

Address by Deputy Minister of Correctional Services, Hon. Thabang Makwetla on the occasion of the Department of Correctional Services Budget Debate (Vote 21)

16 July 2014, Old Assembly Chamber, Cape Town

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House Chairperson,

Hon. Minister of Justice and Correctional Services, Min Mike Masutha,

Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee, Dr Mathole Motshekga,

Colleagues, Members of the Portfolio Committee,

The House at large,

Allow me to take cue from my Minister and acknowledge our distinguished guests at this budget debate this morning, the eminent heads and members of the complimentary bodies which constitute the correctional services dispensation regime, on whose behalf we are also accounting today. Your valuable labour and civic duty are sincerely appreciated.

Honourable Members, our budget debate today signals the commencement of yet another determined and spirited five years in government to programmatically bring to life the vision of a transformed correctional service in South Africa as articulated in "The White Paper on Corrections in South Africa" published in February 2005.

As we start this countdown by putting before parliament the Annual Performance Plans for Year 1 (2014/15 financial Year), we do so, as the

Minister emphasised, with commitment and the discipline to foreground the imperatives of Vision 2030, South Africa's National Development Plan.

It is our intention to diligently implement our plans while we simultaneously continue to work on our plans with the view to achieve conditions where South Africans are safe and feel safe in their communities.

We will strive to understand , and appreciate "the lay of the land", so to speak, such that in time we can produce a framework which projects targets and mile-stones that delineate the main objectives of each of the three MTSF time-spans, leading up to the year 2030- a South Africa we envision.

In the recent General Elections South Africans voted overwhelmingly for "Radical Change". In canvassing his view about the radicalism of the change South African voters want to see in government, Joel Netshitenzhe, the Executive Director of the Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflections argues that this radicalism with regard to the state "has to include the totality of measures required to improve its capacity to implement its policies. Be it in relation to economic and social infrastructure or the industrial policy action plans, the intent of government should be felt in actual implementation- informed by clear high level objectives that understood by public servants, the private sector and civil society alike". If we accept the probability of the correctness of his assertion, we will most likely agree that the same applies to the security sector cluster we belong to in government.

Joel further concurs with Minister Masutha's sentiments that, "South Africans want a state that is legitimate, efficient and ethical". One of the pivotal goals of the Justice and Correctional Services Ministry is the fight against corruption, as the Minister unequivocally stated, when he introduced the presentation of this budget and plans to the portfolio committee.

This commitment finds resonance in the National Development Plan (NDP) in its assertion that in a "developmental state, unions share responsibility for the quality of services delivered, for improving the performance of government, and for fighting corruption and inefficiency".

Honourable Members,

What then are the" high level objectives "that we as public servants and our partners in the private sector and civil society must understand and be clear about? .

Chairperson, Honourable Members I wish to venture a view that the high level objective which our correctional service is in pursuit of, is best articulated in the revolutionary thought once articulated by one of the most accomplished social reformers the African continent has produced in the contemporary period, the first President of Independent Angola, Dr Augustino Neto, President of MPLA, when he argued that; For the Lumpen-Proletariat to remain progressive as part of the motive forces for popular change after victory over colonial oppression , irrespective of the heroism of its participation in that struggle, the lumpen proletariat must commit class-suicide as a social strata, failing which it must be

crushed by the popular masses that it was previously in alliance with in defence of social change.

Honourable Chairperson, excuse me for the gabberish. The long and short of what I wished to convey is that in our newly established democratic order the high-level objective of the Department of Correctional Services - its end-game is the eradication of crime and the drastic reduction of our prison population. Crime is anti-people. It terrorises communities; crime undermines investor confidence; crime shrivels development; crime is counter-progressive; crime erodes the freedom that so many sacrificed their lives for in a quest to realise a better life for our people. Crime is counter-revolutionary.

A struggle friend of mine who I have always admired for his sharp insights into life in black communities of our country, in particular the urban townships, abruptly scuppered our plan to spend the weekend together in order to catch up on each other's private life. Our cosy plan was rudely disrupted by an urgent call that his house had been burgled. He rushed back home to find his house cleaned out of everything electronic and easily movable item. When I called him a day later to find out how he was coping, he was at his normal clam and upbeat self. I called to console him because I naturally expected him to be still angry and upset. In his typical demeanour, he took this blow in his stride and with excitement explained to me that what happened is to be expected. His voice was of someone who did not bear any grudge against the perpetrators. Like a sage, he went on to explain that what happened is a natural outcome of the "system". That, we the leaders, we have lost the perpetrators of the callous break-in into his house. They feel that we no longer belong together; They feel destitute and

abandoned. What they have done is now a problem facing him and the State, the police. They couldn't be bothered about his plight right now. He said at the height of rudimentary organs of popular power in the black townships during the apartheid days, this would not have happened.

He quickly came with a rejoinder while I was still quietly internalising what he was telling me and said, Mbemi, actually you are ideally placed to do something about it. You have a golden opportunity to reach to these people, to reconnect with them. You can nurture a momentous Prison reform movement that can drastically bring down criminal behaviour in our communities. Remember, he continued, these people are among the most entrepreneurial individuals who think out of the box most of the time. They can be REHABILATED.

Kofi Annan, the former Secretary General of the United Nations once said, "No one is born a good citizen. No Nation is born a democracy. Rather, both are processes that continue to evolve over a lifetime. Young people must be included from birth. A society that cuts off from its youth serves its lifeline".

This means that as a Department mandated to rehabilitate and reintegrate offenders, we will have to be visible agents in the moral, social and economic reconstruction of our country. Our clients are not only inmates, but the society that produces offending behaviour. We will be at the forefront of the battle that discourages criminal behaviour, especially in the preventative campaigns targeted at young people. Our offenders and parolees will be more to educate the youth, that crime

does not pay. We should always bear in mind that effective crime fighting relies on community cooperation.

Part of our work during this administration is to educate the public about the National Register for Sex Offenders. While the national register is not open to the public, employers in the public or private sectors, such as schools, crèches and hospitals, are accorded the right to check whether a job applicant is fit to work with children or mentally disabled people.

The crime of corruption should specifically be viewed as a crime against the poor. Corruption is the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. It squanders resources and makes it harder to build trust and dialogue between citizens and government. The NDP states that South Africa “suffers from high levels of corruption that undermine the rule of law and hinder development and socioeconomic transformation”. It is widespread in rich and poor countries alike. The 2006 Global Corruption Report observes that, the US Attorney General has, for instance, declared health-care fraud to be the country’s ‘number two crime problem’ after violent crime, costing billions of dollars each year. Given our security environment, Correctional Services must, therefore, always lead by example by enforcing the rule of law without favour.

I am glad to report that in the first quarter (April, May, June) of this financial year, Correctional Services obtained a 100% success rate in delivering a guilty verdict for a number of offences involving 26 individuals employed by the Department. This is an 8% improvement from the 92% of the previous financial year which Minister Masutha reported to in this house.

Honourable members, regarding the qualified opinion by the Auditor-General on movable tangible assets, the asset register is currently updated continuously with new additions and disposals. Asset balancing and reconciliation is now done on a monthly basis to identify and rectify the discrepancies. The policy regarding the handling of urgent and emergency cases has also been amended and all cases must now serve before the relevant bid adjudication committee.

Fellow South Africans, the transformation programme of our democratic government necessitated that prisons shift from centres of mortification to places of new beginnings. Education and vocational skills are therefore at the heart of our rehabilitation enterprise. From 2010 to 2013, 73,881 inmates participated in education programmes.

We should celebrate the fact that the number of full-time correctional centre schools registered with the Department of Education increased from one in 2009 to fourteen in 2014. We take notice too, that in the 2013 Grade 12 examinations, Umlatati Learning Centre, at Barberton Youth Centre in Mpumalanga, achieved a 100% pass rate.

It is heartening too, to learn about the story of Tshifhiwa Given Mukwevho from Makhado. He was imprisoned for 11 years and is on parole. He pursued a creative writing course with UNISA and, on his release, published his short story collection. Today, Mukwevho is a poet, and community journalist, who topped the inaugural Polokwane Literary Festival.

Honourable members, this Department has production workshops, which operate as business units, including 10 wood workshops, 10 steel workshops, 19 textile workshops, a shoe factory and three sanitary towel units. There are 21 farms and 96 small vegetable sites. The agricultural enterprises include piggery, beef & dairy production, Chicken & egg production, fruit & vegetable production.

The Department is aiming towards self-sufficiency through full utilisation of its 40,000 hectares of correctional centre farm land, reaching our target at about 18% less costs than the open market. Over the past two years (2011 to 2013), almost 30 million kilograms of vegetables, fruit and meat were produced by inmates at correctional centre farms and abattoirs.

The Department has adopted various orphanages, old age homes and schools, and continues to donate surplus products to disadvantaged communities.

On 27th May 2013, the Department launched the Western Cape Arts and Craft Gallery at the Goodwood Correctional Centre for offenders to express their creativity. The Gallery is enabling offenders to sell their art to the public, support their families and have money when released. The gallery will also be used as an after-care centre for released offenders to make reintegration into society much easier and better.

As per the National Framework on Offender Labour, the Department is increasing the number of offenders who participate in offender labour, and skills development, programmes. On 12th February 2013, the Department signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the

Department of Basic Education (DBE) to use offender labour to build schools and supply furniture. The obligations of the Department include:

- Manufacture and delivery of school furniture;
- Rehabilitation of school furniture;
- Construction of school infrastructure;
- Maintenance, and refurbishment, of schools; and
- Establishment of school gardens.

As the Department of Justice and Correctional Services, we will continue to deliver justice for victims and ensure that offenders make restitution both to society for their crimes and leave correctional centres with better skills, and prospects, which will result in a second chance towards becoming ideal citizens.

We thank the Minister for his leadership, the Acting National Commissioner, Mr. Zach Modise, and the support of the portfolio committee on Justice and Correctional Services led by Dr. Mathole Motshekga. We commit ourselves to work together with the office of the Judicial Inspectorate of Correctional Services led by Judge Vuka Tshabalala, the National Council for Correctional Services led by Judge Seraj Desai, the Medical Parole Advisory Board which is led by Dr. Ramatisela. We invite all our partners, including labour and civil society, to continue engaging with us as we find lasting solutions to the problem of crime in our beloved country.

I thank you.