

## Response to the debate of the State of the Nation Address

National Assembly, 14 February 2008

Madame Speaker,  
Deputy President,  
Honourable Members:

When Nelson Mandela delivered the State of the Nation Address to our first democratic Parliament, on May 24, 1994, he quoted some stanzas from Ingrid Jonker's poem, "Die Kind/The Child", in which, among other things she said:

"The child is not dead  
the child lifts his fists against his mother  
who shouts Africa!...

The child is not dead not at Langa  
nor at Nyanga not at Orlando  
nor at Sharpeville  
nor at the police station at Philippi  
where he lies with a bullet through his brain ...

the child is present at all assemblies and law-givings  
the child peers through the windows of houses  
and into the hearts of mothers  
this child who only wanted to play in the sun at Nyanga  
is everywhere  
the child grown to a man treks on through all Africa  
the child grown to a giant journeys  
through the whole world  
without a pass!"

Nelson Mandela then went on to say:

"And in this glorious vision, (Ingrid Jonker) instructs that our endeavours must be about the liberation of the woman, the emancipation of the man and the liberty of the child ..

"And so we must, constrained by and yet regardless of the accumulated effect of our historical burdens, seize the time to define for ourselves what we want to make of our shared destiny.

"The government I have the honour to lead and I dare say the masses who elected us to serve in this role, are inspired by the single vision of creating a people-centred society.

"Accordingly, the purpose that will drive this government shall be the expansion of the frontiers of human fulfilment, the continuous extension of the frontiers of the freedom.

"The acid test of the legitimacy of the programmes we elaborate, the government institutions we create, the legislation we adopt must be whether they serve these objectives."

I believe that in the end, this assembly of law-givers must give itself the space and time to consider the vitally important question whether through the 14 years of our democracy we, together, as a nation, have responded adequately to the historic challenge that "we must, constrained by and yet regardless of the

accumulated effect of our historical burdens, seize the time to define for ourselves what we want to make of our shared destiny", as Nelson Mandela said.

We must, in action, sustain the historical experience to which the Hon Pieter Mulder referred when he said black and white together have built the South Africa in which we live, and expressed the pride we all share in the contribution to this common effort made by our Afrikaner compatriots.

The fact of the matter is that the millions of people who went to the polls in 2004 to elect us, the party representatives who sit in this House, indeed share a common destiny.

In 1994, none of us, regardless of our political affiliation, would not and could not disagree with Nelson Mandela when he said "the masses who elected us...are inspired by the single vision of creating a people-centred society."

Neither could anyone among us contest the assertion he made that the fundamental task of the nation is "the expansion of the frontiers of human fulfilment, the continuous extension of the frontiers of the freedom."

Through all the years I have served in government, I have always hoped that this assembly of law-givers would feel the presence in its midst of the child "with a bullet through his brain" that Ingrid Jonker celebrated, who is "present at all assemblies and law-givings".

I have entertained the hope that, understanding that the presence in this House of die kind/the child means that our democracy "must be about the liberation of the woman, the emancipation of the man and the liberty of the child", again as Nelson Mandela said, this assembly of law-givers would have used the occasion of the State of the Nation Address to make an objective assessment of the distance we have travelled to accomplish these objectives, and what we need to do next to accelerate our advance towards their achievement.

I believe that as yet we have not given ourselves the space and the time calmly and frankly, without partisan constraints and imperatives, to speak to one another and to the nation about the objectives fundamental to the future of our country and people, which Nelson Mandela addressed from this podium 14 years ago.

In this regard I am convinced that all of us must take very seriously and respond to the appeal made by the Hon Mangosuthu Buthelezi, who sits among us as a senior statesperson, when he said we must: "(rise) to the hard task of dealing with the real issues and living up to one's own political responsibility. (He added), there is no point in discussing any change unless there is a serene and objective debate of what went right and what went wrong."

I too believe that this assembly of law-givers must, for the sake of all our people, rather than party political interest, give itself the time and space to engage in "a serene and objective debate of what went right and what went wrong", and answer the troubling question whether we have met the expectations of the child with a bullet through its brain, and yet is present at all assemblies and law-givings, peering through the windows of houses and into the hearts of mothers.

In her intervention, the Hon Hlengiwe Mgabadieli quoted what I said in the State of the Nation Address that, "Our nation should unite as never before and strain every sinew of its collective body to address our common challenges..."

She went on to say, "Let me pause and say I agree with the President so much. I will however request that all of us, Honourable Members, think deep on an inclusive Members' workshop whose purpose will

be to sincerely as public representatives, think and deal with these problems and tendencies of contradicting ourselves when it suits us...

"We need this workshop...if we can all be honest about 'creating the South Africa visualised in our Constitution' and indeed begin to plan jointly on how we can as a people share in the country's wealth, how jointly we can tackle poverty and underdevelopment, etc."

The Hon Mgabadeli closed her intervention by warning all of us of an outcome that we must all dread. She said: "countries like Kenya do love peace. But if we avoid confronting the roots of our difficulties, (and) correct our errors, we will find ourselves in the same situation...Let us be exemplary. Let us know our history as a Nation, as Public Representatives (who) will be (hosting) the Inter-Parliamentary Union in 2008."

Once again, the Hon Bantu Holomisa repeated the appeal he made last year, which essentially the Hon Mgabadeli reflected, that "we require a National Indaba or Convention to deal with various national issues...Such a National Convention would review the progress we have made since 1994 and identify whether there are any inherent defects."

I would like to indicate my own support for the process suggested by the Honourable Members Holomisa and Mgabadeli. This might indeed help our Parliament and our country to respond properly to the heartfelt appeal made by the Hon Nkosi Buthelezi that we engage one another in "a serene and objective debate of what went right and what went wrong".

I was pleased to hear the Hon Speaker yesterday saying this matter was indeed being pursued.

Yesterday the Hon Minister of Education showed me an article by William Saunderson-Meyer which appeared in a recent edition of the Weekend Argus in which he pointed out some of the difficulties we have to confront to conduct the kind of national dialogue of which the Hon Members Buthelezi, Holomisa and Mgabadeli spoke.

After criticising the SABC national radio service for failing to carry out its task to educate, he said:

"It is not only the ignorance that makes one despair. It is the smug positions taken on both sides of the racial divide. The darkies mutter self-indulgently...about past injustices. The whites opt loudly for the Chicken Licken theory of the universe: the sky is about to fall down, at least over the southern part of Africa.

"There is an unpleasant schadenfreude - the malicious enjoyment of another's misfortune - to the response of many whites to the electricity crisis. (To them) It is the final proof that blacks are innately incompetent and unable to run a modern economy.

"Undoubtedly the government has failed. It is telling that the ANC did not believe its own propaganda about sustained future economic progress, which is why it refused to generate more power.

"Nevertheless the ability to ensure the uninterrupted delivery of power and water is by no means an unassailable skill of the white man.

"The west coast of the US is in an endless cycle of power and water shortages; Australia has spectacularly mismanaged its water resources and London...has both water and transport systems that are teetering on the edge of collapse."

He went on to say: "Successful nations are optimistic and have an ability to transcend internal divides at times of adversity and crisis...Much depends on the quality of national leadership but perhaps more

depends on the willingness of individual citizens to be politically and emotionally engaged in their country."

If William Saunderson-Meyer is correct in his assessment, then, surely all of us have a duty to encourage all our "citizens to be politically and emotionally engaged in their country", precisely to create the possibility for us to unite in action and act in unity as we suggested in the State of the Nation Address.

Madame Speaker:

I believe that the Hon Sandra Botha was right when she said our people are concerned about crime and corruption.

She was right when she said our people are concerned about the capacity of the national infrastructure of various kinds to cope with our contemporary needs.

She was right when she said our people want discipline in our schools, safe streets for children to play in, elderly people to be treated with dignity, and a Police Service the people trust.

She was right when she said the poor must become the beneficiaries of any policy changes.

She was right when she said all of us must respect the Constitutional prescript concerning the separation of powers, as well as the separation between Party and State.

Both I and our Government cannot but be pleased that we agree on so many issues with the Official Opposition. This agreement should, in principle, enable us to work together with the Official Opposition, in the context of the proposal made by the Hon Members Buthelezi, Holomisa and Mgabadeli, to address the identified matters of common concern.

I trust that the Hon Members Sandra Botha and Patricia de Lille listened carefully to what the Hon Jeremy Cronin and others from the Government benches said with regard to their suggestion that we dissolve Parliament and hold elections now. Given our real challenges, none among us should allow ourselves to be seduced by the false promise of delusion.

To return to our real world, the Hon Sandra Botha will have to remember that the matters she raised, with the intention to condemn our Government to burn forever in Dante's inferno, are matters we too have raised on many occasions, to challenge our nation to act in unity to eradicate the deeply entrenched legacy of colonialism and apartheid, as well as respond to negative tendencies born of the opportunities provided by the democratic order. Indeed, in the last fourteen years we have engaged in programmes aimed at eradicating this deeply entrenched legacy of colonialism and apartheid.

However, once more the Debate on the State of the Nation Address showed a clear division with regard to the characterisation of our country - between those who believe South Africa is experiencing the worst of times and those who assert that this is the best of times.

These diametrically opposed characterisations have not just arisen from the emergency we have been experiencing in the last few weeks around electricity supply, but have been with us for many years now, as William Saunderson-Meyer argued.

Leading the charge that South Africa has been experiencing the worst of times was, as we might have expected, the Democratic Alliance Parliamentary Leader, the Hon Sandra Botha.

On Tuesday, among others, she claimed that, "The sudden dimming of the lights across SA is merely the most potent and obvious metaphor for the crisis government has visited on the people."

Other Hon Members joined her, wrongly asserting, as she said, that "few of the programmes and strategies of previous years have been fulfilled".

I would like to say that indeed, there are matters that have been raised during this Debate that are also of concern to government and hence serve as the subject of focus as reflected in the Apex Priorities. However, there are many other assertions that were made by some of the Honourable Members which bear no relationship to the truth.

Fully to appreciate the steady progress that our nation is making, I believe we would do well to listen to the people themselves, who have spoken very positively of the progress we have made, as reflected in the Community Survey conducted by Statistics South Africa, which was published last October. This is important because when we stand at this podium we all claim to speak on behalf of these masses of our people.

The responses of the people in the Community Survey confirm what the Honourable Pandelani Nefolovhodwe said, quoting the great African patriot Amilcar Cabral that: "Always bear in mind that the people are not fighting for ideas, for things in anyone's head. They are fighting to win material benefits, to live better and in peace, see their lives go forward to guarantee the future of their children."

The results of the Survey also support the appeal made by the Ministers of Transport and Trade and Industry when they cautioned all of us not to be spokespersons of doom or cheerleaders of bad news.

In this context I should, once again, mention the challenge we face to fight corruption in our society. Quite correctly, the Hon Members have emphasised the critical importance of this front of struggle. Indeed we must strive to intensify our offensive against this scourge. However, I believe that we must avoid addressing this issue in a manner that suggests that we revel in playing the role of cheerleaders of bad news about our country. In this regard I would like to refer to a Country Corruption Assessment Report about South Africa published two years back by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. The UN said:

"With South Africa's rating of 4.8 out of a score of 10 on Transparency International's Corruption Index, it is clear that the country is perceived as having fairly high levels of corruption. There is a general perception within the country too, that corruption is rife. Many people believe corruption has increased in the post-apartheid era during the period of political and economic transition."

It went on to say:

"Unfortunately, the tools and surveys that have been used to measure levels of corruption are primarily based on perceptions. The media has also been influential in emphasising the incidence of corruption, which is of utmost importance but with lesser focus on the steps that have been taken to prevent and combat corruption. Perceptions and media have thus come to form the foundation for understanding the prevalence of corruption.

"It is important to recognise that perceptions do not necessarily reflect levels of corruption in the country. The premise that levels of corruption in South Africa are high needs to be tested."

All of us assert that we are patriotic and want to see our country succeed. Yet, the perceptions to which the United Nations Report refers, which 'do not necessarily reflect the actual experience of corruption in the country', are sometimes fuelled by some among us, thus perpetuating dangerous falsehoods that impact negatively on our country.

Madam Speaker:

We identified the Apex Priorities to accelerate our advance towards the fulfilment of the mandate the people gave our Government in 2004. I would like to assure this House and our nation that Government will ensure the closest possible monitoring and evaluation of the process of the implementation of these Apex priorities. I would also like to urge parliament to play its oversight role in this regard, so that indeed implementation happens as it should. This is central to our call - All hands on deck!

Some negative comments were also made about ASGISA and JIPSA, consistent with the view among some of us that we must, at all costs, find fault. To indicate to the Hon Members what is actually being done, I would like to give a short Report about ASGISA and the Western Cape.

After discussions with the Deputy President and the Minister of Education, with their active support, the Western Cape Provincial Government launched a Skills initiative called the Masakhisizwe Centre for Excellence. Dr Mamphela Ramphele chairs its Board. Masakhisizwe is a partnership between the Provincial Government and the Engineering Departments of the 4 Universities in the Western Cape, and also includes industry representatives.

The Centre trains students mainly in Civil Engineering and Architecture, to respond to the Infrastructure Investment-led Growth which ASGISA champions. The construction sector in the Province has grown from 8% in 2005 to 13% by end of 2007. The Masakhisizwe students are provided with scholarships, mentoring and non-financial assistance, with the objective rapidly to develop and nurture young engineers.

The skills programme started with 120 students. 68 of these have graduated. 50 of the students who graduated have been placed in full-time jobs in Government. There are currently 305 students in the system. Students sign a 4 year contract to work for Government on completion of their studies.

I am convinced that nobody can describe Masakhisizwe as a failure, and thus argue that ASGISA and JIPSA are not producing the outcomes expected from these two initiatives. And yet these false claims are repeated regularly, flying in the face of the important contribution that ASGISA and JIPSA are making to respond to the economic and skills challenges we face.

Madame Speaker:

Historically, the majority of South Africans have always demonstrated the will to overcome whatever problems they may face.

The good response we are already witnessing with regard to the electricity emergency, confirms the determination of the nation to ensure that together, the public and private sectors as well as communities, we respond correctly to the emergency energy situation. Correctly, the Honourable Members have expressed serious concern at the levels of poverty among our people. Government shares this concern. That is why we spoke of an anti-poverty War Room. The Government is determined that we must indeed, and practically, enable as many people as possible to exit from poverty, encourage every poor household to be a partner in the fight against poverty, and defeat the well-known sociological process in terms of which the poor are condemned to pass poverty to the succeeding generations.

Honourable Members:

It is clear that the remarks of the Hon Minister of Safety and Security during this Debate about the Scorpions have raised some concerns. I would therefore like to make some observations in this regard.

As I indicated last Friday, as confirmed by the Ministers of Justice and Constitutional Development and Safety and Security, working with business and other sectors of our society, we have undertaken a detailed review of the criminal justice system, further to improve our response to crime. In the words of

the Minister of Safety and Security, we must revamp the criminal justice system in such a way that we "establish a seamless interconnection between investigations and arrests, prosecutions and sentencing and imprisonment and rehabilitation".

Necessarily the review process included an investigation of the overall capacity of the state to fight organised crime, with reference to intelligence, investigations and other matters. Obviously, this included an assessment of all matters relating to the Directorate of Special Operations, the Scorpions. We were assisted in this regard by the findings and recommendations of the Khampepe Judicial Commission.

The decision our Government has taken is that we have to retain and expand the specialised skills focused on organised crime which exist in the Scorpions and other institutions in the criminal justice system. This view was adequately explained by the Hon Nyami Boo when he spoke from this podium on Tuesday.

The Government has also taken the firm decision that all reforms we institute in this regard must be informed by the unwavering determination to ensure that we strengthen the capacity of our law enforcement agencies to intensify the war against organised crime, and under no circumstances to weaken it.

The Government has also reaffirmed its commitment to meet its international obligations in this regard, fully conscious of the fact that significant and highly dangerous elements of organised crime are, in fact, transnational.

We have therefore decided to bring the specialised investigative skills focused on organised crime under one roof in a specialised unit that will have more personnel and capacity than currently exists in the Scorpions.

This personnel will be drawn from both the Scorpions and the Organised Crime Unit of the SAPS, and perhaps other institutions in our system of governance.

The proposal regarding the reorganised structures which Government will table in Parliament will therefore cover more than the Scorpions. They will also address the important issue of the relationship between the reconstituted specialist institution to fight organised crime on one hand, and the intelligence establishment on the other, including the National Intelligence Agency, the National Communications Centre, the Financial Intelligence Centre and the South African Secret Service, as well as Customs.

The new specialist institution to fight organised crime will serve as a referral body, enabling it to focus on the most complicated and the most pernicious instances of organised crime that will be referred to it by other formations in the criminal justice system, thus to play exactly the same role for which the Scorpions were established.

This specialist unit will continue to be guided and assisted by the skills that reside among members of the National Prosecuting Authority and our intelligence service, ensuring that its operations are both prosecution and intelligence driven, to continue the history of the high conviction rate of the Scorpions.

The complex reorganisation indicated by the process I have described, which will affect a number of institutions that belong within the executive arm of government, will not entail any negative effect on the salaries and conditions of service of the current members of the DSO.

At the time that we approach Parliament to seek its view and agreement with the proposals we will make, we will also release the recommendations of the Khampepe Judicial Commission to enable the Hon Members and the country the better to understand the overall context within which we must address the specific challenge of intensifying the fight against organised crime.

Honourable Members:

The Government is acutely aware of the fact that it owes its legitimacy from the popular mandate it received in 2004. We know very well that we have an obligation always and at all times to listen and respond to the voice of the people.

These masses are deeply concerned that the Government they elected must continuously improve their safety and security, including safety from the drug dealers, safety from death and injury caused by guns in the hands of criminals, safety in their homes, streets, villages and businesses, from theft of their possessions and the attendant grievous bodily harm, and safety from the corruption of government and society, all of which constitute an integral part of organised crime.

Our Government needs no prompting to understand the weight and urgency of this challenge. The Government that came to our Houses of Parliament last Friday to give an account to this assembly of law-givers of what it intends to do over the next twelve months needs no reminder that it is accountable both to our Parliament and the masses of our people. We understand this very well that, acting in unity with you, the elected representatives of our people, and the people themselves, we must, everyday and in action, respond to the people's heartfelt wish for enhanced safety and security.

To conclude my remarks in this regard, I would like to remind the Hon Members that the South African Police Service remains the pre-eminent and unequalled formation in our country that confronts crime daily, including organised crime.

I was very disturbed when I listened to unfortunate remarks during our Debate, which sought to denigrate the critically important work that our Police Service does everyday to improve the safety and security of all our citizens.

The suggestion that the Police Service is nothing more than a junior and inferior formation relative to the DSO is absolutely wrong in the extreme. The SAPS is made up of patriotic men and women who have, over the years, to date, demonstrated an unwavering commitment even to give their lives to guarantee the safety and security of all our citizens. Let us not insult them or speak carelessly about them, projecting them as a cabal of corrupt and incompetent individuals.

Madam Speaker,

I am obliged to address some matters I would rather avoid speaking about because they concern the actions of the President of the Republic directly. However the circumstances dictate that I address these.

Yesterday, the Hon Kenneth Meshoe said that in the light of information contained in a court document evidently submitted by the Acting National Director of Public Prosecutions, there were "grave allegations that go to the heart of the President's integrity".

I have not seen the document to which the Hon Rev Meshoe refers, which apparently relate to issues affecting the suspended National Director of Public Prosecutions and the National Commissioner of Police who is on extended leave.

With regard to the latter I noticed that the Hon Rev Meshoe decided to quote part of what I have said about the alleged criminal culpability of the National Commissioner. For reasons I do not understand, he did not mention the fact that I also said that the National Prosecuting Authority approached me some time ago as President of the Republic, to inform me that they had received claims about alleged criminal misconduct implicating the National Commissioner of Police.



As I have said publicly a number of times, from then onwards I interacted with the National Director to assist him to get such information as he sought, to facilitate the investigations he and the DSO felt they had to conduct to establish whether there was any truth to the allegations.

Having satisfied themselves that they had prima facie evidence suggesting that the National Commissioner had been involved in criminal misconduct, they informed me of this conclusion and their decision to charge the National Commissioner. At this point we informed the NPA that we were ready to assist them to inform the National Commissioner that he should willingly submit himself to the process of prosecution which the National Prosecuting Authority had decided to institute, which we did.

I trust that the Hon Rev Meshoe will explain to this House and the nation why he saw it fit to make the grievous and gratuitous insult which sought to challenge not only the integrity of the person of the President of the Republic, but also the Office of the President and our Government as a whole. It cannot be that this resulted only from the careless use of words!

With regard to matters relating to the National Director of Public Prosecutions, I would like to reiterate that we acted on this matter strictly in terms of the NPA Act. We are convinced that the process put in place to deal with this matter must be allowed to take its course. In this regard, precisely to respect the principle and practice of the rule of law, we will continue to respect the prescriptions described in the NPA Act.

I would also like to inform the House that our Zimbabwe Facilitation Team was in Harare yesterday to discharge the mandate we have been given by SADC. We have agreed with the Zimbabwe negotiating parties to continue this engagement, in an appropriate forum, after the March elections and will therefore not address this matter through the media.

As I approach the end of this Response, I would like to assure the Hon Pandelani Nefolovodhwe that we will follow up his suggestion relating to rural development. I would also like to assure the Hon Bantu Holomisa that we have already contacted the Premier of the Eastern Cape to ensure that together we respond to the Memorandum he handed to me.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish the important Conference of the Pan African Women's Organisation, which begins today, success, convinced that its decisions will help to advance the cause of the emancipation and development of the women of Africa.

Further, we wish our Parliament success when it hosts the Congress of the Inter Parliamentary Union later this year. Undoubtedly, through our conduct, we will continue to demonstrate to the democratic world that we remain firmly determined to protect and advance the democratic gains we achieved at the cost of many human lives. I would also like to take this opportunity once more to congratulate the Soweto Gospel Choir for winning their second Grammy Award. We trust that this great achievement will inspire many South Africans as they engage in Business Unusual.

I thank the Hon Members, the media and our people for the attention they paid to the State of the Nation Address, as well as the responses of the Hon Members indicating as it does that we remain committed to address our common challenges through frank dialogue, without resort to any violence. In particular I would like to salute the Gauteng schools which gathered at the Ekurhuleni Council Chambers in Germiston under the auspices of the GCIS on Tuesday, February 12, to debate the State of the Nation Address.

Finally, I wish the Honourable Members a happy St Valentine's Day, which will give all Members an opportunity to turn their attention to matters of love rather than conflict and fractious debate.

I thank you for your attention.