

**ADDRESS BY THE DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NATIONAL PLANNING
COMMISSION, PROFESSOR TINYIKO MALULEKE**

5 MAY 2023

Members of the National Planning Commission,

Secretary of Planning, Dr Kefiloe Masiteng and Dr Robert Nkuna, DG of the DPME,
and other senior government officials, and

Members of the Secretariat,

Good morning.

I want to welcome all of you here this morning to, what is effectively, our first actual meeting about the about the work of the National Planning Commission (NPC) since our new Chairperson, and Minister in the Presidency responsible for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation has been appointed into this position. At our first engagement or meeting, if you will, it was safe to say that it was a learning experience for both parties with the NPC providing the background to the establishment go the organisation and she was able to provide preliminary advice and guidance based on her political role to guide the work of the NPC and to implement the National Development Plan (NDP).

The Minister has apologised for today although she would have really loved to attend her first meeting, but she has challenges to deal with at a family level, hence she cannot be with us today. We could have postponed the meeting but she allowed us to go ahead.

What this means is that this meeting is about getting down to business now, considering the tight time-frames facing the country. This includes, as noted previously, the less than seven years before the deadlines to meet the NDP objectives, but crucially, the challenges that we face as a country as we enter our seventh democratic elections. While it may be that pundits and experts tend to refer to each consecutive round of elections as the most\decisive, we must recognise that the cracks apparent both within the state and the political parties, coupled with our deteriorating economy, crime, corruption and fracturing social cohesion makes this a critical time.

I want to remind us all, as commissioners and officials of the role that the NPC plays as we start our deliberations. Government draws on the expertise and advice of commissioners to guide its work. This requires that the NPC take a back-looking stance that assesses progress made while providing advice that will change the trajectory that it identifies. Located in the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, it is ideally placed to draw on the expertise in the department as well as related government departments in the Presidency such as Statistics South Africa, GCIS, and the cross-cutting nature of the Presidency.

I am aware that the NPC's Ten-Year Review is in the process of being finalised. I have been informed that the team under the leadership of Commissioner Ramatsetse and the Secretary of Planning has prepared a draft ten-year review of the NDP. This review interrogates how the progress of the NDP has changed since its adoption, taking into consideration various crises that have emerged around the world and within the country (i.e., Covid-19, Ukraine war, severe flooding and landslides in KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape). This review, which will be made public in a few months, assesses the key NDP indicators or targets, such as poverty, inequality, and unemployment for the past ten years (i.e., 2012-2022); it also evaluates the extent to which planning has been institutionalised and what reforms to the country's planning system have been undertaken following the adoption of the NDP.

Taking an even longer time horizon the DG of DPME will provide a presentation on the 30 Year Review of Democracy on the thinking around the drafting of the country's 30 Year review, whose release next year is expected to coincide with 30 years since the advent of democracy in South Africa. The moment will also mark the end of term for the 6th Administration of South Africa's democratic dispensation, and the 2019-2024 cycle of the Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF). As such, there is cause to pause and reflect on the journey, the achievements, shortcomings, and the roadmap towards 2030 and beyond in pursuit of a better life for all the country's citizens. The DG's presentation will provide details on how the 30-Year Review Evidence Report Project will be conducted in terms of its aims and objectives, the overarching approach and methodology, project plan and key milestones.

The work above helps us answer the question: WHERE ARE WE NOW? All findings should help us craft where we want to be in medium (MTSF) and long term, next NDP.

While these reflections about ten years and 30 years progress within the country, are important it must be recognised that these are reflections by the state. However, the NPC are not members of the state as we are independent experts that provide advice to the state. So, we occupy that unique space of being able to foresee challenges with implementation while being able to provide advice without actually implementing it. In her first speech to us, the Minister highlighted the importance of the principles that bolster our democracy as contained in the Constitution. One of the rights enshrined in that guiding document is that of free of the press. You will be aware that two days ago on 3 May, South Africa, along with the rest of the free world, recognised this inherent right. It is one we must continue to uphold because we owe the media a debt of gratitude. Were it not for their constant digging and checking, many of the corrupt state practices uncovered by the Zondo Commission would have been ignored and be allowed to run rampant. Our job is to make sure that while the press exposes state corruption, it is a balanced approach that looks at the role that the private sector plays in facilitating it.

When we addressed the NCOP on about a month ago, we all stressed the importance of incorporating climate change effects into our planning from national to local government level. The chair looks forward to getting the input from the Economy Work stream about the deliberations currently taking place at Parliament on the Climate Change Bill. We should look forward to, amongst others, deliberating on the Climate Change Bill currently before Parliament and the role of the NPC in supporting the process of integrating climate change planning and actions within government and across society more broadly. This crucial framework legislation not only establishes the Presidential Climate Commission in law, but it also spells out the interactions, responsibilities, and development requirements of an effective climate change response and a long-term, just transition to a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy and society for South Africa in the context of sustainable development.

Any proposals to grow the country and improve the lives of our people must take an integrated, comprehensive approach rather than a patchwork method where we are left constantly trying to find our feet. I am therefore quite keen to engage with the presentation from the Enhancing Quality of Life Work stream, which is expected to focus on their priority areas of education, health, social protection, and the cross-cutting issues pertaining to children and disability in a comprehensive manner. As society, we understand the basic importance of providing each citizen with the tools to

manage their lives. We must recognise, however, despite the good intentions, a large percentage of children are unable to read for meaning by grade four. This is only reading for comprehension. How do we overcome that context and move ahead to get them to think in creative ways? It's a cliché, I know, but the pace of changes in the world is so rapid, we have to ask ourselves. 'What future are we preparing these children for, and are we being fair to them?'

Taking a cross-cutting comprehensive approach means that we need to address these challenges from different fronts but so that they aim for the same outcome. We often hear statements like 'It is not difficult', 'We need to pull together' and 'We must invest in the future of our children and our country'. You have all heard this. It seems like the simplest thing in the world. But we have not been able to do this seemingly simple thing. I am pleased that the Enhancing the Quality of Life is taking such a comprehensive approach to education because as we all know. We never stop learning. This approach can only work if we recognise that for all of us to pull together, we must promote social cohesion in a manner that co-ordinates and monitors actions so that it results in the changes that will see us build a truly South African nation based on *Ubuntu*.

I have stated it before so I want to reiterate it, we cannot do this sitting isolated in our various ivory towers. We must engage with the people in the country, be they as individuals or as part of organised formations. In fact, we must challenge ourselves to go beyond our comfort zones of simply releasing statements or participating in interview panels. We must meet with those fellow South Africans who make us shake our heads and say 'Aikona I don't understand that one.' We must do this so that we bridge those divides and we understand how our perception of them may be skewed, but more importantly, how their perception of us may be based on incorrect assumptions. What we as the NPC are proposing on many fronts, research, op eds and advisories is not easy as all. It requires that we open ourselves up to change and to learning so that ultimately, we build a future that has South Africans that truly want to make a difference. This, ultimately, is the aim of the NDP.

In closing, I would really want us to look back and reflect on the journey so far, particularly for us as this third NPC, just to name a few milestones. Indeed, our progress was founded on the previous two NPCs that came before us. We undertook to take forward the work as the institution.

Since we came into office, we contributed to the debate on NHI in Parliament, to ensure progress towards universal health for all. Our meeting with the media houses set the tone and needs to be elevated and sustained. We saw the signed a Sustainable Development Corporation Framework with UNDP as part on international partnerships, we need an update on the progress made to date. We have had consultations with non-state and state partners on critical developmental issues such as Just Transition to low carbon economy, ERRP and Vulindlela, demographic dividend and health issue, Social Protection Floor, Building a capable state, Professionalising the public Service, the Youth workshop as well as Social Cohesion.

This commission has provided advisory note on the Climate Change and the Environment, which was aligned to the disaster period and how the country can be resilient and agile in such conditions. The advice provided on energy building on the paper concluded in the previous NPC has found space in this most complicated state of affairs in our country on load shedding. The last half of 2022, had many more interactions with the social partners on energy, social cohesion, BIG, Social Compact, Child hunger, Firearm diversion Country investment, SAHRC, Township Economy, Employment Scenarios, to name a few. The work we have done in the first year of our tenure has been critical even in building relations and partnerships with development agencies such as World Bank and UNDP. NPC has interacted with Waterberg and OR Tambo on DDM, as well as COGTA and SALGA.

The interface between NPC and Government has improved at the level of departments including the School of Government which initiated training on long term planning. The collaboration between NPC and government is growing to support planning in the country, part of this includes the integrated planning Bill, NDP implementation monitoring through MTSF, National Spatial Development Framework with Rural Development, The Presidency, DPSA, PSC and many others. Lastly since we met, the commission has met with department of Land Affairs on NSDF, with many other engagements discussing matter NDP and development in our country. All this information will form part of our NPC Annual Report in June and our discussion with the President, when we get the date from the Minister`s office in due course.

The critical milestone to finalise now is the Ten Year Review, let`s read and contribute.

I thank you.