

SPEECH BY PREMIER DAVID MAKHURA ON THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICE OF THE PREMIER BUDGET VOTE 1 FOR 2020/21.

18 June 2020

Madame Speaker, Honourable Ntombi Mekingwe;
Deputy Speaker and Chief Whip;
Members of the Executive Council;
Leaders of Political Parties;
Honourable Members of our Provincial Legislature;
The people of Gauteng:

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the debate for the 2020/2021 Budget Vote 1 for the Office of the Premier.

Please allow me to start my input by congratulating our former Head of State, President Thabo Mbeki for turning 78 years-old today. Few people will disagree with the assertion that President Mbeki is one of Africa's finest intellectuals; an accomplished Pan-African thought leader; an African philosopher and statesman of note.

Many in my generation continue to be inspired by President Mbeki's vision and passion for Africa, especially as our continent grapples with the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the unfolding multiple crises of global neo-liberalism.

Happy Birthday Zizi! Aluta continua!

Ordinarily, the focus of this Budget Vote Speech is supposed to be on how the Premier's Office drives the implementation of the Plan of Action of the Gauteng City Region for this decade, which we refer to as "Growing Gauteng Together, GGT2030".

However, these are not ordinary times. The world is gripped by a global public health emergency of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Madame Speaker, I have therefore chosen to focus on how COVID-19 is reshaping the way we work as government.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbates and exposes other pandemics such as institutionalised racism and the killing of black people by police; gender-based violence and killing of women and girl children by men; rising inequalities, poverty, unemployment and food insecurity in the midst of a deepening climate crisis.

All these pandemics pose an existential threat to human well-being and human civilization. We must respond comprehensively to address these pandemics in a manner that safeguards sustainable human progress, greater equality and social justice for all.

Madame Speaker, in February this year, we launched "Growing Gauteng Together: GGT2030" as a Provincial Plan of Action to push forward progressive change and guarantee a quality of life and human well-being to all residents of Gauteng during this decade.

In GGT2030, we outlined seven priorities:

- Economy, Jobs and Infrastructure
- Education, Skills Revolution and Healthcare
- Integrated Human Settlements, Basic Services and Land Release
- Social Cohesion, Food Security and Safe Communities
- A Capable, Ethical and Developmental State
- A better Africa and World
- Sustainable Development for the future generation

We highlighted the fact that GGT2030 is based on 28 strategies and 160 interventions that seek to achieve the following vision and outcomes:

- Building a sustainable future for all;
- Building a society that is based on human solidarity;
- Building a society that cares for the poor and vulnerable;
- Creating a safe and secure environment for all;
- Building an inclusive economy that creates jobs;
- Delivering quality education, skills, and quality healthcare;
- Ending apartheid urban planning and connecting housing to economic opportunism;
- Ending hunger and disease;
- Ending all forms of discrimination - sexism, racism, xenophobia, and homophobia.

Through GGT2030, we made several concrete commitments to grow the economy and improve the quality of life over the next decade:

- Grow the Gauteng inflation-adjusted R2 trillion economy;
- Create 3.1 million jobs;
- Reduce unemployment from 29% to 15%;
- Reduce Poverty from 25.3% to 16%;
- Reduce Inequality from 0.7% to 0.62%;
- Reduce Crime to be reduced by 50%.

GGT2030 drew from the data and insights of Indlulamithi Scenarios for 2030. In addition, we set up research and economic modelling teams that identified a set of policy interventions (collectively referred to as “Nayi le Walk”) that will guarantee a pathway to a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable future for all the residents of the Gauteng City Region.

One thing that Indlulamithi Scenarios planning overlooked is the disruptive impact of the outbreak of pandemics. Pandemics can be more disruptive than technology. They can shut down the global economy and bring down governments.

The outbreak of COVID-19 and its sweeping spread threw the world into turmoil. Drastic decisions had to be taken to curb the spread and save more lives. Many economies were shut down and lives substantially disrupted as the major focus shifted to combatting the spread of Coronavirus. We are still in the midst of the COVID-19 storm and in some respects the storm is gaining more momentum.

The social and economic impact of COVID-19 will be measured fully and accurately in the aftermath of the pandemic.

There is no doubt that more lives will be lost, and millions of people will also lose their livelihoods in the coming months due to the impact of the deadly Coronavirus.

Poverty, inequality, hunger, unemployment will increase.

Gender-based violence is increasing.

Racial inequities have been thrown into sharp relief.

In other words, GGT2030 will need to be re-imagined and rebooted because the structural problems it sought to address have worsened in scale and depth.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also shocked the global economy system in a way that last happened during the 1929 global depression. What the global economy faces is more than a global recession; it is heading towards a global depression.

The structural fault-lines and inequities of both the global economy and the South African economy have also been thrown into the open.

As the economic hub with one-third of the country's GDP and a quarter of the country's population, the Gauteng City Region is central to South Africa's public health response and post-COVID-19 economic reconstruction and recovery.

We need a new economic model. We need a new approach to social security and food security policy to ensure no one goes hungry and no one is left out.

The homeless people cannot go back to the streets after COVID-19. Those without income who are now receiving the COVID-19 grant cannot be asked to fend for themselves after six months.

As the strategic apex and centre of government, the Office of the Premier is playing a central role in rethinking current policies, and spearheading the re-designing of new social and economic policy packages that will ensure that millions of people are included in the post-COVID new economy.

We have re-organised government decision-making, policy planning, disaster management and service delivery to respond directly to the progression and impact of the pandemic on the lives and livelihoods of the residents of our province.

Accordingly, we were able to contain and successfully slow down the spread of COVID-19 during the two months (end of March to end of May).

However, we have now entered a period of surge in infections and the pandemic is gaining momentum. All scientific models show that the period ahead will be tough. We need communities and citizens to play their part in wearing masks, washing and sanitizing hands, as well as maintaining social distance.

As more sectors of the economy and schools re-open, we must strengthen collaboration and co-operation between all sectors. Both public health and economic concerns are important. We need to find an appropriate balance.

We believe a lot has been done and is still being done to ready our public health system for the peak. Of course, we can never say we are hundred per cent ready. This pandemic is uncharted territory.

We also believe a lot of hygiene as well as health and safety measures are in place to ensure that various sectors of the economy will comply with WHO protocols.

We cannot keep the economy closed forever. We cannot keep schools closed forever.

A risk-adjusted strategy means we will regularly monitor the outbreaks and adjust when necessary. We might be compelled to ask the National Coronavirus Command Council (NCCC) to shut down some areas or sectors if the situation worsens.

We need households, communities and businesses to play their full part in flattening the curve and curbing the spread of coronavirus.

Revising GGT2030, Five-Year Strategic Plans and Annual Performance Plans

Government cannot function as though there is no COVID-19. Any approach that suggests "Business as Usual" with regard to government policy and conduct of state affairs would have missed the point. We need a substantial change of gear, both in many areas of policy and posture of those given the responsibility to govern.

COVID-19 has shown that we can deliver popular outcomes that respond to the pressing basic needs of the masses. We have also demonstrated that we can make swift and decisive decisions when the situation demands. We would like to continue with the positive lessons on how we managed the COVID-19 pandemic. There are also lessons we must draw from, some of the mistakes and blunders committed during the management of the pandemic.

We are revising GGT2030, all departmental strategic plans and annual performance plans. We will also adjust our Budget, and this will be presented to this House after the Finance Minister has presented his Budget Adjustment to national parliament.

Let me reassure the people of Gauteng that we will not retreat from our path from radical socio-economic transformation.

The path to the Gauteng of our dreams compels the province to be innovative whilst responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. We need a new economic model and social contract that will ensure that no one is left out or left behind.

We are also embarking on a process of policy review which is essential to the development of responsive and coherent evidence-based policy making. This is because the use of evidence requires policymakers' experience and sound judgement to ensure its relevance and applicability. This evidence can take many forms, i.e. research-based, practice-informed evidence, citizen feedback and evidence from conducting evaluations.

The burden of COVID-19 is felt disproportionately among the poor and working class who live in crowded settlements and travel using over-crowded public transport systems. Race, class and gender accentuates risk and vulnerability to pandemics.

We also want to pay special attention to the conditions of children in Gauteng. There is anecdotal evidence that children are hardest hit by rising levels of hunger and violence in our communities. This places the future of our nation at stake.

The scourge of GBV and femicide is reaching existential proportions. We need to rethink our current responses. What we are doing is completely inadequate. We need to advocate for the adoption of emergency measures to tackle gender-based violence and rid our society completely of abusers and killers of women and children. Yes, we need extra-ordinary measures.

I call on this House to discuss emergency measures to end the pandemic of gender-based violence and killing of women and girl children. History demands of us to act now to end the suffering of women in our land. Let us rise to the occasion.

Women's Lives Matter.

Thank you.