

The Budget Vote Speech 2003

National Assembly, Cape Town, 18 June 2003

Madam Speaker,
Deputy Speaker,
Deputy President,
Ministers and Deputy Ministers,
Honourable Leaders of our political parties, Honourable Members,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

Thank you very much for affording us the opportunity to address parliament on the occasion of our budget vote. As is customary, the Deputy President will also address the House on various issues the Presidency deals with, including the important matters of AIDS, the legislature, elements of our international work and moral regeneration in our society.

The Minister in the Presidency will speak to parliament on the issues of gender equity, the rights of people with disabilities, the rights of children and matters relating to the youth.

On the 28th December 2002, Andrew Gerber, who turned 28 last Friday, overcame the cold and difficult conditions of the Antarctic to reach the South Pole on foot, the first South African to do so. In January of 2003, Marion Cole captained the Lovelife Yacht, sailing with a young black crew in the Cape to Rio Yacht Race. These young South Africans traversed the forbidding waters of the Atlantic Ocean, as bearers of the torch of freedom, in the quest to mobilise global action against the common health challenges of our time.

On the 26th May this year, Sibusiso Vilane, conquered Mount Everest, the highest mountain in the world, becoming the first black person to do so. Sean Wisedale also did South Africa and Africa proud by reaching the top of Mount Everest.

Only two days ago, on National Youth Day, Fusi Nhlapo, whose birthday we celebrate today, gave further inspiration to all of us when he won the Comrades Marathon. Quite correctly, yesterday this House conveyed its congratulations to Fusi and the other runners who led the thousands of participating athletes into Kingsmead Stadium on Monday.

According to its outstanding principal, Dave Robinson, Bryanston High School in Gauteng, "(has a) stated aim as a community school to contribute positively to our wider community. The learners are encouraged at all times to think of others, and to translate their sympathy for those less fortunate into action. Our Grade 11 group, in particular is encouraged to take part in Charity Committees. Through the RCL (Representative Council of Learners) and related leadership projects, we have helped various organisations over the past three years. The teacher in charge of these projects is Mrs Gill Fulscher, one of our HOD's, who has been an inspiration to the learners in terms of vision and devotion." As a result of the exciting programme carried out by this school, to contribute positively to the wider community, two of its learners, Kevin Tregurgha and Tasmin Nash, decided to do something about the street children of Hillbrow, Johannesburg. This is what Kevin has written in this regard:

"I saw a programme on E-TV about children sleeping under boxes on the streets and I decided that I wanted to help in a different way. I then approached our Grade Controller with the idea and asked Tasmin if she would be willing to help. From there on it took us lots of phone calls to various companies, but finally things started to come together and the big night, the 3rd of June, arrived. At about 6:30 pm we arrived at Hillbrow police station with our four blanket-filled cars. After about an hour we had the police escort we had been waiting for. We then made our way to our first stop where, as the cars stopped, people started rushing toward us. We then moved on to our next stop. They had already been told we

were coming. We then offloaded the bakkie. We saw only hands and faces which were desperately pulling on our clothes, our boxes and the blankets we were giving out. Once the bakkie had been cleared we then moved on to our next stop. As we were leaving people were knocking on the car's windows trying to prevent us from leaving. We finally got to our final stop where the people were saying how much Thabo Mbeki loves them. Once we had left Hillbrow we could then reflect on what we had seen, children sniffing glue, the way that people actually lived and little girls walking around with one month old babies on their hips. That night sincerely touched our hearts: the people had tears in their eyes and we could see that they appreciated what they had been given. We would do it again! You have an image of what things are going to be like and nothing could have prepared us for what we have seen. And we will be hoping to do more projects like this."

Palesa Mohapi, is eighteen years old. In May she won the International English-Speaking Union debate in London in competition with her peers from across the world. In her award-winning speech, Palesa speaks of the role of women in the African Renaissance. Among other things, she said: "In the pursuit of these things, women have an important role to play: women like my grandmother, who worked at two jobs in order to send her children to the best schools". And having described a successful poverty alleviation programme in Swaziland run by women, she continues: "These women, like my grandmother, are making positive change and this is the fundamental part of the African Renaissance."

I agree. Thank you for the wise words, Palesa.

Andrew Gerber, the young people who sailed with Marion Cole, Sibusiso Vilane, Fusi Nhlapo and Palesa Mohapi, Kevin Tregurgha and Tasmin Nash have, through their distinguished achievements, spoken for all of us.

They are saying:

The tide has turned!

Africa's time has come!

It must surely be a matter of great pride to all of us that these messages are conveyed to us by the youth of our country. What they have done has served to answer those in our country who regularly present both a false and negative picture of our youth, and a pessimistic view about the future of our country. Their achievements tell the story that we have many young people in our country who are full of initiative, who are highly intelligent, brave, disciplined, determined to live in and contribute to the building of a winning nation, ready to engage this task with the patience and persistence of a marathon runner.

When we say the tide has turned and that Africa's time has come, we say so because we are confident of the role that the youth are playing and will continue to play to ensure that our country and continent continue along the difficult road that will lead all Africa to stable democratic systems, peace and stability, prosperity and the eradication of poverty, and the restoration of the dignity of all Africa's women, children and men. As we observe June as Youth Month, the month of Youth Day, once more we extend our salute to our youth and assure them that we will continue to work together with them for the improvement of their conditions of life, focusing on the challenges of youth development and empowerment.

I am very pleased and honoured that we have in the House today the young heroes and heroines I have mentioned. These are Sibusiso Vilane, the conquerer of Mount Everest, Palesa Mohapi, a victor in the conveyance of the challenge of the African Renaissance, Marion Cole representing the youth who sailed the oceans to link us with the Americas and communicate an important message concerning the health of our youth and country, Fusi Nhlapo who has refused to be deterred by the loneliness of the long distance runner and discouraged by the fact of unemployment, and Kevin Tregurgha and Tasmin Nash, who brought warmth and hope to the street children of Hillbrow and all our towns and cities. Andrew Gerber is currently out of the country, otherwise he too would have honoured us with his presence. I would also like

to welcome to the House Mr Mike Bernatt, representing the sponsor of Sibusiso Vilane, the Rev Mohapi, Palesa's father, Sean Wisedale and his partner, Joy Simmonds, Brian Cole, Marion's husband, Mr and Mrs Gerber, the parents of Andrew Gerber, and Dave Robinson, Principal of Bryanston High.

To all of them I would like to extend our profound thanks for everything they have done to inspire and support the young patriots and achievers we are privileged to salute today. What you have done has enabled our country to stand tall among the nations because we stand on your shoulders, which have carried the young people who sit in the balcony to the pinnacles of achievement they have attained.

Madame Speaker:

We have also spoken of the need for all of us to join hands in a people's contract for a better tomorrow. In this regard, I am pleased that after much preparatory work, the social partners at NEDLAC came together on June 7th at the Growth and Development Summit to adopt the extensive Agreement negotiated by these social partners.

I am happy to commend this Agreement to this House and urge the Honourable Members to see in what ways they can contribute to the implementation of the various programmes contained in the Agreement, continuing to be inspired by the practices of letsema and vuk'uzenzele.

In the past, some in our country called for an Economic CODESA. This reflected a genuine and understandable desire on their part that we develop a national consensus on economic questions. In this way, we would come together in a people's contract for economic growth and development, for the liquidation of the legacy of colonialism and apartheid, for the eradication of poverty.

The Agreement arrived at in the Growth and Development Summit says: "During deliberations, it was agreed that a vision for growth and development should be adopted, a set of priorities for joint action identified and a process set in place to ensure that the identified programme of action is carried out."

It goes on to say:

"The Summit is launching a process for a longer-term dialogue that will require the Nedlac Executive Council to continue to focus and engage on, as well as consider how to address the key challenges and options at hand - above all, job creation, economic growth, and overcoming the massive inequalities left by apartheid.

"The constituencies of Nedlac - government, business, labour and the community - reaffirm their commitment to social dialogue and working together to address the economic and development challenges our country faces - "Nedlac chambers and structures will have standing items on their agendas dealing with the GDS agreements and receive regular reports on the progress of the implementation of the agreements. Constituencies commit to an annual review by the Executive Council of Nedlac on the success of the GDS agreements and to making adjustments where necessary." Some in our country predicted that the GDS would fail. Without even seeing the document negotiated by the social partners, these stated that the GDS had failed even before it took place. In its aftermath, they have found it necessary to assert that they have proved their prowess as soothsayers.

However, even a cursory reading of the GDS Agreement will indicate that the Summit achieved the goals that had been set. It has provided us with central and decisive elements of the national consensus on the challenges of economic growth and development that some of our compatriots had called for.

Beyond this, as demonstrated by the passages from the Agreement we have cited, the Nedlac social partners have committed themselves to a process to monitor and ensure the implementation of the agreements they have reached. This indicates the seriousness with which these social partners

approached the responsibilities with which they were charged. This House and our national parliament as a whole would also do well to interest itself in the implementation of these agreements in a constructive manner, focused on helping to achieve the results decided by the GDS.

Beyond what we have said, the Growth and Development Summit represented a concrete and important response to our call to all our people to enter into a people's contract for a better South Africa. In this regard, I would like to extend our profound appreciation to business, labour and the community organisations for responding to the call made by government that we should join forces in the people's contract we need, to ensure that we make faster progress towards the achievement of the socio-economic goals that stand at the centre of our objective to create a people-centred society.

This response has helped to consolidate the critically important process in our country in terms of which we are further strengthening the unity in action of our country and people. This is emerging not only as a distinct feature of our democracy, consistent with the vision that the people shall govern, but constitutes a vital contribution to the continuing struggle to build a non-racial and non-sexist society and achieve national reconciliation. It was indeed inspiring to see gathered at the GDS our people in all their races and colours, and with significant numbers of women, all united to implement an eminently practical programme of action to address the common challenges we all face as South Africans, regardless of colour, race, gender and class.

As I have already said, we are currently observing Youth Month, dedicated to the advancement of that important section of our population, the youth. It was very good that the GDS ensured that it paid the necessary attention to the matter of youth development and empowerment.

In this regard, among other things, the GDS Agreement says:

"The majority of the unemployed are young. It is increasingly difficult for young people to find work - partly because there are not enough jobs, and partly because the young do not have the skills that are in demand in the labour market. Women, people with disabilities, and those living in rural areas face additional obstacles to finding employment and developing their skills. Currently too few young people are given opportunities to improve their skills in areas that will enhance their employability." Running through the GDS Agreement is the necessary focus on programmes to meet the identified challenges of skills and employment opportunities that face our youth. What this means is that equally as we say to our youth that they must act to change our country and continent for the better, as have done the young who have honoured us with their presence in the House today, so do we have an obligation to ensure that we respond to the challenges facing the youth of our country.

In this regard, I would like to extend our sincere thanks to those in the private sector who are responding to these. Specifically, among others, I would like to thank the ABSA Bank for the enthusiasm and readiness with which it entered into an agreement with the youth concerning its SMME Incubator Fund, cooperation with the Umsobomvu Youth Fund on youth economic empowerment programmes and the National Youth Commission on youth learnerships in finance and information and communication technology.

Another financial institution, the First National Bank, has also responded to our call to assist with the skills development of our people, by embarking on a learnership programme in line with the National Human Resource Development Strategy. From January 2004, the bank will take on 1200 matriculants for the purpose of learnerships, phased over three years. Currently there are 1 600 learners who are going through a CIDA City Campus degree programme and given on-the-job training with the help of professionals from the Bank and the rest of the private sector.

These important financial institutions have set an example in terms of what can and needs to be done. I trust that others within the private sector will follow their excellent example.

The Growth and Development Summit said:

"Constituencies note the intention of the youth sector to invite contributions towards a voluntary youth solidarity fund, where all employed youth will be invited by youth organisations to contribute one day's gross salary to youth development programmes." I trust that this employed youth will respond to this call with the same enthusiasm with which ABSA responded to the request of the youth to enter into partnership with this important private sector player. Since I am part of this employed youth, Zanele Mbeki and I have agreed that I should contribute one day's gross salary to the projected youth solidarity fund. This I will do during this, our Youth Month.

Madam Speaker;

It is in the context of the foregoing that we are happy to report to this House, about some of the work that the Presidency has done in the past year, to add to the efforts of many South Africans as they participate in the people's contract to build a better tomorrow.

In this regard, I would like to make a special reference to the process of izimbizo.

Through the Imbizo campaign we have continued to engage our people about the work that we are doing together to transform our country and bring about a better life. We visited Gauteng and North-West since we reported to parliament last year. Again, we have encountered, in these Provinces, as has been the case in others, the mass of our people ready and eager to participate in the processes of changing their living conditions for the better.

Levai Mbatha Health Centre in Evaton demonstrated the implementation of the principles of Batho Pele. Mailakgang School in the North West has given real meaning to the spirit of vuk'uzenzele. The housing project in the village of Makgola in Zeerust embraced the ethos of letsema.

The Imbizo campaign has become the feature of government at all levels. What is important is that we must be able to make prompt and appropriate interventions once we have interacted with our people and be prepared to act swiftly on desperate and urgent matters that confront them. We have to improve the system of monitoring the extent and quality of government's response to the issues that are raised during the Imbizo campaigns, so that these interactions do not become routine gatherings, which do not help to effect change. As the GDS decided, an important part of building this better tomorrow is constantly and critically to examine the progress we are making to change the conditions of our people for the better.

In this regard, the Presidency is currently engaged in a Ten Year Review, the objective of which is to assess the impact all of us have made on our development and challenges of transformation, during our first decade of freedom.

Though this work is not yet complete, one of the things that is clear is that the welfare of our people has improved through the de-racialisation and radical improvement of social service delivery. More people now get health care, education, pensions, electricity, clean water, housing, and as a result, we are succeeding to improve the quality of life of our people.

Further, the Review shows that despite impressive gains in almost all aspects of government, the public service must be further transformed if the state is to sustain the improvement of the life of the poor and marginalised in our society. Financial, human resource and asset management have to be improved to make further advances in the process of government integration and better delivery across all spheres of government. Further to improve on our performance, this year's government budgeting cycle will see the formulation of a Medium Term Strategic Framework led by the Presidency, with the participation of other departments of government. The Medium Term Strategic Framework encapsulates the key challenges confronting government in the medium term that need to be taken into account in deciding the budget.

Further, it is informed by the global socio-economic and political climate and the possible risks for the country.

This will further strengthen the co-ordinating role played by the Forum of South African Directors-General (FOSAD), the sector Clusters of Directors-General and the President's Co-ordinating Council (PCC) that brings together the Provincial Premiers and the President.

To expedite the realisation of our policy objectives, the DG Clusters have been charged with the preparation of implementation reports, which are then submitted to the appropriate cabinet committees, for subsequent assessment by the Cabinet.

Further, the Presidency has formulated a National Spatial Development Perspective (NSDP) on the basis of a study of the country's social, economic, environment and spatial trends over the past decades. The objective of this Perspective is to develop guidelines to ensure that government's infrastructure investment and development spending programmes, have better spatial outcomes than are currently being achieved.

We reported last year that we have seen positive developments in the functioning of government as a whole. The work of improving the functioning of government is an on-going one and we will continue to identify inefficiencies and blockages, until we arrive at the point where all public representatives and public servants are truly defined by the ethos of Batho Pele, of hard work, selflessness, dedication and service to the people.

We will continue to increase the capacity of local government and embark on a deliberate and conscious effort, of deploying the best people at that sphere of government and implement a systematic programme of training, re-training and improving the skills of all the workers. This we must do so that we can implement our programmes more efficiently and effectively.

In the past year, the economy continued to grow reasonably well, in spite of the tightening of monetary policy that was necessitated by the sharp rise in inflation that resulted from the temporary weakening of the Rand, and the slowdown in the global economy. We are confident that the decisions taken at the Growth and Development Summit, and other interventions, will enable our country to perform even better than it has done, creating the possibility for all of us to respond more effectively to challenges we face together.

Madam Speaker;

The system of the Presidential Working Groups and International Advisory Councils has sufficiently matured in the last year. In these forums, we have continued to discuss and seek solutions to the fundamental issues that cut across the entire business of government and the overall development of the South African society.

Together, they constitute an important part of the people's contract we are building at home and abroad, which unites millions of people and important decision-makers in the common effort to achieve the reconstruction and development of our country.

We are pleased that we have now established the Higher Education Working Group that brings together the Vice-Chancellors of Universities and Technikons. The critical challenge for this Working Group is to contribute to the development of a shared agenda for the transformation of the system of Higher Education and to re-position the institutions in this sector to play a more meaningful role in the transformation of our society.

We are working seriously to establish the Youth Working Group that the youth themselves have suggested and requested.

Of great importance also is the fact that both the International Advisory Council on Information Society and Development and the International Investment Council suggested that in addition to their general advisory tasks, they would like to participate more specifically in contributing to our country's development programmes. This has positioned them as important players within the inclusive people's contract for a better future.

Together we must work to implement what we have agreed with regard to the TRC, always conscious that we have a continuing responsibility to build on the advances we have made with regard to the task of national reconciliation.

Honourable Members;

As you are aware, we had the honour of hosting the important meeting of the transformation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) into the African Union (AU), in July 2002.

Next month, we will be handing over the chairpersonship of this continental organisation to President Chissano of Mozambique. We would like to convey our thanks to this House for the important work it has done to ensure that we make our contribution to the advancement of the African Union.

In particular, I would like to thank the honourable members for attending expeditiously to the matter of the Protocol on the Establishment of Peace and Security Council, so that together with other brothers and sisters in various African countries, we can work systematically within the Union to bring peace and stability to our continent.

We are also encouraged by the role that this parliament has played, under the leadership of the Speaker, which contributed to the progress that has been made on the process towards the formation of the Pan African Parliament. I would also like to thank our Foreign Minister, the Honourable Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Deputy Minister Aziz Pahad and the Department of Foreign Affairs for the enormous amount of work they have done to make the Union operational.

All of us are aware of the enormous challenges facing our continent as we work for its renewal. Prominent among these is the task of successfully addressing the issues of poverty and underdevelopment.

Through the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the development programme of the African Union, we continue our efforts to work for the development and regeneration of our continent. As we know, South Africa is hosting the Secretariat of NEPAD and the Presidency has taken this extra responsibility with Professor Nkuhlu heading the Secretariat, which is tasked with the day to day leadership of the NEPAD process.

Through the NEPAD process, we have ensured that Africa takes ownership of its development agenda. The process has also ensured ongoing dialogue among African leaders on the critical matters of peace and security, democracy, political and economic governance and socio-economic development. It has also provided a new paradigm in terms of our interaction with our development partners, including the identification of Africa's development priorities.

I also thank our Ministers and Deputy Ministers, Directors General and state corporations for the important contributions they have made within their specific areas of competence to advance the NEPAD process.

Madam Speaker;

In our capacity as the chair of the African Union, we have been called to attend to the important matters of peace and security on our continent, always working with other leaders as well as regional structures. As a result, we have all seen important progress in Madagascar, Sudan, Cote d'Ivoire, Burundi, the DRC and Angola. What remains to be done with regard to these and other matters will be done. As I have said in this House before, I am certain that the people of Zimbabwe will find a solution to their problems.

Madame Speaker:

Today we have three other important visitors in the House. These are the three Presidents who lead the islands that make up the Comoros, Mr Abdou Soule Elbak of the Grand Comoros, Mr Mohamed Said Fazul of Moheli, and Col Mohamed Bakar of Anjouan. They are in our country and this House to see what they can take from us as they work to consolidate democracy and peace in their country.

We would like to assure them that we will continue to work with them and Federal President Azhali on these and other matters, as we have been doing for some time already.

We are ready to respond to the requests that have already been made by various representatives of the Iraqi people to work with them as they strive to build a democratic and stable Iraq. Similarly, we will continue to work with other nations to ensure that the United Nations is strengthened and plays its role as defined in its Charter. We continue to pay the closest attention to the vital issue of the implementation of the Road Map for peace between Israel and Palestine, and will make such contributions as may be necessary and possible towards the achievement of this goal.

We are pleased that through our Foreign Ministers, Brazil, India and South Africa have taken the first step to build a partnership among themselves as part of the process of strengthening South-South relations.

Again, last year we hosted the World Summit on Sustainable Development and made our contribution in the important outcome contained in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. Government, through the Minister of Environment and Tourism, continues to play a central role in following up the decisions of the Summit.

Honourable Members;

We meet during a month in which we remember the role played by the youth of this country in our liberation. Again, we are happy that the youth of today, continues to inspire us and in many ways challenge us to strive for higher achievements. We have a duty to respond to this challenge and give further substance to our conclusion that the tide has turned, and concrete proof of our commitment to do more to bring a better life to all our people.

I would like to thank the Deputy President, the Minister in the Presidency, the Director-General and our entire staff for working hard to ensure that we discharge our responsibilities to the best of our abilities.

I would also like to thank all other Departments, Ministers and Deputy Ministers, Premiers, the provincial and local governments for working with the Presidency to ensure that we consolidate policy development and implementation throughout government.

I am honoured to commend the Budget Vote of the Presidency to the House.

I thank you.