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Editor
Brent Simons

Production editor
Mava Lukani

Design and layout
Vishaal Lalla

Copy editor
Jane Henshall

Writers
Abel Mputing, Sakhile Mokoena,
Sibongile Maputi, Sureshinee
Govender, Manelisi Wolela and
Xihlamariso Ngoveni

Photography
Zwelethemba Kostile

Distribution & subscriptions
Jacqueline Zils

Publisher
Parliament of the Republic of
South Africa

**Section Manager:
Publishing and Production**
Shirley Montsho

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EDITORIAL ENQUIRIES

Telephone 021 403 8738
Fax 021 403 8096

E-mail

insession@parliament.gov.za

Subscriptions

jzils@parliament.gov.za

Post

PO Box 15, Cape Town, 8000

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Processing State Capture report & finalising Electoral Amendment Bill are key tasks for 2022, says Speaker



The Speaker of the National Assembly (NA), Ms Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, has confirmed that some of the key tasks for Parliament in this financial year will be processing the report of the Zondo Commission and finalising the Electoral Amendment Bill, writes Sakhile Mokoena.

Presenting the institution's budget vote for debate in the NA recently, Ms Mapisa-Nqakula reported that the President has submitted four out of the five State Capture Commission reports, with the final report expected to be presented to the President on 15 June 2022. An implementation plan will follow four months after that.

"Based on legal advice received, Parliament has already commenced work on the third and fourth reports. Members implicated whilst serving as Members of Parliament and who are still MPs have been referred to the Joint Committee on Ethics and Members' Interests to consider the allegations in order to determine if there was a breach of the Ethics Code," she said.

Parliament's research unit has been tasked with analysing the reports with a view to advising the relevant oversight committees and the Rules Committee once the final report and implementation plan has been submitted. This work will inform the Rules Committee's decisions concerning any possible action to be taken under

the Powers and Privileges Act against implicated individuals who are no longer Members of Parliament.

The Secretary to Parliament has also been tasked with ensuring that MPs receive adequate training on key financial legislation to avoid oversight failures highlighted by the commission in relation to Parliament's role. "Only once the entire report and implementation plan is before Parliament will the Rules Committee decide on how best to proceed with the processing thereof," said the Speaker.

On the matter of the Electoral Amendment Bill, Ms Mapisa-Nqakula reported that Parliament has approached the Constitutional Court for a six-month extension within which to finalise the draft legislation. "I would want to assure the public that both Houses of Parliament are committed to processing this Bill timeously, whilst at the same time taking into account the necessity for thorough public consultation on a matter of such importance to our democratic dispensation.

"We hope that the President will assent to the Bill before the end of 2022. We must state categorically that there is no justification at all for recent attempts by some to cause public panic by suggesting that the general elections of 2024 are at risk," said the Speaker.

She also reported that the Presiding Officers will receive a presentation of the feasibility study conducted in 2018 on relocating Parliament from its current premises in Cape Town. The report will be shared with Members of Parliament before a decision is taken on the future seat of Parliament.

In supporting the budget vote, the Deputy Chief Whip of the majority party, Ms Doris Dlakude, called on Parliament to make sure that it executes its oversight and accountability responsibilities in order to create a more equal society where the previously marginalised can have access to a better quality of life. "The mandate of Parliament is also to accelerate the transformation agenda, as guided by the provisions of the Constitution, through strategic

and outcome based oversight and accountability, as well as through the precept of an activist people's Parliament."

Ms Natasha Mazzone, the Chief Whip of the Democratic Alliance, raised concerns about questions submitted to the executive that remain unanswered. "The more questions we submit, the less answers we receive. We need to improve; that is not accountability," she argued. Ms Mazzone also complained about Parliament lagging behind in processing legislation and alleged that Private Members' Bills were ignored when they do not come from the ruling party. She also suggested that it was time all MPs returned physically to Parliament, instead of the current hybrid system where some MPs still participate via virtual platforms.

The Economic Freedom Fighters' (EFF) Mr Natasha Ntlangwini accused Parliament of not fully exercising its constitutional powers to initiate and prepare legislation, and of only rubberstamping legislation initiated by the executive. "Parliament does not have the capacity to prepare or initiate legislation. Since 2009, only one Private Member's Bill was introduced," she pointed out.

She also used the opportunity to reiterate her party's long-standing call for the national legislature to relocate to Tshwane, saying the fire incident presented an opportunity for Parliament to relocate. "The time has come to break the colonial pact with the City of Cape Town and relocate Parliament to Tshwane. Don't rebuild the fire damaged buildings; this is an opportunity to relocate," said Ms Ntlangwini.

Other political parties raised concerns about Parliament not fully exercising its constitutional powers to amend budgets presented by the executive. There was also concern about the absence of a parliamentary committee responsible for oversight over the Presidency, with some MPs saying this situation made it difficult to hold the Office of the President accountable for money allocated or its performance.

Mr Ahmed Shaik-Emam of the National Freedom Party questioned the impact of oversight reports adopted in the National Assembly when their recommendations are never implemented. "We spend millions of rands on oversight, identify issues and compile reports that we debate and adopt. And nothing happens; no consequences, accountability. What is the purpose?"

Despite many challenges Parliament is doing its work - NCOP Debates Parliament's Budget Vote



Despite various challenges, including the Covid-19 pandemic, floods and a devastating fire, Parliament continues to discharge its mandate as prescribed in the Constitution, said the Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces (NCOP), Mr Amos Masondo, during the Parliament Budget Vote recently, writes Abel Mputing.

This was demonstrated in the NCOP's work in the current financial year, which included adopting 19 Bills, processing 42 reports from committees, completing 12 interventions in municipalities and 64 executive undertakings. In addition, the NCOP embarked on 46 oversight visits and conducted 155 public hearings on the introduction or amendment of Bills, Mr Masondo said.

On cooperative governance, he pointed out that more should be done to improve its inefficiencies. "The challenges, which have been brought to the attention of the NCOP, include, among others, the lack of evidence-based planning; fragmentation of the planning system and inadequate alignment and coherence across the three spheres."

However, measures are being put in place to rectify these deficiencies. "The Workshop on Co-operative Governance and Intergovernmental Relations, hosted by the NCOP in February this year, went a long way in equipping us for our oversight role in this regard."

To enhance the development of its human resources, the legislative sector launched the South African Parliamentary Institute in December last year to "help steer this important

initiative in the right direction".

Parliament's budget in this financial year is R2.757 billion, but received only R2.683 billion. The shortfall of R74 million will be funded through retained earnings and other spending cuts. The budget was allocated to three core expenditure programmes. Administration will receive R776 million; Legislation and Oversight R754 million; and R755 million for associated services and transfer payments to political parties, including the Parliamentary Budget Office. Mr Masondo noted that the financial resources allocated to it are insufficient to sustain pre-Covid-19 spending patterns, which will pose challenges to Parliament's sustainability, effectiveness and efficiency.

Weighing in on the budget vote debate, Mr James Brauteseth (Democratic Alliance, for KwaZulu-Natal), emphasised the dangers posed to Parliament's core business functions by a reduced budget allocation. "Our core mandate is law-making, public participation, research, legal analysis and content development; these are our intellectual backbones. Without which, NCOP is doomed to be the lackey of the National Assembly."

Instead of strengthening the NCOP's programme, Mr Brauteseth pointed out that most of its budget will be spent on administration and remuneration, which will hamper its ability to perform its mandated roles. While not oblivious to budgetary constraints, he pointed out, "the funding of the core

function of this house should be non-negotiable".

Parliament's role must continue to be transformational, urged Ms Dikeledi Mahlangu (African National Congress, Mpumalanga), to ensure that it passes legislation that "speaks to the needs of our people". In addition, Parliament's oversight function must reinforce a continuous relationship between the various elements of the legislature to ensure that government policies are implemented effectively and efficiently, she said.

In addition, she criticised the lack of a Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) research reference group that could advise the executive authority on various matters and said that it could provide greater leadership and guidance than is currently the case. She further underscored the fact that more attention should be placed on improving committee members' knowledge of their subject matter to improve oversight.

Mr Moletsane (Economic Freedom Fighters, Free State) believes that the NCOP has failed to represent the interests of the people and provinces in the national spheres of government. It has failed to hold the executive accountable and instead sits by and watches as the country descends in a downward spiral. "It's the youth that bears the brunt of an unemployment rate that is higher than national average," he pointed out. This creates a maelstrom of social ills, including crime, violence and social unrest.

Poverty, unemployment and under-development rob millions of their dignity, says President during Budget Vote

President Cyril Ramaphosa delivered the Presidency Budget Vote in the full plenary of the National Assembly (NA), saying: "The greatest disservice we can do to our people at this difficult time in the life of our nation is to become distracted from the task at hand," reports Abel Mputing.

In his view, South Africans do not care about political squabbles, rivalries, plots, and intrigue. Above all else, they want their quality of life to improve. They want better basic services and they want employment. Meanwhile and despite challenges, the economy is beginning to show positive signs of recovery and, in the first quarter of 2022, the South African economy grew by 1.9 per cent. This has brought the economy to pre-pandemic levels much sooner than analysts expected.

He also reported positive developments arising from the fourth South Africa Investment Conference, which raised investment pledges worth R332 billion. The government's economic reform agenda aims to achieve a reliable energy supply. This goal is being driven by the relevant departments and agencies, and is supported by Operation Vulindlela, a Presidency and National Treasury initiative.

Added to these reforms is the need to find new sources of clean energy to off-set mounting climate change concerns underpinned by the notion of a just energy transition. To this end, the Presidential Climate Finance Task Team established earlier this year is working on the modalities of an agreement to advance the Just Energy Transition Partnership concluded between South Africa and the governments of France, Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States and



the European Union last year. The establishment of black industrialists and the economic empowerment of women and youth remain the cog of inclusive growth, the President told the house. "Over the next three years a further R21 billion has been committed to support black industrialists and an additional R25 billion to support black, women, youth and worker-owned companies."

To fight gender-based violence, the President reported that he signed into law three bills that will strengthen the fight against gender-based violence and afford greater protection for survivors. Their implementation is scheduled for 31 July 2022, once the amended regulations are tabled in Parliament.

Debating the President's Budget Vote, the leader of the Democratic Alliance, Mr John Steenhuisen, enquired why the Presidency is the only ministry without a standing committee. "We have asked this question many times before and we are yet to receive a satisfactory explanation," continued Mr Steenhuisen. The lack of scrutiny of the presidency's budget remains an ongoing concern.

He questioned the rationale of increasing the Presidency's budget, while the budgets of critical service delivery portfolios have been cut. "While police budgets for ordinary citizens are slashed and policing resources in high crime areas are stretched thinner and thinner, the VIP protection budget of the President and his cabinet is the only part of the police budget that ever goes up."

Turning to the controversy regarding the alleged crimes at the President's farm, Mr Steenhuisen asked: "I'm sure you'll agree, Mr President, that South Africans have a right to know if you are using your VIP protection unit as a private debt collection agency."

He urged the President to respond to the many questions surrounding the events at the farm. "You see; you have to be beyond reproach. You have to be open and transparent so that the people of this country can know you are serving them well and with integrity. But you are none of these things. There is only suspicion, secrecy and silence."

Also participating in the debate, the Chief Whip of the majority party in the NA, Ms Pemmy Majodina, pointed out that the Presidency's budget seeks to consolidate national unity and shared national purpose. She urged that the Presidency must be given sufficient resources to maintain regular and meaningful dialogue with traditional leaders.

Also participating in the debate, Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi also criticised the fact that the presidential budget continues to go up without scrutiny from Parliament. The Presidency budget is not subjected to oversight and interrogation to prevent it from abuse.

To enable the President to perform his work, we have always supported this budget although none of our questions have been answered, Prince Buthelezi said. He asked why it is assumed that the highest office in the land will not act against what is right and just. He asked if the NA is fulfilling its duty by rubber stamping the Presidency budget, especially in the face of mismanagement and corruption in government.

Dr Petrus Groenewald of the FF+ pointed to crime statistics, which show that 6 000 murders took place in the first three months of 2022. One contributing factor to this is mob justice, as it says that people do not trust in the police and criminal justice system, he said.

Rev Kenneth Meshoe said that the allegation of corruption and money laundering against the President have left many devastated and disappointed. "Rather than taking responsibility for breaking the law, the President insists that his hands are clean," said Rev Meshoe.

Ms Thandiswa Marawu of the African Transformation Movement criticised the President's failure to take Parliament into his confidence by explaining what happened at his farm. She said the President had proclaimed that if our people are to thrive and poverty defeated, we need to tackle fraud and corruption. Ironically, when the President made this statement he knew about the robbery at his farm, but it was not reported to the police.

Mr Bantu Holomisa of the United Democratic Movement asked the President why he decided to suspend the Public Protector on the eve of the outcome of the High Court judgement on the legality of her suspension. "You are doing this when the Public Protector was asked to ask you to clarify the break in at your farm. What must we make of your action and who will investigate you now?"

The leader of the Pan Africanist Congress, Mr Mzwanele Nyhontso, said true leadership demands self-subjugation, integrity, honesty, uprightness of character, fearlessness and courage. "While we debate the incident that happened at your farm, President, people are dying of hunger, are landless, have no shelter amid lack of service delivery. Where is the consuming love for our people? Azania deserve better." 🌟



TIME OF ACCOUNTABILITY: President Cyril Ramaphosa responds to MPs after the Presidency's budget vote debate.

President Ramaphosa assures National Assembly he is not evading accountability

President Cyril Ramaphosa has refuted accusations made by some Members of Parliament that he is failing to honour his accountability obligations by not giving a detailed account of a robbery that took place two years ago at his farm, allegedly involving millions in foreign currency. Sakhile Mokoena reports.

Responding to a debate of the Presidency's Budget Vote in the National Assembly, President Ramaphosa maintained that accountability is a responsibility he has never shied away from. He then gave a record of what he called evidence of his commitment to account to Parliament and to the people of South Africa.

He mentioned the number of times he appeared before both Houses of Parliament to answer questions, responded to written questions and his appearance before the Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of State Capture and the South African Human Rights Commission hearings into the July 2021 unrest as evidence of his accountability.

"We are a government elected by the people, for the people, and we are accountable to the South African people for all that we do. The people of South Africa must come first in all that we do. As public representatives, we were elected on the promise

to improve their lives and we are obliged to keep that promise. It is the reason for this government and this Parliament's existence.

He said the robbery at his farm, Phala Phala, in 2020 was the subject of a criminal complaint. Now the law must take its course and due process must be followed. "I will therefore not be responding to speculation, conjecture, allegations or so-called revelations. These must be ventilated in the proper and appropriate forums," President Ramaphosa explained.

Meanwhile, he welcomed the inputs from MPs during the debate on the support Parliament will render to the Presidency to enable it to better fulfil its mandate.

Responding to some parliamentarians who described the process of coordination through the Presidency as creating a super-presidency and an over-centralisation of power, President Ramaphosa said this method has been found to work effectively, particularly

when strengthening the capacity of the state is a priority. "We are helping to streamline and align government functions; assisting to manage and mitigate bureaucratic hurdles; and fulfilling our critical oversight role," he said.

The President also spoke about securing South Africa's energy supply, which has had a direct and material impact on domestic and international investor confidence. This, in turn, leads to a favourable business environment that creates more jobs. That is why supporting the process of structural reform in the energy sector has been one of the Presidency's foremost priorities.

"The energy reform process is aimed in part at addressing our immediate challenges. I outlined progress in the renewable energy procurement programme, the conclusion of power purchase agreements for three risk mitigation projects and measures we will be taking to close the electricity gap. But the ultimate objective is to fundamentally transform the energy landscape, create a new competitive electricity market and, most importantly, decarbonise our economy," he said.

The President also reported on the District Development Model (DDM), calling it a transformation of government planning and a break

"I will therefore not be responding to speculation, conjecture, allegations or so-called revelations. These must be ventilated in the proper and appropriate forums"

President Cyril Ramaphosa

from the past where departments worked in silos, fruitless expenditure on irrelevant projects was common and where development was not aligned to national objectives. He is confident that once this model is fully institutionalised, use of resources will improve, development will be targeted and planning will be more responsive.

The DDM should enable districts and municipalities to develop, while harnessing existing local economic initiatives, such as special economic zones, industrial parks and agri-hubs. "We have set ourselves the target of rolling out the DDM in all 52 of the country's districts, and the Presidency will be conducting oversight in this regard," said the President. 🇿🇦

National Assembly Youth Day – SA better today than it was in 1976



PEACEFUL PROTEST: Young people gather in Roeland Street outside Parliament in Cape Town to demand better service delivery.

The National Assembly hosted a hybrid sitting to commemorate the forty-sixth anniversary of 16 June with the theme of “Promoting sustainable livelihoods and resilience of young people in South Africa for a better tomorrow”, writes Jabulani Majozi.

Mr Sibusiso Kula of the African National Congress opened the debate by saying that the youth of today owe the youth of 1976 their loyalty for their “colossal efforts to dismantle a brutal operating system. South Africa is a better place than it was in 1976, thanks to the contribution of our forebears”. He also pointed out that young people are now employed in mining, construction, ICT, agriculture and manufacturing, sectors that were previously closed to them.

Also participating in the debate, the Democratic Alliance’s Mr Luyolo Mphithi spoke of the current generation of youth’s potential. “I believe that the power to turn this around is in our hands. As young people, we can propose a reimagined society of opportunities and reclaim our democracy.”

He also honored the late Lutho Jett Sikudela, who he said represented all that was right in this country and had a passion for his community and a commitment to fight on behalf of the youth of South Africa. Mr Mphithi went on to say: “There must be a time where graduates are not sitting at home without jobs.”

Ms Naledi Chirwa of the Economic Freedom Fighters said: “It is by design that we are poor. It is intentional that we are unemployed. It is little coincidence that our communities are infested with crime and violence.” Ms Chirwa also highlighted the plight of women and children, saying that when women are sexually violated, they are turned away at police stations when they seek refuge.

The Inkatha Freedom Party’s Mr Sanele Zondo said empowering young people goes beyond speeches and debates. When young people are stuck without internet access and lack of access to skills development, we cannot speak about progress, he said.

Ms Marie Elizabeth Sukers for the African Christian Democratic Party said: “The biggest barrier is the lack of coherence in initiatives at the community level. Reaching the youth on a 365-day basis should become our biggest commitment to drive change

that will be sustainable.” Ms Sukers also added that best efforts are wasted when there is no coherence in programmes at local, provincial and national level.

Mr Nqabayomzi Kwankwa of the United Democratic Movement said youths in South Africa are subjected to high levels of poverty and unemployment. He also alleged that youth unemployment stands at almost 70 per cent and the government has failed to prioritise employment for young people.

He also pointed out that government must encourage more businesses

and support start-ups to create more jobs. He noted the challenges facing historically black institutions, which are characterised by a lack of resources. “Such inequalities are not addressed by the Department of Education, as young people are most affected by a lack of funding or accommodation.”

He also pointed out that 221 Walter Sisulu University students graduated from unaccredited programmes offered at the institution. He also mentioned gender-based violence and pointed out that government interventions are slow.

The African Transformation Party’s Mr Vuyolwethu Zungula said that 67% of the youth are unemployed, almost 50% of the country is dependent on social grants and 68 people are murdered daily.

Mr Shaik Imam of the National Freedom Party said the youth of 1976 worked part-time while still getting an education. “Previously, in 1976, you did not have enough facilities. Today, you have the facilities, but we are burning them, destroying them, vandalising half-a-billion rands worth of infrastructure,” he said.

Mr Imam also highlighted teenage pregnancies, saying that 23 000 girls under the age of 18 ended up pregnant and 934 of them were under the age of 14. And 50 per cent of fathers age of 15 to 24 are unemployed.🙏

“Previously, in 1976, you did not have enough facilities. Today, you have the facilities, but we are burning them, destroying them, vandalising half-a-billion rands worth of infrastructure,”

Mr Shaik Imam,
National Freedom Party



National Assembly – we need an urgent solution to electricity crisis

Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) Member of Parliament and Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (SCOPA), Mr Mkhuleko Hlengwa, recently sponsored a topic for debate in the National Assembly, “Energy crisis and the threat of a protracted failure of Eskom”, on South Africa’s electricity challenges, writes Sakhile Mokoena.



Members of Parliament from the various political parties represented in Parliament presented their party’s views on the situation. Mr Hlengwa began by saying that since March, there have been 26 days of load shedding thus far in 2022, with Eskom’s national control manager predicting at least 100 days of power cuts this winter. “While our economy is on the verge of collapse, Eskom has advised that blackouts that will cost South Africa billions of rands are on the cards, and yet it takes an opposition party – the IFP – to raise the alarm,” Mr Hlengwa said.

He argued in the hybrid sitting that the state power utility is unable to fulfil its fundamental duty, which is to generate enough energy to power our national grid. “With the almost weekly breakdowns and other maintenance-related issues, it is clear that our energy infrastructure is ageing faster than Eskom can get its affairs in order. Eskom has become a national and international embarrassment,” he said.

The SCOPA Chairperson further added that South Africa’s reliance on coal flies in the face of international agreements we have signed to reduce

carbon emissions and mitigate climate change. “It is without question that we must ensure we fully pursue the alternatives to coal in generating electricity, while safeguarding and climate-proofing our environment. We are a country with untapped opportunities and resourceful people. We have an economy that needs to rebound, but any green shoots are dependent on the certainty of its energy supply to move forward.

“Load-shedding cannot become South Africa’s default position. It is not a solution to our energy crisis. We need urgent action now, before we are left in the dark, permanently,” argued Mr Hlengwa.

Representing the African National Congress, Mr Mikateko Mahlaule launched an attack on the opposition and accused them, particularly the IFP and the Democratic Alliance, of lacking the correct understanding of the challenges facing Eskom. The DA has previously sponsored a similar

motion for debate where it blamed the electricity problem on inefficiencies of the ANC.

Said Mr Mahlaule: “What we are witnessing with regard to Eskom is neither a threat nor a failure, it is merely a logical outcome of the instrumentalisation of democratic practices. Access to electricity is a fundamental democratic right and Eskom shows unwavering commitment to that, even though there is often a mismatch between access and energy security,” he said.

Mr Mahlaule also pointed out that the ANC government was committed to the energy-mix approach, which include Eskom’s procurement of energy from independent power producers (IPPs) and plans to implement the nuclear power programme framework to procure 2 500 megawatts of nuclear power. “Nuclear power in addition to IPPs and gas will allow Eskom to conduct maintenance without interruptions as well as sustain the South African economy. It is in the national interest that Eskom must be fixed and restructured to ensure that there is sufficient power to implement the economic reconstruction and recovery plan to reverse the effects of poverty, inequality and unemployment,” he said.

The DA’s Mr Kevin Mileham said the crisis at Eskom requires bold and urgent attention to quickly bring new energy generation online. “More than half of Eskom’s coal-powered fleet is offline for one reason or another. Our energy availability is at a record annual low of 58 per cent and the three-month outlook indicates a rough road ahead, with a high risk of load shedding.” He also proposed that bottlenecks in connecting IPPs to the grid be removed, the transmission infrastructure be upgraded, and the framework for private generation and municipal procurement be simplified.

The Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) believe that all interventions, including bailouts, to stabilise Eskom

are misguided, as the ruling party refuses to address obvious challenges. This has led to a far deeper crisis at the utility. “Three years ago, former Minister of Finance Tito Mboweni introduced a special appropriations bill in the National Assembly to request Parliament to appropriate R59 billion to give to Eskom. Lots of promises and commitments were made. We were told the money will help to reduce the systemic risk of energy crisis and stabilize Eskom,” said EFF Member of Parliament Ms Omphile Maotwe.

She proposed that coal prices be pegged to stabilise Eskom finances. The EFF also does not believe that Eskom should be unbundled, but considers investment in nuclear energy in a financially responsive manner as a positive response to the situation. “Eskom remains the biggest threat to South Africa’s fiscal stability because of its debt and nearly R400 billion in guarantees. It is a stumbling block to any efforts to kick start a dead economy,” she said.

Mr Wouter Wessels of the Freedom Front Plus questioned how Eskom runs at a loss when it is a monopoly. “It is an undisputable fact that has always had a monopoly on electricity supply in South Africa. Now according to economics 101, a monopoly always makes a profit. It can never ever make a loss, except under the management of the ANC. You manage to break all rules, even economic principles,” he said.

He blamed the Eskom crisis on a bloated workforce, mismanagement, corruption, failed policies of affirmative action and black economic empowerment.

Closing the debate, the Minister of Public Enterprises Mr Pravin Gordhan admitted that load shedding costs the country dearly and causes great frustration among all South Africans. It creates hardship for households and businesses. This is why the government has committed to ensure energy security is achieved as soon as possible.

“It won’t be tomorrow, but it will be achieved. Government and Eskom are working to resolve the energy crisis affecting this country. And I can assure this House and the public that there is a lot of hard work, notwithstanding the hurdles and the difficulties that we face, going into this,” the Minister said. 🙏

NCOP hosts summit to promote inclusive economic growth

“By convening this important summit, Parliament seeks to strengthen and accelerate efforts to build an activist developmental state, particularly for purposes of promoting inclusive economic growth.”

Deputy Chairperson of the NCOP, Ms Sylvia Lucas



The National Council of Provinces (NCOP) convened an Inclusive Economic Growth Oversight Summit to look at economic challenges and how stakeholders and government can promote economic growth. The theme of the summit was “Localising the economic recovery plan for accelerated economic transformation”, writes Jabulani Majozi.

The South African economy has worsened due to sustained low levels of investment and growth. The economy has also experienced a series of ratings downgrades and poorly performing state-owned entities have worsened the problem.

The Deputy Chairperson of the NCOP, Ms Sylvia Lucas, chaired the virtual summit, which was attended by NCOP Permanent and Special Delegates, Ministers from the departments of Employment and Labour, and of Cooperative Government and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), the Financial and Fiscal Commission, as well as other invited stakeholders and guests.

Ms Lucas said: “By convening this important summit, Parliament seeks to strengthen and accelerate efforts to build an activist developmental state, particularly for purposes of promoting inclusive economic growth.” The Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan provides the roadmap from which to drive inclusive growth and create mass employment. Ms Lucas also informed the summit that South Africa’s economy had experienced economic stagnation and put tremendous strain on efforts to address structural inequalities.

“Sustained low rates of economic

growth, particularly since 2008, have limited the volume of income for redistribution. Inequality has not reduced. Ownership of the economy remains highly concentrated and higher economic returns continue to accrue to those already endowed with capital and skill.”

However, the Deputy Chairperson said there is now an opportunity to build a new and inclusive economy that can benefit all South Africans and create a divisive break from the past.

Infrastructure that meets the goals of the NDP

The Directors-General in the economic cluster from the Department of Energy and the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) presented their department’s plans for achieving inclusive economic growth. The Director-General in the Department of Energy, Ms Elizabeth Marabwa, said delays in long-term infrastructure planning and procurement processes have resulted in some projects being postponed or cancelled. “Another important element is the inability of the public sector to generate funding required for projects,” she said.

It is important to stimulate the construction sector and increase its contribution to gross domestic product. However, Ms Marabwa stressed that

poor project management, monitoring, labour disputes and threats from the construction mafia and other disruptive behaviours in the construction sector remain a concern. The impact of Covid-19 also contributes to a bleak future in the sector.

Green economy interventions

The department has trained 300 small contractors in the forestry sector to date, with 74 potential contractors being trained on two chainsaw operations. The department has also included young people in their training programmes.

Agriculture and food security

The Department of Agriculture wants to make sure that underutilised land is used to uplift people from poverty.

According to Ms Marabwa: “This programme is really geared toward ensuring that we support food security programmes. The budget is being set aside and this particular project results in the support of 300 000 small-scale farmers.” There are plans to support a further 300 small farmers by 2030, thereby ensuring that about 15.7 million hectares of land will be utilised.

Most farmers depend on rainfall, which is erratic and unreliable and makes their productive activities inefficient. The department will assist

by increasing irrigation support and investment that will ensure support to emerging small-scale farmers and upscale them through production. The department has thus far supported 4 021 farmers.

Ms Marabwa said: “As a result, 678 assistant agricultural practitioners were employed, including 619 young people, four with disabilities. However, due to challenges of sustainable funding, agricultural graduates were employed for a short time and paid a stipend for three months.” It is also important to address the challenges of ensuring that learners in the sector are registered with professional bodies.

She also touched on the growing demands and regulation of the cannabis industry. A number of interventions have been made to enable the emergence of industrial and medicinal hemp. The department wants to make sure that the legal challenges posed by the drug are prioritised.

Tourism sector

On plans for tourism, the DPME is engaged with provinces and owners of strategic tourism assets to rejuvenate the sector. According to Ms Marabwa, one intervention is the roll-out of a maintenance programme for state-owned tourism attractions. The programme is focusing on national parks and has targeted 801 participants, 296 of whom are women, 466 youth and 17 people with disabilities.

Ms Marabwa said: “The programme into provincial parks is at an advanced stage. The department is ensuring that we support our national parks assets and ensure that their state of readiness is enhanced.” Other important strategic interventions are to reignite the domestic tourism market and develop targeted campaigns focusing on domestic tourists visiting local tourism attractions.

Ms Marabwa said: “It is important to make sure that we have our own people taking advantage of the tourism sector to keep it sustainable.” 🌱

Hardship here to stay, NCOP oversight summit on economic reconstruction and recovery hears



COLLECTIVE WISDOM: NCOP creates platform for engagement to find answers



Hardship has become a permanent feature of the South African economic landscape, the NCOP summit on oversight of the government's reconstruction and recovery plan heard, writes Sibongile Maputi.

The Chairperson of the Financial and Fiscal Commission, Dr Patience Mbava, gave a presentation on funding for the economic reconstruction and recovery plan, saying it was incontestable that the country's dire economic situation is likely to worsen. "Townships experience days on end without electricity due to infrastructure vandalism. Water supply interruptions are a way of life because of failing municipalities," Dr Mbava said. She added that although economic growth is stagnant, it is important

that public finances and policies respond to the challenges and the necessary economic transformation. "Growth is prone to shocks, some are domestic and some are international. We are yet to see how inflation will change this picture."

National Council of Provinces (NCOP) member Mr Mohammed Dangor said banks will not lend money until they are sure they will be repaid. "We need to create such institutions that will advance loans to poor people, who need the money and will be able to take the risks."

The session's facilitator, Mr Kenny Mmoiemang (a member of the NCOP), agreed, saying that with the billions of rands the government provides as financial support, South Africa should have a network of development-related institutions providing finance.

NCOP member Mr Mandla Rayi asked whether there had been a change in the government's scenario planning, which he thought needs improvement. He also wanted to know who the government's social partners are that will work with it to achieve economic reconstruction and recovery.

The Deputy Chairperson of the NCOP, Ms Sylvia Lucas, asked about renewable energy and said members want to see industrialisation and economic development. "If Eskom is unable to produce electricity, how are we going to ensure energy supply that could guarantee economic recovery?" she asked. She also wanted to know if the money spent on renewable energy is achieving the government's intentions. Timeframes for plan implementation are also needed.

Mr Mmoiemang asked whether the independent power producer (IPP) programme will be able to deal with the current challenge with electricity supply. "Eskom's plant performance is at 58 per cent. What percentage can the country [aim for] to be the target, in order to ensure that there are no power cuts?" he asked.

Dr Elizabeth Mabarwa responded by saying that a stable electricity supply required a lot of funding and old power plants and technology need to be replaced. "The challenge is of old power plants and complying with emissions power standards. So, it is a combination of factors that are affecting the efficiency of the company." Nonetheless, the IPP programme has had an impact overall and 65 000 jobs have been created.

"Townships experience days on end without electricity due to infrastructure vandalism. Water supply interruptions are a way of life because of failing municipalities"

**Chairperson of the Financial and Fiscal Commission,
Dr Patience Mbava**

Dr Annette Griessel, Deputy Director-General National Planning Coordination in the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation said the government does scenario planning and is guided by the National Development Plan and medium-term planning. She said there was a need to modernise the government's approach to planning and incorporate other methods that will advance a sustainable development agenda. "Maybe we should adopt flexible and agile approaches to meet and respond to shifts in the environment," she said. 🌱



SA ready to host 2023 Netball World Cup

The 2023 Netball World Cup board of directors briefed the Portfolio Committee on Sport, Arts and Culture recently on the work that has gone into preparing for the event in South Africa, including appointing a board, establishing an inter-ministerial committee and signing broadcasting deals, writes Sibongile Maputi.

Further work has included welcoming World Netball officials, securing venues, identifying legacy programmes, appointing a tournament director, unveiling of the logo and staging preparatory events. Plans for fan parks and viewing areas, ticket sales, funding and planning the route the trophy will follow were also unveiled during the meeting.

Committee member Ms Vuyisile Malomane asked how many African teams have qualified to participate in the event. "This is important, as it will develop netball on the continent. Netball SA should be in the top six and not only qualify because they are hosts." In response, the delegation said that a mentoring programme is being contemplated with Botswana and the United States to invest in the game.

Ms Malomane also asked about the construction of 30 courts for the tournament and heard that some were new builds, while others were upgrades. It has not yet been decided where to build the two courts with wooden sprung floors planned for the African continent.

Committee members also asked about the professionalisation of netball in South Africa, the socio-economic and tourism impacts of hosting the tournament, who the lead sponsor will be, staffing the tournament and funding the fan parks.

The delegation of members of the board of directors told the committee that staff would work at the tournament on secondment on short-term contracts. They also said that professionalising the sport had been the primary motivation in bidding for the games. Any surplus funds earned while hosting the games will be shared between World Netball and South Africa. The delegation also intends to benefit from best practice learnt while hosting the Football World Cup 2010, which was played in South Africa. 🇿🇦

Mr Joe Maswanganyi



GEPF's investment portfolio grows from R127 billion to R2.9 trillion in two decades

The members of the Standing Committee on Finance heard recently that the Government Employees Pension Fund's (GEPF's) investment portfolio grew from R127 billion in 1996 to R2.9 trillion by the end of 2020/21 financial year, writes Justice Molafo.

This information was revealed by Mr Musa Mabesa, the GEPF's Principal Executive Officer. Mr Mabesa together with GEPF's senior managers and Deputy Chairperson of the board of trustees, Mr Eddie Kekana, presented a report on the fund's annual performance for the year under review. Mr Kekana said the fund had 1 265 406 active members, including public servants, 473 312 pensioners and beneficiaries, by end of March of 2021.

The GEPF is a state-owned entity established to manage and administer pensions and related benefits on behalf of the government's employees. It paid R111 billion in various benefits in the period under review, including payment of monthly pensions as well as funeral and resignation benefits.

Members of the committee welcomed the presentation, with the committee Chairperson, Mr Joe Maswanganyi, saying that the fund's performance in the year under review is commendable. However, he encouraged Mr Mabesa and the Head of Corporate Services, Ms Portia Mngomezulu, to prioritise filling all vacant positions within the fund.

"You have the responsibility to ensure that the vacancy rate is always kept at zero per cent. We are saying this because the quarterly labour force surveys delivered by the Statistics South Africa show a growing unemployment rate among the young people," said Mr Maswanganyi. 🇿🇦

International Relations House Chairperson welcomes adoption of progress declaration on Global Compact on Migration in New York

The National Assembly House Chairperson for International Relations, Mr Madala Ntombela, says the adoption of a progress declaration at the International Migration Review Forum conference in New York will inspire future progress in this area, reports Manelisi Wolela.



Mr Madala Ntombela

Over 190 countries, including South Africa, represented by Cabinet members, leaders of parliaments and many other organisations gave country progress reports on achievements and challenges, and also shared best practices on the execution of the Global Compact on Migration that was adopted in 2018.

Mr Ntombela described the conference as encouraging collective efforts to address challenges facing over 280 million migrants worldwide, some of whom are subjected to human trafficking and other abuses, with thousands losing their lives and livelihoods in their efforts to flee terrible situations in their own countries.

Mr Ntombela said the world must solve its migration problems collaboratively with nations of origin, with both transit and receiving nations all taking responsibility for addressing adverse conditions including poverty and conflicts, which lead to human rights abuses.

He described migration as an inherently human characteristic that is as old as humanity itself. Parliament's participation in these global efforts to build a better world for migrants will enhance its execution of the oversight and public participation

mandate. He pledged that Parliament will engage the people of South Africa to help build a national movement towards safer, orderly regular migration management.

The conference concluded on 20 May with over 158 pledges of funds, policy and strategy changes, ending of practices of detaining migrant children and clear efforts to deal with climate changes and their aftermath that affect migrants more.

The South African delegation included the Deputy Minister of Home Affairs, Mr Njabulo Nzuza, who led the delegation and presented the country's progress report, as well as the Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York, Ambassador Mathu Joyini.

Mr Ntombela said the parliamentary delegation will submit a report with recommendations and decisions taken on the South African Parliament's course of action. 🌍

Stakeholders concerned by budget increase for politicians' VIP protection

The Standing and Select Committees on Appropriations held a joint meeting to consider public hearings on the 2022 Appropriation Bill as part of their oversight over South Africa's fiscal framework. The committees also held public hearings to ensure that citizens have a say on matters related to the Bill, writes Jabulani Majozi.

Stakeholders making inputs on the Bill – including Equal Education, the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) – had mixed views about it. In its submission, SAICA questioned the budget increase allocated to VIP protection

and argued that it should be given to the National Prosecuting Authority. SAICA argued that it is wrong to deprive the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) of much-needed revenue when it has to ensure justice for over 60 million citizens.

The committees acknowledged that there is a case to be made regarding the budget given to VIP protection services when compared to that given to the NPA. SAICA's Dr Sharon Smulders pointed out that the NPA needs a further R1.7 billion to process state capture cases and modernise the organisations. Another area of concern for SAICA is the use of contingency reserve funds for bailouts to South African Airways (SAA) and the Land Bank. SAICA believes that the reserve fund is underfunded. Furthermore, it should rather be used to address needs arising from the recent floods in KwaZulu-Natal along with other natural disasters and pandemics.

Equal Education's submission was that the basic education sector is rife with underspending, irregular and wasteful expenditure. It pointed out that some R2.7 billion was irregularly spent through the Accelerated Schools Infrastructure Delivery Initiative between 2011 and 2019.

Equal Education researcher Ms Jane Frances called on the committees to advocate for basic education and provide meaningful oversight over the sector. COSATU welcomed the extension of the R350 Social Relief of Distress grant and the Presidential Employment Stimulus, but expressed disappointment that its funding had been cut, resulting in the jobs target being cut as well.

The committees also welcomed a submission from a lone member of the public, Mr V Kalikopu, and encouraged more people to interact with them on issues around public finance.

The Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Appropriation, Mr Sfiso Buthelezi, said: "Eskom has an impact on education and the labour force. We can't talk about the Appropriation Bill without talking about Eskom." Mr Buthelezi continued: "We are seeing wasteful and fruitless expenditure and underspending, and yet departments come and request more funding." 🌍

Gender mainstreaming dominates discussion during CPA Africa Region Conference



Ms Winnie Ngwenya

During the recent Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Africa Region conference held in Freetown, Sierra Leone, all African parliaments were urged to prioritise proportional women's representation and gender mainstreaming in their legislatures and governments, writes Xihlamariso Ngoveni.

The discussion on evolving and adapting new strategies to increase women's participation in politics set the tone for a gender focus in the conference's discussion topics. Delegates to the 52nd CPA Africa Region conference shared challenges, best practice and experiences on what can be done to strengthen support to female Members of Parliament to ensure that they are leaders in their own right and not tokens or proxies for political correctness.

In her Southern Africa Subregional activity report, the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Representative, Mrs Winnie Ngwenya, emphasised the urgent need for gender-responsive budgeting and the use of legislative instruments to enforce gender mainstreaming.

She described how the South African Parliament uses its policy making and legislative instruments to support and protect women against gender-based violence and femicide. "We treat parliamentary committees as a more formal mechanism to enable both male

and female Members of Parliament to influence legislative and policy agendas, both through reviewing bills to ensure that they are gender sensitive, but also by holding enquiries into gender equality issues," said Mrs Ngwenya.

"To this end, I am pleased to report that the South African Parliament has passed three progressive pieces of legislation aimed at protecting vulnerable women in our country. The three acts to be implemented in South Africa are the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act, the Domestic Violence Amendment Act and the Criminal and Related Matters Amendment Act.

The conference commended Rwanda for achieving over 60 per cent women represented in its national Parliament, and said this is a model for others to follow. South African was also commended for having nine female Speakers among the 10 legislatures, including the National Parliament.

Although countries such as South Africa, Rwanda and Zambia report great progress in gender inclusivity in their legislatures and in policies to protect women, the likes of Malawi, Sierra Leone, Ghana and others still have work to do to ensure that more women participate in politics.

However, in addition to the important need to increase the number of women in Parliament, the conference resolved that gender-sensitive legislation needs to be enacted to ensure that, even in instances where gender parity is achieved, women are not placed in strategic positions as tokens and proxies for powerful men, but as equal and able leaders of society.

The conference heard that other challenges with women's representation depend on political ideology and vary from country to country. The Speaker of the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Legislature, Ms Nontembeko Boyce, argued that her political party has a 50/50 gender representation policy, while other political parties in the country are silent on the matter. On the same matter, the President of Female Caucus in the Sierra Leone Parliament, Ms Veronica Kadi Sesay, argued that members of her caucus are united on women matters and value representation above political affiliation.

During a discussion on the continent's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the plenary noted that women were greatly affected by the pandemic, resulting in loss of income, poverty and threatened food security. A member of the Western Cape Provincial Legislature, Ms Matlhodi Maseko, urged the CPA Secretariat to create a universal virtual database wherein best practices, research and prevention

"We treat parliamentary committees as a more formal mechanism to enable both male and female Members of Parliament to influence legislative and policy agendas, both through reviewing bills to ensure that they are gender sensitive, but also by holding enquiries into gender equality issues,"

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Representative, Mrs Winnie Ngwenya

methods can be shared within the region.

Although most discussions revolved around gender mainstreaming and how women bear the brunt of poverty, pandemics and oppression, other topics discussed in the plenary included:

- **strengthening parliamentary visibility: parliamentary efforts in resource allocation for purposes of executing its constitutional mandate**
- **the role of African parliaments in accelerating intra-Africa trade**
- **mobilising regional, international coordination and cooperation to respond to Covid-19 and future pandemics**
- **drawing lessons from Covid-19 to plan for future pandemics**

The Speaker of the Gauteng Provincial Legislature and Treasurer of the CPA Africa Region, Ms Ntombi Mekgwe, emphasised the need to strengthen the CPA's finance subcommittee to ensure that women's activities are supported optimally. She vowed to use her position as CPA Regional Treasurer to influence funding of conference resolutions and the implementation of women's empowerment programmes in the region. 🌍

Parliamentarians visit farms to assess the plight of farm workers

During a meeting in Bloemfontein in Free State at the start of a three-day oversight visit to check on the working conditions on farms countrywide, various stakeholders told a delegation from the portfolio committees on Agriculture, Rural Development and Land Reform and of Employment and Labour that working conditions in the agricultural sector are tough and tantamount to slavery in some instances, writes Abel Mputing.

Giving context to this nationwide undertaking, the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Employment and Labour, Ms Lindelwa Dunjwa, explained that the delegation was in the province in response to a motion raised in the National Assembly in 2020, which recommended that both committees should conduct oversight visits to farms to assess the plight of farm workers across all provinces and to make recommendations to address their predicaments. This motion has since been amended into a resolution that the committees should determine the effectiveness of various labour policies and laws meant to regulate the working and living conditions of farm workers.

A representative from the Congress of South African Trade Unions, Mr Monyatsi Mahlatsi, implored the Department of Employment and Labour to undertake advocacy workshops to ensure that farm workers and owners are made aware of the labour laws applicable to the sector. Many farm workers struggle to access labour unions or are victimised if they



Ms Lindelwa Dunjwa, Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Employment and Labour

are members, he pointed out. This means they are not able to make use of their rights prescribed by law.

Ongoing evictions of farm workers, despite the promulgation of the Extension of Security of Tenure Act (ESTA), is an ongoing problem, Mr Mahlatsi continued. "The problem with ESTA is that it seeks to ensure that evictions follow a due process. It does not protect farm workers from

evictions, even if they are entitled to the security of tenure."

Ms Pulane Maile of the South African Clothing and Textile Workers Union, urged health inspectors to check whether farmer owners comply with legislation set up to protect farm workers from exposure to pesticides and other health risks endemic to the agricultural sector. She further

noted that these workers need access to various services, such as water and sanitation, health clinics, police services, social workers and government schools. Ms Maile also mentioned that farm workers do not receive recognition for their skills when they move on from farm work.

The Food and Allied Democratic Workers Union's Mr Thulani Klass said farm workers often struggle to exact justice when they suffer physical abuse on farms due to a lack of access to legal services on remote farms. He pointed out that farm owners often unleash dogs on union representatives when they visit farms to resolve disputes or protect farm workers.

The committee also heard that even the recently promulgated minimum wage is insufficient for workers' needs due to the rising cost of living, which is fuelled by recent increases of fuel prices, said a representative of

agricultural services company AFGRI, Ms Sosie Matla. "Recent petrol hikes are more than what farm workers earn per day. The prescribed minimum wage is now way too little." At worst, she added: "Some farm owners find it difficult to pay their workers a minimum wage and are forced to pay in kind."

A representative from the South African National Farmers Union, Mr Tebogo Tamane, claimed that illegal evictions are as a result of the growth of illegal immigrants. "Farm owners prefer to hire illegal immigrants because is more cost effective for them. They don't have to pay them the minimum wage as prescribed by legislation." Mr Tamane also suggested that vandalism and criminality on farms, which often leads to farm murders, is a result of the gross human rights violations and physical abuse experienced by farm workers at the hands of farm owners.

Responding to questions and concerns raised in the meeting, the departments of Employment and Labour and of Agriculture, Rural Development and Land Reform clarified the specific guidelines and proposed long-term solutions to fight abusive practices and protect the rights of farm workers. According to acting Chief Director of Shared Services Centre of the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development and Land Reform Mr Steven Modise, the Rapid Response on Rural Safety has been charged with implementing a land rights awareness campaign to protect farm workers' rights.

Policy and legislative amendments are also afoot to provide farm dwellers with permanent security of land tenure and to expropriate land to secure their tenure. "The district land rights management committees, board and facility will assist in mediating eviction disputes through the panel of mediators and legal representatives," he continued.

The acting Director for Public Employment Services, Ms Nombeko Mahlangu, spoke about the inspections they have undertaken to ensure that farm owners adhere to the Labour Relations Act. "We constantly educate farm employers that it's their legal duty to keep employment records," she emphasised. If farmers do not comply with these pieces of legislation they are reported to law enforcement agencies. 🇿🇦





Land Claims - Committee Welcomes Purchase of Part of Rietfontein Farm

A delegation of the portfolio committees on Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development and of Employment and Labour visited the Mahlaela and Ledwaba families who lodged a claim for part of Rietfontein Farm, where they have lived for decades, writes Sureshinee Govender.

The delegation visited the farm as part of its three-day oversight visit to see the living conditions of farm dwellers and farm workers in Limpopo. The committees are visiting all nine provinces, where they visit farm communities and hold community meetings to hear from farm dwellers and farm workers about their living conditions.

The delegation heard from the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development that R2.4 million has been approved for the purchase of 266 hectares of the farm and the claim is in its final stages. The conveyancing attorney is in the process of registering a trust for the Mahlaela and Ledwaba families, which

must exist before the land can be transferred to them. According to the department, it is hoped that the land claim application will be finalised by August this year.

The delegation heard from the claimants that they live under unbearable conditions, in mud houses, with no water, sanitation nor electricity. Asked by the leader of the delegation, Inkosi Zwelivelile Mandela, about its plans to alleviate this situation, the department said that the implementation of plans depends on the land being transferred to the trust.

Many farm dwellers complained in a public meeting which the delegation convened as part of its oversight programme in Groblersdal, about forceful and unfair evictions. Inkosi Mandela told farm dwellers that there is a court ruling on land restitution claims. He informed the claimants that there is a backlog of 6 000 land restitution claims still waiting to be processed. Only claims lodged before 1998 are being processed by the Land Claims Commission.

The delegation heard from Mr Bekwa



Inkosi Zwelivelile Mandela Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development

Bafedi that his farm, Weltevrede JS 165, was forcibly taken from him. The farmer also stole his cattle and built a fence around the farm, preventing him from visiting the graves of his family. He provided the delegation with evidence of his claim and appealed for assistance to regain his farm.

Labour tenants also told the delegation that they have lived for years on farms with no title deeds. Inkosi Mandela told the meeting that the closing date for labour tenant claims was 31 March 2001.

Farm dwellers highlighted a range of

problems they experience on farms, including falling ill due to the toxic chemicals farmers use, being dismissed before their contracts expire and not receiving a pension when they retire. This was reported to the Department of Employment and Labour, but the department has not acted on their complaints.

The delegation directed the departments of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development and of Employment and Labour to write a report on the complaints for the committees of Agriculture and Labour and submit it in a month's time. 🌱