

**A Speech by Honourable K M Moeimang (MP) On the Occasion of
the Debate of the President's Speech on the Opening of the 7th
Parliament on Friday, 19 July 2024**

Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly, Mme Thoko Didiza
The Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces, Mme Refilwe
Mtshweni-Tsipane
His Excellency, the President of the Republic of South Africa, President
Cyril Matamela Ramaphosa,
The Deputy President, Deputy President Paul Mashatile,
The President of SALGA
Honourable Ministers and Deputy Ministers,
Honourable Premiers and Leaders of the Various Delegations in the
Council,
Honourable Members,
Distinguished Members of the Judiciary under the leadership of Chief
Justice Raymond Zondo,
Distinguished Members of our Institutions of Traditional leadership
present here,
Members of the diplomatic corps,
Fellow South Africans,

The official opening of the democratically elected 7th Democratic
Parliament yesterday marked yet another important chapter in the
evolution of our constitutional democracy.

We are truly humbled that the official opening of the 7th Parliament took place on a day that is dedicated to honour and celebrate the indelible legacy of the icon of global peace, humanity and freedom, the late former President Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela.

As we honour the iconic life lived by President Nelson Mandela in his selfless service to humanity, we reaffirm and pledge ourselves to continue to work untiringly to liberate all our people from the persistent bondage of the legacy of poverty, deprivation, suffering, gender and all forms of discrimination and suffering that our people face.

We do so because we truly believe in Nelson Mandela's affirmation that "What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead".

TOWARDS A MORE ACTIVIST PARLIAMENT

Honourable Speaker, we also take this occasion to reaffirm our steady commitment to redouble our efforts to making sure that the 7th Parliament continues to put the interests of all South Africans first, especially the poor, as it performs its constitutional responsibilities.

Our Parliament must strengthen the confidence of our people by remaining the true organ of power and will must be visible through its representatives and have a meaningful impact upon the lives of the people

so that they can practically feel and see in practice the concept of “the People Shall Govern” that the Freedom Charter spoke of in 1955.

To achieve this, we must have a “Peoples Parliament” and Parliamentary Constituency Offices that are used as springboards for community outreach work. These offices must be the hubs for advice, the engine rooms for discussion and centres where communities can receive literature and information become informed and politicised and be prepared to go back into the community to serve the people qualitatively better prepared.’

We must ensure that our Parliament becomes the epicentre of the advancement of the will of our people and formidable platform for championing their plight.

THE WATERSHED EVOLUTION OF OUR DEMOCRACY

Honourable Speaker, the historic 29 May 2024 national and provincial elections and their outcomes will go down in the narration of the profound stories of our democratic transition and one the key chronicles of change since 1994. They are among the most critical watersheds in the evolution of our democracy. This is mainly so because, united in diversity, our people have through the ballot, given no single political party the requisite majority to constitute government on its own, and secondly; the international community whose eyes were firmly cast on these elections will forever take pride in the fact that, no blood was spilled in our streets

with the election outcomes without an outright winner as it has happened elsewhere in the post-colonial Africa and elsewhere.

We deeply appreciate the role that the masses of our people and their political mass democratic, religious, women, youth, business, traditional and other leaders have played in making sure that these elections further reaffirm our common destiny that is steeped deep in spiritual and physical oneness as South Africans.

Across racial, class and gender divides, we have demonstrated in no uncertain terms our unending desire to work together united in our diversity for fundamental change of the current socio-economic landscape defined by deepening levels of poverty, unemployment and inequality.

FORMATION OF AN INCLUSIVE GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY

As the African National Congress, we take part in this debate with clear conscience that, the formation of an inclusive Government of National Unity under the leadership of the African National Congress remains a viable reality dictated by the popular will of the people of South Africa.

As the Freedom Charter proclaims:

“There is no government that can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of the people.”

The people of South Africa have spoken, and their message is very loud. Through their votes, they are very clear that they want us, as various political formations, to set aside our political differences for the common

good of our nation. As the African National Congress, we will continue to champion their plight.

THE THIRTY-YEAR REVIEW AS A BOILERPLATE OF THE STATE OF THE NATION

Mr. President, the Government's 30 Year Review of South Africa's Democracy provides a detailed boilerplate of the state of our nation and documents in greatest detail the significant successes that our nation has made since fall of apartheid in 1994. It reaffirms that our inaugural strategy for fundamental transformation, and the 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, which is the supreme law of our nation, have shaped the orientation of government in implementing progressive policies and programmes over the 30 years of freedom and democracy.

It also narrates the some of the stark challenges that our people still face, as we steadfastly wage a concerted battle against the legacy of apartheid, colonialism, segregation and apartheid spatial settlement.

The malignance of corruption, hard-pressed state capacity to provide basic services to the people, especially the local government, and the poor economic performance are among the critical setbacks and challenges of the democratic state over the recent past that the President has identified as among key strategic priorities for the 7th Administration.

CONFRONTING POOR POLICY COORDINATION AND PLANNING AMONG THE THREE SPHERES OF GOVERNMENT

As identified in the Diagnostic Report of the National Planning Commission, the fragmented planning, competing roles and poor policy coordination among the three spheres of our democratic governance is also one of the persistent challenges of governance since 1994.

Mr. President, as the African National Congress, we reaffirm our pledge to the people of South Africa to work with everyone and all sectors of our society in pursue of Nelson Mandela's vision of a better future. We owe it to the legacy of Nelson Mandela to join all our efforts in ensuring that our constitution remains the firm and sole roadmap that binds in to the shared agenda, founded on values of human dignity, human rights, freedom, non-racialism, non-sexism, the rule of law, respect for national sovereignty, media freedom, and others.

The Constitution locates the National Council of Provinces as the only legislative chamber whose oversight straddles across the three spheres of system of democratic governance. This gives it the unique and differentiated oversight role with immense possibilities not only to strengthen integrated cooperative governance amongst the three spheres of our system of democratic governance, but at the cutting edge of strengthening our system of local government.

Honourable President, in pursuit of this strategic task of fostering the integrated cooperative governance, strengthening the system of local government and deepening public involvement, the NCOP has designed a plethora of high-level flagship programmes: the Taking Parliament to the

People, the NCOP Provincial Week Programme and the NCOP Local Government Focus Week.

These programmes have deepened dialogue among the three spheres of government on critical issues that face our communities, strengthened the voice of our communities across the length and breadth of our country in the policy making, monitoring and evaluation architecture, and most critically, sensitizes the provincial and national executive about the pertinent and critical challenges that face our system of local government.

The District Development Model have opened new frontiers of opportunities for the NCOP to rise to occasion by facilitating seamless coordination, cooperation and integration among the three spheres of our system of democratic governance for the acceleration of service delivery, development and transformation at the district level.

BUILDING VIABLE MUNICIPALITIES

Mr. President and honourable Members, among the abiding critical lessons of the last thirty years of our democracy are three interrelated fundamental questions that require honest conversation and policy rethink if we are to turn our system of local government around in a more meaningful way. First, is the current funding model for local government appropriate to address the developmental challenges of our communities. Secondly, how do we measure up the success of our democracy and the intervention of Parliament in the midst of municipalities that fail to fulfil their obligations in terms of the Constitution or legislation, and lastly; to what extent has our current public participation model foster a responsive, activist people's parliament for change in our communities?

The first planning cycle of our committees in this 7th administration should as a matter of urgency respond to these fundamental questions. We are raising these questions driven by the genuine desire for impactful oversight and public involvement.

In one of the seminal judgments against the failure of the NCOP to facilitate meaningful public involvement, the Constitutional court had this to say:

A reasonable opportunity to participate in legislative affairs must be an opportunity capable of influencing the decision to be taken. It is unreasonable if the content of a public hearing could not possibly affect Parliament's deliberations on the legislation. If the hearing is not effectively or timeously advertised, if people are unable to attend the hearing, or if the submissions made at the hearing are not transmitted or accurately transmitted to the legislature, then the hearing is not capable of influencing Parliament's deliberations.

This does not mean that the legislature must accommodate all demands arising in the public participation process, even if they are compelling. The public involvement process must give the public a meaningful opportunity to influence Parliament, and Parliament must take account of the public's views. Even if the lawmaker ultimately does not change its mind, it must approach the public involvement process with a willingness to do so."

Mr. President what the court outlines here are two interrelated important points. First, the duty of parliament to provide meaning opportunity for participation, and secondly; the obligation and commitment by parliament

to demonstrate willingness to integrate people's voices in the policy making, and if not so, evidence to the effect why the views are not being integrated.

In the same breadth, our oversight the success of our oversight must be measured by the impact it makes in changing the lives of our people. This will require conscious and deliberate scrutiny of the reports of the relevant chapter 9 institutions and partnering with them around key service delivery issues.

Mr. President allow me, in conclusion, to assure you and the collective leadership of the African National Congress that we are fully behind you; and history will vindicate you for having risen to the challenges when it was so much required by avoiding narrow choices that could have deepened the polarisation of this country along the identities defined by the apartheid colonial heritage.

You have stood true to the historic mission of the founding fathers of the African National Congress to unite the people, in their diversity for the pursuit of one common national destiny of a better quality of life for all. We pledge ourselves to continue supporting your efforts to liberate all our people from the continuing bondage of poverty, deprivation, suffering, gender and other discrimination. We recommit ourselves to working tirelessly to ensure that the reconstruction of our nation is complete and triumph in the effort to implant hope in the hearts of our people.

I thank you.