

Memorandum: The State of the Nation - The People's Voice

9 February 2022

We, the undersigned organisations, express serious concern about the state of our nation.

Tomorrow, President Cyril Ramaphosa will report back to the country about what the government has and has not achieved over the last year. He will detail what will be the country's focus for 2022, leading into 2023.

Yet, there is overwhelming concern amongst the public that the country may be teetering on the edge of a downward spiral.

It is now not uncommon to wake up to news of yet another institution being set alight; to reports of IT hacks and attempted acts of sabotage at State Owned Enterprises; to suspicious break-ins at the homes of whistleblowers and to the theft of hard drives and sensitive information from individuals or government.

This is the first State of the Nation Address by the President following the July 2021 unrest. There has so far been little consequence for those behind the failed insurrection. Six months down the line, no one is held to account for the death of 337 people, the mass destruction of economic infrastructure and the heightened social tensions.

It is also President Ramaphosa's first SONA after the November 2021 local government elections, in which the voter turnout, particularly among young people, was tellingly low. When Parliament sits for the first time this year - albeit not in the Parliamentary precinct - those who occupy the seats must ask why citizens have chosen to disengage from the politics of the country.

Is their disillusionment fueled by the toxicity of our current politics that has more often than not put the party before the people? Is it that decisions about who runs what, are not always taken in the interest of the country, or who is the best candidate for the job? Perhaps it is sometimes more about who may be pliable, or who may be able to protect certain interests, be it in selecting a head of an SOE board or law enforcement unit.

Politicians must answer why they want to reverse some of the gains we have made. Just as we welcomed the transparency offered through the new party funding laws, we must now deal with the political pushback because coffers and pockets aren't being lined.

Ask people across municipalities in numerous parts of the country about why they have lost confidence in the functionality of municipal government. When people have to fill the potholes, worry about sewage treatment plants overflowing, panic about taps running dry, and walk home in complete darkness from work at night because street poles have been vandalised and not repaired, something is fundamentally wrong with 'service delivery'.

We must question why people have faith in private security, neighbourhood patrollers, gated community infrastructure and mob violence instead of the police. Or, why welfare institutions are the safety net of the poor and vulnerable, and not the state.

Mr President, in your State of the Nation Address tomorrow, will you tell us what is going to be done to feed the hungry; to keep the lights on; to make sure that our water and sanitation infrastructure is repaired; to ensure that our trains can start moving again; to deal with land reform, redistribution and restitution adequately; to prepare for the consequences of the climate crisis; to ensure that schools are well resourced and that pit latrines are eliminated; and to ensure that people are vaccinated and have proper healthcare?

And, what about the youth? According to the 2021 first quarter findings of the [Quarterly Labour Force Survey](#), youth aged 15 - 24 years and 25 - 34 years recorded the highest unemployment rate of 63,3% and 41,3% respectively.

Mr President, can you fathom the difficulty of an unemployed young person needing to raise [approximately R1 300](#) per month to look for a job?

Will you share plans to resource and ensure the proper functioning of the criminal justice sector; action to prevent public procurement being abused to benefit a few; and a plan to clean up and clear out state capture networks and hold people accountable?

We believe that the release of the two reports by the Zondo Commission marks a turning point. We must claw back the money stolen and recover and restore our state institutions. Members of Parliament, Mr President, we rely on your political will to put measures in place that ensure that those implicated in state

capture, face the full might of the law. We continue to reiterate our call for orange overalls for the corrupt! We cannot do so if there is still trepidation, unquestioning party loyalty and hesitancy in prosecuting those implicated in the Zondo Commission reports, nor if law enforcement is not adequately capacitated to fulfill its mandate. We will resist secret deals made with those implicated in the Zondo report.

Mr President, we want you to share with us how you are going to deal with brewing anti-migrant sentiment, with job creation and with upholding this Constitution and democracy, when attempts to undermine it are clear for all to see.

As we reflect on the previous year's events, and the implications of occurrences this month alone – from the fire at Parliament to the arson attack on this very church that we stand in today, St George's Cathedral - we say that the time for febleness and timidity is over.

Put the people before the party. Lead. Restore governance and stability. Act!

We call on Parliamentarians and you Mr President to:

- Implement the recommendations from the Zondo Commission report. Do not allow the gains made in fighting corruption and capture be reversed;
- Stop the destabilisation of our state and arrest the culprits;
- Counter racist and xenophobic sentiment;
- Put people before the party and competence before political interests in public sector appointment processes;
- Protect whistleblowers by implementing key recommendations in the Zondo Commission reports.
- Engage civil society on further mechanisms for whistleblower support;
- Fix our SOEs and restore good governance in all state institutions;
- Block attempts to reverse the Political Party Funding Act;
- Put forward a budget for the people, which is inclusive, progressive and sustainable;
- Grow the economy, create jobs, and reduce poverty. Implement the Basic Income Grant;

- Stop the decay of state infrastructure. Stop the rot at municipalities; and
- Make government work for the people.

We are in dire need of a re-imagined politics in this country, where people truly govern, where there is pride in serving the people of this country and all those who live in it. We need a government that is completely clean, ethical and morally sound. We need a government that can bail out the poor with a basic income grant, and not SOEs that are left for plunder. We need leaders that can govern, true servants of the people!

The honest, hardworking and peace-loving people of this country will unite to save it. Mr President and Parliamentarians, we ask you to do the same!

This statement is endorsed by the following organisations:

Accountability Now

Ahmed Kathrada Foundation

Alternative Information and Development Centre

Ansarul Ummah Til Islam

Botsotso

Business Ecology

Centre for Analytics and Behavioural Change

Centre for Good Governance and Social Justice

Citizens of Conscience Foundation NPC

CitizensSA

Cooperatives and Policy Alternative Center

Council for the Advancement of the South African Constitution

Die Groep van 10

Dullah Omar Institute

Fighting Inequality Alliance

Gugulethu Community Action Networks

Heartlines

Helen Suzman Foundation

Imam Haron Foundation

Isango Lencubeko

Johannesburg Institute of Social Services

June and Andrew Mlangeni Foundation

Khulumani Support Group

Legal Resources Centre

Market Users Committee

Music is a Great Investment (MIAGI)

Ndifuna Ukwazi

Ntwane Development Community Forum

Organisation Undoing Tax Abuse

Printing South Africa

Public Affairs Research Institute

Right 2 Know

South African Communist Party (Western Cape)

Strategic Dialogue Group

South African Conversations

South Durban Community Environmental Alliance

Survivors of State Capture at SARSTrauma Support Group

South African Christian Leadership Initiative

SynNovation Solution

The Centre for Values Promotion

The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa

The Whistleblower House