



THE 2026 STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS (SONA) DEBATE SPEECH PRESENTED BY Hon. MP NDLOVU OF THE MPUMALANGA PROVINCE IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IN CAPE TOWN.

DATE: 18 FEBRUARY 2026

**1. Speaker of the National Assembly, Honourable Thoko
Didiza;**

Chairperson of the NCOP, Hon Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane;

Honourable President Cyril Ramaphosa,

Deputy President Paul Mashatile;

Honourable Members

2. Honourable President, in times of uncertainty and challenge, leadership is defined by the willingness to lead from the front. Such leadership provides stability, serves as an anchor for the collective, and fosters confidence, loyalty, and pride among the people.

3. We therefore welcome your decision to lead from the front in addressing the country's water challenges. Our people have responded positively to this decisive leadership and draw reassurance from your direct engagement, which reinforces their confidence in government and its commitment to service delivery.

4. We saw you, Honourable President, in the provinces of Limpopo and Mpumalanga when our communities were plunged into sorrow and despair as a result of heavy rains and devastating floods. Even in those difficult moments, you led from the front, standing shoulder to shoulder with affected families.

5. In Mpumalanga, the torrential downpours resulted in the tragic loss of 20 lives, the displacement of many families, and widespread damage to infrastructure. We extend our deepest and most heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families.

6. We further wish to express our sincere appreciation for the swift support and decisive intervention by the Honourable President. Our provincial government reprioritised 288 million Rand to repair the disaster damages.

7. We also appreciate the reprioritisation of 100 million Rand by the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, and the Department of Human Settlements, at 50 million Rand each.

8. This spirit of cooperative governance between the different spheres of government is a living and practical

expression of our constitutional commitment to work together in the best interests of our people.

9. Honourable President, we accept your call and join you in honouring and saluting the brave women of 1956, izi-Mbokodo who stood firm and fought for the total emancipation and the freedom of our people in South Africa.

10. Honourable President, as a champion of gender transformation, you have set the standard for inclusive and progressive leadership in our country. We have taken cue from your example, our Director-General is a woman, and more than 50% of top level managers are women. *Igama lamakhosikazi malibongwe!*

11. According to the Oxfam report, 89,8% of Mpumalanga's population depends on the public health system. The province is, accelerating the employment of health professionals, and advance the rollout of a single Electronic Patient Record System.

12. 93.8% of our Public Health Care facilities are accredited by the Office of Health Standards Compliance (OHSC). Mpumalanga is ready to implement the NHI.

13. To enhance access to clinical care, we recently appointed 25 medical doctors and placed them in Community Health Centres across the Province. This brings the total number to 36 Community Health Centers with full-time doctors. While an additional 10 is supported by contracted doctors.

14. We will complete seven clinics, and construct six new clinics during the current financial year. We have also completed the High-Tech Middelburg regional hospital which has been fully operational and waiting for you Honourable president to open it.

15. Additionally, the state of the art Mapulaneng Hospital is scheduled for practical completion in this financial year.

16. We launched uBuhlebezulu E-Learning program which is designed to bridge the digital divide through distribution of smart devices (tablets). 60 000 tablets were distributed to grade 12 learners at 312 million Rand in 2025.

17. For the 2026 academic year we will be distributing 70 000 tablets to grade 10 learners, for them to utilise

these gadgets for three years. The tablets come with a three-year warranty.

18. We are in the process of offering reliable internet connection to our schools for our learners to be able to utilise their tablets. Our children will be able to compete locally, and globally.
19. We are consolidating a solid foundation for learning, therefore Early Childhood Development remains a priority. 1 300 community ECD centres were registered and funded.
20. We are currently constructing 29 new schools across the province, of which ten will replace old community-built schools, ensuring that our learners are taught in a safe, dignified and modern learning environment.
21. We remain firmly committed to the eradication of all pit latrine toilets in our schools. We have built seven state-of-the-art boarding schools to expand opportunities for learners from farm schools and disadvantaged communities. We also finalised plans for the school of the deaf and blind, and we are ready to go to the market.

22. The trial run conducted in Mpumalanga province, in the Govan Mbeki Local Municipality, Leandra on capturing carbon dioxide from industrial source and storing it underground, is certain. We invite mining companies which stand to benefit from the research to invest on this project.
23. A research done in Bethal by an Australian renewable energy company called Windlab, showed that the Bethal area in our province has the most consistent wind blow in South Africa. As a result, Seriti Green is currently building a wind farm that has already created 2000 jobs during construction, and will create 600 permanent jobs after completion.
24. Agriculture remains one of the key strategic drivers of economic growth in Mpumalanga. We continue to leverage this sector to stimulate investment, support emerging farmers, and expand agro-processing opportunities that create sustainable jobs.
25. Recent statistics indicate that our unemployment has decreased from 34% to 32.3%. We welcome the deployment of the 10,000 new extension officers, as this will benefit us greatly.
26. We will soon be signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the University of Mpumalanga to be a co-partner on the recently signed agreement between

the University and **Hainan Province, in South China** to pilot the large-scale production of hybrid rice in Mpumalanga, which is estimated to create over **388 000** jobs and contribute approximately **40,32 billion Rand** annually to the provincial economy.

27. Madam Speaker, Mpumalanga remains the second most visited province in the country with 2.7 million arrivals. These tourists generated 8.5 billion Rand in terms of tourists spend.

28. We are finalising the feasibility studies of the creation of waves and the installation of a cable car in Mariepskop mountain which has similar features to Table Mountain.

Conclusion

19. Honourable President, indeed your comprehensive and compelling State of the Nation Address drew wide attention across the political and policy spectrum.

20. Even one of your most vocal critics, the Institute of Economic Justice, acknowledged in its response that your address was clear in outlining the challenges confronting



our nation, even where there may be differences regarding the proposed solutions. That recognition affirms that the issues facing our country were articulated with honesty and clarity.

21. Honourable President, we thank you for your continued commitment to serving the people of South Africa. Leadership demands courage, particularly in times of complexity and contestation.

22. As said by Zohran Mamdan: “We may not always succeed, but never will we be accused of lacking the courage to try”. It is that spirit of perseverance and resolve that must guide us as we work collectively to build a just, inclusive, and prosperous South Africa.

23. Inkomu