

Keynote Address
at the
ABASA Gala Dinner, Bloemfontein
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by
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1. Introduction

I was told you are a very serious assembly.

You have the stomach to take a very serious discussion, even during a gala dinner - when you should be having fun. This is commendable and points to good discipline.

This I can understand, as this profession has the ability and a big responsibility to build our economies.

Given tonight's environment, I will try to simplify the intervention, so as to allow for discussions after the wonderful dinner – on the dance floor.

However, I need to allow you to walk out of here with the ability to distinguish between objective and emotional views on the Plan. As professionals, it is indeed expected of you to be objective, independent and be able to find sustainable solutions for business, the economy and country.

This is key, given the socio-economic challenges we are faced with, as a society.

You are an essential part of this discourse.

It is only through professions like these, that we can realise our dreams as a country and as a region.

Tonight I intend giving you a anatomic view of the NDP. I am told that you have gone through two days of the practical challenges and expectations of the Plan. Tonight I am presenting you with the tool itself.

Because there is no free lunch, I will also leave you with some thoughts to engage with, long after tonight.

Where do we start, as a country?

- We are a country gripped with different interpretations of the NDP
- We are on a journey of trying to understand what we are dealing with
- There is a dire need to improve the possibility of tailor-making this document to the needs and aspirations of all South Africans
- We need to ensure that the Plan is fully embraced. A failure, may render implementation very difficult
- There is growing impatience. People are mistaking the NDP for a silver bullet – which it is not

What is the context?

- Structural unemployment of 25%
 - 6% is targeted
- Structural growth of 3% whilst we need to record a sustainable 6% growth, to deal with challenges we are faced with
 - 6% is targeted
- Structural/sticky inflation of 6%
 - 3% would be ideal, to deal with cost of living, particularly for the poor
- Reeling under the impacts of a global financial crisis, which is not of our doing
 - Increase in regional trade from 15% to 30%
- Inadequate cooperation between state and private sector 9
 - Building a capable and developmental state, with a professional public service

2. A Plan for South Africa

“The plan envisions a South Africa where everyone feels free yet bounded to others; where everyone embraces their full potential, a country where opportunity is determined not by birth, but by ability, education and hard work.” (pg 24 of the NDP)

It resonates with your mission of “... promoting the professional interests of Black professionals, engaged in the accounting profession. ... to ensure that every Black accountant and aspiring accountant is able to realise their full potential and aspirations.”

So, it is essential to understand that...

- The National Development Plan is a plan for South Africa.
- It draws on the expertise, knowledge, insights and input of all South Africans
- It presents a vision for the type of country we want to be - in 2030, based on a diagnostic of South Africa's major challenges
- It lays out a series of preferences and policy proposals that we believe would get us to where we want to be in 2030
- Everyone has a stake in making sure we achieve our vision, the challenge is not government's alone. If we are successful, we will all benefit.
- There is a role for South Africans, in general, and ABASA, in particular
- It is an essential vehicle to deliver on our dreams

- The NDP is now an integral part of the development story and need for South Africa.
- It is an initiative that forces a long term thinking on the part of every South African
- It is a call to action by all South Africans
- A call to structurally change the workings of the economy,
- A call to undergo deep behavioural change, at the national, corporate, household and individual levels
- It is about identifying and agreeing incentives that will catalyse these changes

What it is not...

- The NDP is not a plan for the ANC, nor does it belong to any other party.
- It is not even a government plan;
- It is not a plan for the President;
- It belongs to all South Africans;
- It is not a policy.
- The final Plan was presented to President and Parliament on 15 August 2012
- Endorsed by the ruling party here in Mangaung in December 2012
- It was placed at the centre of government's work in the State of the Nation Address:

"The National Plan has been adopted as a national plan for the whole country. It is our road map for the next 20 years.... All the work we do in government is now part of the comprehensive National Development Plan, including all operational plans - be they social, economic or political..."
President, 3 February 2013.

So, it is about changing our psyche and the way in which we think about life. It forces us to be long-term in our thinking and to integrate it into our planning and activities.

Under the stewardship of Minister Trevor Manuel, and Mr Cyril Ramaphosa his deputy on the National Planning Commission, the 25 men and women who form the Commission, have assumed the role of midwives. This they did by coordinating ideas, researching experiences of other societies and listening to the wishes of South Africans.

Hundreds of individuals and groups made submissions and contributions. This led to the birth of the NDP in 2012, following the initial draft, which was published on 11 November 2011.

The process was inclusive. It was probably the most inclusive set of discussions we have had amongst ourselves, as South Africans, since our Democratic Constitution.

3. Role of the NPC

- Performs a convening role...
- Is a Commission for the nation
- In consultation, develops vision and plan for the nation
- Advises government

- Mobilises society
- Oversees and monitors implementation
- But does not implement
- Does not have powers to direct

4. What is this dream?

- A better life for all
- Combating poverty and inequality
- To frame long-term national development objectives and enhance policy coherence and coordination.
- To better protect interests of the future which are poorly represented by markets and help shift economies from an unsustainable inherited path to a sustainable and prosperous one.

5. The NDP fundamentally rests on Six Pillars

When ABASA considers the NDP, it is important to reflect on these pillars:

- Uniting South Africans of all races and classes around the common programme to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality
- Encourage citizens to be active in their own development, in strengthening democracy and in holding their government accountable
- Raising economic growth, promoting exports and making the economy more labour absorbing. This will be your key “bottom-line dilemma”
- Focusing on key capabilities of both people and the country. Capabilities include:
 - a. Skills;
 - b. Infrastructure;
 - c. Social security, and
 - d. Strong institutions and partnerships within the country and with key international partners
- Building a capable and developmental state
- Strong leadership throughout society that work together to solve our problems

6. However, there are challenges confronting us as a country?

- Poor educational outcomes
- Massive unemployment: we need an economy that creates more jobs.
- Infrastructure is poorly located, insufficient and under-maintained
- The public health system cannot meet demand and suffers from quality problems
- A nation still often divided on racial lines (but also on resource lines - “haves” versus “have nots”)
- A resource intensive economy
- Spatial patterns that marginalise the poor
- Community safety issues
- Rural development is not happening fast enough
- South Africa in the world and in the region (issues of competitiveness and scope for greater trade and co-operation)

- The need to build a more a capable state, better equipped to improve public servicing and accountability.

ABASA has a significant role to play in each of these, and can make a huge contribution to spreading the message, highlighting our challenges and ensuring that these are part and parcel of board room decisions.

7. Next steps

- The NDP is now an integral part of our development story
- The NDP starts to address the hopes and aspirations of our people.
- We must, now, move towards implementation
- We have a lot of goodwill towards the plan; we need to harvest this goodwill
- Part of it making sure that corporate SA and professional take responsibility
- A call to structurally change the workings of the economy,
- Financial resources on their own, will not deliver the vision
- Structural changes are much more important for achieving the vision and hopes/aspirations of South Africans
- A call to undergo deep behavioural change, at the national, corporate, household and individual levels
- It is about identifying and agreeing incentives that will catalyse these changes
- The Minister of Finance has led us by budgeting in line with the NDP. These budgets remain sustainable
- The right policy mix and the right behaviour are much more critical in laying the foundation, for our long-term vision. It is important to manage expectations. It is going to be a difficult journey. But difficult things bring out the best in people.

8. The Role of ABASA in turning around our fortunes

- We ask that you internalise and assimilate the NDP into your organisational culture.
- There is no clash of interests; the future of all South Africans is intricately linked and intertwined with your ideals.
- It is in everyone's interests that we develop a stable and prosperous society with high levels of trust among the population.
- Your strengths lie in your deep understanding of business (economy) and your strategic position in shaping board behaviour and opinions, preferences and social trends.
- The ability to change the country's course, is based on the partnership amongst the three key stakeholders, government, business and organised labour. This points us to the seemingly elusive social compact.
- You are an important part of the equation, as you have effective and prominent representation in all three sectors.

9. Conclusion

- Own the Plan: It belongs to you
- Identify your role and commit to contributing
- Do not wait for government to lead... Lead



- Think long-term and positively influence those around you
- Influence corporate SA to invest right and for the right reasons
- Help us build in the right incentive structures
- Remember it is our future... Together, let us make it work!