

The 2004 Budget Vote

National Assembly, 23 June 2004

Madam Speaker,
The Honourable President of the Republic,
Honourable Ministers and Deputy Ministers
Honourable Members,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are pleased to have this opportunity of sharing with you our activities in line with the programme of action outlined by the President in the State of the Nation address.

Ministers have over the last few weeks, in their respective budget votes, outlined the activities of the various departments, aimed at advancing the fight against poverty and expanding access to a better life. These have clearly indicated the commitment of this government to meeting the needs of the people.

Madam Speaker, let me take advantage of this being youth month, and begin by saluting our youth and acknowledging their contribution to the struggle for freedom in our country. The youth are our future and youth development continues to be one of our key priorities. The Minister in the Presidency, who bears responsibility for youth development, will expand on our activities in this regard.

Madam Speaker, we see nation building as continuing to be a key responsibility in this second decade of freedom. Our people, united in diversity, need to work together in a people's contract to create work and fight poverty.

While working for national unity, we by no means seek to suppress the unique diversity that makes South Africa a world in one country.

Members are aware of the establishment of the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities, which is set to begin its work in earnest this year. Let us use this Commission, as religious, cultural or linguistic groups, to contribute our uniqueness as we build a better life for all.

Another key aspect of nation building and the encouragement of diversity is the promotion of multilingualism, especially ensuring the greater use of indigenous languages to promote their growth and development.

Somlomo, namalungu ahloniphekile esishayamthetho sikazwelonke, kuyancomeka ukuthi izilimi eziningi seziyakhulunywa ngisho nalapha endlini yesishayamthetho sikazwelonke.

Kuyinjabulo kakhulu ngoba ngesikhathi sobandlululo lezilimi zazishaywe indiva, zibukelwa phansi. Kuyakhombisa-ke manje ukuthi umbuso wentando yeningi nenkululeko, sekulethe izinguquko eziningi.

Abantu sebeyakwazi manje ukusho okusemicabangweni yabo ngokungazenyenzi.

Lokhu kuyinto ebaluleke kakhulu ekwakhiweni kwesizwe, nasekubuyiseni isimo sokuzethemba ebantwini bakithi.

Okunye okubalulekile Somlomo, ezinguqukweni ezilethwe yinkululeko, ukubuyiswa kwesithunzi samakhosi endabuko sibuyiswa yilohulumeni wentando yeningi.

Siyakhumbula sonke ukuthi amakhosi ayephucwe namandla okwenza izinto ezithile ngesikhathi sobandlululo, ephethwe yizimantshi. Lomthetho omusha oshaywe yilesisishayamthetho usukubeke kwacaca ukuthi yiliphi iqhaza elizobanjwa amakhosi kulombuso wentando yeningi.

Kanti nendlela amakhosi azosebenzisana ngayo nohulumeni isicaciswe kabanzi kulomthetho. Kuningi esikubona kufanele amakhosi abambe kukho iqhaza, ikakhulukazi emkhankasweni wokubuyisa ubuntu, nezimilo emphakathini.

Amakhosi angasisiza isizwe ekukhumbuzeni abantu amasiko agcizelela ubuntu, ukuze kunciphe ubunswelaboya.

Kanti nasemikhakheni yezolimo, nokuthuthukiswa kwezindawo zasemakhaya, kanye nokufakwa kwezingqalasizinda nokunye, kufanele kuqinise ubudlelwane nokusebenzisana phakathi kwamakhosi nohulumeni basemakhaya, njengoba sekwenzeka nje kwezinye izindawo.

Madam Speaker, we are pleased that the moral regeneration programme has continued to take root in communities.

Honourable Members would be aware of the success of the many campaigns undertaken by government and communities, encouraging awareness and action against scourges such as domestic violence, child abuse as well as alcohol and drug abuse.

The success of campaigns such as the 16 Days of Activism against Violence directed towards women, and others such as Child Protection Week, result from the strong partnership between government and communities in preventing and fighting criminality.

We thank all members of this House who are active in their constituencies in such campaigns. Let us do more, especially during this year, which is the International Year of the Family. But let me emphasise Madam Speaker that the Moral Regeneration programme is not only about campaigns against negative behaviour.

It is also about promoting positive values such as ubuntu, compassion, respect for human dignity, human life and all other values enshrined in our Constitution.

Therefore, all of us have a role to play in our communities, to mobilise and promote these values in various activities.

In this regard, Madam Speaker, allow me to use this opportunity to pay tribute to one of our foremost nation builders, the former editor-in-chief of the Sowetan, Aggrey Klaaste, who died at the weekend.

His contribution to social development and to building a compassionate society will never be forgotten. He was not just a spectator and reporter of events; he was a catalyst for change.

Honourable Members, as we all know, the then Deputy President Mbeki launched the Partnership against AIDS in 1998, emphasising partnerships in care and support for the infected and affected.

In addition to many government programmes, many resources have been pooled from diverse communities and social groupings to ensure a strong, united and comprehensive response to this epidemic. This partnership is expressed and co-ordinated through the South African National Aids Council.

We will continue to encourage all sectors and spheres of society to be involved as equal partners in developing programmes, and in sharing information and research that will curb the spread of this disease. We must also develop more support networks for those already infected and affected by the disease.

Honourable members, the building of a better Africa and a better world has always been a strong mission of our government. We will continue our interactions on a bilateral and multilateral level with various countries and international institutions to promote our national objectives.

We will next week host the second meeting of the South Africa-People's Republic of China Binational Commission. We will seek to further expand bilateral relations with China in the political, economic, technological, cultural, educational and scientific fields. South Africa is China's largest trading partner in Africa.

As China is one of the world's fastest growing economies, we anticipate that the Binational Commission will assist in further improving trade between our two countries.

The bilateral trade volume has already increased from R9, 3 billion in 1990 to R23, 3 billion, in 2003.

We also have Binational Commissions with Nigeria, Sweden and Germany, and all these provide a focused mechanism of deepening ties and meeting objectives such as expanding trade relations in order to meet the national priority of job creation.

Madam Speaker, we are also continuing with conflict resolution in the Great Lakes region, including Burundi, where elections need to take place before the 1st of November 2004, in terms of the Arusha agreement.

A timetable has been approved by the Great Lakes region and we are working closely with the Burundi to ensure adherence to the deadlines.

The priorities in the next few weeks include the establishment of an independent electoral commission and the passing of the necessary electoral legislation.

Also in terms of the Arusha Agreement, we are assisting the Burundi parties to finalise a post-election power sharing arrangement, which we call a "soft landing," which would take into account both the aspirations of the majority as well as the fears of the minority.

We spent two days in Burundi last week, and met with 30 political parties and representatives of civil society, to discuss post-election power sharing and the peace process in general.

On Monday this week, in Pretoria, we also received a delegation from the All Africa Council of Churches, the World Council of Churches and the Fellowship of Christian Councils in East Africa and the Horn of Africa, to discuss the Burundi peace process.

With regards to preparing the security conditions, Honourable Members would also be aware of the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping mission from the 1st of June, to replace the African Mission in Burundi.

As members will recall, when the UN Security Council indicated in 2002, that conditions were not conducive for the deployment of a UN force, as the cease-fire agreements did not meet all the UN requirements, the AU decided to deploy the African Mission, to which South Africa, Mozambique and Ethiopia contributed troops.

As we welcome the UN deployment, we also commend the African Mission in Burundi, the first ever peacekeeping mission deployed by the AU. It was a key innovation in the continent and is now a good model for future AU peacekeeping missions.

Madam Speaker, allow me to thank all Honourable members who continue to support the key role that our country is playing in peacemaking and peace-keeping in the continent. South Africa is presently listed as the tenth largest Troop Contributing Country to the United Nations.

This is a remarkable achievement bearing in mind that the country only became directly involved in UN Peacekeeping operations since 2001. This indicates the total commitment of South Africa to peace and stability in the continent and the world.

Our country continues to provide hope in the continent, especially in the search for peace. We recall that during the two presentations to the United Nations Security Council for the deployment of a peacekeeping mission in Burundi, in 2002 and 2003, Council members unanimously emphasised the importance of the role that South Africa is playing in the continent. This view has been expressed in many other forums.

Malungu ahloniphekile esishayamthetho sikazwelonke, angigcizelele ukuthi njengoba sithumele amabutho kulamazwe anjengo-Burundi, no-DRC, senziwa ukwazi ukuthi angeke sithuthuke sijabule sodwa ungunaphakade, kube kudlange izimpi nokwentula emazweni angomakhelwane bethu.

Kuyayisiza iNingizimu Africa ukusebenzela ukuthula ukuze sandise amazwe esingahwebelana nawo, futhi sithuthukise umnotho wezwe lethu, kanye nowezwekazi lethu i-Afrika.

Sizimisele ukusebenzela ukuthula e-Afrika, ukuze kungabibikho ama-Afrika ayophila ngosizi, ukweswela, nangokwesaba.

Honourable Members, taking government to the people through Izimbizo and other public participation programmes is set to continue. Accessibility and the capacity to listen and respond to the people continue to be a key priority of this government.

Last year, a number of izimbizo were undertaken. The follow-ups conducted after the visits indicate the success of this programme. For example, in 2001 we visited the Free State, and in November last year, we returned to assess progress.

As regards agriculture, a request for the speeding up of land claims had been made in 2001. By the time of the follow-up visit, 18 farms had been allocated to the previously disadvantaged families through grants obtained from government.

On the question of access to services, the people of Trompsburg and Zastron had in 2001 complained about having to travel to Bloemfontein to obtain identity and other civic documents. As we speak, Multipurpose Community Centres are under construction in the two areas to resolve the problem.

The people of Trompsburg had also requested sport and recreational facilities, and these were built by government at the cost of R 4 million.

In Limpopo, following complaints from the people during an Imbizo last year, the provincial government set aside over R30 million to demolish and rebuild all schools built with asbestos in Mafefe village.

These are just a few illustrations of how government responds to the issues raised during izimbizo. They indicate the value of imbizo as a communication, monitoring and evaluation tool.

Madam Speaker, in this new term of government and new parliament, as Leader of Government Business let me acknowledge and welcome the existing co-operation between the Executive and Parliament.

We will play our part to contribute to the efficient functioning of Parliament, through, among other things, ensuring the smooth flow of legislation.

In the previous parliament we succeeded in ensuring that a large number of bills did not have to be fast-tracked, and that Parliament had sufficient time to properly consider the Bills before it.

Madam Speaker, Honourable Members, once again thank you for this opportunity of sharing information on our activities. We hope for a continued positive working relationship between the executive and parliament, for the common good of our country.

In conclusion Madam Speaker, let me take this opportunity to thank President Mbeki and Minister Essop Pahad for their support in our work. I also extend my gratitude to our Director-General, the Reverend Frank Chikane, and all Presidency staff for their hard work and much-valued support to all of us.

Allow us to also extend our heartfelt condolences to Rev Chikane and his family on the passing on of his mother.

I thank you.