

BUDGET VOTE ON PARLIAMENT

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SIPHO MFUNDISI

UCDP

The vote on parliament places a heavy burden on members as they have to serve as referees and players or put the other way as the devil's advocates.

The enlarged of executive has resulted in downscaling members of portfolio committees as more committees have had to be put in place. From the 17 members per portfolio committee ten years ago the numbers have been whittled down to 15 and 12 at present. This makes it very difficult for all parties to participate in matters that affect those departments and other committees and this is something that tends to defeat the idea of a multi party parliament as envisaged in the constitution of the country.

That, even with the situation as it stands, sometimes portfolio committees find it difficult to have quorums for greater responsibility from members. All have to be at their posts as and when required.

What astounds us in the UCDP is that the Secretary to Parliament has, in the past four years, been suspended on two occasions. Surely this will have a negative effect on the operations of the institution. We hope the findings by the Auditor General will be made known to all parties and not be kept as the preserve of the Parliamentary Oversight Authority while some parties only get snippets of what is going on by gleaning that from the media.

The UCDP welcomes Prof Mohammed Jahed to establish the budget office and thanks the leadership of the institution for having gone the way of requesting for a seconded official to put the structure in place. We hope the 141 vacant posts as at September 2011, some of which were said to be eyed to provide capacity to this office among others, are gradually being filled

It is ironic that as members of parliament we lament the bureaucratic manner in which departments and municipalities function while our institution wallows in the same mode of operation. It is unfortunate that members who join parliament midstream have to wait for almost six months to be provided with

simple tools of trade such as a laptop yet we are all set to strive for a paperless society.

We have to laud all efforts mounted to make a mark in the international parliamentary stage by participating in bodies such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union and even visiting other parliaments across the globe to do benchmarking and observe best practices out there.

We have noted that among the strategic priorities parliament has set itself is that; **“parliament will expand its focus on increasing representation, openness and accountability by improving its oversight capacity to ensure sound governance and effective service delivery by the executive”**.

This is one goal we as parliament have set ourselves. Let us have **representation increased** in such matters as oversight to avoid a lopsided situation by one party.

It most cases upheavals around service delivery in some areas occur after parliamentarians and provincial legislators had visited the affected areas and reported to their legislatures but executives take their time to respond. Let us not tire to speak out on such issues.

We hope time is not far that parliament will reconsider the formula used to allocate funds by the Independent Electoral Commission to close the gap between the haves and the have-nots.

The UCDP supports the budget vote of Parliament