



National Assembly – Mini Plenary Debate

15 July 2024

Budget Votes

Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment

Debate on Votes 32: Forestry, Fisheries and Environment

Honourable R Nalumango

The Department with the ANC's support is committed to integrating climate change responses across all spheres of government. This is evident in the department's leadership role in implementing the Climate Change Bill, which is the first piece of legislation in South Africa specifically aimed at mitigating and addressing the effects of climate change. The bill is designed to develop and implement strategies that address climate change and institute a fair, long-term energy transition plan, fostering a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy

Honourable House Chair, the devastating floods in Cape Town forcing at least 4,500 people out of their homes and damaging at least 15,000 structures and the veldfire in KwaZulu-Natal that has claimed 6 lives and 196 homes totally destroyed by veldfires in Umlalazi Local Municipality. The most recent huge losses with at least 180 sheep killed and destroyed 10 household in a fire that swept through Marhombe Village near Nqanqarhu, in the Eastern Cape are stark reminders of the serious danger posed by climate change.

These extreme weather events are consistent with the increased frequency and severity of climate-related disasters predicted by climate science. The Department recognizes the urgency of the situation, as evidenced by its commitment to leading the implementation of the Climate Change Bill. This legislation is designed to develop and implement strategies that

address climate change and institute a fair, long-term energy transition plan, ultimately aiming to foster a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy.

Honourable House Chair, the department has set aside R8.7 billion over the medium term aimed at creating employment opportunities through the expanded public works programme, with a focus on environmental protection and infrastructure projects. This includes initiatives such as restoring and rehabilitating degraded ecosystems, increasing land under conservation, protecting wetlands, managing water resources, and addressing challenges in the fisheries and forestry sectors.

Despite this, it must be noted that as the expenditure is set to decrease at an average annual rate of 0.7%, with reductions in the expanded public works programme (as Honourable Gantsho has correctly indicated). This suggests that while the department is committed to addressing climate impacts and creating jobs, there may be limitations in capacity and revenue sources to fully implement all planned initiatives.

As the Department is grappling with a decrease in expenditure, particularly in its expanded public works programme, which is a critical component for job creation and addressing climate impacts. To navigate this challenge, the department has devised a multifaceted strategy. The department is committed to maintaining its core performance despite the budget cuts. This involves prioritizing critical activities and potentially reallocating resources to sustain essential services.

Acknowledging the financial constraints, the department is prepared to re-adjust its targets for the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) period to align with the available budget, demonstrating flexibility in its planning. By focusing on efficiency and effectiveness, the department aims to maximize the impact of its spending. This could involve streamlining operations, enhancing project management, and ensuring that funds are directed towards the most effective initiatives.

The recent devastating floods in Western Cape and Eastern Cape highlight the need for a more robust and proactive approach. While the programme's focus on legislation, resilience, and adaptation is commendable, the scale of these disasters suggests that current efforts may not be sufficient to mitigate the increasing risks posed by climate change.

Honourable House Chair, to enhance the department's mitigation strategies, a multi-faceted approach is necessary. The department should prioritize investments in infrastructure that can

withstand the impacts of climate change, such as flood-resistant buildings, fire-resistant materials, and sustainable land-use planning. This will require collaboration with other government departments and the private sector.

The department should encourage the adoption of green technologies and renewable energy sources to reduce carbon emissions and build a more sustainable economy. This could be facilitated through incentives, subsidies, and partnerships with the private sector. South Africa should leverage international cooperation to access advanced climate change mitigation technologies, share best practices, and secure funding for climate adaptation projects.

By implementing these strategies, the department can enhance its capacity to mitigate the impacts of climate change and protect both human communities and natural systems from the increasing risks posed by a changing climate.

Honourable House Chair, to harness the full potential of our economic growth, the government has launched the South African Oceans Economy Masterplan, a strategic initiative aimed at unlocking the development of ocean-based industries by 2035. This plan encompasses a broad range of sub-sectors, including maritime transport, fishing, aquaculture, sea rescue, marine and coastal management. These sectors are pivotal in attracting investment and creating jobs.

The allocation of 15-year fishing rights to small-scale fishing cooperatives in the Western Cape is a significant step towards empowering small and medium fishers and the traditional fishing industry. This is part of a broader strategy to develop the micro-economy in coastal areas through the DDM model.

The Department through this budget will ensure that the sustainable use of marine living resources and through its fund conduct 16,500 enforcement and compliance operations in prioritized fisheries sectors and that will create 4,500 jobs through the Fisheries programme. This indicates a focus on supporting the livelihoods of those involved in the fisheries sector, which include small and medium fishers.

In conclusion, the refurbishment of 12 small harbours in the Western Cape has stimulated economic activity and job creation in coastal fishing communities. Plans are underway to further develop small harbours in Port St. Johns and Port Alfred, which will drive local

industrialization through agro-processing in the fishing industry and create more job opportunities.

Honourable House Chair, these are the reasons the African National Congress supports this budget, which will allow the government to keep up the progress it has accomplished so far.

Thank You!!