

State of the Nation Address by His Excellency JG Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa, Joint Sitting of Parliament, Cape Town

3 June 2009

Honourable Speaker;
Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces;
Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly and Deputy Chairperson of the NCOP;
Deputy President of the Republic, Kgalema Motlanthe
Former President of the Republic, Thabo Mbeki,
Our icon, the First President of a democratic South Africa, Isithwalandwe Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela,
Former Deputy Presidents,
Distinguished Premiers and Speakers of our Provinces;
Esteemed members of the Judiciary;
Chairperson of SALGA, mayors and leaders in our system of local government;
Chairperson of the National House of Traditional Leaders and our honoured traditional leaders;
Heads of Chapter 9 Institutions;
Governor of the Reserve Bank,
Religious leaders,
Directors-General and other leaders of the public service;
President of the Pan African Parliament, Honourable Idriss Endebe Moussa,
Your Excellencies Ambassadors and High Commissioners;
Distinguished guests, comrades and friends;
Fellow South Africans,

Dumelang, Abusheni, Molweni,

On the 22nd of April, millions of South Africans went out to cast their votes. They exercised their democratic right spurred on by the desire to change their lives for the better.

In their overwhelming numbers, they confirmed that working together we can do more to fight poverty and build a better life for all. They were encouraged by the vision of an inclusive society, a South Africa that belongs to all, a nation united in its diversity, a people working together for the greater good of all. We are humbled by this decisive electoral mandate given by the people of our country, who have chosen their government in a most convincing manner.

Honourable Members,

Our nation has over the past few years gone through very challenging times. It is thanks to the fact that we have a strong and fully functional constitutional democratic system, with solid institutions, that we overcame these difficulties smoothly and with dignity. Today's occasion is a celebration of what makes this democracy work. It is also a celebration of our culture of continuity and collective responsibility.

This is evidenced by the presence here of our icon Madiba, who laid the foundation for the country's achievements, and that of former President Thabo Mbeki, who built on that foundation.

The continuity is also evident in the fact that former President Kgalema Motlanthe is now the Deputy President of the Republic, after a seamless transition, making us a unique country in many respects.

Fellow South Africans,

As you would be aware, the fight against poverty remains the cornerstone of our government's focus.

On the 9th of May, during the Presidential inauguration, we made a commitment to our people and the world that:

“For as long as there are South Africans who die from preventable disease;

For as long as there are workers who struggle to feed their families and who battle to find work;

For as long as there are communities without clean water, decent shelter or proper sanitation;

For as long as there are rural dwellers unable to make a decent living from the land on which they live; For as long as there are women who are subjected to discrimination, exploitation or abuse;

For as long as there are children who do not have the means nor the opportunity to receive a decent education;

We shall not rest, and we dare not falter, in our drive to eradicate poverty.”

In pursuit of these goals, our government has identified 10 priority areas, which form part of our Medium Term Strategic Framework for 2009 to 2014.

The programme is being introduced under difficult economic conditions. The past year has seen the global economy enter a period of crisis unprecedented in recent decades. While South Africa has not been affected to the extent that a number of other countries have, its effects are now being clearly seen in our economy. We have entered a recession.

It is more important now than ever that we work in partnership on a common programme to respond to this crisis. We take as our starting point the framework for South Africa's response to the international economic crisis, concluded by government, labour and business in February this year. We must act now to minimise the impact of this downturn on those most vulnerable.

We have begun to act to reduce job losses. There is an agreement in principle between government and the social partners on the introduction of a training layoff.

Workers who would ordinarily be facing retrenchment due to economic difficulty would be kept in employment, for a period of time and re-skilled.

Discussion on the practical detail is continuing between the social partners and the institutions that would be affected by such an initiative, including the Sector Education and Training Authorities.

We will support the work of the Commission for Conciliation Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) to assist employers and workers to find alternatives to retrenchments through the relevant legal process. To date, CCMA commissioners have saved over four thousand jobs through facilitation processes, and provided ongoing advice and support to retrenched workers.

The Industrial Development Corporation has developed a programme to fund companies in distress. We will also ensure that government buys more goods and services locally, without undermining our global competitiveness or pushing up costs beyond acceptable levels.

Building on the successes of our industrial policy interventions, a scaled up Industrial Policy Action Plan will be developed. The lead sectors already identified are automobile, chemicals, metal fabrication, tourism, clothing and textiles as well as forestry. In addition, attention will also be paid to services, light manufacturing and construction amongst others, in the quest to create decent jobs.

As part of Phase 2 of the Expanded Public Works Programme, the Community Work Programme will be fast-tracked. It offers a minimum level of regular work to those who need it, while improving the quality of life in communities.

The economic downturn will affect the pace at which our country is able to address the social and economic challenges it faces. But it will not alter the direction of our development. The policy priorities that we have identified, and the plans that we placed before the electorate, remain at the core of the programme of this government.

Laat ons mekaar se hande vat, en saam oplossings vind in die gees van 'n Suid Afrikaanse gemeenskap. Die tyd het gekom om harder te werk. Ons regering gaan vorentoe kyk, nie agteruit nie!

The steps outlined in our Medium Term Strategic Framework had to take into account the constraints posed by the economic crisis. The downturn should not cause us to change these plans. Instead it should urge us to implement these with speed and determination.

The Framework focuses on 10 priorities.

We make a commitment that working together we will speed up economic growth and transform the economy to create decent work and sustainable livelihoods.

We will introduce a massive programme to build economic and social infrastructure. We will develop and implement a comprehensive rural development strategy linked to land and agrarian reform and food security.

We will strengthen the skills and human resource base. We will improve the health profile of all South Africans. Working together with all South Africans, we will intensify the fight against crime and corruption. We will build cohesive, caring and sustainable communities.

Working with Africa and the rest of the world, we will pursue African advancement and enhanced international co-operation.

We will ensure sustainable resource management and use.

And, working with the people and supported by our public servants, we will build a developmental state, improve public services and strengthen democratic institutions. It is my pleasure and honour to highlight the key elements of our programme of action.

The creation of decent work will be at the centre of our economic policies and will influence our investment attraction and job-creation initiatives.

In line with our undertakings, we have to forge ahead to promote a more inclusive economy.

In this regard, we will utilise state levers such as procurement, licensing and financial support to assist small medium enterprises as well as to promote the implementation of Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment and affirmative action policies.

The implementation will be done in recognition of the need to correct the imbalances of the past.

The transformation will be undertaken in support of women, youth and people with disabilities. We will reduce the regulatory burden on small businesses. The matter of being stifled by regulations has been raised by the sector several times.

In another intervention to create an enabling environment for investment, government will move towards a single integrated business registration system. This will improve customer service and reduce the cost of doing business in South Africa.

Another important element of our drive to create job opportunities is the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP). The initial target of one million jobs has been achieved.

The second phase of the programme aims to create about four million job opportunities by 2014. Between now and December 2009, we plan to create about 500 000 job opportunities.

While creating an environment for jobs and business opportunities, government recognises that some citizens will continue to require state social assistance. Social grants remain the most effective form of poverty alleviation. As of 31 March 2009, more than 13 million people received social grants, more than 8 million of whom are children.

We are mindful of the need to link the social grants to jobs or economic activity in order to encourage self-reliance amongst the able-bodied. Most importantly during this period, neighbours should assist each other.

Jwale ke nako yakopano. Are thusaneng jwale ka baahisane.

Are dumalaneng hore ho sebane le ngwana ya tla robalang ka tlala hobane batswadi bahae bafeletswe ke mosebetsi. Hare ka kopana ra sebetsa kaofela re ka etsa ho feta mo.

Distinguished guests, as part of the second strategic priority we will continue with our programme to build economic and social infrastructure. The newly-formed Infrastructure Development Cluster of government will ensure that the planned R787 billion infrastructure expenditure as provided for in the budget earlier this year is properly planned for and executed.

This funding includes allocations for the school building programme, public transport including the bus rapid transit system, housing, water and sanitation.

One of the biggest infrastructure investment projects is in the 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup. We have, as government and the nation at large, pledged that the World Cup will leave a proud legacy from which Our children and our communities will benefit for many years to come.

We are on track to meet all our obligations and are determined to give the world the best World Cup ever. We are putting all systems in place to make the Confederations Cup, which kicks off on the 14th of June, a huge success.

In April this year, I gave an undertaking to the taxi industry leadership to defer negotiations relating to the operation of the Bus Integrated Rapid Transit system until after the elections.

We undertook to allow more time to deal properly with the concerns of the industry. On the 11th of June the Minister of Transport will resume discussions with the industry. The meeting will kick-start a series of engagements with the stakeholders affected by the BRT system. We are confident that unresolved issues will be dealt with to the satisfaction of all parties.

This will include the important issue of how all stakeholders will benefit from the initiative.

Honourable Members,

Another development which should boost the World Cup is the roll-out of the digital broadcasting infrastructure and signal distribution transmitters. Overall, we will ensure that the cost of telecommunications is reduced through the projects under way to expand broadband capacity.

We have to ensure that we do not leave rural areas behind in these exciting developments. As part of social infrastructure development we will provide suitably located and affordable housing and decent human settlements.

We will proceed from the understanding that human settlement is not just about building houses. It is about transforming our cities and towns and building cohesive, sustainable and caring communities with closer access to work and social amenities, including sports and recreation facilities.

In this spirit, we will work with Parliament to speed up the processing of the Land Use Management Bill. Working together with our people in the rural areas, we will ensure a comprehensive rural development strategy linked to land and agrarian reform and food security, as our third priority.

I would like to use this opportunity to extend our condolences to the family of the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Dirk du Toit, who passed away this week. His contribution will be sorely missed.

Abantu basemakhaya nabo banelungelo lokuba nogesi namanzi, izindlu zangasese ezigijima amanzi, imigwaqo, izindawo zokuqeda isizungu nezemidlalo kanye nezindawo zokuthenga eziphucukile njengasemadolobheni.

Nabo banelungelo lokusizwa kwezolimo ukuze bazitshalele imifino nokunye, bafuye nemfuyo bakwazi ukuziphilisa. Sizimisele ukuwuqala lomkhankaso wokwakha izingqalasizinda ezindaweni zasemakhaya. Uma sibambisene nezakhamizi, amakhosi, amakhansela nezinduna siyokwazi ukuwusheshisa lomsebenzi.

Sicela abahlala ezindaweni zasemakhaya baqale balungiselele ukutshela uhulumeni ukuthi yiziphi izinto abazidinga ngokushesha.

Uma sisebenza ngokubambisana sizokwenza okuningi.

Hon. Speaker and Chairperson,

While having drawn the necessary lessons from earlier rural development initiatives, we have chosen the Greater Giyani Local Municipality in Limpopo as the first of the pilot projects for the campaign. Out of these projects will emerge lessons for the whole country.

In addition, we will work on the targeted renewal of rural towns, through grants such as the Neighbourhood Development Grant programme. In this way, areas around the towns will benefit from the economic boost.

With all these interventions, we are poised to change the face of rural areas in our country.

Compatriots,

Education will be a key priority for the next five years. We want our teachers, learners and parents to work with government to turn our schools into thriving centres of excellence. The Early Childhood Development programme will be stepped up, with the aim of ensuring universal access to Grade R and doubling the number of 0-4 year old children by 2014.

We reiterate our non-negotiables. Teachers should be in school, in class, on time, teaching, with no neglect of duty and no abuse of pupils! The children should be in class, on time, learning, be respectful of their teachers and each other, and do their homework.

To improve school management, formal training will be a pre-condition for promoting teachers to become principals or heads of department.

I will meet school principals to share our vision on the revival of our education system.

Fellow South Africans,

We will increase our efforts to encourage all pupils to complete their secondary education.

The target is to increase enrolment rates in secondary schools to 95 per cent by 2014. We are also looking at innovative measures to bring back into the system pupils who dropped out of school, and to provide support.

Honourable Members, we are very concerned about reports of teachers who sexually harass and abuse children, particularly girls.

We will ensure that the Guidelines on Sexual Harassment and Violence in Public Schools are widely disseminated, and that learners and teachers are familiar with and observe them.

We will take very serious, and very decisive, action against any teachers who abuse their authority and power by entering into sexual relationships with children. To promote lifelong learning, the Adult Basic Education and Training Kha ri Gude programme will be intensified.

Compatriots, Honourable Members,

We have to ensure that training and skills development initiatives in the country respond to the requirements of the economy. The Further Education and Training sector with its 50 colleges and 160 campuses nationally will be the primary site for skills development training.

We will improve the access to higher education of children from poor families and ensure a sustainable funding structure for universities.

Fellow South Africans,

We are seriously concerned about the deterioration of the quality of health care, aggravated by the steady increase in the burden of disease in the past decade and a half.

We have set ourselves the goals of further reducing inequalities in health care provision, to boost human resource capacity, revitalise hospitals and clinics and step up the fight against the scourge of HIV and AIDS, TB and other diseases.

We must work together to improve the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan for the Treatment, Management and Care of HIV and AIDS so as to reduce the rate of new HIV infections by 50% by the year 2011. We want to reach 80% of those in need of ARV treatment also by 2011.

We will introduce a National Health Insurance scheme in a phased and incremental manner. In order to initiate the NHI, the urgent rehabilitation of public hospitals will be undertaken through Public-Private Partnerships.

We are also paying urgent attention to the issues of remuneration of health professionals to remove uncertainty in our health services. Working together let us do more to promote quality health care, in line with the United Nations Millennium Development Goals to halve poverty by 2014.

Fellow citizens,

Together we must do more to fight crime. Our aim is to establish a transformed, integrated, modernised, properly-resourced and well-managed criminal justice system. It is also critically important to improve the efficiency of the courts and the performance of prosecutors and to enhance detective, forensic and intelligence services. This work has started in earnest, and it will be undertaken with new energy and vigour.

Among the immediate targets is to ensure that we increase the number of prosecutors and Legal Aid Board personnel. We will do the same with police detectives. We changed the name of the relevant Ministry from Safety and Security to Police to emphasise that we want real operational energy in police work. This will contribute to the reduction of serious and violent crimes by the set target of 7% to 10% per annum.

The most serious attention will also be given to combating organised crime, as well as crimes against women and children.

Honourable Speaker and Chairperson,

While appreciating the investment of the private sector in the security industry, we will improve the regulation of this industry. Amongst other key initiatives, we will start the process of setting up a Border Management Agency; we shall intensify our efforts against cyber crime and identity theft, and improve systems in our jails to reduce repeat offending.

Compatriots,

I wish to underline our support for the continued transformation of the judiciary.

The transformation should address key issues such as the enhancement of judicial independence, entrenching internal systems of judicial accountability as well as ensuring full access to justice by all. The success of the democratic system as a whole depends on good relations of mutual respect and a spirit of partnership among the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary. This is very important for our constitutional democracy.

Honourable Speaker and Chairperson,

We have repeatedly stated our commitment to fight corruption in the public service.

We will pay particular attention to combating corruption and fraud in procurement and tender processes, application for drivers' licences, social grants, IDs, and theft of police case dockets. Let me emphasise that we all have a role to play in this war against crime.

We must actively participate in Community Policing Forums. We must stop buying stolen goods, which encourages crime. We must report crime and assist the police with information to catch wrongdoers. In this way, we will move forward towards a crime-free society.

Honourable Members, since 1994 we have sought to create a united cohesive society out of our fragmented past. We are called upon to continue this mission of promoting unity in diversity and to develop a shared value system, based on the spirit of community solidarity and a caring society. Our shared value system should encourage us to become active citizens in the renewal of our country. We must build a common national identity and patriotism.

We must develop a common attachment to our country, our Constitution and the national symbols. In this spirit, we will promote the National Anthem and our country's flag and all other national symbols. Our children, from an early age, must be taught to pay allegiance to the Constitution and the national symbols, and know what it means to be South African citizens.

We will ensure a common national approach to the changing of geographic and place names. This must provide an opportunity to involve all South Africans in forging an inclusive national identity, to deepen our understanding of our history and heritage.

Sport is a powerful nation-building tool. Working together we must support all our national teams from Bafana Bafana to the Proteas and the Springboks; from Banyana Banyana to Paralympians.

Our teams can only do well with our support.

Allow me to use this opportunity to congratulate our national teams for their performances in the past week, indeed in pulling off a hat trick. The country's women's netball team has done us proud by winning the Tri-Nations Netball Challenge. Congratulations to the Sevens Springboks who have become the IRB Sevens World Series Champions - and not forgetting the Blue Bulls who have won the Super 14 finals in a convincing fashion!

We take this opportunity to wish the Springboks well in the upcoming series against the British and Irish Lions.

It is clear that we need to invest on a large scale in sports development. We will speed up the revival of school sport and ensure that it forms part of the school curriculum. In addition we will ensure that the provision of sport facilities in poorer communities receives priority.

Hon. Speaker and Chairperson,

We have committed ourselves over the years to contribute to building a better Africa and a better world.

The main goal of government for the medium term is to ensure that our foreign relations contribute to the creation of an environment conducive to sustainable economic growth and development. To this effect, we will continue to prioritise the African continent by strengthening the African Union and its structures, and give special focus to the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

Equally important, and closer to home, is the strengthening of regional integration with particular emphasis on improving the political and economic integration of SADC, towards the AU goal of a Union government. We will establish a South African Development Partnership Agency to promote developmental partnerships with other countries on the continent.

South Africa will continue to assist in the reconstruction and development of the African continent especially in post-conflict situations. We will continue to encourage a peaceful and sustainable settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on the two-state solution. We will support the peace efforts of the African Union and the United Nations on the African continent, including in the Saharawi Arab Republic and Darfur in Sudan.

As the Chairperson of SADC and Facilitator, we will participate in promoting inclusive government until free and fair elections are held in Zimbabwe. The plight of the Zimbabwean people has had a negative impact on the SADC region, especially South Africa. We call upon all peace-loving countries in the world to support the inclusive government to achieve economic recovery. We will support efforts of the SADC region to resolve the situation in Madagascar.

Allow me, distinguished guests, to pay tribute to the SA National Defence Force for their sterling role in peace building in the continent.

Through continental and regional bodies, we will work towards the entrenchment of democracy and the respect for human rights on the African continent. We will contribute to the strengthening of South-South relations and pursue mutually beneficial agreements with key countries of the South.

We will continue to enhance relations with the developed North including the G8, and our strategic partnership with the European Union. We will continue to play an active role in ensuring the conclusion of the WTO Doha Development round of negotiations.

Honourable Speaker and Chairperson,

South Africa, being a dry country requires urgent action to mitigate adverse environmental changes and to ensure the provision of water to citizens.

Amongst various programmes, we will implement the Water for Growth and Development strategy, which will strengthen water management. We will continue to improve our energy efficiency and reliance on renewable energy.

Honourable Members,

A developmental state requires the improvement of public services and strengthening of democratic institutions.

We have established two Ministries in the Presidency to strengthen both strategic planning as well as performance monitoring and evaluation. To ensure delivery on our commitments, we will hold Cabinet Ministers accountable through performance instruments, using established targets and output measures, starting in July.

We will also involve State-Owned Enterprises and Development Finance Institutions in the government planning processes and improve the monitoring and evaluation of their performance.

Honourable Members, fellow South Africans,

To ensure that all three spheres - local, provincial and national - improve service delivery, we will speed up the establishment of a single Public Service.

This administration will insist on putting people first in service delivery. We will ensure courteous and efficient service from front-counter staff in the provision of services in all government departments. In this era of renewal, we will move towards a more interactive government.

To lead by example, work has begun on the establishment of a public liaison capacity in the Presidency. In addition to receiving letters and emails from the public, we will also establish a hotline for easier access. Staff will handle each public inquiry as if it was the only one, following it through all the channels until it receives the attention it deserves.

Honourable Speaker and Chairperson,

The National Youth Development Agency, formed through the merger of Umsobomvu Youth Fund and the National Youth Commission will be launched on June 16 in Ekurhuleni.

The institutions are being merged to enhance service and development opportunities provided to the youth. The Agency will link up unemployed young graduates with economic opportunities; strengthen efforts to expand the National Youth Service Programme and support young entrepreneurs.

Speaker and Chairperson, Distinguished Guests,

Next month our beloved Madiba will turn 91. People all over the world still continue to clamour for his presence and for him to address their crises.

His values and his example of dedication to the service of humanity is a shining example in today's troubled world.

An international campaign has been initiated by the Nelson Mandela Foundation and related organisations, called Mandela Day, which sums up what Tata stands for. Mandela Day will be celebrated on the 18th of July each year. It will give people in South Africa and all over the world the opportunity to do something good to help others.

Madiba was politically active for 67 years, and on Mandela Day people all over the world, in the workplace, at home and in schools, will be called upon to spend at least 67 minutes of their time doing something useful within their communities, especially among the less fortunate.

Let us wholeheartedly support Mandela Day and encourage the world to join us in this wonderful campaign.

Honourable Speaker and Chairperson Fellow South Africans,

We have presented to the nation our programme for the next five years. Attached to each commitment we make is a detailed project plan, with targets and critical milestones. This information will in due course be made public. Indeed as citizens we should at the same time ask ourselves what is it that we can do on our own to help promote this national programme.

To be a citizen is not only about rights, it is also about responsibility, to make a contribution to make ours a better country. We also expect to work well with opposition parties in Parliament, in the spirit of putting the country first. In addition, Madiba taught us well that this country belongs to all, black and white. Working for reconciliation and unity will remain important as we move forward.

Since the implementation of our programme will take place in the face of the economic downturn, we will have to act prudently - no wastage, no rollovers of funds - every cent must be spent wisely and fruitfully. We must cut our cloth according to our size.

Fellow South Africans, working together we can do more to realise our common vision of a better and more prosperous nation!

This is the partnership we are calling for.

I thank you!

Issued by: The Presidency
3 June 2009