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## State of the Nation Address – Opening of Parliament

The President's address touched on various aspects crucial to our nation's development, NAPTOSA welcomes many of these initiatives while also highlighting areas that require further attention and action.

NAPTOSA commends the President's plans to assist areas affected by natural disasters. These measures are crucial for rebuilding and providing immediate relief to our communities. It is, however, equally important to extend this focus to urban development. Our cities need significant improvements to ensure that the infrastructure and quality of life they offer can be mirrored in our schools. Quality urban development will lead to enhanced educational environments, and the eradication of pit toilets, benefiting both learners and education personnel.

The President outlined three strategic priorities: inclusive growth and job creation, reducing poverty and tackling the high cost of living, and building a capable, ethical, and developmental state. These priorities are commendable, and their success hinges on a strong and well-funded education system. Investing in education is not just a moral obligation; it is an economic imperative. The President's focus on poverty alleviation and early childhood development is critical. We must ensure that these programs are adequately funded and accessible to all. Schools in underprivileged areas need more than just promises; they need tangible support and resources to break the cycle of poverty and provide equal opportunities for all children.

Professionalizing the public service and fighting corruption is vital for building a capable state. This is especially true in the country's decision-making structures where mismanagement and corruption can have devastating effects. NAPTOSA supports appointing qualified individuals in senior positions and demand transparency and accountability in the management of all state resources.

NAPTOSA welcomes the emphasis on inclusive growth and the affirmation of the roles of women and youth in the economy. This inclusive approach is essential for a balanced and progressive society. By ensuring that women and young people are given the opportunities and support they deserve, we can foster a more equitable and dynamic economic landscape. It is imperative that these commitments are translated into actionable policies that have a tangible impact on the ground.

As #ClimateJusticeChampions, NAPTOSA is hopeful that the Just Energy Transition Investment Plan will indeed set out a clear path to invest more than R1.5 trillion in a just transition. This investment must support workers and communities in Mpumalanga and other coal-producing regions. A just transition is critical to ensuring that the shift towards renewable energy does not leave behind those who have been reliant on coal and other non-renewable industries. Supporting these workers and communities will not only help in mitigating the economic impact but also promote sustainable development.

The President's positive comments about workers are a step in the right direction. Acknowledging the efforts and contributions of workers across all sectors is vital. It is through the hard work and dedication of these individuals that our economy can thrive. We hope that these comments will be backed by policies that improve working conditions, provide fair wage increases, and ensure job security for all workers.

The commitment to vocational and technical training is a positive step towards inclusive growth. However, for these initiatives to be successful, we need substantial investment in educational infrastructure, teacher training, and policy development. Our learners must be equipped with the skills needed for the future job market, which requires a modernised and forward-thinking education system.

The President's announcement of significant investment in infrastructure, including schools, is welcome news. Prioritising the construction and maintenance of safe, modern educational facilities, especially in rural and under-served areas, is crucial. Every child deserves a conducive learning environment, and every teacher deserves a safe and well-equipped workplace.

While we welcome many of the initiatives outlined by the President, it is essential to remain vigilant and ensure that these plans are implemented effectively. NAPTOSA will continue to advocate for policies that not only benefit our members but also contribute to the overall well-being and development of our nation. We look forward to working collaboratively with the Government and all stakeholders to achieve these goals.

**Mr BL Manuel**

**Executive Director**