

RESPONSE TO THE 2014 STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS

ISAAC SIPHO MFUNDISI

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It is twenty years since the advent of democracy and we hope as the country has just passed the adolescence stage, all that will be said and done will show a measure of growth and maturity. Let us leave behind unnecessary point scoring and speak out without fear or favour.

South Africans should not embellish their facts and they should speak truth to power in the interest of this lovely country of ours.

There are very many instances where services have improved. Applying for a passport and the new Smart card identity card and getting same in less than a fortnight is worth writing home about. We all know in the past that used to take eternity. We hope other government institutions will take a leaf from the book of Home Affairs

We watch with great alarm whither bound this country if the social assistance programme covering 16 million people is waved as an achievement. To what extent are we going to build a nation depending on handouts? Have we forgotten the injunction that everyone will live by the sweat of their brows? In juxtaposing the fact that unemployment figures are going through the roof yet we give out grants as high as this one feels that surely a middle of the road course has to be found.

Our concern as the UCDP against the country developing into a welfare state is being supported by the disparaging names given to those who earn an honest living through the Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP). Some who receive these social grants call them

Epa Wena Popai. Those who earn a living are termed fools! This cannot be a good story.

We totally agree with the President that common ground has to be found between the mine bosses and employees. The current and continuing impasse does not bode well for the future of this country. In fact this goes for all employers and employees, government included. Work stoppages are a drawback.

The effect of the Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission has yet to be felt in a province like the North West. We are mindful that a bill thereon is before parliament yet work is in progress in other provinces as indicated in the SONA.

On 12 February 2013, when the President replied to the debate on the State of the Nation Address he said: "Honourable Mfundisi, we have noted your request for the Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission (PICC) to look into the Koster – Lichtenburg road in the North West". It is over a year that they are looking into it but no progress has been registered. It is worth noting that that road is a menace to motorists to the extent that a fortnight ago members of the provincial portfolio committee on Public Works were on site conducting an inspection *in loco* when they were nearly run over by two vehicles on the same road.

I shudder to say this tends to remind me of one former minister of South Africa who was called Dr Promise because he made promises that never bore fruit.

It is concerning that the North West province is treated more like a step child of this government. It is the only one without aeroplane services yet there are two airports that are almost going to waste. One wonders why flights between Cape Town and Sun City were

stopped, let alone those between O R Tambo and Mmabatho. We have seen airports being duplicated in eThekweni and eMthatha while in the North West they are being left to grow cobwebs.

The story told in the SONA regarding land restitution lends itself to scrutiny. If 5000 farms were occupied by 5000 white families and 200 000 black families have been resettled on them, we in the UCDP do not accept that as a success. A simple calculation shows that on average a farm occupied by one white family gets to be occupied by 40 families which means that they cannot be expected to make a living like the former occupant did.

Another area of concern is around communities straddling two living areas, the one they were forcefully removed from and the one they were settled on by those who removed them from their father land.

There is no doubt that the Grade 12 results are better than in the past, however it should be borne in mind that even as the Honourable Minister of Basic Education congratulated the class of 2013, she stated that her department did all they could to let them pass as more failures would be hard put to coping with the new CAPPS approach. Having said that we do not take away anything from their success but that has also proved a difficulty for Higher Education Institutions as there are insufficient funds in the NASFS coffers to absorb the shock high pass rate. Surely not a very good story to tell!

It is common knowledge that products of FET colleges are hard put to finding employment because of the course combinations they made during their years of study. To most of them the qualifications they have are not worth the paper they are written on.

There is need for a planning section in our education system or alternatively constant interfacing with captains of industry to ensure that products of the education system are relevant to the needs of industry.

We share the same concerns as far as the number of females is concerned in the judiciary. Having only one female Judge President in twenty years is cause for concern.

While it was sad to listen to the story regarding the 800 police killed one feels that could have been balanced with the number of civilians who died at the hands of police in order to give it a rounded and balanced story.

The UCDP has NEVER supported the notion of tenders being allocated to individuals. We suspected from the beginning that the system would lend itself to corruption. We shall therefore whole heartedly support the establishment of a central Tender Board.

We in the UCDP have noted, appreciated and supported the programme of Social Cohesion as mounted by the current administration. That leaders of all parties represented in parliament were given opportunity to share the stage with the President and address the nation on national holidays, is something worth writing home about.

The fact that during the launch of the Social Cohesion in Kliptown in 2012 some leaders of opposition parties were identified to facilitate some workshops speaks volumes about the magnanimity and of the current administration. Unfortunately I could not honour the privilege as I was in the USA on other pressing matters at the time.

The issue of Social Cohesion is one story this administration will be remembered for. It never happened in the past three administrations and due has to be given to where it is due.

One issue that will remain as a blot in the book of the ANC is the failure to obliterate the use of bucket systems even in old black residential areas despite that it was said that by 2007 that would be a thing of the past.