

# STATE <sup>OF</sup> THE **NATION** ADDRESS

BY PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA

## HIGHLIGHTS



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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



## Highlights of the State of the Nation Address (SoNA) 2024

His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa delivered the SoNA to a Joint Sitting of the two houses of Parliament – the National Assembly and National Council of Provinces – at the Cape Town City Hall on Thursday, 8 February 2024.

### Tribute to the late President of the Republic of Namibia

“As we were preparing for this SoNA, we were deeply saddened to hear of the tragic passing of Dr Hage Geingob, the President of the Republic of Namibia. President Geingob was a dear friend to me and of the South African people, and a comrade in arms in the Struggle for our freedom. He was a champion of African peace, unity, progress and development. May I ask that we observe a moment of silence in his honour.”

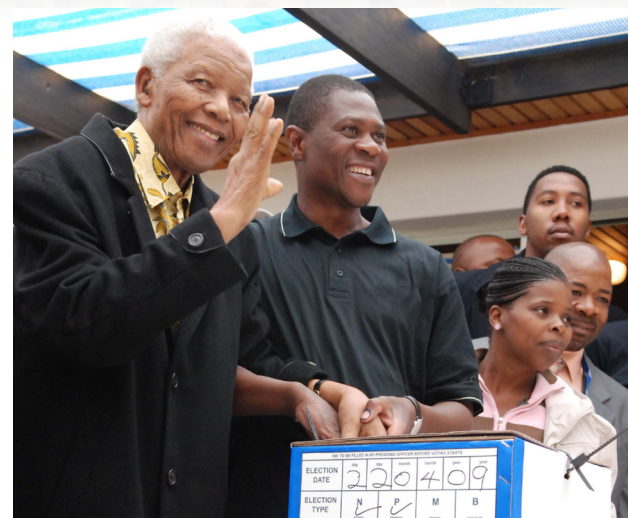
### REFLECTIONS ON THE 30 YEARS OF FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY

“This SoNA takes place in the 30th year of our democracy. On 27 April 1994, millions of South Africans cast their ballot in a democratic election, many for the first time in their lives. That momentous day was the culmination of centuries of struggle, the Struggle to liberate our people from suffering and oppression, from dispossession and exploitation, from poverty and inequality.

“As we stood in the long, winding queues to vote, we turned to one another and spoke of our joy and sometimes with tears running down our cheeks. We embraced friends and strangers alike, encouraged by a sense of a common future that we were about to determine for our country with our vote. We placed into those ballot boxes not just a vote, but a dream of the country we wanted to build.

“It was the dream of a South Africa that, in every sense, belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity. The world watched as Nelson Mandela, the father of our nation, cast his vote in Inanda in KwaZulu-Natal; the land of uShaka, a hero whose name echoes across the ages; the birthplace of John Langalibalele Dube, the first President of the ANC, which united the African people; and the home of Chief Albert Luthuli, the first African Nobel Peace Prize Laureate.

“In many ways, his voting in Inanda at the place where John Langalibalele Dube is buried, was symbolic because through casting his vote there, he was reporting back to the first President of the ANC on how far the Struggle had been prosecuted.



“After casting his ballot, Madiba said:

“This is the beginning of a new era. We have moved from an era of pessimism, division, limited opportunities, turmoil and conflict. We are starting a new era of hope, reconciliation and nation-building.”

“It is this dream, of a free and united people, that is woven into our democratic Constitution.

“It is this Constitution that has guided our collective efforts over the last three decades to fundamentally change our country for the better, and it must stand at the centre of the work we do now to build a better life for all.”

### ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE LAST THREE DECADES

Over the last three decades, government has been on a journey, striving together to achieve a new society – a national democratic society. Government has cast off the tyranny of apartheid and built a democratic state based on the will of the people. It has established strong institutions to protect the fundamental freedoms and human rights of all people.

Government has transformed the lives of millions of South Africans, providing the necessities of life and creating opportunities that never existed before. It has enabled a diverse economy whose minerals, agricultural products and manufactured goods reach every corner of the world, while creating jobs in South Africa.

“As a country, we have returned to the community of nations, extending a hand of peace and friendship to all countries and all people. Just as we cannot deny the progress South Africans have made over the last 30 years, nor should we diminish the severe challenges that we continue to face. We have endured times of great difficulty, when the strength of our constitutional democracy has been severely tested.” – **President Cyril Ramaphosa, SoNA, 8 February 2024, Cape Town City Hall.**

## EXTERNAL FACTORS

“There have been times when events beyond our borders have held back our progress. The global financial crisis of 2007 and 2008 brought to an end, a decade of strong growth and faster job creation.

“More recently, the Russia-Ukraine conflict has contributed to rising prices of fuel, food and other goods across the world – and has, as a result, made life more difficult for all South Africans.”

## EFFECTS OF STATE CAPTURE

“There have also been times when events at home have shaken the foundations of our constitutional democracy. Perhaps the greatest damage was caused during the era of state capture.

“For a decade, individuals at the highest levels of the State conspired with private individuals to take over and repurpose state-owned companies, law-enforcement agencies and other public institutions.

“In some cases, these activities were enabled by local and multinational companies. Billions of rands that were meant to meet the needs of ordinary South Africans were stolen.

“Confidence in our country was badly eroded. Public institutions were severely weakened. The effects of state capture continue to be felt across society, from the shortage of freight locomotives to crumbling public services, from the poor performance of our power stations to failed development projects.

“But South Africans, including many honest and dedicated public officials, fought back and worked together to defeat state capture. Even then, attempts to thwart the country’s recovery continued.”

## FAILED INSURRECTION

“We recall with great anguish the events of July 2021, when individuals loyal to their own interests sought to provoke a popular insurrection, leading to a tragic loss of life and widespread destruction. Again, they were unsuccessful.

“These efforts to undo the hard-won gains of our freedom failed because the people of South Africa stood firm, together, in defence of our Constitution and its promise of a better life for all.”

## DEALING WITH COVID-19

“It was the same determination that enabled the country to endure the devastation of COVID-19, the worst global pandemic in over a century. More than 100 000 South Africans lost their lives to the disease and two million people lost their jobs.

“Yet, it would have been far worse if we had not acted together as one to stop the spread of the virus, to support our health

workers, to protect the most vulnerable, and to roll out an unprecedented vaccination programme. We were able to unite society around a common effort to save lives and livelihoods.”

“I want to pay tribute to the many thousands of South Africans who made financial contributions to the Solidarity Fund, to the workers who produced medical supplies, and to the nurses, doctors and other health workers who risked their lives to care for those who were ill.” – **President Cyril Ramaphosa, SoNA, 8 February 2024, Cape Town City Hall.**

## GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND FEMICIDE (GBVF)

Another major challenge government has to address is GBVF, which it characterised as the second pandemic. Government has introduced laws and directed more resources to prosecuting perpetrators, providing better support to survivors, and promoting women’s economic empowerment.

“As a society, we must intensify our collective efforts to bring GBVF to an end.” – **President Cyril Ramaphosa, SoNA, 8 February 2024, Cape Town City Hall.**

## EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

In recent years, South Africa has had to confront the effects of climate change. The country has had devastating wildfires in the Western Cape, destructive floods in KwaZulu-Natal, unbearable heatwaves in the Northern Cape, persistent drought in the Eastern Cape, and intense storms in Gauteng.

“Much of the task of this administration was to get our country through these great challenges and to work to regain our way. While each of these events has left its mark, our country has weathered every storm. Yes, we have the scars to show. But in every case, South Africans have been resolute.

“We have not only persevered, but we have come back stronger and more determined. All these efforts have demonstrated how South Africans value the freedom that was won after decades of struggle.” – **President Cyril Ramaphosa, SoNA, 8 February 2024, Cape Town City Hall.**

## TINTSWALO – DEMOCRACY’S CHILD

“The story of the first 30 years of our democracy can be best told through the life of a child called Tintswalo, born at the dawn of freedom in 1994. Tintswalo – democracy’s child – grew up in a society that was worlds apart from the South Africa of her parents, grandparents and great-grandparents.

“She grew up in a society governed by a constitution rooted in equality, the rule of law, and affirmation of the inherent dignity of every citizen.

“Tintswalo, and many others born at the same time as her, were beneficiaries of the first policies of the democratic State to provide free healthcare for pregnant women and children under the age of six.

“Tintswalo’s formative years were spent in a house provided by the State, one of millions of houses built to shelter the poor.

“Tintswalo grew up in a household provided with basic water and electricity, in a house where her parents were likely to have lived without electricity before 1994.

“Tintswalo was enrolled in a school in which her parents did not have to pay school fees, and each school day she received a nutritious meal as part of a programme that today supports nine million learners from poor families.

“The democratic State provided a Child Support Grant to meet her basic needs. This grant, together with other forms of social assistance, continues to be a lifeline for more than 26 million South Africans every month.

“With this support, Tintswalo – democracy’s child – was able to complete high school. Through the assistance of the National Student Financial Aid Scheme, Tintswalo attended one of our Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges and obtained a qualification.

“When Tintswalo entered the world of work, she was able to progress and thrive with the support of the State’s employment equity and Black Economic Empowerment policies.

“With the income she earned, she was able to save, to start a family, to move into a better house, and to live a better life. This is the story of millions of people who have been born since the dawn of our democracy. But it is only part of the story.

“For, despite the remarkable achievements of the last 30 years, many of democracy’s children still face great challenges.

“Millions of young people aged 15 to 24 years are currently not in employment, education or training.

“There are many who have a matric, a diploma or a degree who cannot find a job, or do not have the means to start a business.

“While economic growth is essential to reduce unemployment, we cannot wait to provide the work that many of democracy’s children need.”

Through this programme, government has created more than 1.7 million work and livelihood opportunities. Through the stimulus, government has placed more than one million school assistants in 23 000 schools, providing participants with valuable work experience while improving learning outcomes.

Through the **Presidential Youth Employment Intervention**, government established **SAYouth.mobi** as a zero-rated platform for unemployed young people to access opportunities for learning and earning.

Over 4.3 million young people are now engaged on the network and 1.6 million have so far secured opportunities.

Government has, working together with the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), set up a number of initiatives to provide opportunities for young people, including the **National Youth Service** and the **Youth Employment Service**.

These programmes matter because work matters to people. The NYDA has played a key role in assisting a number of young people to start their own businesses. Having a job does not only provide an income – it is fundamental to people’s sense of self-worth, dignity, hope, purpose and inclusion.



**WORKPLACE EQUALITY**

From the depths of deprivation and inequality, government has worked over 30 years to ensure that all South Africans have an equal chance to prosper. It is not enough to recognise the injustices of the past; we need to correct them.

Government has introduced laws and undertaken programmes to enable black South Africans and women to advance in the workplace, to become owners and managers, to acquire land and build up assets.

The proportion of jobs in executive management held by black people increased almost five-fold between 1996 and 2016.

**RESTORING INSTITUTIONS AND REBUILDING THE ECONOMY**

One of the overriding challenges this administration had to deal with when it took office was state capture and corruption. Government’s first priority was to put a decisive stop to state capture, to dismantle the criminal networks within the state and to ensure that perpetrators faced justice.

**CREATING YOUTH EMPLOYMENT**

Government has taken steps to address the youth unemployment challenge. Three years ago, building on the success of the **Expanded Public Works Programme**, it launched the **Presidential Employment Stimulus**.

Government had to do that so that it could restore institutions and rebuild the economy. It appointed capable people with integrity to head law-enforcement agencies, government departments, security services and state companies, often through an independent and transparent processes.

The credibility and efficiency of a number of institutions like the South African Revenue Service (SARS) have been restored and their performance improved.

## COMBATING CORRUPTION AND OTHER SERIOUS CRIMES

Government set up the Investigating Directorate as a specialised and multidisciplinary unit within the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) to investigate corruption and other serious crimes.

“Great progress has been made in bringing those responsible for state capture to justice. More than 200 accused persons are being prosecuted. More are under investigation. Stolen funds are being recovered.” – **President Cyril Ramaphosa, SoNA, 8 February 2024, Cape Town City Hall.**

Freezing orders of R14 billion have been granted to the NPA's Asset Forfeiture Unit for state capture-related cases, and around R8.6 billion in corrupt proceeds have been returned to the state.

A restored and revitalised SARS has collected R4.8 billion in unpaid taxes as a result of evidence presented at the Commission, while the Special Investigating Unit has instituted civil litigation to the value of R64 billion.

Government has taken steps, including through new legislation, to strengthen the country's ability to prevent money laundering and fraud and secure its removal from the “grey list” of the Financial Action Task Force.

With the assistance of business, government has set up a digital forensic capability to support the NPA Investigating Directorate, which in due course will be expanded to support law enforcement more broadly.

Legislation is currently before Parliament to establish the Investigating Directorate as a permanent entity with full investigating powers. But there is much more work to be done to eradicate corruption completely.

Based on the recommendations of the National Anti-Corruption Advisory Council, we are determined to introduce further measures to strengthen our anti-corruption agencies, protect whistle-blowers, regulate lobbying and prevent the undue influence of public representatives in procurement.

“We will not stop until every person responsible for corruption is held to account.

“We will not stop until all stolen money has been recovered.

“We will not stop until corruption is history.

“The real tragedy of state capture was that it diverted attention and resources away from what government should have been doing, which is to grow our economy and create jobs.” – **President Cyril Ramaphosa, SoNA, 8 February 2024, Cape Town City Hall.**



## REVIVAL OF THE ECONOMY

Over the past five years, government has worked to revive the economy from a decade of stagnation and protect it from both domestic and global shocks. Government has made progress. The economy is today three times larger than it was 30 years ago.

### JOB CREATION

The number of South Africans in employment increased from eight million in 1994 to over 16.7 million now. Over the last two years, the number of jobs being created has been increasing every quarter, and we now have more people in employment than before the pandemic. Yet, our unemployment rate is the highest it has ever been. Even as employment is growing, more people are entering the job market each year than jobs are being created.

### ECONOMY AND INVESTMENT

Government has laid a foundation for growth through far-reaching economic reforms, an ambitious investment drive, and an infrastructure programme that is starting to yield results.

Companies continue to invest, thousands of hectares of farmland are being planted, new factories are being opened and production is being expanded.

Government is on track to resolve the most important constraints on economic growth by stabilising energy supply and fixing the logistics system. As these obstacles are removed, the true potential of the economy is unleashed.

## INTERVENTIONS TO END LOAD-SHEDDING

Government has set out a clear plan to end load-shedding, which it has been implementing with a single-minded focus through the National Energy Crisis Committee. Government has delivered on its commitments to bring substantial new power through private investment on to the grid, which is already helping to reduce load-shedding.

Last year, government implemented a major debt relief package, which will enable Eskom to make investments in maintenance and transmission infrastructure and ensure its sustainability going forward.

Since government revived its renewable energy programme five years ago, it has connected more than 2 500 megawatts of solar and wind power to the grid with three times this amount already in procurement or construction.

Through tax incentives and financial support, government has more than doubled the amount of rooftop solar capacity installed across the country in just the past year.

Government has implemented sweeping regulatory reforms to enable private investment in electricity generation, with more than 120 new private energy projects now in development.

These phenomenal developments are driving the restructuring of the electricity sector in line with what many other economies have done to increase competitiveness and bring down prices.

“Through all of these actions, we are confident that the worst is behind us and the end of load-shedding is finally within reach. But we are not stopping there.

“To ensure that we never face a similar crisis ever again, we are reforming our energy system to make it more competitive, sustainable and reliable into the future.

“We are going to build more than 14 000 kilometres of new transmission lines to accommodate renewable energy over the coming years.” – **President Cyril Ramaphosa, SoNA, 8 February 2024, Cape Town City Hall.**

To fast-track this process, government will enable private investment in transmission infrastructure through a variety of innovative investment models.

Last year, government tabled the Electricity Regulation Amendment Bill to support the restructuring of Eskom and establish a competitive electricity market.

As government undertakes these reforms, it is positioning the economy for future growth in a world shaped by climate change and a revolution in green technologies.

In the last three years, South Africa has seen an increase in extreme weather events, often with disastrous consequences. This is why government is implementing a Just Energy Transition, not only to reduce carbon emissions and fight climate change, but to create growth and jobs for its own people.

Government will undertake this transition at a pace, scale and cost that the country can afford and in a manner that ensures energy security.

With the abundance of solar, wind and mineral resources, government is going to create thousands of jobs in renewable energy, green hydrogen, green steel, electric vehicles and other green products.

The Northern Cape, with its optimal solar conditions, has already attracted billions of rands in investment.

## PROMOTING A GREEN ECONOMY

Government is going to set up a Special Economic Zone in the Boegoebaai port to drive investment in green energy. There is a great deal of interest from the private sector to participate in the boom that will be generated green hydrogen energy projects.

Government has decided to support electric vehicle manufacturing in South Africa to grow the automotive sector, which provides good jobs to thousands of workers. It has decided

to give special focus to regions like Mpumalanga to enable the creation of new industries, new economic opportunities and sustainable jobs.

And in the past year, government has increased the financing pledges for the Just Energy Transition Investment Plan from around R170 billion to almost R240 billion.

## CLIMATE CHANGE RESPONSE FUND

To address the persistent effects of global warming, which manifest themselves through persistent floods, fires and droughts, government has decided to establish a Climate Change Response Fund.

This will bring together all spheres of government and the private sector in a collaborative effort to build our resilience and respond to the impacts of climate change.

## IMPROVING FREIGHT LOGISTICS

To deal with severe inefficiencies in the freight logistics system, government is taking action to improve the ports and rail network, and restore them to world-class standards. Government has set out a clear roadmap to stabilise the performance of Transnet and reform the logistics system.

Working closely with business and labour, government has established dedicated teams to turn around five strategic corridors that transport goods for export purposes.

The number of ships waiting to berth at the Port of Durban – which has experienced severe congestion in recent months – has reduced from more than 60 ships in mid-November to just 12 ships at the end of January.



Transnet has appointed an international terminal operator to help expand and improve its largest terminal at the Port of Durban. Government is overhauling the freight rail system by allowing private rail operators to access the rail network.

With the current conflict in the Middle East affecting shipping traffic through the Suez Canal, South Africa is well positioned to offer bunkering services for ships that will be rerouted via its shores.

## ACCESS TO BROADBAND AND THE INTERNET

Government completed the auction of broadband spectrum after more than a decade of delays, resulting in new investment, lower data costs and improved network reach and quality.

These reforms have a profound impact in a society in which access to the Internet has risen dramatically over the last decade. Less than half of all households had internet access in 2011, compared to 79% of households in 2022.”

## VISA SYSTEM

Just this week, government published new regulations to reform the visa system, which will make it easier to attract the skills that the economy needs, and create a dynamic ecosystem for innovation and entrepreneurship.

## INVESTMENT

Government raised R1.5 trillion in new investment commitments through five South Africa Investment Conferences, of which over R500 billion has already flowed into the economy.

## SUPPORT FOR THE MINING SECTOR

To support growth in the mining sector, we are moving ahead with the modernisation of our mining rights licensing system and are launching an exploration fund to support emerging miners and exploit new mineral deposits.

Through this, mining, which was the bedrock on which the South African economy was built, will once again become a sunrise industry.

Participation of previously disadvantaged black people is increasing. Black ownership stands at approximately 39% when compared with 2% in 2004.

## INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Investment in infrastructure is gaining momentum. New and innovative funding mechanisms will be used to increase construction of infrastructure.



## IMPROVING WATER SUPPLY

The Department of Water and Sanitation aims to enhance water resource management by initiating infrastructure projects to secure water supply and diversifying water sources to reduce dependence on surface water.

Bulk water projects are under construction across the country to improve water supply to millions of residents in villages, towns and cities.

The following water infrastructure projects are in progress or completed: Lesotho Highlands Water Project, Umzimvubu, Hazelmere Dam, uMkhomazi Water Project, Clanwilliam Dam, Tzaneen Dam, Loskop, Mandlakazi, pipeline from Jozini Dam, Giyani, pipeline from Nandoni Dam to Nsami Dam, Pilanesberg Water, Vaal Gamagara and pipeline from the Vaal River to Hothazel.

In the Eastern Cape, the Msikaba and Mtentu bridges are beginning to rise over the landscape, and will be among the highest in Africa once complete.

The steel used for part of the project is fabricated in Mpumalanga and the iron ore comes from the Northern Cape.

## ROAD AND RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE

In the past five years, the South African National Roads Agency Limited, which manages nearly 25 000 km of roads, has awarded more than 1 200 projects to the value of R120 billion.



## HIGH-SPEED RAIL

In November last year, Cabinet approved a framework for high-speed rail, focusing initially on the Johannesburg to Durban corridor.

## LAND OWNERSHIP

As government grows the economy, it is making it more inclusive. Through redistribution, around 25% of farmland in the country is now owned by black South Africans, bringing it closer to achieving the target of 30% by 2030.

## SUPPORT FOR BLACK INDUSTRIALISTS

In the last five years, government has supported around 1 000 black industrialists with funding and other forms of support. These black-owned firms employ more than 90 000 workers and contribute many billions of rands to the economy.

At the same time, about 200 000 more workers obtained ownership of shares in the companies they work, bringing the total worker ownership in companies in the South African economy to well over half a million workers.



This trend continues to grow as more and more companies realise that it is beneficial to their operation that their workers should have a stake in the businesses they work for.

The reforms that government has initiated and the work that is underway will enable it to end load-shedding, to improve the logistics system, to achieve water security and ultimately to create jobs.

“While our challenges have never been greater, our response to these challenges will lead us to greater prosperity than we have ever known.” – **President Cyril Ramaphosa, SoNA, 8 February 2024, Cape Town City Hall.**

### IMPROVED EDUCATION

One of the worst injustices of apartheid was the manner in which education was used as a tool to perpetuate inequality. Over the last 30 years, government has sought to use education as a tool to create equality.

Basic education outcomes are steadily improving across a range of measures. The latest matric pass rate, at 82.9%, is the highest ever.

And with each new year, learners from no-fee schools are accounting for more and more of the bachelor passes achieved. At the same time, fewer learners are dropping out of school.

Government has increased funding for poor and working-class students in universities and TVET significantly over the past five years. Over the next five years, government will focus its attention on expanding access to Early Childhood Development (ECD) and improving early grade reading, where we are already beginning to see progress.

Moving ECD to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) was one of the most important decisions as we were now able to devote more resources to ECD and ensure that through cooperative governance various departments of government get involved in ECD augmented by the DBE.

### POVERTY ALLEVIATION

Government’s policies and programmes have, over the course of 30 years, lifted millions of people out of dire poverty. Today, fewer South Africans go hungry and fewer live in poverty.

In 1993, South Africa faced a significant poverty challenge, with 71.1% of its population living in poverty. However, under the democratic government, there has been a consistent decline in these numbers.

By 2010, the poverty rate had dropped to 60.9%, and it continued to decrease, reaching 55.5 % in 2020, as reported by the World Bank. This progress has been made possible by extensive support to those in society who need it most.

Five years ago, government introduced a further measure to tackle poverty by introducing **National Minimum Wage** as envisaged in the Freedom Charter. The decision by key role players, being business and labour and communities to introduce the minimum wage immediately, raised the wages of over six million workers.

In the midst of the pandemic, government introduced the special **Social Relief of Distress Grant**, which currently reaches some nine million unemployed people every month. Government has seen the benefits of this grant and will extend it and improve it as the next step towards income support for the unemployed.

These grants and subsidies do much more than give people what they need to live. They are an investment in the future. Social assistance has been shown to increase school enrolment and attendance, lower drop-out rates, and improve the pass rate.

### IMPROVED LIFE EXPECTANCY AND HEALTHCARE

South Africans are living longer than ever before. Life expectancy has increased from 54 years in 2003 to 65 years in 2023. Maternal and infant deaths have declined dramatically.

Government has built more hospitals and clinics, especially in poor areas, providing better quality care to more South Africans. Today, 95% of persons diagnosed with HIV know their status, 79% of those receive antiretroviral treatment, and 93% of those are virally suppressed. New HIV infections among young people have declined significantly.

And yet, while the health system has had a great impact on people’s lives, government is working to improve both the quality of healthcare and equality of access.



The National Health Insurance (NHI) will provide free healthcare at the point of care for all South Africans, whether in public or private health facilities.

Government plans to incrementally implement the NHI, dealing with issues like health system financing, the health workforce, medical products, vaccines and technologies, and health information systems.

## FORMAL HOUSING AND CLEAN DRINKING WATER

One of the most visible, impactful and meaningful achievements in the first three decades of freedom has been in providing homes to the people. Today, nearly nine out of every 10 households live in a formal dwelling.



Where there were once shacks and mud houses, there are now homes of brick and mortar. These are homes with water to drink and to wash with, homes with electricity for lighting and cooking. At the end of apartheid, only six out of 10 people had access to clean drinking water. Today, that figure has increased to nearly nine out of 10 South Africans.

“We are working to ensure that subsidised housing is located close to work, education and services.” – **President Cyril Ramaphosa, SoNA, 8 February 2024, Cape Town City Hall.**

## IMPROVING MUNICIPALITIES

For services to be delivered, local government has to work. Too many municipalities are failing on governance, financial and service-delivery measures. These constraints affect every aspect of peoples’ daily lives.

Government has started the implementation of a number of measures to address this problem by providing support to local government, including professionalising the civil service and ensuring that people with the right skills are appointed to key positions.

The Presidency, National Treasury and the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs are working together to enhance technical capacity in local government and to improve planning, coordination and fiscal oversight.

Through the Presidential *izimbizo* that have been held across the country, government has seen how the District Development Model (DDM) has brought together all spheres of government and key stakeholders to address the service delivery challenges in communities.

The DDM has proven to be an effective instrument to enhance cooperative governance and collaboration. Government will continue to broaden and deepen this process.

## TACKLING CRIME

Tackling crime and insecurity is a key priority. South Africans deserve to be safe and to feel safe, to walk freely and without fear in their neighbourhoods and public spaces.

During this administration, government focused on equipping law-enforcement agencies, which had been systematically weakened, to do their work effectively.

Government has strengthened the ranks of the police through the recruitment of 20 000 police officers over the last two years and another 10 000 in the year to come. An extra 5 000 police officers have been deployed to Public Order Policing.



## OPERATION SHANELA

The South African Police Service has launched Operation Shanela as a new approach to target crime hotspots, which resulted in over 285 000 arrests since May last year.

The Economic Infrastructure Task Teams that are operational in all provinces have had important successes in combating cable theft, damage to critical infrastructure and illegal mining.

Through close collaboration with the private sector, there has been a reduction in security incidents on the rail network.

## BORDER CONTROL

Government launched the new Border Management Authority last year to improve the security of the borders and it has already stopped over 100 000 people who tried to enter the country illegally.

## FIGHT AGAINST GBVF

Together with civil society, government has developed the National Strategic Plan on GBVF, together with civil society, as a society wide response to this pandemic.

Around R21 billion was dedicated over the medium term to the implementation of the six pillars of the plan, including the economic empowerment of women.

New laws were introduced to strengthen the response of the criminal justice system to GBV and provide better support to survivors of such violence.

Government's ultimate goal is to end GBV altogether by mobilising all of society. As part of this, government supports the call for a pledge that men in South Africa are invited to take to demonstrate their personal commitment to ending this scourge. Women are also in the process of developing their own pledge.

"We still have a long way to go to build safer communities, prevent violent crime and protect our infrastructure.

"But there is no doubt that a professional, well-trained and properly resourced police force, working closely with communities, will make our country a safer place." – **President Cyril Ramaphosa, SoNA, 8 February 2024, Cape Town City Hall.**

## A BETTER AFRICA AND A BETTER WORLD

Today, every South African can hold their heads high, confident that South Africa has assumed its rightful place on the world stage.

Government remains committed to playing a constructive role on the continent and around the globe for the realisation of a better Africa and a better world. It will continue to play an important role to silence the guns throughout the continent.

Government's engagements with parties in the Russia-Ukraine conflict through the Africa Peace Initiative are progressing. South Africa engages in these peace efforts because it believes that even the most intractable conflicts can be brought to an end through negotiations.

Guided by the fundamental principle of human rights and freedom, government has taken up the Palestinian cause to prevent further deaths and destruction in Gaza.

Government has welcomed the ruling of the International Court of Justice that Israel must take all measures within its power to prevent acts of genocide against Palestinians.

"We condemn the killing of civilians on all sides and call on all parties involved in the conflict to commit to a peace process that will deliver a two state solution." – **President Cyril Ramaphosa, SoNA, 8 February 2024, Cape Town City Hall.**

Government will use its foreign policy to pursue its development goals. During its leadership of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) last year, South Africa witnessed a new chapter for the BRICS family of countries.

The expansion of the group from five to 10 members presents opportunities for trade and a strengthening of political and diplomatic ties between countries in the global South.

Government will build on the progress have made in establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which will transform South Africa's economy and that of the continent by creating new jobs and increasing economic participation.

And government will place Africa's development at the top of the agenda when it hosts the Group of Twenty (G20) in 2025. The achievements over the last three decades are a testament to the power of collaboration and partnership to address the most pressing challenges.

South Africa has a vibrant civil society, a powerful union movement and an engaged private sector. Over the last five years, government has worked with these social partners to address challenges such as to keep people safe and to distribute vaccines during the COVID-19 pandemic, and to mobilise a society-wide response to GBV.

"In the past year, government has come together with social partners to end load-shedding, address the challenges in the logistics sector, tackle crime and corruption, and accelerate job creation." – **President Cyril Ramaphosa, SoNA, 8 February 2024, Cape Town City Hall.**

This is the South African way of building a social compact working together on tangible issues, and it will be the key to building a new society in the years to come.

This is the last SoNA of the sixth democratic administration. The last five years has been a time of recovery, rebuilding and renewal. South Africa has had to:

- revitalise the economy after more than a decade of poor economic performance.
- rebuild public institutions after the era of state capture.
- recover from a devastating global pandemic that caused great misery and hardship, that closed businesses and cost jobs.
- confront and overcome a debilitating electricity crisis that, despite significant improvement in recent months, continues to hold back the economy.

South Africa has come a long way in the last five years. Government has:

- built on the achievements of the last three decades and it has taken decisive measures to address the immediate challenges facing South Africans.
- restored the independence and capability of law-enforcement agencies to tackle corruption and crime.
- worked to advance the rights of persons with disability. Government took great pride in making South African Sign Language the 12th official language of the country.
- safeguarded and promoted the basic rights in the Constitution, such as the freedom of speech, association and belief.
- defended media freedom and the independence of the judiciary.
- protected and advanced the rights of members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning and intersex community, and continue to combat all forms of prejudice and intolerance.
- made significant progress on measures to grow the economy, create jobs and reduce poverty.

While government has set in motion the process of renewal and reform, there is more work to be done to see these reforms through to the end. Government will:

- see through the work underway with partners to end load-shedding and revive the performance of ports and rail network.
- continue to strengthen law-enforcement institutions, tackle GBV and fight corruption to make South Africa a safe place for all.
- continue to strengthen local government, professionalise the Public Service and ensure that public officials are held accountable for their actions.
- continue to position the economy to grow and compete in a fast-changing world, to support small businesses, to give young people economic opportunities and to provide social protection to the vulnerable.
- continue the work to improve the country's fiscal position and hold firm to a sound macroeconomic trajectory.
- use the opportunities provided by the AfCFTA to increase trade and expand industries.
- continue to build an inclusive economy, focusing on the empowerment of black and women South Africans, advancing workers' rights, intensifying land reform and pursuing a just energy transition that leaves no-one behind.

"As we celebrate 30 years of freedom, we must remain steadfast in our commitment to our constitutional democracy and its promise of a better life.

"We should not give in to those who resist the responsibility that the Constitution places on us all to correct the injustices of the past and fundamentally transform our economy and society.

"We must remind these people of the obligation that the Constitution places on the State to progressively realise the rights of everyone to housing, healthcare, food, water, social security, safety and education.

"By the same measure, we should not allow anyone to diminish vital democratic institutions, to denigrate the judiciary or to challenge the constitutional authority of this Parliament.

"We should not give in to those who seek to divide our nation, incite violence and undermine our democracy.

"As in the past, as in the future, the people of South Africa should stand together against any attempt to reverse the achievements of our democracy.

"As the Chairperson of the Constitutional Assembly, I worked with many great leaders of our country to craft a Constitution that truly reflects the will of the South African people.

"As President, I see it as my primary duty to defend our Constitution, and to work every day to realise its promise. As we move forward, let us remember that it is up to us – not anyone else – to determine the future of South Africa." – **President Cyril Ramaphosa, SoNA, 8 February 2024, Cape Town City Hall.**

"We are not passive observers of our history. We are its authors. We are the builders of this country we call home. As we look towards the next 30 years of freedom, we must choose the kind of country, and indeed the kind of world, we want to create for ourselves and for our children.

"We are committed to a South Africa in which our common identity lies in our recognition of each other's humanity. We want a country in which every person is free to be exactly who they are, regardless of their race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity or religion.

"We want a country in which the same opportunities are available to every child, whether they are born in Sandton, in Mdantsane, in Sekhukhune, in Mitchell's Plain or in Phoenix.

"We want a country in which the rule of law applies to everyone, no matter how wealthy they are or what position they hold. As we continue the journey together to make this vision a reality, we are inspired by democracy's children, by their energy, by their creativity and by their enthusiasm.

"We are inspired by the young people who have carried our hopes onto the global stage, from the Springboks to Banyana Banyana, from the heroic Bafana Bafana to Grammy Award winners like Tyla."

"As we mark the 30th anniversary of our freedom, we are reminded of the words of President Nelson Mandela, who said that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. He said:

*"I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back on the distance I have come. But I can rest only for a moment, for with freedom comes responsibilities, and I dare not linger, for my long walk is not yet ended."*

"While we have come far, we have a long way still to go. Like Madiba, we must keep moving, always forward, always onwards, towards the country of our dreams. Always believing that victory is certain." – **President Cyril Ramaphosa, SoNA, 8 February 2024, Cape Town City Hall.**



