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RESPONSE ON THE MEDIUM-TERM BUDGET SPEECH

NAPTOSA acknowledges Government's dedication, as expressed in the recent Medium Term Budget Policy Statement, to drive inclusive growth, reduce poverty, eliminate debt, and build a capable, ethical, and developmental state. As a union serving Education Personnel, committed to enhancing the future of South Africa, we view these priorities as foundational to achieving national cohesion and prosperity.

1. Inclusive Growth and Job Creation

The government's forecast of 1.1% GDP growth for 2024 highlights the urgent need to accelerate inclusive economic development. NAPTOSA strongly supports a strategy that promotes investment in education and job creation, particularly within sectors that serve the youth, who remain the future of our economy. Education is critical for preparing young South Africans to contribute to an inclusive economy, and we advocate for increased support for teacher training, school infrastructure, and community engagement to empower the next generation.

2. Reducing Poverty and Addressing the High Cost of Living

We applaud the government's emphasis on protecting the social wage, with commitments to health, education, social protection, and employment programs. However, as we experience rising living costs, many Teachers and Education Support Personnel face financial hardship, impacting morale and productivity. NAPTOSA urges further protections in the fiscal strategy to sustain teacher compensation and mitigate the increasing cost burden on Education Personnel, whose dedication underpins the stability and quality of the education sector.

3. Building a Capable, Ethical, and Developmental State

The commitment to building a capable and ethical state resonates deeply with NAPTOSA's mission of promoting accountability and excellence within education. A robust state infrastructure enables a safe, fair, and supportive environment for teachers, learners, and parents alike. Furthermore, the allocation of resources toward growth-enhancing infrastructure, particularly in schools, is essential. Many schools require upgrades and repairs to provide learners with a conducive learning environment, as evidenced by recent damages caused by severe weather conditions.

4. Fair Compensation for Public Servants

NAPTOSA appreciates the minister's acknowledgment that public servants need to be compensated fairly. Fair and equitable compensation is essential not only for maintaining morale but also for ensuring high-quality service delivery across all sectors. Public Servants play a vital role in supporting South Africa's social and economic development, often working under challenging conditions. We look forward to seeing this commitment reflected in the ongoing negotiations, recognising the invaluable contributions public servants make to the nation's progress and stability.

5. Disaster Response and Risk Reduction

NAPTOSA appreciates the increased focus on disaster readiness and risk reduction, considering the storms that damaged over 30 schools, in Mpumalanga, this week. This damage has disrupted schooling and placed the administration of the National Senior Certificate (NSC) exams at risk. An efficient response system is imperative, not only to facilitate the repair of damaged schools but also to ensure that our education system is resilient and prepared for future events. We advocate for swift and dedicated resources to address these needs and prevent further disruption to learners' education.

In conclusion, while NAPTOSA recognises the complex trade-offs required by the fiscal strategy, we urge the government to prioritise investments in education and infrastructure. Ensuring a stable, fair, and equitable education system is paramount to achieving inclusive growth and a better life for all South Africans. We look forward to working alongside government and stakeholders to realise these shared goals and foster an empowered and educated South African society.

Mr BL Manuel

Executive Director