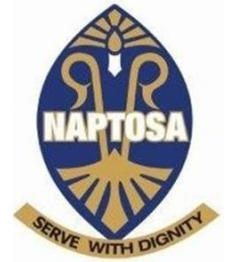


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REACTION TO THE STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS (SONA)

President Cyril Ramaphosa's State of the Nation Address highlighted several national priorities. While we acknowledge certain commitments, we must critically assess the gaps, particularly in education, crime and safety, poverty and unemployment, and the impact of austerity measures. In this moment of reflection on our national challenges, NAPTOSA joins South Africa in expressing our deepest condolences to the families mourning the loss of the 14 South African soldiers who tragically lost their lives while serving on a mission to bring peace to the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo

Education

NAPTOSA welcomes the praise for the Matric Class of 2024, which achieved the highest pass rate in our history. We must, however, do more for learners who are **less academically inclined**. This cannot be done in **overcrowded classrooms**, a problem worsened by austerity measures placed on schools. We welcome the government's plan to expand TVET colleges and recognise their role in skills development and job creation. Both basic education and TVET colleges must be properly resourced to ensure no child is left behind. We call on the government to prioritise education funding, address overcrowding, and invest in skills development to create a brighter future for all learners. **#GoPublic #FundEducation**

Crime and Safety

The President spoke of expanding the Detective Service and intensifying 'Operation Shanela' to combat crime. This does, however, not fully address the increasing kidnappings and the high rate of Gender-Based Violence (GBV). NAPTOSA calls for greater investment in school safety. **Our Safe Schools = Safe Nation** campaign underscores the undeniable link between secure learning environments and national stability. Schools cannot be islands of vulnerability, where learners and educators fear for their safety. While the National Council on GBV has been established, implementation must be accelerated to protect women, children, and vulnerable groups. NAPTOSA calls on government to fast-track the implementation of GBV response measures and allocate dedicated resources to strengthen school safety. Additionally, we urge communities to unite in safeguarding our schools, reporting incidents, and fostering a culture of zero tolerance towards violence. Only through collective action can we create a safer society for all.

Poverty and Unemployment

The government aims to build a **capable, ethical, and developmental state**, yet **austerity measures continue to erode public services**. The contradiction is evident: how do we create a capable state while cutting funding for essential services, particularly in education and community development? The proposed **Public Procurement Act regulations** to support black-owned businesses are welcomed, but these must translate into real economic opportunities, creating sustainable economic growth and reducing inequality. NAPTOSA calls on communities to hold leaders accountable, demanding transparency and equitable resource allocation. A capable state cannot be built on broken foundations—investment, not austerity, is the way forward.

Climate Justice

As **#ClimateJusticeChampions**, we welcome the President's statement on **climate justice**. The commitment to a **Just Energy Transition** and investment in **renewable energy** is a step in the right direction. South Africa must ensure that this transition is inclusive, creating jobs and addressing energy poverty.

While some progress is acknowledged, particularly in infrastructure investment and economic reforms, implementation remains key. We note that some wheels are already in motion and remain hopeful that the rest will follow. NAPTOSA supports and acknowledges the push towards digitisation and welcomes the establishment of professionally managed, ring-fenced finances for utility services to ensure adequate investment and maintenance. Additionally, we call for greater policing – investing in the safety of our country and its people is paramount. If we fix our police system, everything else will fall into place, enabling the capable state envisioned by the President.

While we embrace the intent of these commitments, we emphasise the need for decisive action to bring these plans to life.

Mr BL Manuel

Executive Director