

2023/05/23

Honourable Chairperson;

Minister of Police, Honourable Bheki Cele

Honourable Ministers in attendance;

Honourable Deputy Ministers;

Chairperson of the portfolio committee on police and members of the Portfolio Committee;

Honourable MECs present;

Members of Parliament;

Senior Managers of the South African Police Service

Heads of entities;

Ministry of Police;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and gentlemen;

Thanks for this opportunity to deliver this inputs to our budget vote, which is taking place in the midst of our continued efforts to find new and innovative interventions to discharge our enormous responsibility of keeping our nation safe.

We remain fully aware of the pressing obligation to continue pursuing every effort that will realise a crime-free South Africa, where the populace and everyone within our borders will live without fear of being attacked or becoming victim of criminality, where our women and children do not live in fear of falling victim to Gender-Based violence and Femicide.

Honourable Members;

This year's budget vote is held post the stormiest years of our recent history. Just as we thought we were emerging from the devastating consequences of the COVID 19 pandemic and the commensurate lockdown that affected not only the economy but the nature and focus of policing, we found some provinces of the country engulfed by floods, civil unrest and many other unexpected turn of events.

As a result of several unexpected turn of events that are usually out of our control, we find ourselves in a predicament of multi-challenges as a country, aggravated by the impact of the electricity crisis on the economy and on the safety of our communities. The underlying paradox of it all is that irrespective of the nature of these challenges, the inability to adequately address them from a socio-economic perspective, results in these ultimately becoming a safety and security problem in one way or another.

This complexity requires that our approaches and interventions - to enhance policing and promote safety in communities be intensified, multi-pronged, and intergrated. Effective policing always requires the involvement and collaboration with relevant stakeholders, including the security industry, the business sector, all government institutions and most importantly, our communities.

I must indicate that community and stakeholder engagement in crime prevention and combating are not new concepts within government or the Police environment. We have over the years belaboured the point that we need all hands on deck if we are to win the battle against crime – and we have seen that within the areas where communities are actively collaborating with the police, crime reduces considerably.

We are continuing to encourage intensified involvement of the community, with the plea that you cannot sit with information that will make your own community safer and ensure that your children can enjoy all the rights and privileges bestowed upon them by the Constitution.

Honourable Members, Crime has a severe impact on the quality of life of all South Africans, particularly the poor. High levels of crime also affect efforts to stimulate growth, increase investment and reduce poverty.

As you are all aware, investment and growth require a safe, stable and crime-free environment. Most importantly, it is fundamental to the aspirations of all people to live in security, peace comfort and prosperity.

It is with this in mind that police visibility, effective training and better resourcing of police stations are government's priorities. Let me at this point applaud President Cyril Ramaphosa's visionary decision to continue to direct significant resources and effort to fight crime and keep communities around the country safe, despite the shrinking government purse.

This will indeed go a long way in increasing police visibility on our streets and thereby act as a further deterrent to criminal activities, especially in crime hotspots. Minister has spoken to the 12 000 new police trainees that have been recruited to ensure that the South African Police Service (SAPS) urgently gets the capacity it needs.

This additional personnel will assist SAPS to, in addition to the priorities that Minister mentioned earlier, strengthen its response to the growing problem of criminal groups that extort money from construction and other businesses. Of late, there has been a growing outcry of these extortion groups demanding protection fees even from people letting their own back rooms as a source of livelihood.

We are determined not to allow these to disrupt the lives of South African citizens, hence there has been, amongst others, collaborative efforts between the SAPS and the National Prosecuting Authority directed at combating these crimes of economic disruption.

Pursuant to Cabinet intervention and having realised the extent to which crime and inadequate security contributed to Eskom challenges, the Government has implemented the following interventions:

- A SAPS led Priority Committee for Energy Security.

- A 24-hour Mission Area Joint Operational Centre (MAJOC) at ESKOM Megawatt Park in Sunninghill.

- Planned Operations as well as Executed Actions.

These planned operations and executed actions are focussed on combatting crime incidents at ESKOM sites and other associated electrical infrastructure in an attempt to secure the power grid.

A total of 461 ESKOM case dockets were opened related to illegal and unregulated coal and fuel-yards, in Partnership with the Departments of Fisheries, Forestry and Environmental Affairs (DFFE) and Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE).

The SAPS Organised Crime Unit and the DPCI jointly reported a total of 120 dockets that were registered, which resulted in 98 arrests from January this year to date.

Honourable Members; Despite all our efforts to reduce crime in South Africa, it remains a challenge and keeps changing form. Criminals have no prescripts to adhere to and can change their modus operandi as their situations demand. This therefore implores the SAPS to develop more versatile modes of operation as well, including exploring and exploiting technology that can assist us. As the leadership of SAPS we have taken a decisive action to ensure that we procure the necessary technology that will improve policing in general.

POLICE KILLINGS

As our committed and dedicated police officers continue to execute their duties with vigour and diligence, they face the reality that they may leave their homes and never return. Our men and women in blue continue to lose their lives to unscrupulous criminals, leaving behind a trail of broken hearts, broken homes and broken children.

In the financial year ending on 31 March, instant, a total of 92 police officers were murdered on and off duty. Although this is a decrease from the previous year, which saw 110 police officers killed, it is still an unacceptably high number and shows a very serious disregard of our law enforcement efforts. We cannot allow criminals to undermine government without serious repercussions.

We have also seen a total of seven police stations that were attacked during the 2022/23 financial year. Again there is a decrease of one compared to the previous year but it is still not acceptable.

In this regard, a comprehensive Police Safety Strategy has been developed and is being implemented nationally through a multidisciplinary approach in order to mitigate the risk of police attacks and killings as well as the attacks on police stations.

In addition, a National Police Safety Committee has been established at national level to monitor the implementation of the Police Safety Strategy.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION TO FIGHT CRIME

We have of-course, long heeded the President's call to enhance the functioning of Community Policing Forums (CPFs) in a manner that will allow our citizens to trust and rely on the protection of the State. Last year, we reported on the directive for both the CSPS and the SAPS to work together and prioritise the development of a model that will provide relevant resources to better equip the CPFs to carry out their activities as a key crime combatting resource on the ground. As you have been informed by the Minister, this has yielded positive results and about R70 million rand has been made available for the resourcing of CPFs.

We are aware that this will not be sufficient for the payment of stipends and other necessities but it is a step in the right direction. Allow me at this point to applaud the great work that is done by members of the CPFs in different areas. In some communities, you find CPF Members who wake up every morning to walk community members to and from their transportation stops to prevent them from being attacked. They do this, without any compensation.

The goal is to intensify efforts to improve community policing, focussing on the mobilisation of the community in order to improve visibility particularly in high crime areas. We remain resolute to achieve our target.

Last week, we had a Community Policing Indaba held in Pretoria over a period of 3 days, where we critically assessed the working and challenges of the CPF. The Indaba resolved that there is a need to strengthen CPFs and its collaboration with other legitimate crime fighting structures. The need to ensure that CPFs are properly resourced was also raised sharply.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMMES (IZIMBIZO)

As a government of the people by the people for the people, we continue to listen to our people that have entrusted us with the mandate to lead them. We are therefore continuing to strengthen our outreach programmes in partnership with the CSPA and other stakeholders, under the stewardship of the SAPS Visible Policing. Our direct interaction with our people through Izimbizo affords us an opportunity to understand various difficulties and challenges affecting our communities, while allowing them to also share their proposed solutions to their challenges.

We do not want these engagements to be mere talk shows, therefore we are ensuring that issues raised by community members are correctly recorded and followed-up. We have ensured regular meetings to monitor progress made on issues raised by the community members until closure of each case.

We are also revamping the format of Izimbizo by also including career expositions, “public education” on the processes and functioning of the criminal justice system as a whole, as well as bringing other government services to our communities, especially in far-flung areas. Recently during our Imbizo in Ga-Mothiba in Limpopo held 2 days ago, we partnered with the Reserve Bank in the endeavour to educate the public on the new banknotes to ensure that they are not subjected to fake notes.

In consideration of the increasing incidents of crime and violence amongst our youth, and as part of our School and Campus Safety Strategy, we are intensifying our safety and security interventions, especially in Institutions of Higher Learning, in partnership with the Department of Higher Education and Training. Training will be provided to the institutions management and student structure. We will also establish safety structures and student care centres to support students who are victims of crime, especially Gender-Based Violence.

As we keep to this year’s theme of “Combating Crime through Decisive Police Action and Robust Community involvement”, we are getting hard at work. Policies and strategies are in place, work of rebuilding our country through improving and strengthening our service delivery mechanisms has already started, but we know a lot still awaits us.

We can comfortably stand in front of you today and state with certainty that we know what lies ahead and as the Ministry and the family of the South African Police Service, we are ready for the task at hand and we further invite everyone to join in our determination to fight crime.

OVERSIGHT INSTITUTIONS

Chairperson; As we chart forward with our continued efforts to improve the safety and security of our communities, we do not take lightly the contributions of our internal and independent

structures intended to ensure checks and balances. We remain alert to the need for us to continue to rebuild our police service and restore trust and pride in the service.

By its nature, the policing or law enforcement environment lends itself to an imbalanced exercise or execution of power. Necessary as this maybe, it needs to be balanced in one way or the other.

We have therefore ensured that we establish internal oversight institutions, which are part of the SAPS family but are tasked with independently maintaining oversight, checks and balances over SAPS as well as ensuring monitoring and evaluation of its interventions and impact.

These institutions are aimed at providing the Ministry and SAPS Management with independent, objective assurance, advice and evaluation designed to add value to and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our interventions and operations.

These internal institutions include the SAPS Inspectorate, the Civilian Secretariat for Police Service (CSPS) and the Independent Police Investigative Directorate (IPID), amongst others. All of these need proper resourcing to function optimally. We acknowledge the high vacancy rate within the IPID and we have urged the management to urgently address the issue.

DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT MODEL

The President introduced the District Development Model (DDM) to bring all three spheres of government together with other social partners in every district to grow inclusive local economies and improve the lives of citizens.

In particular, the DDM facilitates integrated planning and budgeting across spheres of government and improves integration of national projects at a district level.

SAPS has received this concept positively and has understood its value-add. To this date, over and above appointing District Commissioners, a National Steering Committee has been established to coordinate and drive SAPS participation in all DDMs.

We are fighting and pushing back criminals in order to protect our people and their respective properties. People must be discouraged to leave this country because of criminals. Instead, we must jointly assist each other in fighting these criminals for we have no option but to win. South Africa will never become a lawless country, never.

As I conclude, allow me to express my sincere gratitude to the effervescent and ever-ready Portfolio Committee for their guidance as well as constructive criticism and contribution to our work. I would also like to thank Minister Bheki Cele who is forever steadfast in pursuing criminality and crime in our country. My gratitude also goes to the staff in my office, the IPID, CSPS, the DNA Board, management of PSIRA, the SAPS Management and finally my wife.

Thanks.