

**Remarks by the ANC Chief Whip, Cde Mdumiseni Ntuli, on the
occasion of the debate on Vote 1: Presidency**

23 July 2024

Madam Speaker,

Your Excellency, President Cyril Ramaphosa,

Deputy President, Paul Mashatile

Esteemed Members of Parliament,

Fellow South Africans,

Eighteen years ago, in his address to the Joint Sitting of our parliament, the then Secretary-General of the United Nations, the late Kofi Annan, spoke of South Africa's unique ability to transcend its history. He saw in us a beacon of hope, a nation that could teach the world the power of dialogue and trust, rather than confrontation and resentment.

Among other things, he said:

“You have shown that a nation need not be imprisoned by its history; that even people whose communities have been in bitter conflict, and have endured or committed the worst injustice, can work together to build a common future. I believe this example can serve not only other individual countries, but also the world as a whole, which today is seething and seething with resentment based on past and present injustice, and with misunderstandings based on differences of culture and belief.”

He went on to say:

“South Africa’s particular wisdom, derived from its own history of overcoming resentment and mistrust, can be used to convince other countries that injustices and misunderstandings are not cured by confrontation or threats,

since these only strengthen the determination of the powerful to keep power in their own hands. South Africa can teach all of us that, on the contrary, the way to a better balance lies through dialogue, and the establishment of mutual trust. Only in such an atmosphere can the weak win attention and respect from the strong.”

Madam Speaker, I was reminded of Annan's words as we witnessed last week, former adversaries and now colleagues in government, earnestly debating the President's Address.

Avoiding the temptation of succumbing to romanticism, what we witnessed, albeit by serendipity, is what the outstanding Annan aptly described as *“South Africa’s particular wisdom, derived from [our] own history of overcoming resentment and mistrust...[to] not be imprisoned by [our] history.”*

Unfortunately, on the other side of the same coin, the public was also fed a diet puerile theatrics, luddite dogmatism, and venomous hostility, passing for opposition. We recognise and place a high premium on the importance of having a strong and constructive opposition for any democracy to thrive, including ours. However, it would be remiss of us, especially after last week not to urge our colleagues in the opposition benches to engage in respectful and productive dialogue that contributes to the betterment of our nation. In this regard, we wish to join the President in calling for a discussion that focuses on matters of substance, as opposed to vengeance and personalized attack.

As the saying goes, "umntu aka lahlwa"; we hope that for the sake of the constituencies they represent, somewhere down the road they will overcome their cretinous manner of proceeding! I wish to state categorically today, Madam Speaker, that the assertions suggesting the Government of National Unity (GNU) will collapse in a year or two are merely a wish being father to a thought!

The GNU is not just a coalition of convenience; it is a concrete manifestation of what the African National Congress called, in our 1992 Ready to Govern Document, a “truly South African vision of our country.”

We described this vision then as:

“One which is not distorted by the prejudices and sectarianism that has guided viewpoints on race and gender in the past... [and one which relies] on the wisdom, life experiences, talents, and know-how of all South Africans, women and men.”

Madam Speaker, the Constitution of the Republic lists 16 responsibilities vested in the President of the Republic. Among these are;

- *developing and implementing national policy; and*
- *co-ordinating the functions of state departments and administrations.*

This underscores the vital importance of having fully capacitated Presidency, able to provide the necessary strategic leadership to government and society broadly.

The Presidency plays a critical role in strengthening policy coordination and implementation, serving as the nucleus for cohesive social and economic development in the nation.

Accordingly, central planning is indispensable for ensuring that development efforts are systematic and aligned with overarching national objectives. The National Development Plan (NDP), which outlines the strategic framework up to 2030, is a cornerstone of these efforts.

As the seventh administration looks to and beyond 2030, it is tasked with formulating a vision that continues to drive progress and addresses emerging challenges. The National Planning Commission must be empowered and adequately resourced to support this long-term vision, ensuring that policies are not only well-conceived but also effectively implemented.

The Presidency's intervening role is also crucial in tackling structural factors that impede progress and in addressing service delivery challenges. By leveraging its authority and convening power, the Presidency can weave interventions that cut across various sectors, ensuring that bottlenecks are addressed, and resources are optimally utilised. This involves not just high-level oversight but also active engagement with different layers of government and stakeholders to ensure that policies are translated into tangible benefits for our people.

The ability to mobilise and coordinate these efforts across departments and agencies is essential for overcoming systemic barriers and improving service delivery. And only the Presidency can achieve this!

Furthermore, the Presidency is also pivotal in promoting nation-building and social cohesion. Building a cohesive society requires engaging diverse communities and stakeholders, ensuring that everybody feels represented and involved in the nation's development.

The National Dialogue to which the President has committed his support, will help to build trust, foster mutual understanding, and create a sense of shared common nationhood and purpose. The strategic and historic importance of the National Dialogue, is that it would help to produce the required national programme that must help our country to eliminate poverty, reduce inequality, while at the same time defines the roles and responsibilities of each sector of society and sacrifices each of them shall make in achieving these national objectives.

This is essential for maintaining social, political and economic stability and will ensure that development efforts are inclusive and equitable.

Madam Speaker,

As the African National Congress (ANC) we stand firmly in support of the Presidency's Budget Vote, a budget that embodies our shared vision for a thriving, inclusive, and resilient South Africa. This budget is more than a blueprint; it is a dedication to tackling the challenges our nation faces head-on and constructing a brighter future for all South Africans.

Our economy, as with others globally, has encountered substantial hurdles. Yet, the measures outlined by the President offer a strategic roadmap towards recovery and expansion.

The Presidency should be empowered with the necessary resources and capacity to lead the drive for much needed investments in infrastructure, promotion small and medium-sized enterprises, and foster innovation, laying the very foundation for sustainable economic progress.

It must be able to coordinate initiatives that generate jobs, reduce unemployment, and uplift communities.

As we just heard from the President, youth employment and empowerment remain fundamental pillars of our national development. The President's dedication to enhancing these through programs like the Presidential Youth Stimulus in the hands-on approach he has deployed towards this programme.

By ensuring our youth are equipped with essential skills for the future, we are investing in our nation's most valuable asset – its people.

Infrastructure development is a key catalyst for economic growth. This budget emphasizes the importance of modernising our infrastructure to support economic activities and enhance the quality of life for all South Africans. Investments in transport, energy, water, and sanitation will not only create jobs but also guarantee essential services are accessible to all, particularly in underserved areas.

We are acutely aware of the destructive impact of corruption on our nation's progress. The President's commitment to combatting corruption and promoting good governance is evident in this and previous budgets. Strengthening anti-corruption institutions, enhancing transparency, and ensuring accountability are vital steps in restoring public trust and guaranteeing that public resources are utilised for the benefit of all South Africans.

Additionally, the budget underscores our dedication to education. By investing in our educational institutions and ensuring that every child has access to quality education, we are empowering future generations and securing a brighter future for our nation.

We also recognise the importance of environmental sustainability. This budget allocates resources towards mitigating the impact of climate change, promoting renewable energy, and preserving our natural resources for future generations.

In conclusion, a comprehensive evaluation of President Ramaphosa's tenure reveals a leader dedicated to reform, anti-corruption efforts, crisis management, and economic recovery. His navigation of complex domestic and international political and economic landscapes demonstrates resilience and a strategic vision for South Africa's future.

This budget is a bold and visionary plan that addresses the Presidency's immediate needs as an effective center for coordinating state affairs. It is a testament to the President's leadership and our collective determination to overcome challenges and build a better future for all South Africans.

I urge all Members of Parliament to support this budget and collaborate in maintaining oversight on the expenditure of public funds. Let us unite in our efforts to create a South Africa that is prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable!

Thank you.