

DEBATE ON THE STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS

4 JUNE 2009

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UCDP

Thank you very much Mr President for the speech you delivered on the opening of the fourth democratic parliament. The speech that is easy to comprehend, and the speech that has targets. This speech is going to make it easy for us to assess performance, achievements of your government. It will be easier to remind you that these targets were not met, and what are the problems. We will know who is performing and who is not, and corrective measures will be put in place timeously.

The President has hinted to the people of South Africa that South Africa can not escape the consequences of the present economic melt-down and he has admitted that the country is facing a recession, and that the government together with the social partners are joining hands to come up with plans to minimise the impact of this recession. This is a step in the right direction, but the President could have revealed what plans are in place so as to engage in the robust debate of the success, the limitations of these plans.

The President in his numerous speeches has indicated that he is willing to work closely with opposition parties, and we would like to be engaged in the formulation of plans so that we own them up, and not later blame the ruling party for having failed South Africa.

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R787 billion is a good amount of money that could be used to improve on the delapidated infrastructure throughout the country and move on with the building of new structures.

How will the rural areas benefit from the R787 b of infrastructure development? If we do not cater for the rural areas we will be perpetuating the economic imbalance as it exists in South Africa now. We hope and trust that the National Planning Commission in the President's office will address the issue.

We congratulate the President for coming up with the intervention strategies to address health problems, the introduction of the National Health Insurance Scheme, paying attention to the issues of remuneration of health professionals. On the second issue of remuneration of health professionals, the government must take a holistic approach rather than the piece-meal approach solution. Is it not time that the whole salary structure of the public sector be reviewed? So as to avert strikes and picketing, by unions, that affect service delivery and the economy of the country?

The President had indicated that he will be meeting with school principals because of lack of discipline, lack of work ethics, ill-mannered learners, the low morale of teachers and teachers who abuse learners sexually. In doing this he, if I am not wrong, will be the first Head of State to meet with the

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teaching fraternity, and this is another step in the right direction. If he can solve problems facing the education system in South Africa, it will be a giant step forward. More often than not, research reveal that our learners are rated the lowest in reading and writing skills. It is high time that educators are reminded of their responsibilities, and it is in meeting with these professionals that their responsibilities be spelt out.

The President in meeting with teachers must remind them that reading makes a man, and reading and writing at the same time make a full man. Therefore, no time wasting, like the President said, if you don't deliver give way.

There are two ministries of education now, and we hope that these ministers will not perpetuate the fragmentation that exists in the education department, the system of uncoordinated directorates.

We humbly submit that the curriculum be looked into. It should not change from one minister to the other. Since 1996, we had Curriculum 2005 (OBE) which changed to Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) which also changed to New Curriculum Statement (NCS). These changes confuse educators who are not properly trained to deal with them, thus the low morale of educators and the poor products of our education system, that are less competitive in the international educational arena.

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When the Americans landed on the lunar surface for the first time, there was a saying “One Giant Step Forward”. The Rural Development Ministry is one such a giant step forward. We have been waiting for a leader to pronounce on the rural development like the present Head of State. The economy of this country can grow faster if the resources in rural areas are put into better use. Then the Land Use Management Bill must be speed up – to correct the ills of development in rural areas. For the pilot project envisaged for rural development programme to be successful, relevant infrastructure must be in place, so that we don’t dampen the spirit of rural communities with failing projects.

I thank you.