

CABINET STATEMENT

On the Cabinet meeting of Wednesday, 25 February 2026

ISSUES IN THE ENVIRONMENT



SoNA 2026: Fixing What We Must to Rise Together

Cabinet committed to the timely implementation of the commitments made by President Ramaphosa during the 2026 State of the Nation Address and the SoNA Debate Reply.

The SoNA 2026 prioritised addressing key challenges that still confront the country despite firm progress on the economic front as confirmed by continuously improving economic indicators. These challenges include: (a) the national water crisis, (b) Foot and Mouth Disease, (c) organised crime and the weakened criminal justice system, (d) a weak local government system, and (e) unemployment.

On the water crisis, the President will chair a Water Crisis Committee that will consolidate and coordinate all interventions aimed at resolving South Africa's water challenges. The Water Crisis Committee will finalise a Water Action Plan that will focus on short-, medium-, and long-term interventions required to ensure that water flows from the taps. To stabilise water supply in Gauteng, the Minister of Water and Sanitation has approved an urgent water use licence for Rand Water to abstract additional water from the Integrated Vaal River System for three (3) months, enabling municipalities to stabilise reservoir levels.

The fight against organised crime and the weakened criminal justice system is being undertaken through a multi-pronged strategy. This strategy includes the implementation of the National Organised Crime Combat Plan which is also reinforced through the deployment of SANDF in gang-ridden hotspots, and the decontamination of the criminal justice system from compromised elements through the re-vetting of members and the metro police. The re-vetting includes lifestyle audits. The Vetting Plan will be submitted to the Joint Standing Committee on Intelligence. In addition, a dedicated task team with SAPS members has been established to investigate evidence of criminality against senior SAPS officials implicated in the Madlanga Commission.

2026 National Budget (R2.67 trillion)

Cabinet welcomed the R2.67 trillion budget of 2026 which will fund the commitments made by the President in the SoNA.

To support the fight against crime, the Minister of Finance added R2.7 billion over the MTEF to the Defence budget to improve operations and an additional R1 billion each was allocated to the SAPS and SANDF from the CARA Fund to fight against organised crime.

To support the local government reforms to ensure service delivery, the Minister of Finance announced R2.7 billion over the MTEF for a performance-linked reform for metro trading entities in electricity, water and solid waste. The aim of the reform is to ensure ring-fencing of water and electricity revenues to enable reinvestment in the services before any cross-subsidisation.

In addition, the Minister announced the introduction of the Split Delivery model for municipal infrastructure grant (MIG), where municipalities with serious service delivery or governance failures will be shifted to an indirect service model. The indirect service model will result in capable district municipalities and other accredited implement-

ing agencies forming part of their infrastructure delivery suite.

The Budget also brought tax relief to households and small businesses by withdrawing R20 billion in tax increases that were provisionally included in the May 2025 Budget, adjusting personal income tax brackets and rebates fully in



line with inflation, and increasing the compulsory VAT registration threshold from R1 million to R2.3 million.

Cabinet reiterated its commitment to prudent fiscal management, the reform agenda, and speedy implementation of interventions and programmes that have resulted in narrowing of the budget deficit and steady economic growth that made Budget 2026 possible.

Steady progress in the fight against unemployment

Cabinet welcomed the results of the 2025 Quarter 4, Quarterly Labour Force Survey, as released by Statistics South Africa which show that unemployment decreased by 0.5 percentage points to 31.4% in the fourth quarter of 2025 from 31.9% in the previous quarter.

The number of unemployed persons decreased by 172 000 to 7.8 million, while employment increased by 44 000 in Q4 2025 to 17.1 million.

Economic Transformation and Progress Imperatives

Cabinet supported the President's SoNA announcement that it is unacceptable that 31 years into democracy, black, coloured, and Indian people continue to have fewer economic opportunities than white people, and unacceptable that women earn less than men.

Data from Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) confirms that between 2006 and 2023, black households experienced real income growth of 46%, coloured households at 29% and Indian households at 19%. The level of poverty in the black population fell from 67% in 2006 to 44% in 2023 while the level of poverty in the coloured population fell from 43% to 25% over the same period.

Notwithstanding this progress, Cabinet acknowledged that the average income of white households remains five times higher than that of black households.

In this regard, Cabinet welcomed the imminent review of the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Framework to ensure it supports greater transformation and inclusive growth.

Black households now 41% of high-income bracket

Cabinet recognised the findings of the University of Cape Town's Liberty Institute of Strategic Marketing based on Stats SA data, which demonstrate the proportion of black households earning more than R75 000 a month climbed to 41 percent in 2024 from 29 percent in 2012. The number of Black South Africans in middle- and upper-income brackets, earning more than R22 000 a month, quadrupled to more than 7 million in 2024.

Overall, the total number of people in those income groups rose from approximately 4 million to more than 11 million, between 2012 and 2024.

Rising black remuneration is progressively transforming the racial profile of South Africa's higher income brackets. This is a direct dividend of thirty-one years of democratic transformation through programmes such as employment equity and black economic empowerment. This progress is made in a country that was shaped by institutionalised inequality, where the black majority was systematically discriminated against during colonial and apartheid rule, and earnings were once based on one's race, though government's transformation programmes, amongst others.

Cabinet also appreciates that this progress is still not proportional to the demographic representation of South Africa's population. Black South Africans still dominate the ranks of the poor and working poor, and millions still live in poverty.

South Africa resumes local vaccine production to curb the outbreak of FMD and free the country to disease free status

The Agricultural Research Council (ARC) Onderstepoort Veterinary Research (OVR) resumed production of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) vaccines in over 20 years. The first batch of locally produced FMD vaccines were handed over on Friday, 6 February 2026. This milestone will contribute to urgent steps to curb the outbreak of the FMD currently ravaging over 14 million livestock in the country and causing untold devastation to the farming community.

Cabinet is confident that the re-building of local vaccine production capacity within the State-Owned ARC and OBP will also contribute to the goal of reclaiming South Africa's FMD free status from the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH). Cabinet extends its appreciation to the farming community, who have worked tirelessly to complement efforts of the Department of Agriculture to curb the current outbreak of the FMD.

Improved Crime Statistics Indication of steady progress in the fight against crime

The SAPS released the Q3 2025/26 crime statistics on 20 February 2026 with a national crime picture justifying a cautious, evidence-based optimism whilst more work still needs to be done.

On murder, the downward trend that began in Q1 of 2023/24 has been sustained, with a recorded 8.7% decrease, representing 602 fewer lives lost compared to the same period last year. Over two years, murder for this quarter period has dropped by 17.6%, translating to 1 359 fewer murders.

Double-digit reductions in murder were recorded in five provinces: KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng, Mpumalanga, Free State, and the North-West. Smaller decreases were recorded in the Western and Eastern Cape, while slight increases were recorded in Limpopo and the Northern Cape. Of the 30 highest-murder precincts nationally, only 15 recorded decreases. This confirms that while national trends improve, targeted community-level

intervention remains essential.

Cabinet is very concerned about the notable increase in the murder of police officials this quarter. 23 officers lost their lives, with approximately 80% killed while off duty. The National Commissioner of the South African Police Service has been tasked with a full assessment to prevent these deaths.

Total contact crime, encompassing all categories of violent crime, decreased by 6.7%, representing 12 682 fewer cases reported to SAPS compared to the same quarter last year. Over two years, total violent crime for this quarter is down 8.3%, or 15 763 fewer cases.

This trend is attributable, in part, to enhanced policing operations.

The SIU Report on Home Affairs VISAs

When President Ramaphosa signed the Proclamation authorising the Special Investigation Unit (SIU) to investigate allegations of corruption and fraud in the VISA application processes on 16 February 2024, the aim was to safeguard the integrity of South Africa's official documents and the immigration

system.

Cabinet commended the SIU for its work that will assist Home Affairs to close outstanding gaps and ensure all perpetrators are brought to justice.

Cabinet also commended the Department of Home Affairs for the progress made in strengthening the country's immigration system since the initial allegations of fraud and corruption were discovered.

Return of 15 of the 17 young men who were lured to join the Russian frontlines

The South African Government, working closely with the Russian government has secured the safe return of the men between the ages of 20-39 years who were lured to join the Russian frontlines. This followed receipt of distressed calls for assistance to return home from seventeen (17) South African men.

Cabinet joined President Cyril Ramaphosa in expressing gratitude to President Vladimir Putin who responded positively to the call of President Ramaphosa to support the process of returning South African men who were lured into the battle lines between Russia and Ukraine.

All seventeen (17) men have been released from the contracts they signed with military contractors. Fifteen (15) of the men are back in South Africa whilst two (2) remain in Russia, with one in a hospital and the other being processed before finalising his travel arrangements.

Investigators are ongoing into the circumstances that led to the recruitment of these young men and the violation of South African laws.

Ekapa Mine Accident

The Minister of Mineral and Petroleum Resources, Gwede Mantashe, together with Northern Cape Premier Zamani Saul and Sol Plaatje Executive Mayor Martha Bartlett, visited the Ekapa Minerals Joint Shaft Mine in Kimberley, where a mud rush accident occurred on 17 February 2026, which resulted in five employees being trapped underground. All operations at the mine have been suspended as an intensive rescue operation continues. Once the rescue operation is completed, the Department will conduct a formal investigation in line with the Mine Health and Safety Act to determine the cause of the incident.

The DMPR team, led by the Chief Inspector of Mines, remains on site to monitor and support rescue efforts. The government has commended mining companies and Minerals Council South Africa for their assistance in supporting the rescue mission. The affected families are receiving ongoing communication. The government's thoughts and prayers are with the families of the affected employees as rescue efforts continue.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

39th Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly

President Cyril Ramaphosa led a high-level South African delegation at the 39th Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly from 14 to 15 February 2026. Convened on water and sanitation under the theme: "Assuring Sustainable Water Availability and Safe Sanitation Systems to Achieve the Goals of Agenda 2063", the focus directly aligns with the SoNA's domestic crisis agenda and bolsters continental efforts to support access to sustainable water and sanitation services.

President Ramaphosa also attended and chaired the AU Ad-hoc High Level Committee for South Sudan (C5) Plus Summit. The C5 plays an active role as an overseer on the implementation of the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan.

South Africa as interim Chairperson of SADC prepares to host 46th SADC Summit

South Africa, as Interim Chair of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), has started preparations towards the 46th SADC Summit in August 2026 by hosting sectoral meetings.

In this regard, South Africa successfully hosted the joint meeting of the Ministers of Health and other Ministers responsible for HIV and AIDS within SADC from 23 to 24 February 2026, with the attendance of WHO, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF representatives.

The meeting discussions reviewed health issues and disease outbreak coordination.

In addition, South Africa will host the SADC Council of Ministers Meetings from 12 – 13 March 2026, which will be attended by Ministers from 15 SADC member states, and this will be preceded by meetings of the Standing Committee of Senior Officials.

South Africa-China Economic Partnership

Cabinet was briefed on the signing of the South Africa – China Economic Partnership Agreement for Shared Prosperity (CAEPA) as part of the Southern Africa Customs Union (SACU) and China trade relations which included negotiations on the Early Harvest Agreement which will unlock the 100% duty free market access for African Countries that have diplomatic relations with China.

In addition, South Africa will, on 25 March 2026, host the 13th South Africa – China Strategic Dialogue which will provide a structured high level platform for both countries to review, align, and advance the implementation of their bilateral relations, and to reaffirm the All-Round Strategic Cooperative Partnership through regular diplomatic engagement.

On 26 March 2026, the Deputy President, Paul Mashatile will co-chair the 9th South Africa – China Bi-National Commission (BNC) which aims to review and advance the strategic bilateral cooperation, align priority sectors, and deepen political, economic and technical collaboration between the two countries.

CABINET DECISIONS

Progress on the implementation of the President's Response to the recommendations of the State Capture Commission

Cabinet approved the progress on implementing the actions from the Recommendations of the Judicial Commission on Allegations of State Capture, Corruption and Fraud for submission to Parliament.

By November 2025, assets recovered in relation to the allegations of State Capture, Corruption and Fraud stood at R16.432 billion: Special Investigating Unit recovered R2.89 billion, Asset Forfeiture Unit recovered R8.142 billion, and South African Revenue Service recovered R5.4 billion.

Progress on reforms includes, (i) the Public Service Amendment Bill and Public Management Amendment Bill which are with the President for assent; (ii) Overseeing judge has been appointed for the Investigating Directorate Against Corruption (IDAC); (iii) South Africa has been removed from FATF grey-

list; (iv) The report of the Electoral Reform Consultation panel has been tabled to Parliament; (v) The draft Whistleblower Protection Bill will soon be processed through Cabinet, and the (vi) Central Register for Dismissed Officials is under consultation for concurrence purposes.

To date 57% (34 of 60) of the actions have been completed, 18% (11 of 60) are on track, 23% (14 of 60) are delayed but work is proceeding and only 2% (1 of 60) of the actions require attention.

Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) Control Strategy

Cabinet was briefed about the scale and severity of the Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) in South Africa.

Cabinet approved the proposal to implement a national mass vaccination programme for cloven-footed animals as a core containment and recovery measure.

The vaccination programme will

cover the national herd of approximately 14 million cattle, which will require an estimated 28 million vaccines over the next 12 months.

The mass vaccination programme will be supported by central procurement to ensure the correct vaccine for the circulating strain.

The strategy details the vaccination prioritisation of provinces in line with the extent of the outbreak.

Cabinet was informed of the 2 million vaccines available to kick off the vaccination drive.

Cabinet appeals to farmers to observe the movement control measures in place as an effective measure to limit the spread.

National Evaluation Policy Framework 2025

Cabinet approved the National Evaluation Policy Framework 2025, which updates the Evaluation Policy to remain relevant and fit-for-purpose

The Policy Framework 2025 strengthens the process of setting

targets and outcomes while factoring in evaluation reviews in the Annual Performance Plans, and develops comprehensive management mechanisms on non-performance, and incentivising good performance.

Second National Report on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda

Cabinet approved the Second National Report on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda

The report provides inputs for the global reporting on New Urban Agenda implementation:

- National progress and challenges related to sustainable urban development for social inclusion and ending poverty.
- The state of the nation on sustainable and inclusive urban prosperity
- Environmental sustainability and resilient urban development, including governance, planning, financial frameworks and institu-

tional capacity.

Cabinet also approved that the Minister of Human Settlements develops a strategy to address the construction of informal structures in dangerous, disaster-prone locations, including medium- to long-term solutions for Temporary Residential Units (TRU)

The Government Sexual and Reproductive Justice Strategy (SRJ) for South Africa

Cabinet approved the Sexual and Reproductive Justice (SRJ) Strategy for South Africa.

The strategy pursues a rights-based sexual and reproductive justice framework anchored in the Constitution.

The Strategy aims to ensure all individuals, particularly women, youth and marginalised groups, have the power and resources to make healthy decisions about their bodies, sexuality, and reproduction.

BILLS

Special Pensions Amendment Bill, 2026

Cabinet approved the submission of the Special Pensions Amendment Bill to Parliament. The Bill repeals the Special Pensions Act 69 of 1996, to provide for the retention of benefits that have been determined before the lapsing of certain provisions. It allows persons who qualify for more than one benefit to be granted the most advantageous benefit, to ensure fairness and consistency in the administration of special pensions.

The Bill makes provision for the right of a surviving spouse or beneficiary to receive a survivor's lump sum benefit in respect of persons who have died or presumed dead in law. The amendments are further designed to address administrative gaps and expand

eligibility, in recognition of the sacrifices made by individuals in the establishment of South Africa's democratic order.

Labour Laws Amendment Bill, 2025

Cabinet approved the publication of the Labour Laws Amendment Bill for public comment. The Bill seeks to modernise and strengthen South Africa's labour law framework by amending the Labour Relations Act 6 of 2018, and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act 7 of 2018, as well as revisions to the National Minimum Wage Act 9 of 2018 and Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998. It aims to enhance worker protection, ensure alignment with Constitutional rights to equality and dignity, improve enforcement of employment stan-

dards and clarify dispute resolution mechanisms.

The Bill strengthens protection for vulnerable and non-standard workers while maintaining an appropriate balance with employers' operational requirements. The Bill gives effect to the Constitution by promoting fair labour practices, social justice and inclusive economic participation.

Labour Relations Amendment Bill, 2025

Cabinet approved the publication of Labour Relations Amendment Bill for public comments. The Bill seeks to modernise and strengthen the labour relations framework by introducing clearer rules on closed-shop ballots, limiting the automatic extension of bargaining council agreements to certain new business and regu-

lating the funding and financial reporting of bargaining council, trade unions and employers' organisations. Proposed amendments aim to strike an appropriate balance between increased flexibility for employers and enhanced protections for workers.

The Bill proposes measures to streamline dispute resolution processes, cap compensation for high-earning employees and refine retrenchment procedures.

Introduces changes to procedural fairness to make dismissal processes less adversarial. These proposals are the outcome of NEDLAC negotiations and members of the draft Bill, during the public participation process.

EVENTS AND CONFERENCES

Hosting of the LIV Golf South Africa Event at the Steyn City Golf Course: 2026 to 2028

Cabinet approved the hosting of the LIV Golf South Africa event to be held from 19 to 22 March 2026 at the Steyn City golf course in Johannesburg.

The LIV Golf league is a professional men's golf tour featuring leading international golfers competing in a global series of events.

Hosting of LIV Golf tournament is expected to deliver significant economic and socio-economic benefits, including increased tourism, and job creation, whilst also contributing to the promotion and development of golf in South Africa through targeted legacy programmes.

The event is estimated to generate between R500 million and R800 million in direct economic impact per event.

The LIV Golf legacy programme aimed at empowering young people through access, inspiration and professional development opportunities will be imple-

mented in two phases. Phase one around Southern Grounds Golf Club and the Steyn City Gauteng Academy, and Phase two will expand the programme's reach to additional communities.

Additional LIV golf events are planned for 2027 and 2028, with potential extensions to 2029 and 2030.

Human Rights Month

South Africa will commemorate Human Rights Month in March under the theme: "A Legacy of Courage: Protecting Rights, Preserving Humanity." This year marks 30 years since the signing of the Constitution into law.

The launch of the 30th anniversary Commemoration of the adoption and signing of the Constitution into law will take place on 2 March 2026 at the Apartheid Museum. This commemoration is an opportunity for all of us to reaffirm that our democracy and freedoms remain strong.

Cabinet calls on all South Africans to continue to honour the living expression of

the nation's collective commitment to constitutional democracy, human rights and freedoms, the rule of law, and to honour the contribution of struggle heroes and heroines to our freedom and democracy.

Hosting of the Inaugural National Transport Conference

Cabinet approved the hosting of the inaugural National Transport Conference from 16 to 18 March in Johannesburg, Gallagher Estate.

The conference will address South Africa's transport sector to address challenges and develop solutions. The conference is expected to attract 750 delegates from South Africa, the Southern African Development Community, and the broader international community.

The conference aims to build a shared vision for the role of transport in South Africa's socio-economic development, and mobilise stakeholders around a common transport agenda. It will also promote knowledge-sharing, draw on international

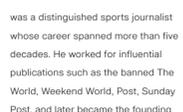
and local research, and explore innovative transport technologies and digital solutions to improve the performance and competitiveness of the country's transport system.

Armed Forces Day

President Cyril Ramaphosa as Commander-in-Chief of the South African National Defence Force addressed Armed Forces Day in the Vhembe District Municipality on 21 February 2026.

Armed Forces Day is commemorated annually in remembrance of the sinking of the SS Mendi, and to honour all our soldiers who paid the ultimate sacrifice while serving the Republic outside our borders and in internal operations. It is a day to pay tribute to the courage of those who wear uniform, and who serve to safeguard our nation and her people.

Cabinet joins President Cyril Ramaphosa in paying tribute to the members of the Native Labour Corps who lost their lives in the sinking of the SS Mendi on the 21 February 1917 during the First World War. Their bravery, defiance and unity in the face of death reverberates through time, and their courage and spirit continue to inspire us today.



experiences of South Africans during the dark days of apartheid, ensuring that the voices and struggles of ordinary people were seen and remembered.

CONGRATULATIONS

Cabinet extends its congratulations and well wishes to:

The Proteas for advancing to the Super Eight Stage of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup, in India and Sri Lanka. We wish them well in their quest to book a place in the semi-final.

The Christian and Muslim communities as they observe Lent and Ramadan respectively. Cabinet joined President Ramaphosa in extending its best wishes.

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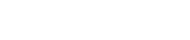
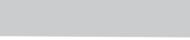
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