



NAPTOSA MEDIA STATEMENT ON SONA 2019

'Like many others, awaiting the 2019 State of the Nation Address (SONA) by President Cyril Ramaphosa, NAPTOSA also took the time to reflect on some of the issues and promises from last year's SONA, and, honestly, it is a bit of a mixed bag' said NAPTOSA President, Mr Nkosipendule Ntantala.

The economy has not had the kick start that was anticipated. In fact we slumped to a technical recession that we have thankfully managed to emerge from since. The news on corruption is even worse than what was believed before. To his credit we must acknowledge that many of the new revelations on the depth of corruption in our country is the result of the work of Commissions of Inquiry established by the President.

The President delivered on the Job Summit and the Investment Conference. The outcomes of these initiatives are, however, yet to be seen at a practical level. The implementation of a minimum wage was achieved, albeit a year late, and SARS appears to have been stabilized, also the result of a Commission of Inquiry.

Promises to stabilise and revitalise State Owned Enterprises have not come to fruition, although the President will obviously disagree. One only has to look at debt laden Eskom, Prasa, SABC and SAA to know this is true. On the infrastructure front, whilst acknowledging that new schools are being delivered through the ASIDI program, infrastructure maintenance is sadly lacking as we were so sorely reminded by last week's school tragedy.

This year's SONA was much more in-depth and focused than last year's with many more concrete proposals on moving South Africa forward.

'NAPTOSA cannot but align itself to the broad five point action plan of President Ramaphosa. Economic growth and job creation; improvement of the education system to cater for future skill requirements; improvement of the lives of all South Africans, especially the poor; fighting corruption; and strengthening the capacity of the state are all critical areas for our country at this juncture' said Mr Ntantala. Achieving all of this, however, will be the challenge, because Summits and Conferences alone do not necessarily bring about tangible results. And the President has identified many of these.

On the education front, we are delighted with the President's announcement that government intends eradicating all unsafe and inappropriate sanitation facilities in schools in the next three years. NAPTOSA has been calling for this for so long amidst many broken promises by the Department of Education. We trust this is now the real deal.

It is, however, disappointing that the President seems to equate school safety to mainly sanitation issues. Gun violence and gang activities at and near schools, parents being shot outside school premises, drug pushers targeting schools, sexual harassment and teacher on learner violence, and vice versa, can no longer be tolerated as part of our school environment. Something must be done, and done as a matter of urgency, because nice sounding policies alone, no longer cut it.

NAPTOSA has already expressed its support for the consolidation of the whole ECD function under the auspices of the Department of Basic Education because the current fragmented approach, whereby the Department of Social Development is responsible for certain areas of the ECD sphere, is not working well. To see that this is now a firm intention of government is pleasing.

The President's vision for every learner in South Africa to be issued with digital workbooks and textbooks on a tablet device within six years, is commendable, although the practical implementation might not be so straight forward. Before embarking on this path, it is imperative that teachers be trained and re-trained in the utilization of these devices so that they are able to guide and assist learners accordingly.

It is satisfying to see that issues discussed in the recent Education Indaba have found their way into the President's Address. Especially the issue of the envisaged demands of the future world of work on our education system. The Framework for Skills for a Changing World whereby both educators and learners will be trained to respond to the requirements of the 4th Industrial Revolution is therefore welcomed.

Recognizing gender-based violence as an urgent national priority and addressing it by inter alia strengthening the Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual offences Units of the SAPS and resolving to close down all taverns, shebeens and liquor outlets near schools, has NAPTOSA's full support.

It is impossible to reflect on all the areas covered by the President in his Address, safe to say that NAPTOSA will watch with keen interest the proposed plans to bring Eskom back from ruin and to use the NPA in the good fight against corruption.

In conclusion, said Mr Ntantala, 'We need the President to understand that through acceptance of the State as employer's multi term wage offer in 2018, public servants showed their commitment to contribute to the rebuilding of our country and our economy, despite not being responsible for the state we find ourselves in. We trust that this commitment will not be shattered by poor governance and continued unauthorized expenditure, misappropriation of funds and corrupt activities. NAPTOSA calls on the President to honour his statements in last year's, as well as this year's, SONA when he said "Thieves who are stealing public funds should be arrested and prosecuted." and "Where there is a basis to prosecute, prosecutions must follow swiftly and stolen public funds must be recovered urgently."'

END OF STATEMENT

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