



PARLIAMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES
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OPENING REMARKS BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES, HONOURABLE N. A. MASONDO, ON THE OCCASION OF THE MINISTERIAL BRIEFING ON THE NATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION STRATEGY UNDER THE THEME “PROGRESS IN ADDRESSING CRIME AND BUILDING A COORDINATED APPROACH TO CRIME PREVENTION AND CONTROL”

VENUE: VIRTUAL **DATE:** 22 FEBRUARY 2022 **TIME:** 10H00

Greetings to everyone and good morning to all participants!!

Programme Director, the Deputy Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces, Honourable Sylvia Lucas

Minister of Police, Honourable Bheki Cele

Deputy Minister of Police, Honourable Cassel Mathale

House Chairperson for International Relations and Members’ Support, Honourable Winnie Ngwenya

House Chairperson for Committees and Oversight, Honourable Jomo Nyambi

Chief Whip of the National Council of Provinces, Honourable Seiso Mohai
Permanent and Special Delegates

Acting President of SALGA, Councillor Deon De Vos

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. INTRODUCTION

Programme Director, I thank you for the opportunity to open the Ministerial Briefing Session on the National Crime Prevention Strategy. The theme for today's engagement is *"Progress in Addressing Crime and Building a Coordinated Approach to Crime Prevention and Control"*.

This theme reaffirms the notion that fighting crime is everyone's responsibility.

It also illustrates the role of the NCOP in facilitating co-ordination in the discharge of national priorities by the different spheres of government.

This briefing is intended to provide the Members of the NCOP, the Provincial Legislatures and Municipal Councils (through SALGA), with the necessary information to be able to coordinate and enhance their oversight work.

2. ON THE VISION OF A SAFE AND SECURE ENVIRONMENT

Our vision of a safe and secure environment can be traced back to the Freedom Charter, which declared that: "All people shall have the right to live where they choose, ... and to bring up their families in comfort and security".

Our Constitution entrenches this vision by providing that: “Everyone has the right to freedom and security of the person”. This includes the right “to be free from all forms of violence from either public or private sources”.

Our implementation document, the National Development Plan (NDP), states that safety is a necessary condition for human development, improving quality of life and enhancing productivity. And that when communities do not feel safe and live in fear, the country’s economic development and the people’s wellbeing is affected, hindering their ability to achieve their potential.

Importantly, the NDP makes the critical point that safety and security are directly related to socioeconomic development and equality, affecting the development objectives of economic growth and transformation, employment creation, improved education and health outcomes, and strengthened social cohesion.

As Members would attest, these issues are at the core of the call by President Cyril Ramaphosa for a comprehensive social compact to grow our economy, create jobs and combat hunger, which he unpacked during his State of the Nation Address recently.

In order to build safer communities, the NDP directs us to ensure that by 2030:

1. People living in South Africa feel safe and have no fear of crime;

2. People are safe at home, at school, at work and they enjoy an active community life free of fear;
3. Women can walk freely in the streets and children can play safely outside;
4. The police service is a well resourced professional institution staffed by highly skilled officers who value their work, serve the community, safeguard lives and property without discrimination, protect the peaceful against violence and respect the rights of all to equality and justice.

Clearly, the work that is needed to achieve this vision requires a coordinated approach and the participation of everyone.

3. ON CURRENT CHALLENGES

Programme Director, we are all generally speaking aware of the challenges we face in the fight against crime. In his reply to the debate on SONA last Wednesday, the President of the Republic reminded us about some of these when he mentioned: “The murder and rape of women by men, the children killed in the crossfire of gang wars, the theft of cables and other infrastructure, the intimidation and extortion at construction sites”.

We can add numerous other challenges, such as the ease with which drugs and other harmful substances are available within communities.

In dealing with these issues, we need an ethical and professional police service that is, for instance, unlikely to be influenced by gangs that terrorise members of the community.

Equally, we should commend the efforts of professional police officers, especially those who work in gang-infested areas to prevent crime and to secure justice, at great risk to their lives, safety and security of their families.

As public representatives, we must work tirelessly to ensure that we support the good work of such officers and the members of the public.

4. ON KEY ELEMENT OF THE NATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION STRATEGY

Programme Director, as I have said at the beginning, the theme for today's Ministerial Briefing Session reaffirms the notion that fighting crime is everyone's business. It is therefore important that this House interrogates or deeply examines the work that government is doing in ensuring that this happens.

This is especially so given the fact that, among other things, the National Crime Prevention Strategy (NCPS) seeks:

- To establish a comprehensive policy framework which will enable government to address crime in a coordinated and focused manner,

and draws on the resources of all government agencies, as well as civil society.

5. ON REPORT OF THE EXPERT PANEL INTO THE JULY 2021 CIVIL UNREST

Today's briefing takes place shortly after the release to the public of the *Report of the Expert Panel into the July 2021 Civil Unrest*. We thank government for making the report public. This demonstrates government's resolve to promote transparency in how it conducts its affairs and to facilitate a public conversation between government and the people on matters that are of national importance.

The report explains what happened during the period between 8 and 17 July 2021, which saw parts of the provinces of KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng explode "in violence never before seen in democratic South Africa". The authors suggest that the violence can be viewed in the context of multiple crises and challenges facing South Africa, key among them being:

1. The weakness of State institutions generally;
2. High unemployment, with youth unemployment above 70%;
3. Inherited high levels of poverty and deep inequality;
4. Poor spatial planning, leading to overcrowded and unsuitable living conditions for many, with informal settlements emerging in crowded urban spaces as people move to the cities in search of opportunities;
5. Rampant corruption at various levels of government;

6. The phenomenon of sponsored State Capture, as understood in the South African context; and
7. The frustrations caused by the Covid-19 restrictions, adding to the feelings of despair among the population.

Of course, some of these issues emerged during the debate on the unrest and the Ministerial Briefing Session on the Economic and Fiscal Impact of the July 2021 Public Violence and Looting, held by the NCOP respectively in August and November last year.

However, there is one lingering question that the Members of this House also raised. It is about the possibility of similar unrests in the future.

In this regard, the authors of the Report, comment as follows:

“The question, many argue, is not ***if and whether*** more unrest and violence will occur, but ***when*** it will occur. The fear of many is that not only will a repeat of such violence find ground in the all-too-familiar contexts of negative political constestation, where certain interests take advantage of the levels of poverty, inequality, lack of service delivery and social tensions to advance their cause”.

Programme Director, in this year’s SONA the President announced certain interventions that government was taking to respond to some of the key issues raised in the report. We welcome these, including the envisaged public process for the development of the National Security Strategy.

One of these important interventions, which the President said require immediate attention, is the re-establishment of community policing forums to improve relations and coordination between local police and residents of the areas they serve.

In this regard, I would like to call on all the public representatives in Parliament, the Provincial Legislatures and Municipal Councils to heed this call and ensure that there are community policing forums, neighbourhood watches and/or street committees in the areas in which they reside. This will be an important response to the President's call.

6. CONCLUSION

In closing, as public representatives, we have a duty to lead our communities to work towards the realisation of the vision where the people of South Africa feel safe and have no fear of crime.

Also, we have a duty to interrogate the work of government to strengthen the efforts, as outlined in the NCPS, to address crime in a coordinated and focused manner. We must make crime fighting everyone's responsibility.

There is evidence of some weaknesses in the security architecture of the country, as revealed by the report on the July unrest, and in how our communities support the fight against crime.

Programme Director, I appreciate the opportunity to open this Ministerial briefing session on the important subject of building a coordinated approach to crime prevention and control. And I am looking forward, as others do, to a lively interaction and engagement.

Thank you very much!