



**PARLIAMENT**  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

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## **BUDGET VOTE SPEECH**

**BY**

**HON. THOKO DIDIZA, MP**

**SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**DEBATE ON VOTE 2: PARLIAMENT**

**22 JULY 2024: 14:00**



**Honourable House Chairperson, Frolick**  
**Honourable Members of the National Assembly**  
**Ladies and Gentlemen**

The role of Parliament is important in the life of the nation. It is a representative body that carries the hopes and aspirations of the people. It is a body that develops new laws, amends existing ones and repeals those that are no longer needed. It is a body that holds the government to account for executive action. It is an instrument that ensures that public resources are spent efficiently by the government to address the needs of people.

Parliament is an instrument that is at the disposal of citizens through which they can influence policy and legislation. When one reflects on the important role of Parliament, one will appreciate why those freedom-loving South Africans in 1955, in Kliptown, when adopting the Freedom Charter ensured that one of the first clauses would call for citizens' participation in their governance and said “The people shall govern”.

Our democratic dispensation in 1994 and the finalisation of our constitution in 1996 created a framework in which we now have a legislative arm of the State whose critical role will be that voice of our citizens. As we celebrate the thirty years of freedom, we can look back at the achievements that this House has been able to make. Transformative



legislation that has changed the lives of our people for the better has been crafted and passed by this Parliament.

It is through the interventions of those who went before us as pioneers of building this legislature, that we have transparency such that our nation and beyond may have an opportunity to follow the debates that touch their lives and also observe how their representatives are engaged in ensuring that their lives are made better than they were before.

In the creation of this Parliament, those who went before us fully understood that accessibility and transparency would be meaningful if their culture and languages would find expression in these very walls and corridors of power. In the past week, this matter has been highlighted when there were some challenges regarding interpreting services. I want to assure honourable members that we will address this matter. Similarly, the Executive will have to ensure that bills that are tabled in Parliament also reflect the appreciation of the respect of all our languages.

Honourable Chairperson and honourable members, public participation is the bedrock of how we engage our citizens to ensure that their views are taken on board in law-making, policy formulation and other important decisions that this Parliament takes. We have had sectoral Parliaments, petitions; Parliament meets the people as well as public hearings. These engagements help us to deepen engagements with citizens.

Thirty years has given us an opportunity to look back also on our weaknesses and things that must be changed for us to continue to solidify



what we had conceived as an activist Parliament. The mini-plenaries where members discuss critical issues do help us to address issues of concern that come from members given their experiences in communities.

Honourable members, in order to ensure that Parliament undertakes its oversight responsibility over the Executive, timeous tabling of documents will assist committees in deliberating on issues brought before them. It will also be critical to ensure that engagement with the executive is improved and that the quality of responses to questions posed to the executive assists. In the previous administration we have acknowledged that where Ministers are unable to attend a portfolio committee or be available to answer questions, Deputy Ministers will be available to undertake this work. This decision remains important in order to ensure that oversight work takes place.

Honourable members, the sixth administration started the engagement with the National Treasury to address the funding model of Parliament. Careful consideration of our budget will show that it has been declining over time which has had a negative impact on the work of Parliament. The burning of Parliament has added more strain and has affected its effectiveness.

House chairperson, honourable members, we have appreciated the issues raised by members towards the end of the sixth administration about looking for alternatives that will allow the full sitting of Parliament until the rebuilding of the new chamber is completed. Last week Friday, I



held a meeting with the Minister of Public Works to explore the possibility of getting a dome that has been used by the state for big events previously, like the funeral of late President Mandela. The Minister has indicated to us that the dome is available and the department and Parliament will meet again on Thursday to conclude on this matter. Should we become successful, this step, while it is temporary will go a long way in ensuring that Parliament undertakes its business effectively.

We want to indicate to members that the reconstruction of the new chamber is on course. On Thursday, we will have an engagement with the Public Works and Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) to look at the timelines for the completion of this work. Members will be briefed through appropriate structures on the progress.

As we opened the 7th Parliament, we have experienced challenges of committees not being able to conduct their business due to space availability. While we have tried to improve, this remains an ongoing challenge that we must address. The availability of space for offices of members is another point that going forward we must address.

House Chairperson, Honourable members, building the capacity of members is critical for them to engage in meaningful work of Parliament. The initial onboarding and training of members has been necessary, however, we do need to ensure that members are fully given enough tools to do their work. Subject-specific training is necessary to capacitate members. The constituency offices must be a dynamic link between



citizens, the legislature and the government. The sixth administration has ensured that such offices have both an administrator and a field worker, we need to look at how best we can improve including the use of digital technologies.

Honourable Chairperson, Chapter Nine and Ten Institutions are critical in supporting our democracy. The work they do and their recommendations which are tabled in Parliament must be reflected upon and implemented by Parliament.

Chairperson during the induction of members of Parliament as well as in the Rules Committee a proposal was made that Parliament must monitor the implementation of reports that are tabled and adopted by this House.

Honourable members, parliamentary diplomacy remains an important area of our work. Our participation in the regional, continental and international bodies remains critical to advance our national interests as well as contribute to global peace and development. Honourable members, we will develop ways in which feedback on our engagements is deliberated upon by members to ensure that those who at times become delegates to these forums are well aware of the debates long before they attend.

House chairperson, one of our functions is to ratify international treaties and agreements. Going forward, this will require careful consideration by relevant portfolio committees before they are tabled for ratification in the



Houses of Parliament. We need to be alive to the implications of such treaties and how they advance our national interest and global peace.

House Chairperson, Honourable members, Parliament through its international diplomacy, needs to scrutinise international trends, particularly on international trade and see to what extent can we as Parliament use our parliamentary diplomacy on issues of improving market access issues for our corporate citizens.

Chairperson, we need to advance our role in regional and continental structures such as in SADC and the Pan African Parliament, not only in respect of our participation but also in monitoring how our government implements some of the agreements that flow from these structures.

House Chairperson, Honourable Members, the tabling of the budget Vote 2 will enable Parliament to focus on the key priorities areas which I have mentioned earlier. However, the *Financial Management of Parliament and Provincial Legislatures Act*, requires that Parliament develops a new Strategic Plan, within 6 months of the national elections. This process will allow the institution to concretise its priorities and outcomes for the 7<sup>th</sup> Parliament, and to re-align its resources to priority areas of Parliament. The 2024/25 budget for Parliament (Vote 2) is set at **R4.436b** (Four Billion and Four Hundred and Thirty-Six Million). The total allocation received from the National Treasury amounts to **R3.263b** (Three Billion and Two Hundred and Sixth-Three Millions) and it includes **R500 million** for the refurbishment of the Parliamentary buildings and facilities.



I, therefore, table the Budget Vote 2 for your consideration.