

OPENING REMARKS BY MINISTER GUNGUBELE

MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

11 APRIL 2022

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you to the first media engagement of the third National Planning Commission (NPC). You will note that I specifically referred to it being the first because we envisaged that it will be the first of many such engagements with this Commission. We want to take this opportunity to provide you with some more information about the Commission and to take that first step in building the relationship with you.

You may remember that we announced the names of this in December last year just before the festive break. As you will have seen at the time, this Commission, like the ones that preceded it, is composed of people who are experts in their respective fields and whose experience is testament to their passion for this country. The process of choosing a new Commission was not an easy one. We are lucky that the country has produced many great thinkers and many compatriots whose vision aligns with the best interests of the country.

Before you think that I am here to simply sing their praises, let me be clear that the reason I am doing so is because the appointment of these commissioners by the President sends another message. That message is that it is time that we roll up our sleeves and we begin to work actively towards the change in the country that the National Development Plan (NDP) envisages. This is in line with the President's overall plan focusing on delivery that includes new initiatives by the such as the District Development Model and the establishment of commissions to address specific areas of concern.

You will also be aware that this year marks 10 years since the NDP was adopted by all parties in Parliament as the guide to take us to a different and improved South Africa by 2030. Let me repeat that, different and improved. It was designed to change the lives of all South Africans by taking a comprehensive approach where the reality of 2012 became a different

one by 2030. In fact, the Vision Statement says, 'Now in 2030 we live in a country which we have remade.' When we say 'different', the cynics among us will say, 'yes, worse than before' which is why we say, 'and improved'.

I don't want to ignore the cynics, so let me say with candour, using the thinking proposed by Jack Welch, that we must recognise that we have not met the goals as we intended ten years ago. That is true. Recognising this is the first step to asking, how do we do things differently to change the trajectory that we are on. This is where these very smart people appointed will assist us as we tackle this challenge where implementation of our plans have not met the targets.

Before I go into what this NPC will be expected to focus on during their tenure and some of the challenges that they will face, let me, again responding to cynics, remind all of us about the basic principles of the National Development Plan. You will know that the overall objectives are to eliminate poverty and reduce unemployment and inequality and the principles that underpin how this will be done include strong leadership, a capable state and an active citizenry.

How these three supporting principles work together is important which is where you, the media, have an important role to play. This is not a plan for government to implement only. We have plenty of those. This is a plan for the entire country. For strong leadership and a capable state, the country must have an active citizenry. These three are interlinked, in fact the NDP represents them as cogs turning the machine that will move us forward.

We have seen wonderful instances where they have worked well: We have just lived through 750 days of national disaster due to the Covid-19 pandemic – during this period, we have seen the state, despite its fiscal challenges, making provision, albeit a small amount, for extra support to those households that needed it. We have seen citizens rallying to support others during this time either through non-governmental organisations or by contributing to the Solidarity Fund. We accept that it is your role as the media to let us know where we are failing but I want to suggest that it is equally your role to celebrate the positive contributions that citizens make to our country. I am aware of an online publication, News24, that recently did just that on 1 April 2022 instead of the usual false stories that make up April's fool.

While there have been some gains, we know that this has been far from adequate. We must serve our people better. This brings me to the reason that we are here today. Government recognises that the National Planning Commission's ultimate mandate as captured in its name is long-term planning. This speaks to that Vision that I spoke of earlier. Where do we see ourselves by 2030? And remember, 2030 is not the end, it is a milestone in the journey of our country, but it is a milestone with targets that must show that we have progressed.

Although ten years have passed since the NDP was adopted, we are conscious that only eight years remain for us to reach that milestone. This period that has passed allows us to measure how far we have come. While the NPC's focus must be on long-term planning, it is equally important that they understand how implementation takes place, what the obstacles are, and to provide guidance as we get back on course to meeting our long-term goals.

Since their appointment in December, the NPC has had several meetings both as the whole Commission and as smaller working groups to get to grips with their mandate as well as the challenges that face the country which essentially are the challenges that face the Commission. This has included induction about government processes so that meeting their responsibilities become easier as well extensive and detailed discussions about what the main challenges are.

While the Deputy Chairperson will outline the Commission's mandate as well as some of these challenges, allow me to briefly touch on some of the discussions that I have been privy to. There was an overwhelming sense that one of the main issues that must be resolved is that the National Development Plan must once again be at the centre of both government action as well as the national discourse. This engagement today is one of the first steps to getting people to talk about it, to think about what they (and that includes you) can do to make it happen, and then to ensure that it is implemented in every part of our country.

One of the shortcomings that they identified through this discussion was the incapacity of the state to implement the proposals of the NDP. This often combined with poor leadership that

pay lip-service to the NDP without understanding its goals has acted as an obstacle to implementation of developmental objectives. As government, we are clear that the greatest challenge has been around implementation and in the discussions held to date, this was my emphasis to guide the discussions. These are just some of the issues that have come up and that will be refined as the Commission deals with the complexity of the state and all its components and spheres, society whether as organised formations or as the general citizenry, and the interface between the two. Neither the state nor society is uniform, singular, or without historical challenges.

In concluding, I want to reiterate that the aim of this morning's engagement is to present the National Planning Commission to you, to give you some insight into the work that they will be undertaking for the next five years, and to, in this way, start the process of getting the National Development Plan to be in the public domain again. This engagement, obviously, has the further aim of ensuring that by starting the discussion with you, you are not only going to hold us responsible for what we pledge here today, but that you will see it fit to act as our partners as we get the country working towards implementing the goals of the NDP.

I thank you.