



# African People's Convention

**PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE**

**P O Box 15**

**Cape Town**

**8000**

**Tel: 021 403 3532**

**Fax: 021 403 2622**

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## **AFRICAN PEOPLE'S CONVENTION RESPONSE TO PRESIDENT, T.M. MBEKI'S STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS**

by

Comrade Themba Godi

12 FEBRUARY 2008

Madame Speaker, Comrades and Honourable Members.

Allow me to join the House in Congratulating the President on his address to the Joint Sitting of Parliament last Friday.

Business Unusual – what an appropriate imperative! It must, indeed be business unusual if tomorrow is to be better than today. A better tomorrow must not be a mere speculation, wish or hope, but must be manifested by what we do today. Business as usual would imply that a better tomorrow remains a dream perpetually deferred.

Such would be a cruel visitation on the people it would disqualify us from claiming to be walking in the footsteps of, amongst others, President Nelson Mandela, the martyred Rick Turner, and the outstanding patriot and leader Robert Sobukwe.

The values of the Liberation Movement, of people centeredness have been contaminated by alien class values of corruption and egocentricism. Business as usual would mean the co-existence of these contradictory values. Thus business unusual should go further than mere administrative jerk-up to also imply the reassertion of the superior values of selfless service to the people.

It is the conviction of the APC that we must never lose sight of our internationalist responsibilities, especially to the oppressed people of Palestine. We must never lower our voices in speaking out for and in solidarity with the Palestinians who suffer daily destruction, murder and humiliation. The Palestinians deserve to be free.

Comrade President, Africa remains a Continent of challenges and opportunities. There are challenges of peace, reconstruction and development in many parts of Africa. The APC adds its voice of concern about developments in places like Kenya, Chad and Darfur in Sudan. Our leaders and people can and should do better than what we are witnessing right now.

The APC congratulates you, Comrade President and the government for fulfilling your pan-African duties in finding solutions to challenges facing the Continent, from the reconstruction of the land of Patrice Lumumba, the DRC to facilitating the Zimbabwe dialogue. We congratulate you and your government; you have our support and that of progressive Africa.

Cde President, we do concur that the issues you raised as things that government would like to see realised are indeed important. If done expeditiously and fully they can fundamentally transform the lives of our people, for indeed the freedom we have must have material meaning to the poor.

The fundamental challenge is developing the capacity of the machinery of government. Commitments and targets can be set, but in the absence of government capacity they will remain paper commitments. Last year you spoke about the eradication of the bucket system; but its unhealthy stench is still a daily experience of many communities in the country – like Boys Town in Crossroads (Cape Town) which has no toilets, roads and electricity.

To us the starting point is to deal with the high vacancy rates, especially those affecting management and supervisory positions. The timeous filing of Key Performance Agreements will be a welcomed improvement, but critical will be the Content of those KPA's in relation to the objectives of government and the challenges facing that Department.

We firmly agree with you, Cde President, that improved performance depends on the quality of leadership provided by the Executive/Minister and Senior Management in a Department. This challenge does not particularly and only relate to Home Affairs, but can surely include departments like Defence, Correctional Services, Water Affairs and Forestry and parastatals like Land Bank if the Auditor-General's reports are anything to go by.

We would have loved to hear you; Cde President; talk to the missed bucket system eradication deadline. Why has the deadline not been met; is there a new deadline or is it sliding out of your radar?

We had expected that in dealing with educational matters you would touch on the matric results. They have been steadily declining for some years now, this is surely a cause for national concern. This decline, coupled with our poor showing on numeracy and literacy levels compared to countries like Kenya and Mauritius has a negative bearing on the country's skills development processes. The quality of education and its outputs are critical determinants of a country's development.

Cde President, you touched the issue of accelerated land reform, which you did last year, including increased support for new beneficiaries and emerging farmers. We are worried that there doesn't appear to have been any dramatic shifts. Support to new beneficiaries is definitely not enough, coupled of course, by the embarrassing shenanigans at the Land Bank. Can we be assured that this time around there will be visible and dramatic movement; including fixing the land bank.

The same can be said of our health system. The experience of many in our public facilities is not a proud one. Much, effort and focus is needed to provide health care facilities and services to our people which should confirm that today is better than yesterday. Our capacity to provide support and care for people with HIV and AIDS is not up to desirable levels. If we reacted to this challenge the same way we dealt with the energy crisis, I believe, we should have reached almost all those that need treatment and support. We can and must do more, faster.

The APC like all in our country is concerned about the violence visited on the people by de-classed elements. The APC will support any programme or legislation that seeks to enhance our capacity; efficiency and co-ordination to fight crime, especially organised crime.

Any measure that is not informed by the above will not have our support. That is what will guide our stance on the issue relating to the Directorate of Special Operations (DSO).

The APC will remain a consistent and principled partner in the struggle to advance social and economic transformation in the interest of the majority. They deserve it, they fought for it.

I am honoured.

I am inspired.

I am an African.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'M. Adh' with a small mark above the 'h'.