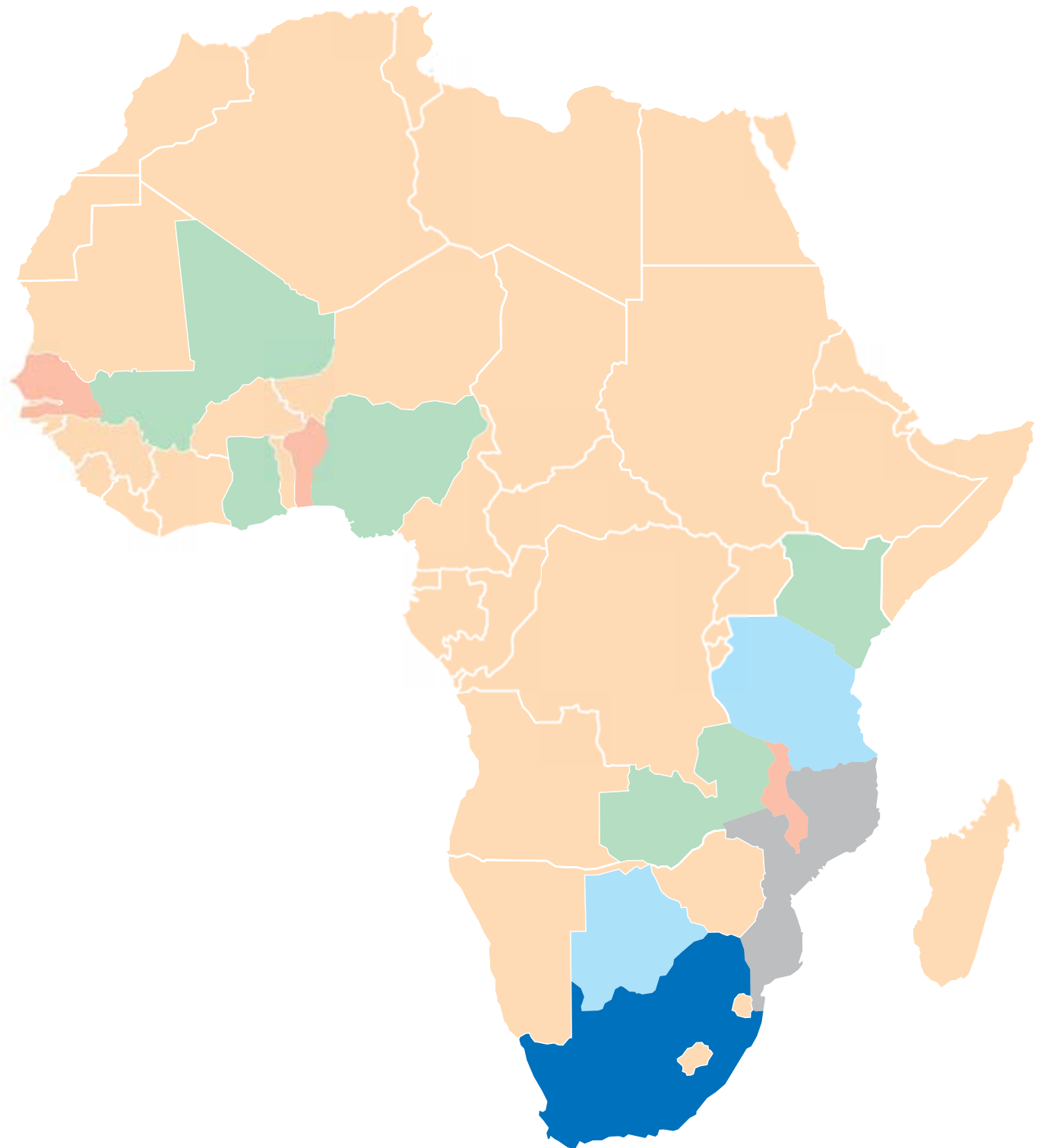


# SOUTH AFRICA

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**State of the Nation Address by His  
Excellency Thabo Mbeki, the  
President of South Africa, at the  
Opening of Parliament  
6 February 2004  
Cape Town**



Nelson Mandela delivered our first State of the Nation Address before the first democratically elected parliament on 24 May 1994. In that address he quoted from a poem by Ingrid Jonker:

. . . the child is present at all assemblies  
and law-givings  
the child peers through the windows of  
houses and into the hearts of mothers  
this child who just wanted to play in the  
sun at Nyanga is everywhere  
the child grown to a man treks through  
all Africa

the child grown to a giant journeys  
through the whole world  
Without a pass

Nelson Mandela then went on to say:

And in this glorious vision, she instructs that our endeavours must be about the liberation of the woman, the emancipation of the man, and the liberty of the child. It is these things that we must achieve to give meaning to our presence in this chamber and to give purpose to our occupancy of the seat of government. And so we must, constrained by, and yet regardless of the accumulated effect of our historical burdens, seize the time to define for ourselves what we want to make of our shared destiny.

The government I have the honour to lead, and I dare say the masses who elected us to serve in this role, are inspired by the single vision of creating a people-centred society. Accordingly, the purpose that will

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drive this government shall be the expansion of the frontiers of human fulfilment, the continuous extension of the frontiers of freedom. The acid test of the legitimacy of the programmes we elaborate, the government institutions we create, [and] the legislation we adopt must be whether they serve these objectives.

We begin the last session of our Second Democratic Parliament two and a half months before we celebrate our First Decade of Liberation and Democracy. We also meet in these Houses of Parliament not long before we hold our third general elections. It is, therefore, natural that our national legislature should spend some time reflecting on what we have achieved—and not achieved—during the last ten years. Inevitably, all of us will also make speeches aimed at improving our fortunes in the forthcoming elections.

But perhaps the correct starting point for the government would be to recall what was said as we began our journey into our democratic future. It was for this reason that I quoted what President Mandela said at the start of the first session of the First Democratic Parliament.

To repeat what he said:

The government I have the honour to lead, and I dare say the masses who elected us to serve in this role, are inspired by the single vision of creating a people-centred society. Accordingly, the purpose that will drive this government shall be the expansion of the frontiers of human fulfilment, the continuous extension of the frontiers of freedom. The acid test of the legitimacy of the programmes we elaborate, the government institutions we create, [and] the legislation we adopt must be whether they serve these objectives.

Sometimes it is difficult to fully understand the fact that we are barely ten years past a time in the lives of our people when our collective future was very uncertain. Some among us hardly will remember that even as we met in this House to

listen to President Mandela deliver the State of the Nation Address, fellow South Africans were continuing to die as a result of political violence.

For instance, the *South Africa Yearbook 1995* reported that “although political violence declined during and after the April 1994 election, extensive criminal and political violence continued to persist in the country, especially in KwaZulu-Natal and on the East Rand of the Gauteng Province.” Daily fatalities from political violence still numbered six in May and just under four in June.

Others among us will have forgotten that as we sat here listening to that first State of the Nation Address, the commitment made by President Mandela to ensure “the expansion of the frontiers of human fulfilment” was to many little more than a promise they appreciated but could not fully comprehend.

The question had still to be answered as to where the resources would be found to finance the “expansion of the frontiers of human fulfilment” of which President Mandela spoke. In the decade [leading] up to the middle of 1993, the average annual gross domestic product [GDP] growth rate was less than 1 percent. During the first half of 1995, the annualised growth rate stood at 1 percent. For the fiscal year 1994–1995, the budget deficit stood at 6.6 percent. Consumer price inflation in the twelve months [leading] up to April 1995 was 11 percent.

By the end of that year, the interest rate stood at 13 percent. On 14 February 1995, the then governor of the Reserve Bank, Chris Stals, said, “A more restrictive monetary policy is needed to make sure that the current economic upswing will not be of the boom-bust nature of earlier times, but will be more durable.”

On 29 June of the same year, Mr. Stals sounded an ominous note when he said, “Underlying inflationary pressures are undoubtedly increasing again in the South African economy. . . . If left unchecked, this trend will eventually force the abortion of the welcome improvement over the past year in real economic growth, and will frustrate the objectives of the Reconstruction and Development Programme.”

On 28 August 1995, Chris Stals said, “Basically, the South African economy is not competitive enough to enable it to maintain an economic growth rate at a level high enough for its own needs. More drastic economic restructuring will be needed to lift the growth potential of the economy to the desired and more acceptable level.”

In the same speech, he expressed the uncertainties of the day when he said, “Economic growth will, in the final situation, be dependent not only on an improvement in the economic structure of the country, but even more so on political and social stability. In the final situation, all business decisions are influenced by the overall environment in which they are taken.”

On 12 October 1995, he said that the country still was faced with some political uncertainties, which [have an] impact on our economic prospects. He said:

At this stage . . . the country still has to face: the first fully democratic election for local authorities, scheduled to take place in early November 2004; a more clear definition of the political, economic, and financial relationships between the central government and regional governments; and the drafting of a final Constitution to replace the current interim Constitution before the next general election can take place.

Since time immemorial, the overwhelming majority of our people knew nothing but despair. They knew as an incontestable fact that tomorrow would not be better than yesterday; it was also fixed and given that the following day would be worse. But then 27 April 1994 came, and things changed radically and irrevocably for all South Africans.

For the black and especially African majority, suddenly a new dawn broke. After these masses had cast their votes, they still had nothing in their stomachs or their pockets. They walked away from the polling booths to return to their miserable shacks, their children made listless by hunger, [with] brutish thugs prowling the unlit

dirt roads of the shantytowns, ready to pounce on their victims without mercy.

They walked the long distances to return to their homesteads of rural squalor, to the mornings of drudgery, to women with bucketsful of dirty river water on their heads, to the daily diet of mealie-pap, to the dark, still, and menacing nights broken only by the weak flickering light of the paraffin lamp and the dying embers of an exhausted fire on a humble hearth.

Yet they had a spring in their step because they knew that a new dawn had proclaimed the coming of a bright day. Though their hands carried the emptiness to which generations of deprivation had accustomed them, their hearts and minds were fired up by a newfound sense of hope—as well as the attendant feeling of dread lest that hope turn out to be but a mere mirage, the false creation of a wish that was intensely felt.

The experience of many decades taught us to understand that the black poor of our country valued a just peace as deeply as they valued their lives. It taught us that their sense of pride in themselves as human beings made it impossible for them to join in a mass slaughter of other human beings, even to satisfy the basic instincts of vengeance and retaliation to settle scores.

Over many decades, we saw that these masses would always refuse to turn racist simply because they were subjected to cruel, racist rule. When a hero in their midst, Chris Hani, was murdered in cold blood, they refused to fulfil the prophesy of the poet that the blood-dimmed tide would be loosed to drown the ceremony of innocence.

They stood in the voting lines side by side with those who had been their oppressors, and never uttered a single word of anger, nor jostled the white person next to them because they felt that their time to become the new masters had arrived. Black and white stood together, voluntarily acting together for the first time in our history, to give birth to a new social order that would serve the interests of all our people.

When the leadership of these black masses said to them that despite the fact that their children, their brothers and sisters, their mothers and fathers, had been slaughtered in Boipatong

and elsewhere on the many killing fields in our country, they as leaders were obliged to pursue the peaceful advance to a just peace, these masses agreed and urged that the dialogue chamber should bring to the nation the gift of a just peace.

They thought and acted as they did because they knew—better than those who had been certified as learned—that only a just peace would end their despair and bring into their lives the sense of hope that would make it possible for them to bear the pain of hunger until the day came when they would no longer go hungry.

It was for these reasons that they had fought, ready to sacrifice their lives, for the just peace and the sense of hope they saw as necessary conditions for their survival as human beings. Those among us who are fond of threatening violence to promote a cause should learn to know this, that the masses of our people are ready and willing to sacrifice once again to defend the peace and [to] keep alive the sense of hope that enables them to behave in mysteriously miraculous ways.

I must presume that many of us read the moving article by Rian Malan published last Sunday. He says:

On this day, ten years ago, I was hiding gold coins under floorboards and trying to get my hands on a gun before the balloon went up. As a white South African, I was fully expecting war as right-wing Boers and Bantustan chiefs conspired to annihilate Nelson Mandela's people, and the ANC [African National Congress] leader squabbled with President FW de Klerk over who deserved more credit for their shared Nobel Prize.

In my view, peace would never come. There was too much history, too much pain and anger. . . .

Ten days before the predicted apocalypse, there came a miraculous reprieve. A reverent quiet settled upon the nation, and the election passed off entirely peacefully. . . .

I set out to discredit the outcome. The peace is illusory, I sneered; anarchy is still

coming. Look at crime! Rape! Guns and mayhem! Decaying cities! Abandoned factories! Incompetence and corruption everywhere! When our new rulers dismissed such criticism as racist, I said, Fine: If that's the price one pays for speaking the truth, I will consider myself honoured and continue. Hospitals don't work anymore! Surly nurses! Drunken teachers! A civil service where the phones just ring!

Malan ends his personal testimony with these words: "It is infinitely worse to receive than to give, especially if one is arrogant and the gift is something big, like mercy or forgiveness. The gift of 1994 was so huge that I choked on it and couldn't say thank you. But I am not too proud to say it now."

I have borrowed these honest words from Rian Malan to tell the painful story [of how] strangely, but unsurprisingly, despair has changed its domicile—because of 27 April 1994, our Freedom Day. Now because freedom for all our people had become the defining feature of our reality, those who had rejoiced in the supremacy of their race opened their doors to despair.

Those who had had despair imposed upon them rejoiced in the triumph of the angel of hope, which brought a new life of a shared neighbourhood to all our people, no longer fractured by high, fortified walls of hatred, fear, and mistrust.

But this too, the transference of the burden of despair, became part of the reality that the new democratic order had to address. It became part of what had to be done to achieve what President Mandela foretold when he spoke from this podium about the expansion of the frontiers of human fulfilment and the continuous extension of the frontiers of freedom.

Almost ten years after its liberation from white minority rule, our country still faces many challenges. Many of our people are unemployed. Many of our people continue to live in poverty. Violence against the person in all its forms continues to plague especially those sections of our population that are poor and live in socially depressed communities.

The burden of disease [affecting] our people, including AIDS, continues to be a matter of serious concern, as do issues that relate to the fact that many of our people, including the youth, lack the education and skills that our economy and society need.

There are still many of our people who live in shacks and others who have no access to clean water, proper sanitation, and electricity. Imbalances and inequalities that [have an] impact on fellow citizens on the basis of race, gender, and geographic dispersal continue to persist.

In the 1994 State of the Nation Address to which we have referred, President Mandela said, “We have learnt the lesson that our blemishes speak of what all humanity should not do.” The point we have sought to make in the last few minutes in referring to the challenges we continue to face is that the blemishes Mandela spoke of continue to disfigure our society. We have not yet eradicated the cruel legacy we inherited, which he characterised as the blemishes that all humanity should avoid.

Despite this reality, the answer we have given and will continue to give to the question of whether we have made progress with regard to the fundamental tasks of which Nelson Mandela spoke on 24 May 1994 is a resounding yes!

Together with all other objective observers of social development, we have always known that our country’s blemishes, produced by more than three centuries of colonialism and apartheid, could not be removed in one decade. Nevertheless, we have no hesitation in saying that we have made great advances to ensure the expansion of the frontiers of human fulfilment and the continuous extension of the frontiers of the freedom, which Nelson Mandela spoke of almost ten years ago.

The statistics and concrete information of which the Honourable Members, distinguished guests, and our country are familiar tell the real story of what we have done and had to do to create the people-centred society that has been central to the work of both our first and second democratic governments.

This real story is that before 1994:

- estimates of the housing backlog ranged from 1.4 million to 3 million units, and people living in shacks were between 5 million to 7.7 million;
- 60 percent of the population of South Africa had no access to electricity;
- 16 million people had no access to clean water;
- 22 million people did not have access to adequate sanitation;
- there were seventeen fragmented departments of education with a disproportionate allocation of resources to white schools; and
- there was a 70 percent secondary-school enrolment.

A decade later:

- about 1.9 million housing subsidies have been provided and 1.6 million houses built for the poor of our country;
- more than 70 percent [of] households have been electrified;
- 9 million additional people now have access to clean water;
- 63 percent of households now have access to sanitation;
- there has been a successful formation of an integrated education system, even though there is a clear need for more resource allocation and capacity building in poor areas;
- nutrition and early-childhood interventions have been established to improve results for children from poor backgrounds; and
- by 2002, secondary-school enrolment had reached 85 percent.

Again, the real story of our country tells us that ten years ago:

- South Africa was in its twenty-first year of double-digit inflation;
- the country had had three years of negative growth—the economy and the wealth of the nation were shrinking;

- South Africa had experienced more than a decade of declining growth per capita—the average income of South Africans had been falling since the 1980s, and the overall wealth of the country had declined by nearly one-third;
- from 1985 to the middle of 1994, total net capital outflow from our country amounted to almost R50 billion.
- government had run up a budget deficit equal to 9.5 percent of the GDP, including the debt of the so-called independent homelands;
- the net open forward position of the South African Reserve Bank was \$25 billion in deficit; and
- public-sector debt was equal to 64 percent of the GDP.

It was this unhealthy economic situation that led Chris Stals to make the observations to which we have referred.

A decade later:

- inflation is down to 4 percent if you use the CPIX [Consumer Price Index excluding the interest rate on mortgage bonds] or less than 1 percent if you use the CPI [Consumer Price Index];
- the country is experiencing the longest period of consistent positive growth since the GDP was properly recorded in the 1940s;
- the net open forward position of the South African Reserve Bank rose to \$4.7 billion in surplus by the end of last year; and
- public-sector debt has come down to less than 50 percent of GDP.

Since 2001, we have engaged our people in the various provinces in the process of izimbizo, the seventh and latest being KwaZulu-Natal. By this means we have sought to deepen the interaction between the national government and the masses of our people. The national ministers and provincial and local governments have also carried out their own imbizo campaigns for the same reason.

We have just presented some of the statistics that tell part of the story of our First Decade of

Freedom and our progress towards the creation of a people-centred society. The imbizo process has given us an excellent opportunity to hear directly from the people what these figures mean to them.

It has been truly inspiring to hear directly from the people as they expressed their concerns, communicated their aspirations, and made suggestions about what needs to be done to take us further to meet the needs of the people.

These masses—essentially but not exclusively the poor of our country—invariably speak well of the improvements to the quality of their lives that have occurred during the last ten years. They talk about the increased access to better housing, water, electricity, roads, land, school meals, and social grants.

But these masses are equally insistent about the need for all of us to act together to address the outstanding challenges. Regularly, they raise the issue of the need for jobs and for appropriate training, especially for the youth, to ensure that upon completing their school years, they are able to find employment. Like others of our rural communities, rural KwaZulu-Natal called on the government to help with the provision of tractors and seed to assist the people in tilling the soil.

The people have not hesitated to make frank and critical assessments, especially of the quality of service delivery in their localities as well as the performance of the municipal councillors. They also boldly raise questions about such [issues] as crime, health matters, and instances of perceived or actual corruption and malpractice.

Last week we were at Msinga in KwaZulu-Natal. One of the participants at the imbizo complained that although people had cellular phones in this rural and mountainous area, they [were unable to] use them. He explained that this was because the cellular phone companies had not erected the necessary masts.

The staff of the President's Office immediately contacted Vodacom and informed them of the complaint made at the imbizo. I am very pleased to say that two days ago one of the local leaders at Msinga called to say that the service providers had come to the area within hours to attend to

the complaint. In less than a week, the people of Msinga had been given the possibility to communicate by telephone among themselves and with the rest of the country and the world.

We held our last imbizo in KwaZulu-Natal at Gamalakhe near Harding, in the Ugu District Municipality. At this imbizo a local resident drew our attention to instances of corruption in our prisons. He then gave us details of his experience of this corruption.

We have passed these details to Judge Thabane Jali, who heads the Judicial Commission investigating malpractices in our correctional system and who, I understand, is also present in the chamber. Again, I am pleased to say that within days of receiving this information, Judge Jali instructed the people assisting him in KwaZulu-Natal to meet the complainant and follow up on his allegations.

I mention these two instances because they demonstrate the positive response by the public and private sectors to the call we have made for all our people to work together in the spirit of letsema to tackle the common problems facing our country and people and [to demonstrate] that the government takes the imbizo process very seriously and tries at all times to respond to the issues raised by the people within the context of available resources.

Again, I mention this because some in our country, for reasons best known to them, seem very keen to criticise the government's response to the imbizo on false grounds. This happened recently when ill-informed allegations were made about the commitments we had made to the people of Bekkersdal in Gauteng.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank both Vodacom and Judge Jali and express the hope that others will follow the excellent example they have set for all of us.

But perhaps more striking than everything we have said so far about the imbizo process is the people's palpable sense of confidence in a better future for their country and themselves. This goes together with the complete absence of any sense of distance or alienation from the government they elected.

These masses attend the imbizo confident of their right to communicate directly with their government and certain that the process presents them with a genuine opportunity to have their concerns addressed. I have listened to our people boldly expressing their views even in areas that not so long ago were paralysed by the fear that to speak one's mind was to invite death.

This has said to me that we have moved forward, most significantly towards the realisation of the objective presented by President Mandela when he committed us to the continuous extension of the frontiers of freedom.

Most of us here will remember that not so long ago, the government and the state were public enemy number one to the masses of our people. Then, some thought that to advance the demand that the people should govern was the mere rhetoric of politicians hungry for power. Institutions that were the cause of our despair have today become repositories of hope.

When we presented the State of the Nation Address to our Second Democratic Parliament on 25 June 1999, we talked about "the enormity of the challenge we face to succeed in creating the caring society we have spoken of."

We said that:

For this reason this is not a task that can be carried out by the government alone. The challenge of the reconstruction and development of our society into one which guarantees human dignity faces the entirety of our people. It is a national task that calls for the mobilisation of the whole nation into a united people's action, into a partnership with government for progressive change and a better life for all, for a common effort to build a winning nation. The government therefore commits itself to work in a close partnership with all our people, inspired by the call—Faranani!—to ensure that we draw on the energy and genius of the nation to give birth to something that will surely be new, good, and beautiful.

The masses of our people, individuals, and institutions, among whom we cited Judge Thabane Jali and Vodacom, are responding magnificently to the call we repeat today and will repeat in the future: Faranani!

In a few months, we will return to these chambers to inaugurate our Third Democratic Parliament. Whoever will be president then will deliver yet another State of the Nation Address. That will provide an opportunity to address the more detailed issues on the government's programme as well as matters that will be covered in the budget speech and the Medium-Term Revenue and Expenditure Framework perspectives that will support the government's actions as our country begins its second decade of democracy.

Today we present the long-term perspective for the continued transformation of our country that will and must be based on our country's achievements during its First Decade of Liberation. In this regard, we would like to restate this matter unequivocally—that the policies required to translate what President Mandela said in May 1994 are firmly in place.

Accordingly, we do not foresee that there will be any need for new and major policy initiatives. The task we will all face during the decade ahead will be to ensure the vigorous implementation of these policies, to create the winning people-centred society of which Nelson Mandela spoke.

If I may say this, creating that winning nation must include greatly improved organisation, management, and performance by all the national teams, Bafana Bafana, the Springboks, the Proteas, and our athletics teams.

The work we will do must decisively move our country forward in the eradication of poverty and underdevelopment. We must achieve further and [more] visible advances with regard to improving the quality of life of all our people, affecting many critical areas of social existence, including health, safety, and security; moral regeneration; social cohesion; sports and recreation; and opening the doors of culture and education to all.

We will have to score new victories in the struggle to create an egalitarian society, success-

fully addressing the important challenges of persistent racial and gender inequalities, the disempowerment of our youth and people with disabilities, and proper care for children and the elderly.

We must ensure that our country and people are properly positioned within the global community of nations, fully understanding and responding to the diverse political, economic, social, and technological challenges of the process of globalisation. In this regard, we will have to persist in the work we are doing towards the regeneration of Africa and the construction of a new and more equitable world order.

The advances we must record demand that we ensure that the public sector discharges its responsibilities to our people as a critical player in the process of the growth, reconstruction, and development of our country. In particular, this will require that we further strengthen our system of local government and ensure that the system of traditional government plays the role ascribed to it in our Constitution and legislation.

We must achieve greater progress with regard to the integration of our system of governance, achieving seamless cooperation both within and among all spheres of government. At the same time, we must further consolidate the practise of creating public-private partnerships and building government-civil society cooperation to ensure that we utilise our collective capacities to give further impetus to the overall development and transformation of our country.

With regard to the public sector, I would like to take this opportunity to salute and thank especially the cadre of public-sector managers and leaders that has emerged over the last decade, many of whom are with us in this chamber. The work they have done and are doing has placed them at the very forefront of the historic processes that are giving birth to a new society.

I have no hesitation in saying that they stand tall even among their counterparts elsewhere in the world. We will continue to rely on them to lead the state and parastatal machinery as we break new ground towards the creation of a people-centred society.

As we enter our Second Decade of Liberation, we must continue to build the sense of national unity, united action, and new patriotism that have manifested in our people's response to the calls Faranani, Masakhane, Letsema, and Vuk'uzenzele! Working together, in conditions of entrenched democracy, [with] respect for human rights, peace, and stability, we must continue to produce the good news that has made our country a place of hope even for other people in the rest of the world.

We already have the policies and programmes that will enable us to translate all the strategic objectives we have just spoken of into a material factor in achieving the goals of the expansion of the frontiers of human fulfilment and the continuous extension of the frontiers of freedom that Nelson Mandela spoke of a decade ago.

We have already identified the challenges posed by the second economy, which constitutes the structural manifestation of poverty, under-development, and marginalisation in our country. We must therefore move vigorously to implement all the programmes on which we have agreed to ensure that we extricate all our people from the social conditions that spell loss of human dignity.

These include the urban renewal and rural development programmes, the expanded public-works programme, the expansion of microcredit and small enterprises, the provision of adult basic education and modern skills, and the development of the social and economic infrastructure.

This will also help us enormously to achieve the goals of nonracism, nonsexism, balanced urban-rural development, and social cohesion.

At the same time, we must continue to focus on the growth, development, and modernisation of the first economy to generate the resources without which it will not be possible to confront the challenges of the second economy. This will require further and significant infrastructure investment; skills development; scientific and technological research; development and expansion of the knowledge economy; growth and modernisation of the manufacturing and service sectors; deeper penetration of the global markets by our products, thereby increasing our savings levels;

black economic empowerment; and the further expansion of small and medium enterprises.

We will have to focus on implementing the measures we have identified to ensure that we achieve better value for the money spent on social delivery. Among other things, our success with regard to both the first and second economies must create the conditions for us to reduce the numbers of our people dependent on social grants.

This will increase the resources available for social expenditures focused on further investing in our people to empower them to become better activists for reconstruction and development—away from trapping large numbers within the paradigm of poverty alleviation.

We will also have to ensure that the institutions and processes we have established and instituted to give effect to the constitutional and practical requirement for cooperative governance function effectively. We must also focus especially on raising skill levels within the public sector, and [we must] ensure managerial and technological modernisation, driven by a clear understanding of the developmental tasks of our democratic state.

We must be impatient with those in the public service [sector] who see themselves as pen-pushers and guardians of rubber stamps, thieves intent on self-enrichment, bureaucrats who think they have a right to ignore the vision of Batho Pele, who come to work as late as possible, work as little as possible, and knock off as early as possible.

We have also established institutions and processes to give effect to our shared desire to mobilise all our people voluntarily to act together to achieve the tasks of reconstruction and development. Quite clearly, the sustained calls for all of us to respond to a new patriotism have struck a chord among all our people, black and white, with the exception of the most selfish and self-centred among us.

Needless to say, the further translation of the vision of faranani into a powerful motivating force for progressive change can only be achieved within the context of the democratic, popular, and open participation of all our people, black and white, in determining our shared destiny.

In this regard, I notice that the traditional

doomsayers are back at their favourite sport of trying to frighten us with scarecrows. Seemingly, these have not achieved the maturity of a Rian Malan. Instead, they paint monstrous pictures of impending violence during the forthcoming elections and radical constitutional amendments after the elections, by the very people who drafted this Constitution.

The masses of our people sacrificed everything to achieve peace and democracy for all of us. These masses will not allow desperate politicians [to] do desperate things to win or retain power for themselves.

We are all—or should be—perfectly aware of the tasks of the African Renaissance. Together we have worked very hard to ensure that we make the necessary progress with the challenges of our continent's regeneration. At the same time, we still will have to contribute as much as we can to the common African effort to strengthen such institutions as SADC [Southern African Development Community], the African Union, and NEPAD [New Partnership for Africa's Development], and [to] help ensure that they discharge their responsibilities effectively. We must do this work driven by the conviction that we will not allow anything to stand in our way towards the building of a peaceful, democratic, and prosperous Africa.

In this regard, I would like to pay tribute to the officers and [the] men and women of the South African National Defence Force who are doing sterling work to help advance the cause of democracy and peace in various parts of our continent. The new equipment they are receiving will give them increased capacity to meet this and other obligations.

Other regions of the world, including the most developed countries, are hard at work to change their neighbourhoods for the better. We can only ignore or minimise this task with regard to ourselves at our own peril, driven by a lingering sense that we are not an integral part of the African continent. This we will not do.

All major current international developments emphasise the importance of constructing a new world order that is more equitable and responsive

to the needs of the poor of the world, who constitute the overwhelming majority of humanity.

The Iraq affair, the continuing and painful conflict involving Israel and Palestine, the WTO [World Trade Organisation] failure at Cancún, the seeming paralysis around issues relating to the democratisation of the UN and other multilateral institutions, the dissonance between the process of globalisation and a multilateral system of governance, the issue of global terrorism—all these matters underline the importance of moving forward significantly towards the building of the new world order that has been spoken of for a long time.

We must stand ready to play our part in addressing this urgent challenge, in our own interest.

During our Second Decade of Liberation, we will ensure that Freedom Park is completed, together with other legacy projects that celebrate our humanity and our commitment to human dignity and the all-round emancipation of all human beings.

A decade ago, Nelson Mandela said, “The acid test of the legitimacy of the programmes we elaborate, the government institutions we create, [and] the legislation we adopt, must be whether . . .” they help to create a people-centred society, the expansion of the frontiers of human fulfilment, and the continuous extension of the frontiers of freedom.

As we progress [towards] the celebration of our First Decade of Liberation and Democracy, I trust that the national, provincial, and local legislatures will give themselves the opportunity to answer the question [of] whether they have passed this acid test.

What I will say is that during this First Decade, we have made great progress towards the achievement of the goals we enunciated as we took the first steps as a newborn child. We also laid a strong foundation to score even greater advances during the exciting and challenging Second Decade ahead of us, as a people united to build a better South Africa and a better world.

When he contemplated the advent of the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the

twenty-first, the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda  
wrote in "The Men":

The era's beginning: are these ruined shacks,  
these poor schools, these people still in rags  
and tatters,  
this cloddish insecurity of my poor families,  
is all this the day? the century's beginning,  
the golden door?

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We have it within our power to build our own  
golden door into our Second Decade of  
Liberation. We have demonstrated that we have  
the will to answer the question in the affirmative  
and say, Yes, this is the day!

Thank you.

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