

RESPONSE TO THE STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS

SIPHO MFUNDISI

(PRESIDENT: UNITED CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY)

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Listening to the delivery of the address by President Zuma one was left astounded as to whither bound this country. While in teaching circles it is expected that repetition enhances assimilation and understanding one never bargained for such repetition from such office or to such extent.

As a former teacher I came to learn much about the hidden curriculum. In this case the president successfully withheld information from what the nation wants to know such as the situation on the costs of upgrades at Nkandla following announcements by the minister of Public Works, the calls for frugality by treasury for officials to restrain their spending yet they seem to excel instead and that in order to root out corruption anyone in government who is found guilty of same be shown the exit door. In this case it is time to set sad examples about those who spend or steal with impunity.

President Ian Khama, only last week, stated clearly that his government is considering to reroute their exports and imports from both Mozambique and Namibian ports as against those of South Africa where work stoppages are the order of the day.

On an occasion like a speech from the Head of State people expect pertinent issues to be addressed. Millions of the unemployed look forward to be reassured that employment is within reach, not the monotonous and sterile saying that there has been an economic meltdown. All they need is to earn an honest living through the sweat of their brow as they were promised that if they vote the party in question they would get better jobs. Now is the time to deliver on such a promise.

Victims of crime want to know if there will be urgency in ensuring that justice is carried out. They live on the maxim that justice delayed is justice denied.

Parents want to know when their children will receive decent education. The hackneyed statement of good results carries no weight when children are

made to pass at 30%. Imagine a doctor who has to operate on a patient while he knows only 30% of what has to be done! This goes for all professions. When people opted and voted for democracy they never imagined that they were getting themselves into adulterated education.

The issue on e-tolling that is about to turn the country into a battle field went unsaid by the president as if it is a non-event. Could it be that it does not matter as those in charge go past even the existing toll gates without having to stop? To the average citizen it is these toll-gates that cause concern and the President missed a golden opportunity to cough thereon. It is not a matter to be left untouched when the COSATU, the affiliate of the ruling party, turns our roads into slow drives at the drop of a hat.

That the National Development Plan has been accepted by all in the country is not gainsaid. The rub is on the implementation. The question is on how those millions of jobs will be created. It is the detail that has to come forward. We reiterate here and now that the NDP was put together in the most democratic and consultative way. The commission reached every nook and cranny of this country for explanations and inputs from citizens.

The envisaged implementation of the National Health Insurance in 2014 is set for a big surprise when hospitals are imploding with inefficiency. Whether you go to George Masebe in Limpopo, Moses Kotane in the North West, Charlotte Maxeke or Chris Hani Baragwanath in Gauteng it is all ineptitude that prevails. One wonders where is the wisdom in naming these failing centres after stalwarts of the struggle when people who work there take no pride in them. Surely those after whom these centres of disgrace have been named are turning in their graves.

We in the UCDP believe that teaching is a labour of love. It boggles the mind that the President can go to such lengths as to justify striking by teachers and virtually retract or modify the resolution to declare teaching as an essential service in the way the expression is known world-wide. As much as the teachers have a right to strike, the pupils' right to education and learning is equally entrenched in the constitution. The interests of both parties have to be addressed and met by the government.

The instability in accessing schooling is causing concern. Year in, year out, learners are chanted from this or that school as one is being closed down either because of dwindling numbers of learners or even ineffective teaching. This has an impact on learners as invariably transport is rarely properly, if ever, arranged. It also affects the lifestyles of the kids and they start bunking classes.

While in last year's state of the nation the president is on record as saying government will prevail upon Eskom to reduce electricity prices, the latter has come up as if to spite government by asking for a 16% price hike for the next 5 years or so.

Ordinary citizens are always told that this government has, in an unprecedented manner, provided electricity to so many houses in so many years. The very citizens out at Seolong, Makoshong, or even at Sakutswane are surprised when the same government that boasts of providing the electricity claims that its hands are tight when it comes to the hikes in tariffs.

We all support the strong words the president used to speak against child and women abuse. We hope and believe that the instant and specialised courts the president spoke of was not only a sweetener and measure to appease the aggrieved. Let us see them spring into action soon.

I spoke to some medico over the weekend asking what it could be like to emasculate such offenders but was advised about legal suits when those rapists decide to settle and form families. I find it difficult to reconcile respecting their rights when the rights of a deflowered and traumatised young woman were trampled upon. This Mr President needs to be looked into.

It is almost 5 years that the President has called on all government institutions to ensure that payments for goods received is effected with 30 days of service being rendered or delivered yet is still not happening as it should. Some dynamite has to be put under those who default. It is this delay and utter negligence that results in some SMMEs crumbling and causing loss of earnings and dependence on government. It is under such circumstances that clean audits by the Auditor General will be hard to come by as documentation is not presented as required.

Notwithstanding that the Presidential Infrastructure Co-ordinating Commission identified ten major roads in the North West as priority, nothing has come out of that. The Koster-Lichtenburg road which was due for completion before the 2010 World Cup is yet to be completed and has deteriorated further. This is one route that could serve as an alternative to the most expensive toll-gate in South Africa the Swartruggens toll-gate. It is high time that the priority status of the road is re-prioritised.

The UCDP welcomes the envisaged filling of all vacant posts in the criminal justice system but pleads that they should be men and women of substance. In the case of the National Director of Public Prosecutions we pray much that it be someone who will at least complete the set term of office. Up to so far none has and invariably all left the office with their heads hanging in shame.

We have noted with trepidation that a new tax regime is on the way. We shall watch the space next week Wednesday.