



Address by President Cyril Ramaphosa on the occasion of the Presidential Inauguration, Union Buildings, Tshwane

19 Jun 2024

Your Majesties, Kings and Queens,
Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,
Former President Thabo Mbeki and Mrs Mbeki,
Former President Kgalema Motlanthe and Mrs Motlanthe,
All former Heads of State and Government,
Distinguished representatives of respective countries and of international organisations,
Speaker of the National Assembly,
Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces,
The Chief Justice of the Republic,
Premiers, MECs and Mayors,
Members of Parliament,
Leaders of political parties,
Religious and traditional leaders,
Ambassadors and High Commissioners,
Veterans of our struggle,
Distinguished Guests,

Fellow South Africans,

Today, we gather under this vast Highveld sky at the seat of our government, the Union Buildings, to witness before all South Africans and our honoured guests from various countries on our beloved continent and from far afield a fundamental rite of our democracy.

In our brilliant diversity, we gather to affirm our solemn conviction that this country belongs to all who live in it, as articulated in the Freedom Charter almost seventy years ago.

We gather here, as people born of the same soil across our nine provinces that make up a unitary South Africa, determined that by our deeds we shall heal the divisions of our past, and overcome the ongoing inequalities and hardships of the present.

We declare for all to know that neither discord nor dissent shall cause us to cast aside that which calls us to build a united, free, just, equal and prosperous nation.

On this day, we assert by solemn oath the will of the people of this land.

We affirm our unwavering fidelity to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, which is based on the enduring vision and values of the Freedom Charter.

As the leadership of this diverse nation, we have a sacred duty to unite the people of South Africa.

We affirm that history has placed on our shoulders the responsibility to transform our country into a non-racial and non-sexist society.

We affirm our determination to build a more equal and caring society.

We affirm our resolute quest to build a growing and inclusive economy that offers opportunities and livelihoods to all people.

We rededicate ourselves to the task of democratic renewal and social and economic transformation so that no one is left behind.

And so, as we enter another era in the life of our nation, the resilience of our democracy has once more been tested and the people have spoken loudly that they choose peace and democracy over violent, undemocratic and unconstitutional methods.

In their multitude, in voices that are many and diverse, the people of South Africa have voted and made known their wishes, their concerns and their expectations.

We accept and respect the results of the elections and we once again say the people have spoken. Their will shall be done without any doubt or question.

The voters of South Africa did not give any single party the full mandate to govern our country alone.

They have directed us to work together to address their plight and realise their aspirations.

They have expressed their appreciation of the progress in many areas of their lives over the past 30 years of democracy.

They have also been unequivocal in expressing their disappointment and disapproval of our performance in some of the areas in which we have failed them.

They want a transformed, growing and inclusive economy that creates jobs for millions of job seekers and offer business opportunities to all entrepreneurs in our nation – women and men, young and old.

The people have been clear about what they want.

They want a South Africa in which all may find shelter in our democratic Constitution and may find protection in our courts.

They have described a country in which all may rise above the circumstances of their birth, nurtured by loving families, aided by a caring state and empowered by initiative, will and hard work.

Through their votes they have made clear that they want the basic necessities of a life that is comfortable, happy, healthy and secure.

Through their votes they asserted that they want enough food to eat. Water that is clean. Affordable electricity that is available at all times.

They want decent homes that keep out the wind, the rain and the cold.

They want well-maintained roads and street lights that work.

The people of South Africa have asked no more than to be properly cared for when they are sick, they want the young to be taught well, for the elderly to be cared for, and for those without work to work.

The people of South Africa have spoken about the land they want to farm, about the businesses they want to run, about the things and products they want to make, about the skills they want to learn.

They have spoken of their desire to be safe in their homes, on the street, in their cities, in their villages and on their farms.

The people have demanded an end to the theft of public funds and the capture of the state.

Above all, the people of South Africa have stressed that they are impatient with political bickering and the endless blame game among politicians and political parties.

They want us to put their needs and aspirations first and they want us to work together for the sake of our country.

Today I stand before you as your humble servant to say we have heard you.

As the President of the Republic, I will work with everyone to reach out and work with every political party and sector that is willing to contribute to finding solutions to the challenges our country faces as we transition to a new decade of freedom.

Thirty years have passed since we turned our back on racial tyranny and embraced an open and democratic society.

We have made great strides in building a new society that is founded on strong democratic institutions and universal freedoms.

We have built a transformed public service, an independent judiciary, a competitive electoral system, a sophisticated economy, a vibrant and free media, and a robust civil society.

And yet despite this progress, our society remains deeply unequal and highly polarised. There are toxic cleavages and an incipient social fragmentation that can easily turn into instability.

The lines drawn by our history, between black and white, between man and woman, between suburbs and townships, between urban and rural, between the wealthy and the poor, remain etched in our landscape.

In places, these lines may have faded, but they have not disappeared.

We are citizens of one country and yet we occupy different worlds, separated by high walls and great distances.

We are divided between those who have jobs and those who do not work; between those who have the means to build and enjoy a comfortable life and those who do not.

And so today is no ordinary day.

It is a moment of fundamental consequence in the life of our nation.

It is a moment when we must choose to either move forward together or risk losing all we have built.

In this moment we must choose to move forward;

to close the distances between South Africans and to build a more equal society;

to translate the promise of our Constitution and the vision of the Freedom Charter into a reality for all.

This moment requires extraordinary courage and leadership.

It requires a common mission to safeguard national unity, peace, stability, inclusive economic growth, non-racialism and non-sexism.

Through the ballots that they have cast, the people of South Africa have made plain their expectation that the leaders of our country should work together.

They have directed their representatives to put aside animosity and dissent, to abandon narrow interests, and to pursue together only that which benefits the nation.

As leaders, as political parties, we are called upon to work in partnership towards a growing economy, better jobs, safer communities and a government that works for its people.

From across the political spectrum, parties have answered that call.

Understanding that no party can govern alone and make laws alone, these parties have agreed to work in partnership, to employ their talents for the good of the country and the progress of its people.

Together, they have resolved to establish a government of national unity to pursue a common programme of fundamental and lasting change.

The formation of a government of national unity is a moment of profound significance. It is the beginning of a new era.

As the leaders of this country came together in a government of national unity 30 years ago to forge a common future and build a united nation, the parties in the government of national

unity of today have agreed to work together to address the most pressing challenges before our nation.

The parties have adopted a Statement of Intent, in which they have committed to pursue rapid, inclusive and sustainable economic growth;

to create a more just society by tackling poverty;

to safeguard the rights of workers;

to stabilise government and to build state capacity.

The parties have made a commitment to invest in South Africa's people through quality education and health care;

to address crime and corruption;

to strengthen social cohesion and build a united nation; and,

to pursue a foreign policy based on human rights, solidarity and peace.

As South Africans, we must each do what we can to achieve this mission.

We will invite all parties, civil society, labour, business and other formations to a National Dialogue on the critical challenges facing the nation.

We will seek, as we have done at so many important moments in our history, to forge a social compact to realise the aspirations of our National Development Plan.

As individuals, as families, as communities and in our many formations, let us draw on our every strength to turn our dream for a better South African into reality.

Even as we are united in our diversity, we are a people of deep and abiding faith.

We pray for our nation, for our spirits to be lifted, and for our fortunes to be restored.

We owe this noble mission our courage.

We must be brave and we must be bold.

This is a new tide that heralds progress, transformation and deep, fundamental change.

We look to this rising tide with optimism and hope.

We must reject every attempt to divide or distract us, to sow doubt or cynicism, or to turn us against one another.

Those who seek to stand in our way, those who seek to inflame tensions, will not succeed, because South Africans are resolute.

Those who seek to undermine our institutions will fail, because democracy lives in the hearts of our people and never be dislodged.

Nothing will distract us from serving the people and advancing their interests.

Now is the time to move forward. Together, we will do more and better.

Now is the time to assemble all our capabilities and to direct all our energies to answer the call of the people of South Africa.

We dare not linger, we dare not rest, until we have created jobs for those who need them;

until there is enough food on every table;

until every person in every town, city, village and farm receives the basic services they need for a decent life.

We dare not rest until the women of South Africa are free from the social, cultural and economic constraints that hold back their progress.

We cannot rest until criminals are off our streets and the drugs are out of our communities;

until men no longer perpetrate violence against women and children;

until those who steal from the people are held to account.

We dare not rest while our communities are ravaged by flood, fire and drought.

Together, we will confront the threat of a rapidly warming planet.

We will accept our responsibility to respond to climate change in a manner that is ambitious, just and inclusive.

We do this for the sake of this generation and all those that will follow.

We will build a government that is capable and honest.

Together, we will work to promote multilateralism for a fairer, more equal, more just and more compassionate world, founded on solidarity and universal human rights.

We will join hands with our brothers and sisters across our beloved continent Africa to find peace, to achieve stability, to advance development.

Through the African Continental Free Trade Area, through the construction of roads, and rail lines, factories and power stations, Africa will embark on a new age of production and commerce.

Today, I make a solemn commitment to be a President for all South Africans;

to defend our Constitution and protect our democracy;

to work with all those who share the dream of a better life for all;

to care for the poor and the vulnerable, and to support all those who are in need;

and to make our country stronger, more resilient, more equal and united.

This is the dream that the poet Sandile Dikeni describes in his work ‘Love Poem for my Country’:

My country is for health and wealth
See the blue of the sea
And beneath the jewels of fish
Deep under the bowels of soil
Hear the golden voice of a miner’s praise for my country

My country is for unity
Feel the millions
See their passion
Their hands are joined together
And there is hope in their eyes

On this day, our hands are joined together. We are united. We are full of hope.

May God bless South Africa and protect its people.

Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika.
Morena boloka setjhaba sa heso.
God seën Suid-Afrika.
Mudzimu fhatutshedza Afurika.
Hosi katekisa Afrika.

I thank you.

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