Motion of No Confidence in the Speaker deficient and procedurally flawed

Speech by ***Siviwe Gwarube MP,* Chief Whip of the Official Opposition**

**A year and a half into her tenure, the DA maintains Mapisa- Nqakula is not a suitable head of the legislature**

The true test of an effective head of the national legislature is whether the individual can impartially and with integrity carry out our constitutional obligations as Parliament.

It would be dishonest for anyone to argue that this House is ran impartially and with integrity.

It is not.

This critical role cannot be occupied by an individual who has – on numerous occasions undermined the Constitution, disregarded the role of Parliament as an oversight body and routinely forgets about the principle of separation of powers.

This is why in August 2021 when President Ramaphosa brazenly instructed the ANC members of this House to elect Speaker Mapisa- Nqakula, the DA objected to her election.

We objected because the President shuffled his deck of cards to remove a deeply compromised Minister in his cabinet, only to shackle us – the national legislature – with an individual who could never rise to the occasion.

We all knew that a former Minister of 19 years, who had always treated Parliament with disdain would not miraculously transform into a defender of legislative oversight.

And when the true test of impartiality came, the Speaker failed.

She has failed on five key metrics:

*Rebuilding of Parliament*:

* Over a year since the fire that gutted the Parliamentary precinct, we are still none the wiser about who is to be held accountable for what went wrong that day.
* We are still scrambling for a suitable venue to convene so we can get back to the work of serving South Africans.

*Zondo Commission Recommendations:*

* Almost a year later since the President tabled the final recommendations of the Zondo Commission report, this House is yet to take action against sitting MPs and Ministers who are heavily implicated in the report. Instead, the Speaker has personally delayed this process.

*Strengthening accountability:*

* Following the scathing findings of the Zondo Commission against Parliament, the DA tabled a series of amendments to the Rules of the National Assembly to allow for interpellations – a stronger form of questioning the Executive as per our constitutional duties. This was shot down by the ANC majority.
* The DA and other opposition parties have been calling for the establishment of portfolio committee that would oversee the growing Super Presidency. That has been stalled by the ANC in the rules Committee.

*Maintaining order in the House:*

* The Speaker has no ability to restore order in the Chamber. There are clearly no de-escalation measures in place. That is why the DA was quick to remind the Speaker of the process to follow when members of this House are to be ejected from the chamber. The floor of Parliament is no place for armed security forces.
* Indeed, the violence and disruption by political parties also has no place in a chamber where we are expected to show leadership to South Africans who desperately need to see this from us.
* Two things can be true at the same time: we must reject the politics of violence and disruption in Parliament. So too must we reject the overreach of the executive that sees armed security personnel as the permanent feature of our chamber.

*Impartiality and integrity:*

* Key bodies such as the programming committee chaired by the Speaker are often stifled and effective proposals rejected by the ANC. Whether it is calling for Ministers to answer questions in the House or requiring that portfolio committees meet in person – these are treated as though we are asking favours from the governing party to do our jobs.
* Most recently, the Speaker has been found wanting in handling the impasse between the President and Parliament on the appointment of the SABC board. Even though Parliament has made recommendations to the President – as is required – there’s an unprocedural back and forth between her and the president, while the public broadcaster without a board for several months.
* Just a few days ago, the Speaker led a delegation to Russia, to assure the Russian government of South Africa’s support. This is despite the fact that the Russian President has a warrant for his arrest by the international Criminal Court (ICC) for his government’s conduct during the country’s war with Ukraine. And perhaps more importantly, delivering a message of support on behalf of this Parliament that we never agreed to.

In this short period of time that the Speaker has been at the helm of this institution, we have seen its deterioration.

It is undeniable.

However, the DA cannot support this motion as it stands.

The motion is deficient and procedurally flawed.

In our view, it does not cover the full extent of the Speaker’s conduct.

It fails to capture the essence how she has failed as a presiding officer.

If we were to support this motion, it would need to be comprehensive and cover elements which is currently does not.

That is why we have elected to abstain from the vote.

Our abstinence from this vote should never be construed as a vote of confidence in you, Madam Speaker.

Far from it.

Our abstinence is motivated by the fact that the motion that is before us today, does not even scratch the surface of why you are ill-suited for this role.

Yours will be a legacy of the last Speaker of the National Assembly where the ANC held a majority.

And you will be remembered as the Speaker that hastened the decline of this institution.

The constitutional giants that came before you like Dr Ginwala and Mr Max Sisulu built a foundation that is being deliberately obliterated by the ANC.

You see, a working Parliament cannot co-exist with a governing party that is packed to the rafters by individuals who are only honourable by name.

That is why a working Parliament is not in the interests of the ANC.

The only way to rebuild the institution is to remove the governing party that has presided over its destruction at the ballot box.

And that we shall.