

Mr President, back your words with action

By **Luyolo Mphithi MP** – DA Shadow Minister of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities

***Note to Editors:** The following speech will be delivered today during Parliament's debate on the State of the Nation address and is under embargo until delivery.*

Speaker

Honourable members

Mr. President

Unemployment is often described as an economic issue, but what it really is, is threat to human dignity.

Today I remind this house of a declaration made in 1996, almost 26 years ago.

**We, the people of South Africa,
Recognise the injustices of our past,
Honour those who suffered for justice and freedom in our land,
Respect those who have worked to build and develop our country, and
Believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity.**

These words stand as the preamble of our constitution, an intent of law, an indication of what is to follow. But much deeper than that, they stand as a promise. A promise that imagines that in a caring South Africa human dignity is what we fight for. Always. That in a booming South Africa we all can dream and have chance of making those dreams come true.

Today the youth of South Africa stand at the periphery of that promise. Denied of their potential and dreams. Their talents ignored. Their hopes destroyed. And their trust broken. I raise these experiences of this generation so that they what it feels like to be put first and centred in debate like this. A generation that is victim to only one thing; the ANC. An organisation that has become so destructive and cancerous for many young people.

Mr. President it was only 2018 where you stated that 800 000 jobs would be created by government; in 2019, you stated 1 million jobs would be created; and in 2020 and 2021 you stated the same. Of course, we know that all these promises did not come to fruition; instead, the numbers of the unemployed skyrocketed until we became the highest unemployed country in the world.

In this year's SONA address, you agreed with the DA that government is not employer of the people but that the private sector is. However the RET faction in your party does not seem to agree. One side says this the other says that. It's so deep that even in the YL there is one side that says government is failing across all sectors, while on the other side you have a group that maintains that government is doing well.

The call to support structural reform by supporting SMMEs, investing in infrastructure, and assisting the economy in creating new sectors is what we call in the DA clear blue water but I am sure the President already knows what that means. The DA welcomes the effort to expand the criteria for participation in the Employment Tax Incentive. Since 2012, the DA has been calling government to take seriously the opportunity that the ETI presents because it targets job creation. To simply expand the ETI without

proper thought of young people located in poorer provinces, who are less mobile, and have no work experience would be a misstep.

The DA has long called for a focus on the green economy and the blue economy, which are future sectors that can combat unemployment.

Mr. President in your response tomorrow may you please indulge the young people of South Africa by answering the following:

1. For young people who have small business and are struggling to get their product into places like Shoprite, Spar or Fruit and Veg. What type of support is your government giving?
2. Government has been silent on the matter of lowering data costs in South Africa after much promise. How far is government with this matter?
3. Mr. President what attempts have been made to understand the failure of the stimulus programme particularly because two years after its implementation unemployment amongst young people continues to rise?

Poverty is much more than a lack of access to resources. It is about being excluded from the levers of the economy. This is why in DA run or DA-led coalition metros and municipalities we are focused on closing the skills gap amongst young people because we understand that unemployment has a causal link with poverty and indignity. This is something your ministers simply do not understand. Perhaps this is the reason you have decided to centre a number programmes within your office because your ministers *ba muncu*. **#MinisterMaiteMashabaneMustResign** no cap.

These commitments though welcomed remain just words without substantive action. As it stands young people spend an average of R1 300 per month looking for a job. With the rise of cost of living in South Africa and everything becoming more expensive, what comfort can you bring to this group of young people?

Mr. President we must hold our values and principles against the hard realities in this nation and see if we are measuring up to the legacy of our forbearers and the promise of future generations. It is the promise in the preamble of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. It's the promise to a young person who hopes to one day to be able to find a job and take care of their families. It's the hope of a small-scale entrepreneur who wants to grow their business and not be stifled by red tape. It's the hope that young people's talent will not be lost and overlooked. It's about the audacity, Mr. President, to ensure that your words are backed by action.