ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA AT THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES (NCOP) TAKING PARLIAMENT TO THE PEOPLE PROGRAMME, UGU SPORTS AND LEISURE CENTRE\*

Chairperson of the NCOP, Mr Amos Masondo,
Deputy Chairperson of the NCOP, Ms Sylvia Lucas,
Premier of KwaZulu-Natal, Ms Nomusa Dube-Ncube,
Honourable Members,
Ministers and Deputy Ministers,
MECs,
Executive Mayor of the Ugu District Municipality, Cllr Phumlile Mthiyane,
Mayors,
Representatives of the South African Local Government Association,
Representatives of political parties,
Traditional, religious and community leaders,
Fellow South Africans,

Ngijabula kakhulu ukubuya la KwaZulu/Natal. Ngenyanga edlule bengilapha ngizokwethula isitifiketi sobukhosi kuNgangezwe Lakhe, His Majesty King Misuzulu kaZwelithini.

Svumelana no Bayede ukuthi sizosebenzisana ukuletha intuthuko esifundazweni saKwaZulu/Natal.

Okubalulekile ukuthi silalele abantu, futhi sibikele abantu ngalokho esikwenzayo ukuthuthukisa izimpilo zabo.

One of the most important ways in which we are doing this is through the programme of Taking Parliament to the People.

This is the key outreach programme of the National Council of Provinces.

Twenty eight years since the first democratic Parliament sat in Cape Town, we continue to have a Parliament that is activist, that is responsive and that is determined to make a difference in the lives of our people.

This week, Taking Parliament to the People has come here to the Ugu District Municipality for the first time.

Sino Ngqongqoshe bethu, nezi Meya, namakhansela.

They are here to respond to your concerns and tell you what they are doing to resolve them.

Siyazi ukuthi ziningi izinkinga lapha kUgu District Municipality.

Sizwe ngezinkinga zamanzi la, water shortages and interruptions are making life difficult for the people of the district.

We have also heard from our citizens that the poor state of the roads in parts of the district is making it more difficult for leaners to get to schools and for people to get the clinics.

The state of the roads is making it difficult for wokers to get to work, and for businesses to transport their products to markets.

Good roads are not just important to people’s every day lives; they also open up economic opportunities and strengthen local economic development.

We have heard during the public hearings that the people of this district need housing, particularly after the floods earlier this year destroyed many homes and businesses.

Kubantu abaningi lapha kunzima ukuphila ngaphandle kwe-grant.

To support poor and vulnerable people, the government continues to provide social grants to millions of South Africans.

Since 2020 we have also had the COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress Grant.

Siyazi ukuthi abanye banezinkinga zokuthola imali yabo.

We have heard this during the public hearings over the past few days.

Siyazi futhi ukuthi kwabaningi le mali ayenele futhi, nifuna enye.

Challenges with agricultural production are also having a direct impact on people’s lives in this community.

Ugu is an agricultural district, and the majority of people rely on the land to feed themselves and their families, to grow crops and for their livelihoods.

There are also longstanding issues with land tenure in areas under traditional administration.

Honourable Members,

In many ways, the challenges facing residents in Ugu District Municipality mirror those of many of our municipalities countrywide.

Since democracy in 1994, this government has made significant strides in improving the lives of the South African people, particularly those who were most disadvantaged by apartheid rule.

We have expanded basic services like water, sanitation and electricity and built homes.

We have provided access to free primary healthcare, quality basic education and free tertiary education.

Since 1994, the progressive and pro-poor policies of successive democratic administrations have lifted millions of people out of extreme poverty and improved their lives.

And yet we know that we can no longer rely on these past glories as we witness severe challenges at local government, which is where service delivery happens.

This year, I have led five Presidential Izimbizo, in the North West, Free State, Mpumalanga, Gauteng and Northern Cape.

At these izimbizo, challenges at local government were foremost on the minds of our citizens.

Reports from the Auditor-General and National Treasury and the State of Local Government reports point to inefficiency, maladministration, lack of financial controls and poor governance in many municipalities.

All of these affect local government’s ability to provide the basic services people need to lead lives of quality and dignity.

That is why we should welcome the new Local Government: Municipal Systems Amendment Act, which is an important tool for improving the manner in which our municipalities function and for accountability.

Among other things, the Act disallows municipal officials from holding political office, defines competency criteria for the appointment of municipal managers and strengthens the framework for performance evaluation.

This should be viewed alongside the Framework for  the Professionalisation of the Public Sector, which was adopted by Cabinet last month.

This makes specific proposals to ensure merit-based recruitment and promotion and more effective consequence management for all public servants.

This is going to have a big impact on how government, at all levels, works.

The task of this year’s Taking Parliament to the People is to deliberate on what is being done – and what must be done – to strengthen local government.

The interaction with the people of Ugu District Municipality has no doubt done much to enrich the NCOP’s deliberations.

As part of strengthening local government performance, we are striving to entrench the District Development Model as an integrated, multidisciplinary approach to government planning and implementation.

We often spend a great deal of time diagnosing the problem and painting a picture of what a poorly-run municipality looks like.

We should instead be focused on what an ideal municipality should look like and how to build such municipalities across the country.

We have spoken before about some of the key elements of an ideal municipality, including a vibrant economy, places where tourists want to visit, inter-connected communities and skills and training hubs.

Such municipalities provide good access to health, education and recreational facilities.

In such an ideal municipality not only are residents able to lead lives of quality and dignity, they are magnets for investment.

In short, an ideal municipality is a place that people want to live in, want to work in, want to bring their business and investment to, and want to visit.

To achieve this, we need to capacitate local government to play a far more prominent role in implementing the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan.

We cannot achieve higher economic growth, we cannot create more jobs and we cannot grow more businesses, if local government does not function well.

We have a shared responsibility to promote investment in this district and in this province.

Over the last four years, we have raised more that R1 trillion in new investment commitments, of which R330 billion has already flowed into the economy.

The factories, data centres, paper mills and mines that are built through this investment are not located at the Union Buildings or Parliament.

They are located here, where people live, and that is why we need to make sure that companies want to invest here.

That is why we have put in place several measures to promote growth and job creation throughout the country.

We have expanded the tax incentive for employers to take on more young people, we have invested in emerging black industrialists and launched a loan scheme to enable small businesses to bounce-back from the COVID pandemic.

While we encouraging companies to invest and create employment, we are also using public and social employment to create opportunities for the unemployed.

The Presidential Employment Stimulus, for example, has benefited over a million people in the last two years.

Of these opportunities, about 186,000 were in KwaZulu-Natal.

Significant progress has been made in reforming the country’s telecommunications, energy, ports and rail industries.

These are the industries that make the economy work.

The Port of Durban is critical for the economy of this district, the province and the country, which is why we are undertaking reforms to improve its efficiency and capacity.

This is work that involves all spheres of government, Transnet and other stakeholders. It is a great example of cooperative economic development.

Residents of Ugu District Municipality,

Sesiyihambile indima yentuthuko kodwa akwanele, usemuningi umusebenzi okumele siwenze.

Since 1994 the democratic government of the people has been hard at work to bring about a better life for all.

But we know there is so much further we need to go if the promise of our Constitution is to be fulfilled for all.

As parliamentarians, yours is a critical role.

You hold government to account for the promises that have been made, and ensure that they are met.

In Taking Parliament to the People you are fulfilling this important mission.

To the people of the Ugu District Municipality I say, join hands with us to make local government stronger here and throughout the province.

You have made your voices heard.

As the different arms and spheres of government, we will follow up on the issues that you have raised and report back to you on what is being done to resolve them.

I look forward to today’s debate, and to hearing from political parties and our Premiers on the measures that are being taken in their respective provinces to strengthen the governance.

When government is efficient, capable, agile, and responsive, there is progress and development.

People’s quality of life improves. Living standards go up and incomes rise.

As a result, the nation’s economy grows.

Better governance is an issue in which each of us has a stake.

Let us continue to work together and to strive together to turn the South Africa we dream of into reality.

I thank you.

\*ISSUED BY THE PRESIDENCY OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA\*