

Taking Decisive Action to Mitigate Against the Economic and Fiscal Impact of July 2021

Closing Remarks by the Chief Whip of the Council, Hon Mohai, S J 23 November 2021

Honourable Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces,

Distinguished Special Delegates;

Leadership of the organized local government;

Honourable Members and Colleagues;

As the honourable Members may recall, the Constitution enjoins the NCOP to represent the provinces in order to ensure that the provincial interests are taken into account in the national sphere of government;

And this it does by providing a national forum for public consideration of issues that affect the provinces, and by participating in the national legislative process;

There is no doubt that the July 2021 violent unrests, destruction and looting of property which claimed over 350 people lives, was one of the most costly to human life, the economy of our country and livelihoods of our people post the 1994 democratic dispensation;

This violence was also a lively reminder to policy makers, both in the public and private sector about the dangers of the persistence of the deep inequality, poverty, unemployment and hunger that continue to define the lives of the vast majority of our people;

This violence coincided with the one and half year of the persistence of the deadly Covid19 pandemic with its own associated human and socio economic devastations unparalleled in human history;

Chairperson, there is no doubt that this July 2021 events were supreme test of our democracy, and most importantly, the capacity of the state security apparatus to defend our people in the midst of violent undemocratic channels of protests;

It is therefore fitting that as we close this Ministerial briefing we join the President in expressing our collective message of condolences to those families that lost the loved one during this violence;

Chairperson, it will indeed be an omission on our part not to join the Minister of Police in saluting our security forces, in managing this violence without one single life mowed down by their bullets in the midst of intense provocations;

We join the country's call on the National Prosecuting Authority and Criminal Justice system to leave no stone un-turned in bringing the perpetrators of this mayhem to book;

Among the abiding lessons of this violent mayhem is the sense of collective identity displayed by our people in their quest to defend our democracy and the rule of law;

The speedy intervention of government in collaboration with the private sector and the social partners to mitigate against the economic and fiscal impact of this violence will go down in the annals of history as the building block of a resilient nation at work to secure a better future for all;

This should be another lively reminder to all of us assembled here that, democracy that does not take along its people as the architects of their own future deserves no future;

Honourable Chairperson, the July 2021 mayhem should be understood within the broader context of the increasing rise of populism in the global body politic and its associated undemocratic forms of political expressions against the persistence of poverty, unemployment and inequality;

This calls for a fundamental rethink of our assumptions about the role of parliament, as an elected tribune of the people, especially the poor, the vulnerable and the working class. Among the key questions we must honestly confront are; is our work making impact on the lives of the people, and how do we break new grounds to speedily respond to the needs of our people for a better quality of life for all?

Chairperson, I am sure we will all concede that this platform, unlike a formal debate of the House which are always driven by narrow and partisan political competition, create an ideal space to mediate and negotiate the competing interests of our people as the basis for forging the collective agenda of oversight.

As the discussions and contributions have demonstrated today, there is an emerging collective consensus among the provinces and political parties around the following key issues:

- Support of government mitigation measures to revive the destroyed businesses which has devastating impact on the economy and the livelihood of our people;
- Strengthening of the relationship between the private and public security sectors to enhance future collaboration in crime intelligence gathering, prevention and combating;
- More targeted approach for leveraging the informal business;
- Restoring the investor trust and confidence in South Africa as the investment destination;

The swift response of government and the South African Risk Insurance Association to recapitalize the destroyed and looted businesses will go a long way in assuring the international and local investors about South Africa's capacity as an investment destination;

Whilst we all agree about the glaring poverty, hunger and unemployment that are still concentrated among the Blacks and Africans, we must avoid the temptation of fanning, direct or indirect, the use of violent measures by our people to express their anger;

For those who think they can resort to this as part of the strategy to unseat the ANC, must be reminded that this encourage the political culture of lawlessness, anarchy and civil disobedience that is not in the interests of our people and the country at large;

Clearly, this forum has strengthened the knowledge base of the Sector Committees of the NCOP and individual MPs as they interact with the sector departments and their respective constituencies to conduct oversight;

Surely, the Minister has also benefitted extensively from the insights and concrete experiences of the MPs about the situation on the ground as the basis for policy monitoring and evaluation;

Honourable Chairperson, in closing, allow me to thank the honourable Minister for making time to be part of this briefing. We also thank the Special Delegates from the provinces, the leadership of SALGA and honourable Members of the NCOP for their valuable contribution.

I thank you