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conclusion

THE TWO OVERRIDING OBJECTIVES

of eradicating poverty and reducing inequality have been the central focus of government policy since 1994. This review has shown that South Africa has made remarkable progress in many areas. In 20 years, the country has emerged from its deeply divided and violent past into a peaceful, robust and vibrant democracy that has made major strides in improving the lives of its citizens. South Africa has achieved or is on track to meet many of the United Nations MDGs by 2015, as illustrated in Table 9.1¹.

Poverty has been reduced since 1994, but society remains highly unequal. In addition, while there has been progress in addressing the legacy of apartheid, inequality is still largely defined along racial lines. Going forward, a number of challenges will have to be addressed to eradicate poverty and reduce inequality. These include employment creation, improving labour relations, overcoming economic infrastructure constraints, improving the capability of the state and the quality of service delivery, and overcoming the challenges related to basic education, public health services, crime and corruption.

In the first decade after 1994, enormous progress was made in establishing the institutions of a democratic state. Since then, there has been an increased focus on improving the performance of these institutions and the quality of public services. While the public service of today is far more responsive to people's needs, partly as a result of post-1994 programmes such as Batho Pele (People First), there are still many instances where citizens do not receive an acceptable standard of service. Initiatives being implemented to shift the public service ethos towards being more people-oriented include the School of Government and the revitalised Batho Pele programme.

Improvements in the quality of service delivery have occurred where there has been a sustained focus on improving management and administration (such as in the South African Revenue Service and parts of the Department of Home Affairs). The NDP includes measures to replicate these successes much more widely, alongside developing skills, improving coordination across government and strengthening accountability for poor performance.

Many mechanisms to facilitate participatory democracy have been put in place since 1994, ranging from NEDLAC to school governing bodies and community policing forums. There is a need to ensure that these mechanisms lead to increased mutual understanding and the resolution of problems. For example, the increase in service delivery protests points to a need for local government to work with civil-society organisations, faith-based organisations and traditional

leaders to strengthen participation so that problems can be addressed without resorting to violent protest.

Over the past 20 years, approximately 12.5 million people have been provided with access to accommodation through government housing programmes. Government will need to further increase its efforts to work with other stakeholders to overcome existing spatial patterns that continue to divide society. This includes incentivising the private sector to provide more low-cost housing in better-located areas to access work opportunities.

In the first decade, government made rapid progress in amalgamating the apartheid education departments, increasing school enrolment, equalising public expenditure and putting in place a new curriculum. The longer-term challenge has been to improve the quality of education. The key issue is the quality of teaching, which is being addressed through strengthened teacher support programmes. Consideration could also be given to introducing minimum competency requirements for teachers. There is an ongoing focus on eradicating school infrastructure backlogs. Education is the ladder out of poverty and the performance of the basic education system will need to be improved further to enable people to access decent jobs, earn a better income and provide the skills required by the economy.

Good health is a prerequisite for engaging in productive work activities, and lack of access to quality health services entrenches inequality. There have been major improvements in access to healthcare since 1994, and the focus is now on reducing the burden of disease, addressing the socio-economic determinants of ill health, and improving the quality of service in the public health system. Key areas of attention include managerial and administrative weaknesses, infrastructure backlogs and implementing the National Health Insurance system to enable citizens to access quality healthcare on the basis of need and not affordability.

Corruption in both the public and private sectors is impeding service delivery, undermining public confidence in the state and the economy, and reducing economic growth, competitiveness and investment. A range of institutions and measures have been put in place since 1994 to counter corruption. These are being strengthened by implementing measures in the NDP, such as preventing public servants from doing business with the state and better management of the risks related to government procurement processes. Corruption is not only a public-sector problem and a culture of zero tolerance needs to be developed across society, with businesses and citizens also playing their part.

The battle against crime has not yet been won. While the levels of serious crimes have declined since 1994, crime levels remain high due to a number of causes,

including socio-economic determinants such as poverty, inequality, and drug and alcohol abuse. Crime has a negative impact on investment, growth and employment, as well as the wellbeing of citizens.

Employment creation is key to eradicating poverty and reducing inequality. The number of employed people in South Africa has grown by almost 50 percent since 1994. However, there has been an even larger increase in the number of people looking for work, and the level of unemployment is high. Accelerated economic growth and investment are required to reduce unemployment. The increase in strikes which has occurred since the late-2000s has a negative impact on investment, and the labour relations environment will need to be improved.

There is a strong emphasis in the NDP on building a capable and developmental state that is able to play a leading role in driving the country's development, in addition to providing quality public services to its citizens. Effective partnerships across society will help create a virtuous cycle of rising confidence, rising investment, higher employment and increased productivity and income. This requires greater trust between the state, labour and business.

Government's focus on improving education outcomes and skills development, and addressing economic infrastructure constraints such as the supply of electricity and water, will contribute to reducing unemployment. Changing the approach to land tenure in ways that stimulate production and economic opportunity could help promote employment in rural areas. Further growth of the green economy (such as the production of renewable energy) will contribute to both sustainable development and employment creation. There are many opportunities for South Africa to benefit from economic growth elsewhere in Africa. This involves continuing to identify specific trade, manufacturing and industrial niches, especially where South Africa enjoys a competitive advantage.

When looking back over a 20-year period, all South Africans can be proud of, and inspired by, the achievements of our young nation. This pride must inspire us to do more, to move faster in the period ahead. Too many people still live in poverty, too few people

work, too many children do not receive quality education, and the gap between the rich and the poor remains unsustainably wide. While we have seen great progress in many areas, much remains to be done. We have made mistakes in some areas, but we have also shown an ability to work hard to correct them. Going forward, we should draw inspiration from our ability to overcome these challenges.

For the first time, South Africa has a long-term plan to address the challenges set out above. The NDP was developed through a process of extensive consultation. It was approved by Cabinet and has received support from a broad range of stakeholders. The vision of eliminating poverty and reducing inequality is something we can all contribute towards, and its successful realisation will require the active engagement of all sectors of society.

The existence of a long-term plan brings greater coherence to the work of government, as well as increased predictability to our policy direction. This allows us to give sustained focus to ensuring effective implementation, as medium-term, sectoral and departmental plans will now be focused on taking forward the objectives of the NDP. In the words of President Jacob Zuma:

"The plan has been adopted as a national plan for the whole country. It is our roadmap for the next 20 years. All the work we do in government is now part of the comprehensive National Development Plan, including all operational plans, be they social, economic or political."

REFERENCES

- ¹ Statistics South Africa, (2013). "Millennium Development Goals, Country Report 2013." Statistics South Africa: Pretoria.

TABLE 9.1: MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SELECTED INDICATORS)

■ Unlikely to be achieved
 ■ Likely to be achieved
 ■ Achieved

| INDICATORS | 1994 baseline (or nearest year) | Current status (2013 or nearest year) | 2015 target | Rating |
|--|------------------------------------|---|----------------|--------|
| Proportion of population living below \$2.50 per day | 42.4 (2000) | 29.2 (2011) | 21.1 | |
| Share of the poorest quintile in national consumption | 2.9 (2000) | 2.7 (2011) | 5.8 | |
| Employment-to-population ratio | 44.1 (2001) | 40.8 (2011) | 50-70 | |
| % of employed people living below \$1 per day | 5.2 (2000) | 3.9 (2009) | 0 | |
| Prevalence of underweight children under five years of age (%) | 13.2 (1993) | 8.3 (2008) | 4.7 | |
| Adjusted net enrolment ratio in primary education: | | | | |
| Male | 96.5 (2002) | 98.9 (2011) | 100 | |
| Female | 96.8 (2002) | 99.2 (2011) | 100 | |
| Proportion of learners starting grade 1 who reach last grade of primary: | | | | |
| Male | 89.2 (2002) | 93.4 (2012) | 100 | |
| Female | 90.1 (2002) | 96.1 (2012) | 100 | |
| Literacy rate of 15–24 year-olds: | | | | |
| Male | 83.3 (2002) | 90.7 (2011) | 100 | |
| Female | 88.4 (2002) | 94.6 (2011) | 100 | |
| Female share of non-agricultural wage employment | 43 (1996) | 45 (2012) | 50 | |
| Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament (%) | 25 (1996) | 44 (2009) | 50 | |
| Under 5 mortality rate (per 1 000 live births) | 59 (1998) | 53 (2010) ⁱ | 20 | |
| Infant mortality rate (per 1 000 live births) | 54 (1998) | 38 (2010) ⁱ | 18 | |
| Immunisation coverage under one year old (%) | 66.4 (2001) | 92.8 (2011) | 100 | |
| Life expectancy at birth: | | | | |
| Male | 50.0 (2002) | 56.8 (2012) | 70 | |
| Female | 55.2 (2002) | 60.5 (2012) | 70 | |
| Maternal mortality ratio per 100 000 live births | 150 (1998) | 269 (2010) ⁱ | 38 | |
| Antenatal care coverage (at least one visit and at least four visits) (%) | 76.6 (2001) | 100.6 (2011) | 100 | |
| HIV prevalence among population aged 15–24 years (%) | 9.3 (2002) | 7.3 (2012) | 4.2 | |
| Proportion of population with advanced HIV infection with access to antiretroviral drugs (%) | 13.9 (2005) | 75.2 (2011) | 80 | |
| Death rates associated with tuberculosis per 100 000 population | 147 (2002) | 49 (2011) | <147 | |
| Death rates associated with malaria per 100 000 population | 459 (2000) | 72 (2012) | 229 | |
| Proportion of terrestrial areas protected (% of total) | 5.18 (1994) | 6.71 (2012) | 17 (2020) | |
| Proportion of marine areas protected (% of total) | No data | 7.34 (2012) | 10 (2020) | |
| Proportion of population using an improved drinking water source (%) | 76.6 (1996) | 90.8 (2011) | 88.3 (2015) | |
| Proportion of population using an improved sanitation facility (%) | 49.3 (1996) | 66.5 (2011) | 74.65 | |

ⁱ Estimates based on mortality data from the Civil and Registration and Vital Statistics Systems (CRVS) data.