



MINISTER  
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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**Remarks of the Minister of Social Development, Ms Lindiwe Zulu, MP on the  
occasion of the State of the Nation Address Debate**

**Tuesday, 13 February 2024**

**Cape Town City Hall**

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Speaker of the National Assembly, Honourable Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula;  
His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa;  
His Excellency Deputy President Paul Mashatile;  
Honourable Cabinet Ministers;  
Honourable Members of Parliament;  
My Fellow South Africans;

1. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. From the very beginning, let me also thank the leadership collective of our great movement, the African National Congress, for the opportunity you have given to me to serve our people and our beloved country, South Africa. This is an opportunity that I do not take for granted for I am consistently mindful of the weight of public expectations and the mandate to find lasting solutions to challenges that confront our people.
2. At the height of the apartheid regime, the cherished ideals of a free and democratic South Africa seemed nothing but an elusive dream. We dare not forget that ours is a democracy born out of the blood and sweat of the forebears of our liberation struggle.
3. We shall forever remain indebted and inspired by their selfless struggle for the freedom and democracy we now enjoy in this country. We re-affirm our resolve to ensure that their sacrifices were not in vain. For the heroes and heroines of our struggle, including some of the Members in this House today, freedom seemed far fetched and unattainable.

4. 30 years on, a firm foundation has been laid and continues to be strengthened for a thriving constitutional democracy. I am proud to be part of this administration that has spared no effort in lifting the most vulnerable—children, women, older persons and persons with disabilities from the abject and dehumanising conditions of extreme poverty.
5. Government alone cannot achieve the equity and prosperity that present and future generations demand of us. We were able to achieve all of these through a collective endeavour, one that as South Africans embraced through public-private and people-centred partnerships that put the interest of our people first.
6. Mr President, Madiba's long walk to freedom continues until we remove misery and restore dignity to the lives of every man and woman in our country. Our march to a better life for all is now irreversible. No more will we allow anybody to deny us our rights and treat us like second-class citizens in our own country of birth. No more will we allow the entitled and privileged few to decide what is best for us. No more will we allow those who have built their wealth off the blood and sweat of our people to enforce oppressive policies that keep us at the bottom of the heap.
7. Madam Speaker, let me remind the naysayers and those with self-inflicted amnesia what we inherited when we came into office:
  - The destruction of the family unit and communities torn apart by slave trade and a migrant labour system,
  - Apartheid policies that impoverished individuals; created spatial poverty traps and negatively impacted on the human capital formation of black people,
  - A fragmented social welfare system based on race, gender, and geographical location. Welfare policies, legislation, and programmes were inequitable, inappropriate, and ineffective in addressing poverty and basic human needs
  - The policy and legislative framework resulted in, fragmentation, unequal funding, a lack of participation and non-responsiveness, and a lack of sustainable financing.
8. Mr President, in your State of the Nation Address you outlined the remarkable journey we have traversed and the massive gains we have achieved under this Government for all South Africans. As you rightfully asserted, we have a lot to be proud of. So today, I want to focus particularly on the work that we have done to bring home to our people the realities of democracy under the Social Development Portfolio.
9. **What have we done?**

- Improved access to sustainable livelihoods and entrepreneurial opportunities through grant funding and capacity building of civil society organisations by the National Development Agency (NDA);
- progressively expanded social protection coverage from 2.4 million in 1994 to 28 million to support those who cannot support themselves due to no fault of their own;
- We are currently providing regular income support each month without fail, to more than 4 million older persons, about 1 million adults with disabilities and 160 000 children with disabilities. More than 13 million children from poor households receive the Child Support Grant, while a further 237 000 children are supported through our Foster Care Grant.
- provided financial support to the tune of 8,2 Billion Rand to Non-Profit Organisations that render the much-need community development and statutory services in communities;
- increased the number of children benefitting from Early Childhood Development, living up to the mantra: from inception to the grave;
- restored the dignity of our older persons and increased life expectancy through amongst others the provision of Old Age Grant;
- created over 500 thousand employment opportunities through the expanded public works programme;
- addressed the disproportionate impact of poverty on women through women empowerment initiatives;
- passed progressive pieces of legislation such as the Children's Act to ensure the protection of children providing universal access to social welfare services, including adoption, foster care and psychosocial support services
- intensified international collaboration with development and UN agencies such as UNICEF, UNDP and ILO on best practices focusing on poverty eradication initiatives
- expanded access to care and support services for victims/survivors through the implementation of Pillar 4 of the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (specific focus on GBV hotspots);
- capacitated the Gender-Based Violence Command Centre and the National Emergency Response Team (NERT) to render psychosocial, trauma counselling and referral services;
- we are currently expanding shelters and Khuseleka One-Stop Centre Model to all provinces

10. Madam Speaker, 30 years on, the ANC-led Government has laid down the fundamental political and institutional foundations on which to build a future we want. The next 30 years is a history waiting to be written. We look to the future with renewed optimism and determined as ever to build on the foundation of our 30-year successes and continue to serve and to deliver on our commitment to build a better life for all South Africans. It is my prayer that, another 30 years from now, our children and grand-children will look back on our effort and be thankful that we kept the faith.
11. Madam Speaker, you have heard today from the opposition about their self-inflicted historical amnesia and desperate attempt to deflect, to distort, to deny the facts, to discount our successes and to discredit this Government. In the face of these shameful attacks to erase history to suit their political narrative, President Ramaphosa and the ANC-led Government will never relent in our fight to defend our hard-won freedoms.
12. When the ANC-led Government signed the Social Assistance Act into law, our nation took an historic step toward fulfilling a fundamental principle of the Freedom Charter and the Constitution of our country: that social security is a right, not a privilege. Contrary to the official opposition's desperate and misinformed opinion, social security is and will remain a sound investment in the human capital of this country.
13. Today, the social assistance programme is the most enduring and one of the biggest poverty alleviation and redistribution intervention by this administration. Study after study has shown that our social assistance programme is well targeted and has substantially reduced abject poverty and vulnerability.
14. We need not look any further than the 2023 National Senior Certificate results. Of the 897 775 Grade 12 learners who wrote the NSC, 543 786 full-time learners were social grant beneficiaries, with 62 out of the 110 top performing learners in different categories. 202 156 social grants learners received a Bachelor pass which gains them access to further their studies at institutions of higher learning through the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS).
15. Mr President, ours is a humane Government that accepts without reservation, our constitutional obligation to help the most vulnerable. It is under the ANC-led Government, ably led by President Ramaphosa that our nation successfully navigated our way through the worst global health crisis ever—the COVID-19 pandemic.
16. Members of the opposition want to conveniently forget about all that because of selective memory. This is a fact and facts do not lie. It is this government that at the height of the pandemic, introduced the Special COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress to save lives and livelihoods. Today, we provide income support to more than 8 million to unemployed adults to cushion them against hunger as they struggle to find their place in our economy.

17. With a total budget of R266 billion this year, over R22 billion is directly injected into our economy every month and into the hands of those who need it most to facilitate their participation in the economy and the labour market. This in turn stimulates key sectors of our economy, what in economic terms is referred to as the multiplier effect. The positive spin-offs of this investment are reflected in numerous local reports and international studies. This is no small achievement by any measure.
18. Guided by the developmental philosophy of leaving no one behind, we are now finalising policy proposals for the introduction of the Basic Income Grant. It is heartening to see that even opposition expressing support for this policy initiative. We welcome your support, but equally rebut your cheap political stunt with the contempt it deserves for trying to claim easy victories by positioning yourselves as champions of this initiative that is firmly rooted in the ANC policy documents.
19. Madam Speaker, I know that members of the opposition are irritated by these facts and would rather shove this under the carpet and continue to blatantly tell lies to the public about this Government. Mr President, they are irritated by your analogy of Tintswalo because they know very well that hers is a lived experience of the majority of our people. Hers is a story is told by undisputable facts contained in the 2022 census report. These are facts for which this administration will not shy away from nor apologise.
20. As we stride into the third decade of freedom and democracy, we do so with great confidence that our goal for social and economic transformation is well on course. As we prepare for the upcoming National General Elections, we know that South Africans will not be fooled by the opposition's empty promises and will see right through their scaremongering and populist political charade. Mr President, we have fire in our belly because we know that we are going to fight hard for every single vote and for the continuation of this administration.

I thank you.