantly, we will link social assistance with other forms of support to lift people out of poverty.

As a country, we need to appreciate the impact that a well-functioning and quality education system has on both reducing poverty and driving inclusive economic growth. We will therefore focus on achieving universal access to early childhood development, which is a prerequisite for improved learning in later years.

We will ensure schools are conducive to the delivery of good education, with enough classrooms, safe and appropriate sanitation facilities, clean water and a daily meal for those children who attend our schools. To ensure that we produce the skills that our economy needs, we will expand vocational and technical training in schools and post-school institutions. In this regard, we will seek to take a demand-led approach to skills development.

An important task of the next five years is to ensure that we reduce the high cost of living through ensuring that everyone in South Africa has equal access to equitable, accessible, affordable and quality health care.

As we implement the National Health Insurance, NHI, we will focus on strengthening health care infrastructure, which many people during the debate and discussions on the NHI, have said we should focus on. We will also improve the training of health care professionals and use technology to improve health care management.

While there is much contestation around the NHI, there is broad agreement that we must draw on the resources and capabilities of both the public and private sectors to meet the health care needs of all South Africans equally.

In implementing the NHI, we are confident that we will be able to bring stakeholders together, and that we will be able to resolve differences and clarify misunderstandings.

As the Government of National Unity, we have agreed that we will seek to build consensus around issues that we may not agree on. There are a number of issues that we agree on. We are united around many issues. There are issues which we still need to find full agreement on, and we will work hard to ensure that we do find agreement.

With so many people living far from economic opportunities and services, transport costs take up a large portion of many of our people's income and drive up the cost of living. We often hear reports that many of our people spend up to 40% to 50% of their income just on transport. An immediate priority is therefore to complete the recovery of the passenger rail network across the country to enable people to travel from outlying areas to cities at an affordable rate.

Around 80% of commuter rail corridors are now back in operation and nearly 300 vandalised stations have been refurbished, providing safer and more efficient services to commuters.

The third strategic priority of the Government of National Unity is to build a capable, ethical and developmental state. We will proceed with the work already underway to professionalise the Public Service, ensuring that we attract into the state people with skills and capabilities.

I need to pause here for a minute. As a Government of National Unity, people were appointed to key positions of Ministers and Deputy Ministers and, as they took office, Public Service officials managed this transition period extremely well and I want to thank them for doing so.

We will continue to fight corruption and prevent undue political interference in the administration of the state.

In this administration, we will complete the work to restore the financial position and operational performance of our state-owned enterprises, SOEs. We will complete the implementation of a new centralised ownership model for our SOEs. This will improve accountability, transparency, governance and oversight, while reducing inefficiency and the potential for corruption.

The establishment of a state-owned SOE holding company will give us even greater capacity, apart from everything else that this will benefit us for. It will give us greater capacity to build a sovereign wealth fund. This has been done successfully by other countries whose sovereign wealth funds have built up capital from the high performance of their SOEs rather than from the fiscus. So, this is an important move.

To tackle crime and corruption, we must have capable, sophisticated and independent law enforcement agencies that can fight complex and organised crime. We will deploy modern technology to assist crime fighting. A data-driven approach will be used to identify violent crime hotspots and inform the allocation of policing resources alongside prevention measures. We will continue to tackle priority crimes like illegal mining, gang violence, cash-in-transit heists and the construction mafia through specialised police units.

We will continue to implement the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide, and we will expand victim support services, like the Thuthuzela Centres and GBV desks in police stations.

Thirty years ago, President Nelson Mandela stood before this House to reflect on the first 100 days of the first Government of National Unity. Recognising the different views of the diverse parties within that Government of National Unity, he said:

What brings us together is the overriding commitment to a joint national effort to reconcile our nation and improve its wellbeing.

The same may be said of this Government of National Unity that has now been established by 10 of the parties represented in this Parliament. We share a commitment to reconcile our nation by advancing social justice and equal prosperity for all. We are committed to improving the wellbeing of our country and its people through inclusive growth, the creation of jobs and the reduction of poverty. This is an undertaking that should involve all of us.

On the occasion of the Presidential Inauguration, I made a commitment that we should work together to hold a national dialogue to discuss the critical challenges facing our country and to agree on what we all need to do to achieve a better future for this great country.

Across society, people, organisations, foundations ... you name them ... have expressed their support for a national dialogue. They have said it should involve all key stakeholders in the life of our country, representing civil society, traditional leaders, the faith-based sector, labour, business, cultural workers, sports people and other formations representing the diverse interests and voices of our citizens.

Following the example set by historic events such as the Congress of the People in 1955, the Conference for a Democratic Future in 1989 and the Convention for a Democratic South Africa, Codesa, talks in the early 90s, and drawing on the experience of writing our Constitution in 1996, we envisage a national dialogue that involves extensive and inclusive public participation.

As we have done at many important moments in our history, we will seek to forge a common vision and build a comprehensive social compact with a clear programme of action to realise our people's aspirations for this beautiful country. Through this national dialogue, we are called to be agents

of change, to be champions of inclusive growth, to be the creators of opportunity for all our people.

A few years ago, a diverse group of partners and stakeholders from across society came together to consider various scenarios for the future of our country. These were called the Indlulamithi Scenarios 2035.

One of the scenarios that they painted and described was called the recrimination nation, using the image of the loud hadeda bird as its symbol. This described a situation of inaction, where our country's problems go unresolved and where everyone blames each other for South Africa's ills. This scenario painted a picture of our country going into decline.

The second scenario that they painted and described symbolised a vulture. This painted a picture of a desperate nation governed by a populist coalition whose main objective is self-enrichment and patronage. This scenario – which seems to excite people so much – saw investment confidence being eroded, the growth path being low and unemployment, poverty and inequality remaining extremely high.

These fellow South Africans also described a scenario they called the co-operation nation, which was symbolised by social weaver birds. This scenario paints a picture where, after disruptions and protests, there is a coming together of political parties, the state, the private sector, labour and civil society in order to jointly identify priorities, leveraging the strength of each. As this scenario plays itself out, there is change in the form of governance and reform that leads to the economy growing, with more investment attracted, leading to the reduction of unemployment, inequality and poverty.

By establishing the Government of National Unity, by preparing for this national dialogue I've spoken about, we have deliberately set ourselves along the path towards being a co-operation nation. That's where we want to go and would like all of us as South Africans to behave like weaver birds. Weavers are among the most efficient and gregarious birds in that they build complex structures together and, more importantly, they co-operate. This is the way we should go.

Despite all the challenges, despite our differences, despite all the headwinds that we have faced as South Africans, we are called upon to remain firmly committed to pursuing the path of co-operation, growth and inclusion. We are called upon to behave like weaver birds, building nests and building this big South African nest that will be able to sustain all the people of our country.

Earlier today, a group of South African climbers reached the summit of Kilimanjaro. As we know, this is the highest peak on our beloved continent. They did so in honour of the birth of the father of our nation, Nelson Mandela, and to celebrate the 30th anniversary of our freedom. This

effort that they are involved in is known as the Trek4Mandela expedition. These climbers have been joined by other climbers from several countries around the world to help to keep girls in school by raising funds for sanitary products and other needs. This is an important part. What they have done symbolises what we should all take as an inspiration. Let their actions inspire us all. Let their achievement of reaching the summit of Kilimanjaro remind us that, as the South African nation, there is no mountain we cannot climb and no peak we cannot reach.

One remembers what Nelson Mandela wrote in his *Long Walk to Freedom*, when he said he had walked — and he had had a long walk — and he had climbed a number of hills. He reached this hilltop and surveyed the beauty of our country and said he should not tarry too long because there are many more hills to climb. As South Africans, we can summit many hills if we work together and rise together.

I want to conclude by referring to and paraphrasing the words of Martin Luther King Jr when he said, let us rise up tonight with greater readiness. Let us stand with a greater determination. And let us move on in these powerful days, these days of challenge, to make South Africa what it ought to be.

We have a great opportunity to make this country a better nation. The coming together of all these parties that have decided to co-operate is quite a historic moment for our country and we must make the Government of National Unity work, function and succeed.

I am determined and I have been grateful in talking to all the leaders of these nine parties. I have been grateful that all of them have with one voice said, Mr President, we want this Government of National Unity to work and we shall make it work. Thank you very much. May God bless South Africa.

6. The Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces adjourned the Joint Sitting at 20:04.

X GEORGE  
Secretary to Parliament