

NPC STATEMENT

Delivered by NPC DEPUTY CHAIR PROF TINYIKO MALULEKE AT INAUGURAL MEDIA BRIEFING

On the 27th April 2022, South Africa marks 28 years of democracy.

In September this year, a key milestone in the lifespan of our young democracy will be reached. It will be ten years since the adoption of the [National Development Plan](#) (NDP) as the country's development blueprint.

While these are significant milestones, it is glaring that the democratic dividend has not been shared equally or realised by all South Africans

If the dignity, equality and prosperity envisaged in both our Constitution and in the NDP are to become a reality, there is urgency for South Africa to meet its development goals.

From the day of its inauguration in December 2021, the 3rd National Planning Commission has been keenly aware of the gap between the objectives stated in the NDP and the progress towards their achievement.

Understandably, one of the most frequently asked questions has to do with the slow progress of the implementation of the National Development Plan.

The [review](#) of the NDP done by the previous National Planning Commission in 2020 concluded that the country is unlikely to meet many of the goals on our current developmental trajectory as captured in the NDP. One of the major findings of the NDP review was that implementation of the NDP has been weak, and that little remedial action has been taken to address the implementation shortcomings. As a result of the poor implementation track record, now made worse by the deadly devastation of Covid-19, the country has veered badly off the development course and targets set out in the NDP. One of the most urgent tasks facing the 3rd NPC is that of facilitating a return to course. In re-centring the NDP as the main development plan of the country, we will work towards a realignment and a cohering of all key national plans such as the MTSF and the spatial planning framework around the developmental priorities of the NDP.

In December 2021, when President Ramaphosa appointed the country's third NPC, he summarized our mandate as that of:

1. Leading the development of a strategy for a post COVID-19 economy and society to deal with the country's triple challenge of poverty, unemployment, and inequality by 2030.
2. Supporting a strong leadership that will be required to mobilise society to promote the acceleration in implementing the National Development Plan towards 2030.
3. Forging a conversation among key stakeholders, leading to effective and impactful social compacts on a number of key issues facing the country.
4. Providing advice on key developmental priorities included those linked to food security, water security, energy choices, economic development, the economy's structure, social cohesion, education, health, 4IR, public transport, industrial development, spatial planning and climate change.
5. Undertaking research and impact assessments so as to build a body of knowledge around critical matters for long term planning and development of South Africa.
6. Monitor, review and assess progress in achieving the NDP.
7. Provide evidence-based advice on futuristic national planning and foresight scenario planning to implement the plan towards 2030 better.
8. Contribute to the development of international partnerships and networks on national planning.

Ours is a tall order. As the Commission, we have emerged from a series of background briefings and a two-day lekgotla brimming with ideas while acknowledging the enormity of the tasks that lie ahead.

Of the 60 months of our tenure as the NPC, we are left only with 55 months. As noted above, our tenure virtually commences as the nation commemorates ten years since the National Development Plan (NDP) was promulgated.

The third NPC begins its term at a precarious moment in our country's history. Several challenges face South Africa at this time: the impact of Covid-19, slow or negative economic growth, rising poverty, hunger, inequality, and unemployment as well as corruption, crime, gender-based violence, and the state of national politics. There is a palpable sense of social disenchantment with the scale and speed of progress made against the NDP targets and priorities. The global political economic situation is as fragile, impacted by challenges around climate change and now by the war in Ukraine.

I couldn't agree more with those among us, including our Chair, Minister Mondli Gungubele, who have suggested that the third NPC has no more than three priorities: priority number one is implementation, number two is implementation and number three is implementation. But let me hasten to add that it is not as if the NPC itself was ever expected to effect implementation, but given the slow progress on the front, the 3rd NPC has no choice but to focus attention on the weak track record of implementation so far.

I have listened carefully to the words of those who have cautioned us against misdirecting ourselves and misunderstanding our mandate. There is, of course, a reason why we are called the NPC - National Planning Commission and not the National Implementation Commission. But if implementation is slow or non-existent, planning alone, is clearly insufficient. Given that ours is a tenure that is closest to the finish line of 2030, we cannot afford to be dismissive, smug or philosophical about implementation.

It may not be up to the third NPC to implement the NDP, but this NPC must at least explain why implementation has as yet not occurred as consistently, as fast and as broadly as initially envisaged and point to the solutions that will successfully address this. This may be the most critical thing that this NPC has to establish. We have to probe why it has been so hard to prioritise, coordinate, cohere, cascade down, streamline and pinpoint the necessary catalytic interventions necessary to embed and institutionalise the NDP within the departmental, provincial, and municipal plan. Our task is to call the country back to the NDP.

On the day of our induction, President Cyril Ramaphosa pointed out that the two greatest weapons in the hands of the NPC is the expertise that resides in its members – individually and collectively - as well the convening power that is delegated to it by government. These then are the two weapons that we intend deploying during our five-year tenure.

Fortunately, we are not starting from scratch. We have the knowledge and the wisdom of two NPCs before us, including the priorities which they identified through the work-streams we have established. We also have the lessons contained in the NDP Review.

There is enough literature to demonstrate that countries which have successfully achieved national development goals and targets are those at the heart of whose plans are clear sets of catalytic priorities around which the whole state machinery is mobilised.

This implies that as well as addressing the questions around implementation blockages, the third NPC will have to enhance the ability of the state to identify and pursue catalytic priorities which will expedite the attainment of NDP goals.

Although the NDP is a plan for the whole country, it has not been sufficiently adopted by all sectors. As we mark its 10th anniversary in September the third NPC is urging all South Africans to rally behind the NDP to ensure its implementation. To that end, the NPC is committed to

building partnerships broadly across society and such engagements should ensure active citizenry and strong leadership for development.

When I concluded the NPC's lekgotla I suggested ten action words which should guide us:

Convene. Prioritise. Catalyse. Embed. Institutionalise. Align. Cohere. Coordinate. Implement. Implement.

These are the action-words of the third NPC.

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Issued by the National Planning Commission

11 April 2022