DEBATE ON THE STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS BY THE PREMIER OF KWAZULU-NATAL NOMUSA DUBE-NCUBE DURING THE JOINT SITTING OF PARLIAMENT HELD ON 14 FEBRUARY 2023

I am honoured to stand before this august House on behalf of the ANC as we join millions of other South Africans in welcoming the State of the Nation Address delivered by His Excellency, President Cyril Matamela Ramaphosa.

There is consensus in society that the State of the Nation Address was an apt depiction of the situation we are in as a country. There was no bending of facts, underestimation of challenges and cooking of statistics. The SONA was a clear demonstration of the level of respect and regard the ANC led government has for the people of South Africa.

Hon. Speaker and Honourable Members, times such as the one we find ourselves in as a nation require decisive leadership, leadership that has been tested, leadership that has been sharpened at the anvil of fire, and which has come out sharper than before.

The 2023 State of the Nation Address sets us on the path to our post-Covid-19, post-floods, post-crisis season with projects and programmes that are necessary to accelerate the transformative journey that we want to undertake to get things back on track.

KZN IS RISING FROM THE TRIPPLE TRAGEDIES

When we were hit by the devastation of the floods in KwaZulu-Natal, President Ramaphosa was the first on the ground to the rescue of KwaZulu-Natal. Never have we seen a President who is better and adequately suited to the challenges of our time than President Ramaphosa. When Covid-19 hit in 2020, President Cyril Ramaphosa led from the front. When the July unrest threatened to burn the province down, President Ramaphosa stood head and shoulder above the rest.

I stand here on behalf of the people of our province to confirm that KwaZulu-Natal has rebounded and is recovering from the effects of the triple challenges. Almost all sectors of the economy are showing signs of a positive recovery.

WATER SUPPLY RESTORATION

We can say with certainty that we are now back to full restoration in as far as water is concerned giving priority to a vital service that is not only needed in our homes, but which is a key component of industrial activity. We have recently commissioned Aquaduct 1 and a reservoir which was extensively damaged by the floods. This is now producing more volumes of potable water to supply many parts of Ethekwini Metro. We also completed the uThongathi Water Scheme and are currently addressing reticulation challenges for areas such as Hambanathi. Repairs to the damaged pipeline that supplies umlazi including Prince Mshiyeni Memorial Hospital are at an advanced stage and we have full restoration of water supply shortly.

REPAIR TO SANITATION WORKS

Before someone speaks from the debt of their ignorance, let me give progress on the issue of our beaches. We are resolving challenges to sanitation infrastructure that affected our beaches. Most of our beaches are open and water quality is being monitored on weekly basis. I wish to assure you that this Easter Holiday season, wonke umuntu uzojabula eDurban, KwaZulu-Natal. The Ohlange Sewerage Pump Station which impacted the northern beaches and affected the central beaches of Durban has also been repaired. We also quickly attended to the Northern Wastewater Treatment Works.

FLOOD DAMAGED SCHOOLS

Hon. Speaker out of the total 356 schools that were damaged by the floods, 46 have been completed, 123 are at construction stage, and 187 are undergoing procurement. Those under construction will be completed in the first quarter of 2023.

HUMAN SETTLEMENT INTERVENTIONS

Your Excellency, Mr. President, the many flood victims who were left homeless and destitute in April and May 2022, have followed the State of the Province Address in their dignified temporary accommodation. It is thanks to the caring ANC government led you Mr President that no flood victim spent Christmas at a mass care centres like Halls and Churches. All our deserving citizens were moved into flats around the city. By December 25 we had closed all 135 mass care centres in Ethekwini, Ugu, KwaDukuza and Pietermaritzburg. The support by national government has been phenomenal. We have provided dignity and privacy to the families and individuals who lost their homes in the floods. Progress is also being made in linking them to permanent housing projects in land parcels that have already been identified in various affected municipalities. We have to date secured eight land parcels which will be used for permanent housing solutions in the Western, Northern and Southern regions. A total of R325 million has been set aside.

PROVINCIAL ROADS REHABILITATION

Hon. Speaker, our Province suffered massive road infrastructure damages as a result of the floods. Our estimates are that we need an amount of R5,7 billion to be spent on 1372 flood damaged projects. The damage to be fixed included pipe culvert damages, wash- aways, and even damage to bridges. We have made progress in fixing infrastructure and got the economy going again. We completed in record time the Port Access roads, Solomon Mahlangu, A big portion of M4, N2, R102. All these strategic routes were affected but now are open

SANRAL has just appointed a service provider to fix the N2 uMgababa and N2 umhlali bridge. When we deliver the State of our Province, we will expand in details on the progress we are making. As we do the work on the ground, we are exposed to the reality of the impact of devastation on infrastructure. More investments will be required. In the next few week together with SANRAL we will be launching a R5billion EB Cloete interchange as part of expanding our road networks. We will create jobs and support SMMEs. Asimile siyaqhuba!

As part of this productive collaboration, through an existing Memorandum of Agreement between the KZN Department of Transport and the National Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (NDPWI), the Welisisizwe Rural Bridges programme (Bailey bridges programme) is being implemented in 24 locations in the province to provide access in the current financial year.

PROGRESS POST UNRESTS

The emerging position is that most small businesses have reopened, at the same time as a substantial percentage of big businesses which are back to normal. At the same time, a number of big businesses including mega malls such as Makro, Shoprite and other have started operations while others are still under reconstruction. The rebuilding work continues. Toyota one of our biggest car manufacture and many businesses in South Durban Basin are back to business and re-investing in our province.

CONTINUING TO ATTRACT INWARD INVESTMENT

Through the efforts of President Ramaphosa, we have attracted billions of rands in investment from local and international investors including SAPPI SAICCOR (R7.7billion), Wilmar (R1,5bn), Hesto Harness (R950m),Tetra-Pak(R500m), Kerry Ingredients(R600m), The Port Shepstone Intermodal Facility and Shopping Mall (R550m), and the Homestead Luxury Game Lodge R200m project in the Alfred Duma Municipality

To date the province has attracted greenfield investments of over R8,3 billion and we are set to create 3 182 jobs and retained 6 323 jobs in brownfield investments of R600 million in company expansion projects. These are just a few investors who believe that the past is where we come from, but the future is where we are destined for better things.

We welcome your progress report Mr President on the Transnet National Ports Authority (TNPA) strategy to make our port become a world-class port operator. This will increase the competitiveness of KwaZulu-Natal as a strategic logistics corridor in Africa

COMMENT ON ENERGY

Hon. Chairperson, we welcome the President’s intervention on the pressing matter of secure and reliable supply of energy. We have been warned by the wise that instead of cursing darkness, let us light a candle, dance in the storm to innovate and find better ways of illuminating our world. In this regard KwaZulu-Natal will take various steps to secure energy supply with the province very well-positioned for alternative energy generation, green hydrogen electricity, bioethanol from sugarcane.

Our Executive Council has approved a team working on alternative energy generation including working with municipalities to fast-track energy generation. We have an electricity master plan.

PRESIDENT RAMAPHOSA LEADING FROM THE FRONT

We welcome the battery of interventions announced in the areas of crime, employment creation, investment and energy as the President mapped the way forward, and with a steady hand is guiding the country out of the current crisis and into a better future for all.

This exemplary leadership is not only decisive and accountable but is unflinchingly bold where others would have prevaricated and meekly capitulated.

President Ramaphosa is showing us what Amical Cabral meant when he said: “Hide nothing from the masses of our people. Tell no lies. Expose lies whenever they are told. Mask no difficulties, mistakes, failures. Claim no easy victories...”

Chairperson, instead of criticising, Members in the Official Opposition benches are advised to support the President, and to use their affinity to big business and capital to urge their friends to desist from so-called civil disobedience in the form of an ‘investment strike’. I say this following a rather strange and disturbing call made by senior mining executive Sibanye’s CE Neil Froneman in the Bloomberg article titled “Investors on strike in South Africa” which appeared both in the Business Day and Business Tech editions of 07 February 2023.

In the article Mr Froneman argues that because of a general loss of confidence, business is now effectively undertaking an investment strike. These are words of a senior businessperson whose corporate entity has made billions of dollars from our minerals and the mining sector and on the backs of the working class.

The investment strikes, tax strikes or whatever strike, we must remember that apart from being immoral, these so-called strikes serve no purpose but exacerbate our challenges rather than resolve them. Michael Bassey Johnson in “The Book of Maxims, Poems and Anecdotes” warns us these type of friends like Froneman and declares: “They come to you when the sky is crystal clear, and they disappear when the same sky is overcast with dark clouds.”

We are only too happy the views of the DA and Mr Froneman are not but remain that of a fringe minority that has not much force or effect.

CONCLUSION

Hon. Chairperson in less than a year our provincial government accomplished what no apartheid state could accomplish, which in record time was to rebuild billions of rand worth of infrastructure, roads, bridges, houses, railways, airports and business to rekindle our economy back to life.

The province of KwaZulu-Natal has through these recent challenges demonstrated its resilience and fortitude. In the hour of need the flood victims were not alone, their caring government was with them, we wish to give assurance that we will continue to work until we have overcome this crisis. As the ANC-led government in KwaZulu-Natal we make a solemn pledge, just as we all did in 1994 under the visionary leadership of President Nelson Mandela to create a modern, advanced, forward-looking, caring and pro-poor developmental state that is united behind the goal of bringing a better life for all.

As the wartime leader of the Allies, Winston Churchill rallied his troops to the Second World War we too say: “For the morning will come. Brightly will it shine on the brave and true, and kindly on all who suffer for the cause, glorious upon the tombs of heroes. In the end, thus will shine the dawn of a new day”.

Your Excellency, Mr President, counter-revolutionaries will come and grand-stand here, we must not be disturbed when they negatively opine. They represent the sustenance of the status core. They are twin friend of colonialism and apartheid and their sworn enemy is transformation and the National Democratic Revolution. You charged us to pull in one direction and we are fully behind you Mr President. The State of our Nation Address has once more affirmed and no one can challenge the fact that the ANC-led government is the only indisputable liberator and leader of our people.

I thank you