

Reaffirming the Centrality of the National Development Plan: SONA and Parliament

20 February 2026

The [National Planning Commission](#) (NPC) welcomes the strong focus of the State of the Nation Address (SONA) on the objectives of the [National Development Plan: Vision 2030](#) (NDP). We are pleased that, in his SONA, the President placed the NDP at the centre of South Africa's long-term planning framework.

Ahead of the 2026 State of the Nation Address (SONA), the Commission called on the President to [reaffirm the centrality of the NDP](#) in guiding national priorities and ensuring policy coherence. This message was reiterated when the NPC addressed the Portfolio Committee on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation on 18 February 2026.

While the NPC's presentation to the Portfolio Committee focused on progress made with meeting the NDP targets, the NPC took the opportunity to point out its status as an independent advisory body, not an implementing department. The presentation outlined the constraints caused by the state's inability to translate policy and plans into viable projects with budgets and outcomes. The Commission also pointed out the problem of poor coordination and lack of coherent implementation across government departments.

The Commission raised concerns about delayed infrastructure, deteriorating services, reduced private sector confidence, and slower job creation, which have a disproportionate effect on women, children, youth, and people with disabilities. By drawing attention to specific challenges emanating from the inability of local governments to access and utilise reliable and comprehensive data, the Commission pointed out the importance of state capacity. Reliance on fragmented data sets undermines the state's ability to detect and respond to performance gaps and implementation lapses.

The presentation to Parliament had been preceded by an NPC virtual Post-SONA public engagement designed to deepen public dialogue and analysis of the SONA. This took place on 16 February 2026, with the theme "*Perspectives and Priorities Beyond the President's Address*". The engagement brought together Commissioners, stakeholders, and members of the public to reflect on the alignment between SONA commitments and the country's long-term developmental objectives.

Alignment with the National Development Plan

Addressing the engagement, NPC Deputy Chairperson, Professor Tinyiko Maluleke, described the SONA as a critical moment for national reflection. He said, "The State of the Nation Address is a very important moment in the annual calendar of the country. It allows us to assess whether we are making sufficient progress towards eradicating poverty, unemployment, and inequality, and, increasingly, corruption as outlined in the National Development Plan."

While welcoming the strong resonance between the President's address and the Commission's work, particularly on [water security, energy reform](#) and economic development, Maluleke cautioned against crisis-driven governance based on short-term planning.

Key Sectoral Reflections

During the engagement, Commissioners reflected on major priorities across economic, social and governance sectors. They emphasised the need to strengthen coordination in [mobilising financial resources for productive investment](#), infrastructure expansion and job creation, supported by [improved governance](#) and accelerated energy and [green growth reforms](#). [Small and medium enterprises](#) were identified as central to employment and innovation, yet constrained by regulatory complexity, underscoring the need for streamlined licensing, reduced red tape and enhanced digital systems.

The importance of [building a capable state](#) through, among others, the professionalisation of public service, the strengthening of [municipal capacity](#) and the combating [of corruption and organised crime](#), was emphasised.

Commissioners highlighted that persistent [rising cost of living, persistent unemployment and inequality](#) continue to undermine quality of life. They emphasised the need [for strengthening income support, early childhood development](#), digital inclusion and broader social protection systems.

Planning Beyond 2030

The NPC welcomed the President's emphasis on planning beyond 2030 and the National Dialogue process aimed at shaping a new social compact. As the country approaches the 2030 horizon, the Commission will continue to provide independent, evidence-based advice to support implementation, strengthen institutions and advance inclusive development.

As an independent advisory body appointed by the President, the NPC is the custodian of South Africa's NDP: Vision 2030. The primary role of the NPC is to advise government and Parliament on matters pertaining to the implementation of the NDP. It also has the responsibility to mobilise the whole of society, including the private sector, around the objectives of the NDP, which remains the only cross-cutting long-term plan for national development in South Africa.

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