

**Address by President Jacob Zuma in response to the debate on the State of the Nation
Address, National Assembly, Parliament, Cape Town**

21 Feb 2013

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Deputy Speaker,
Honourable Deputy President, Mr Kgalema Motlanthe,
Ministers and Deputy Ministers,
Honourable Members,
Special guests,

Next year, South Africa will mark 20 years of freedom and democracy.

In celebrating this milestone, we will recommit ourselves to achieving a truly united, non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and prosperous society.

We have gone a long way since 1994, and South Africa is definitely a much better country today than it was then.

We have a Constitution that extends equal rights to all, born out of the experience of domination of one group by another and an oppressive State.

From the ashes of apartheid colonialism, hatred and divisions, we committed ourselves to build a new society, a South Africa that is a home for all, especially the black majority that had been excluded for centuries.

It has not been an easy road, as President Mandela told us in 1994. And it is a long road to the type of society we want to achieve, but we are getting there steadily. Yindelendlela.

Madiba warned us too, at the birth of democracy, that none of us acting alone can achieve success.

Informed by that message from President Mandela, in 2009 the fourth administration came into being with the core message being; "working together we can do more".

The State of the Nation Address 2013, outlined the progress made in bringing about a better life, based on the 2009 electoral mandate. We had announced five priorities then, - education, health, rural development and land reform, the fight against crime and creating decent work.

We gave an account of what government has done in implementing its 2009 to 2014 programme of action.

The economy is our biggest focal point especially during this time of the global economic recession and slow economic growth, as outlined in the State of the Nation Address.

As we strive to boost the competitiveness of our economy in a gloomy global climate, we are encouraged by some reports that came out recently.

Last week, the Global Business and Audit Advisory firm, Grant Thornton, states that South Africa has maintained its position as the leading Emerging Economy on the African continent in terms of potential investment destinations.

The report, entitled 'Emerging Markets Opportunity Index: High Growth Economies', ranked the 27 largest emerging economies in terms of their potential for business investment. It reported that South Africa had climbed one place to the fourteenth position.

Ernst & Young in its report also said local economic fundamentals were sound and that a steady acceleration of growth over the medium term was expected.

However, they also pointed out that the country's short-term economic challenges such as the current account deficit and debt levels needed to be addressed in the upcoming 2013 budget.

The Minister of Finance will deliver the budget next Wednesday.

According to an average weighting by the World Bank, Transparency International and the World Economic Forum, besides others, South Africa is among the highest-ranked emerging markets.

More importantly, investors also realise these advantages and are continuing to invest in South Africa. Our tax relief incentives, announced in 2011, have resulted in an increase in foreign direct investment.

We can count the recent investment of 800 million rand in Boksburg by Unilever which is one of their largest investments globally.

The Swiss multinational, Nestlé, has opened two new factories in the town of Babelegi, north of Pretoria. This is part of a 500-million rand investment in its South African operations, creating over 130 permanent jobs in the process.

The Department of Trade and Industry has also approved applications from our local manufacturers such as Tiger Brands, Aspen and Nampak.

Building on these successes, we continue to deal with the factors that constrain growth and keep jobs away.

A key intervention in this regard, is our rolling infrastructure programme. The Ministers of Economic Development and Public Enterprises provided detailed reports on the infrastructure projects and the progress we are making.

This surely assisted those Honourable members who had claimed not to know what the infrastructure programme has achieved to date.

In line with the National Development Plan, we are also building partnerships to promote investments, support SMMEs or to improve the energy supply, as part of further unlocking growth.

We are also improving skills development, hence the expansion of the training of artisans and other scarce skills as outlined by the Minister of Higher Education and Training.

We are also building and strengthening trade links with the fastest growing parts of the world, including Sub-Saharan Africa.

Also important is the need to restore stability in the mines. The Minister of Mineral Resources is currently meeting with affected parties to address the challenges in the sector. I urge all stakeholders to commit themselves to this process.

Youth unemployment has been raised sharply in the debate. Honourable Manamela and Honourable Makubela-Mashele outlined the necessary mechanisms that can assist us to deal with youth unemployment.

We come from a culture of engagement and seeking consensus on issues.

It is for this reason that youth unemployment has been tabled at NEDLAC for discussion by social partners. They have discussed a broader range of youth employment incentive schemes.

These initiatives will complement the current short term employment initiatives such as the Expanded Public Works Programme, the National Rural Youth Service Corps, the Community Work Programme, programmes within the SA National Defence Force and many others.

It is sad that Honourable Adams has such a gloomy view of the country and youth development initiatives. Hopefully, she will soon join in and be part of finding solutions.

Honourable members,

Let me emphasise that we are indeed very happy with the progress made in other priorities as well, for example in the health sector.

The past trend of declining life expectancy has been reversed and life expectancy is now firmly on an upward trend.

I suspect that Honourable Members in the opposition may have missed information on this important national achievement, which has excited even the United Nations and research institutions.

At the same time, the battle against the pandemic still continues and we dare not become complacent.

Honourable Bhoola, you are correct. When we reaffirm the Constitution, let us also reaffirm the fundamental right to life.

The right to life and the right to safety and security of women and children are paramount.

While welcoming the significant decrease in overall serious crime, we once again strongly condemn the shocking, barbaric and inhuman cases of rape that have taken place in our motherland.

Some of these have gone beyond women and girls, as there have been reports of boys being molested as well.

We have directed the police to show no mercy to perpetrators of these crimes. As outlined by Minister Radebe in this debate, we will re-establish the Sexual Offences Courts to complement the work of the Sexual Offences Units in the SA Police Service.

But there are aspects of this crime that go beyond the criminal justice system.

Honourable Mphahlele stated correctly that legislation alone, would not be sufficient to liberate women from the yoke of male domination and that we have to work on our attitudes in public and private lives.

The Honourable Motshekga, the Chief Whip of the Majority Party reminded us that as much as we develop interventions, programmes and campaigns to stem this tide, we can all agree that that roots of this violence and the notion that life is cheap can be traced back to our dark and unjust past.

Therefore, must look at what it is that we should be doing to prevent such horrendous crimes. How do we build stronger and more cohesive communities?

We also need to look at how we can promote values that define human beings, such as respect for human life, respect for the next person and their property, and basic ubuntu and other values that cement the social fabric of society.

I met with religious leaders last year, who raised the need for a national discussion as they also felt something has seriously gone wrong.

As we head towards the 20th anniversary of our freedom, we need to look into this matter seriously as leaders.

We must build on the work of the social cohesion summit that took place in Kliptown last year, and begin the work of healing the nation, as various sectors of society.

We need stable communities to participate actively in the transformation of society.

The Department of Basic Education is already looking at inculcating values of nationhood at a very early age, promoting rights and responsibilities amongst children.

We acknowledge and applaud the good work of many civil society organisations that are raising awareness about violence against women and many other issues affecting society.

In addition, we are happy that the National Assembly will host a debate on gender-based violence next week.

As Madiba taught us, none of us, working alone can achieve success, working together; we will do so much more.

Honourable Killian reminded us to look broader into other aspects that affect the status of women. She raised concern about the Traditional Courts Bill.

Indeed, since its introduction the Bill has been criticised for being flawed for a number of reasons.

Among these are the following;

- That it is unconstitutional in that it prohibits legal representation in traditional courts.
- That it does not contain provisions to ensure that women form part of the courts nor does it go far enough to ensure that women can participate actively in the deliberations of the courts;
- That it entrenches balkanisation of traditional communities in accordance with the boundaries of the old tribal authorities of the defunct Bantustans;
- That it restricts access to justice by denying the right of persons to "opt out" of the traditional justice system and pursue redress of their matters in courts of law.

All these concerns and more should be addressed during the parliamentary processes as the Bill is currently before parliament. As government we have heard the concerns loudly and clearly.

Honourable Members spoke at length about education, which indicates that we are agreed on this being the apex priority in our country.

We are happy with the huge increase in the number of children attending Grade R, from around 300 000 in 2009 to close to 800 000. This demonstrates our determination to fix education from the foundation upwards.

Honourable Shenge takes issue with the Annual National Assessment tests which measure literacy and numeracy levels.

The first ANA results in 2011 supported our diagnosis that things needed to change in the basic education sector in order to produce better results.

The basic education delivery agreement identified a number of required changes, including the introduction of workbooks and the training of teachers which are being implemented.

The 2012 ANA results indicate that these changes are starting to bear fruit at the lower grades.

We urge Honourable Members to work closely with schools in their constituencies and support them to ensure an improvement each year. Members of parliament cannot be spectators, education is a societal issue.

Honourable Speaker, let me correct Honourable James who said I failed to establish the link between improved remuneration for teachers and performance.

Let me remind the Honourable member. I said;

"The (remuneration) Commission will also assess the return on investment. In elevating education to its rightful place, we want to see an improvement in the quality of learning and teaching and the management of schools. We want to see an improvement in attitudes, posture and outcomes".

Honourable Godi spoke strongly about the need to enhance the capacity of the state to deliver on government programmes. We agree that a lot must be done in this regard. We have already put in place a number of initiatives since 2009 to improve the functioning of the state.

The monitoring of management practices by the Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation in my office is already starting to bear fruit in a number of areas.

For example, the average time taken to fill a funded vacancy in national and provincial departments has improved from 9 months in 2010 to four months in 2012.

The responsiveness of departments to cases referred to them from Chapter 9 institutions and from the national Anti-Corruption Hotline has improved.

The average time taken to issue an ID book has been reduced from about 150 days to about 30 days.

The bar-coded green ID book will be replaced by a new ID smart card in the 2013-2014 financial year. The smart card is intended to prevent fraud.

The average time taken to process an application for a social grant has decreased from 30 days in 2010 to 21 days in 2012.

As Honourable Minister Sisulu and Minister Manuel pointed out, the training of public servants, including managers will be prioritised to further improve the capacity of the state.

This should also bring in much-needed skills and reduce the money we pay to consultants which the Auditor-General and many honourable members here, have raised alarm about.

It is also an undertaking made in the National Development Plan, that the culture and orientation of the public service will change for the better.

It is for this reason that we say if that we are to pay public servants better, we want a return on our investment.

We have also put in place mechanisms to improve citizen care and make the public service friendlier and more responsive. We still have a long way to go, but we have made a start. Important amongst these is the front-line service delivery monitoring programme.

Over 300 unannounced visits were undertaken during the past year by officials from the Performance Monitoring and Evaluation department and offices of the Premiers.

Repeat visits to sites indicate that, in many cases, the monitoring has resulted in improvements.

In this regard, Minister Sisulu is correct in her assertion that some of our public servants work diligently putting in many hours a day to improve services to our people.

A model example is that of Ms Pearl Bhengu and Mr Mondli Mazibuko and the staff at the SASSA office in Umzimkhulu.

After an unannounced visit, they acted on the findings and improved the queue management, provided chairs and a shelter for the waiting area and ensured that toilet facilities were working.

I personally undertook visits to many areas under the Presidential "Siyahlola" monitoring programme. For example in Umzimkhulu we assessed the poor state of municipal services, in Ngobi village in Hammanskraal we went to check on the water delivery situation, in Gauteng it was a review of public transport, and in the Eastern Cape the visit concerned the delivery of school infrastructure.

Ministers will be undertaking many similar visits this year as well, so that communities can raise concerns and suggestions directly.

We also continue to interact with the public through Presidential Hotline.

By 31 January 2013, citizens had logged more than 154 549 cases with the Presidential Hotline, of which 89% had been resolved.

Mr Sitilibana Mkoka, from Centani Village, Butterworth in the Eastern Cape was able to obtain a wheelchair after calling the hotline on 31 January 2013.

Mr Herbert Memela from Gauteng was paid by the Department of Energy for services rendered after the intervention of the Hotline. There are many more examples of citizens who have been assisted.

The culture of putting people first is being inculcated gradually. A better and more caring public service is possible, as illustrated by these cases.

It should also be an inclusive public service, with more women in senior positions and also one which strives to achieve the 2% employment for people with disabilities.

Honourable members, land is a topical issue given the centenary anniversary of the 1913 Land Act this year.

Honourable Dikobo correctly pointed out the need to disabuse ourselves of the notion that ownership of land and farms by Africans represents a threat to food security. Indeed we agree that with more post-settlement support, all newly owned farms will continue to be productive.

Honourable Minister Nkwinti explained the four pillars of land reform and our intention to rebuild the class of black farmers and improve food security.

Honourable Dikobo also mentioned that he receives complaints that people are asked for membership cards when they try to access opportunities in the Expanded Public Works Programme or the Community Work Programme. This is totally unacceptable. I have asked Minister Chabane to look into this matter.

Honourable Mfundisi, we have noted your request for the Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission (PICC) to look into the Koster-Lichtenburg Road in North West.

Similarly, Honourable Holomisa has suggested that the PICC should look into building a railway line between Mthatha/Kokstad/Queenstown and East London.

I have asked the chairperson of the PICC management committee, Minister Nkwinti, to look into both requests.

Honourable Holomisa, I have also directed the Department of Basic Education to immediately look into the case of the Tshadama Secondary School in Vhembe district, Limpopo whose principal wrote to the honourable member citing overcrowding and other difficulties.

In addition, Honourable Holomisa I have been assured by the Department of Transport that the problems relating to the terminal building at Mthatha airport are being attended to with a view to completing the building by April this year as scheduled.

Honourable speaker,

We also received feedback from people who viewed the state of the nation address at 55 centres around the country arranged by GCIS. The viewers were happy about the report back on various issues such as education, crime fighting, rural development and health.

They wanted more focus on youth unemployment, education, housing, basic services and more focus in rural development and sustainable jobs.

Farm workers said they needed an assurance from the President that government has a plan to deal with the backlash from farmers following the increase in the national minimum wage of farm workers from R69 to R105 per day.

In this regard, we will continue engagements with the farmers and farm workers.

Many more issues were raised that will inform our communication programme with the public going forward.

Honourable Speaker

Honourable Members,

With regards to the way forward, Minister Manuel asked what binds us as a nation and as members of parliament and reminded us that the Constitution binds us all.

In addition, we have all adopted the National Development Plan, which outlines the type of society we want to build, giving effect to the Constitution.

The Plan, developed by the National Planning Commission, originates from a directive in the 2009 ANC election Manifesto.

We had said; "We will ensure a more effective government; improve the coordination and planning efforts of the developmental state by means of a planning entity to ensure faster change".

That planning entity was thus established in 2009 in the form of the National Planning Commission in the Presidency.

Every government department or entity will from this year have to factor in elements of the NDP into their plans.

But more effectively and comprehensively, we have begun developing a draft Medium Term Strategic Framework for 2014 to 2019, as the first five-year building block of the National Development Plan.

Our cross-cutting strategies such as the New Growth Path, the Industrial Policy Action Plan, the departmental Strategic Plans, Annual Performance Plans and municipal Integrated Development Plans and every other government plan will fall under the umbrella of the National Development Plan.

The framework will be precise and clear in identifying indicators and targets to be achieved in the period 2014 to 2019.

The first draft of the 2014-2019 NDP aligned framework should be ready for a thorough discussion at the July Cabinet Lekgotla.

This can then be refined so that it can be submitted to Cabinet for approval as soon as possible after the 2014 elections.

We look forward to a new way of doing things and a new culture so that by 2030, we can say that we have arrived at the South Africa we all envisaged in 1994.

Honourable Cronin stated that opposition parties had sidelined themselves from the broad consensus building processes underway in the country to address our many challenges. He was sceptical about their ability to join the mainstream.

Unlike Honourable Cronin, I am optimistic.

As we move to the 20th anniversary of freedom, there should emerge a common thread of patriotism that binds us.

We should put South Africa first. All of us have a patriotic duty and responsibility to build and promote our country.

Rhetoric and grandstanding is a luxury the country cannot afford.

The National Development Plan 2030 provides a perfect vehicle for united action precisely because it has the support of South Africans across the political and cultural spectrums.

Leaders in every avenue should be ready to rise above sectional interests, and with greater maturity, pull together to take this country forward.

When we go abroad, we should speak from the same script, saying that South Africa is open for business, and South Africa is the best destination for any investor who is serious about returns on their investment.

We believe it is possible to do so, if we decide to put the country first, and act in the national interest.

We can disagree on as many issues as we want to, but we have to find issues where we put South Africa and our people first.

Let us draw inspiration from the words of President Mandela at the birth of our democracy.

He said, and I quote:

"We understand it still that there is no easy road to freedom.

We know it well that none of us acting alone can achieve success.

We must therefore act together as a united people, for national reconciliation, for nation building, for the birth of a new world.

Let there be justice for all.

Let there be peace for all.

Let there be work, bread, water and salt for all.

Let each know that for each the body, the mind and the soul have been freed to fulfil themselves.

Never, never and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another and suffer the indignity of being the skunk of the world.

Let freedom reign.

The sun shall never set on so glorious a human achievement!

God bless Africa!"

I thank you.