

State of the Nation Address 2025: From Promise to Progress: Turning South Africa's Vision into Action



President Ramaphosa's State of the Nation Address made one thing clear: South Africa is at a turning point. Bold, decisive action is needed to drive inclusive growth, tackle unemployment, and build a more resilient, sustainable economy. At the [National Business Initiative \(NBI\)](#), we welcome the government's commitment to reform, infrastructure investment, and economic transformation. But words must translate into action—real change will only come through meaningful collaboration between business, government, and civil society.

This is why the bridge building and collaboration work done by the NBI is so intrinsic to South Africa's future.

A thriving economy starts with people. Economic inclusion must be at the heart of South Africa's recovery. Unlocking private capital, supporting black-owned businesses, and helping small enterprises grow are crucial steps, but they must lead to real opportunities for those who need them most. Growth means little if it doesn't uplift all South Africans, especially those who have been left behind for too long.

Central to this is our country's youth. South Africa's future depends on ensuring young people have meaningful access to education, skills development, and employment. The commitment in the SONA to a new student funding model is a positive step, but education alone isn't enough. We need stronger public-private partnerships that provide real pathways into the workforce—young people need experience, networks, and opportunities that translate into lasting careers.



Through our [Installation, Repair, and Maintenance \(IRM\) Programme](#) and [Just Energy Transition Skilling for Employment Programme \(JET SEP\)](#), we are fostering private sector collaboration, offering demand-driven technical skills, and strengthening pathways into sustainable employment. These programmes align directly with the President's call for businesses to scale up work-based experience, ensuring that young people are not only trained but actively absorbed into the workforce. Over 800 learners have trained in the IRM Programme since 2017.

But growth and opportunity must also be just. Social transformation and equality are not optional—they are fundamental to building a stable and prosperous country. Genuine transformation requires visible and intentional leadership, ethical governance, and a strong commitment to social inclusion. The President's focus on whistleblower protection, gender equality, and inclusive policies is encouraging, but systemic barriers remain pervasive. We must accelerate efforts to ensure that fairness, justice, and dignity are not just ideals, but lived realities for every South African.

At the same time, we cannot afford to compromise on climate commitments in our pursuit of economic recovery. The just energy transition, water security, and sustainable infrastructure are not only necessary for job creation but also critical to long-term climate resilience and the well-being of people. South Africa's future depends on reliable energy, and we must meet our climate commitments in a way that is both affordable and effective.



Climate policy must be embedded in economic development strategies. South Africa must stay committed to climate targets and renewable energy investment, in line with the concept of common but differentiated responsibility. Global uncertainties are of course of concern, but the upside of transitioning to a low carbon economy is clear. Achieving this balance requires strong public-private partnerships, investment in resilient infrastructure, and a long-term vision that integrates sustainability into every economic decision.

A strong economy also requires strong communities. Municipalities are the backbone of service delivery, yet too many struggle to meet even the most basic needs of residents. The review of municipal funding must result in real reforms that improve governance, enhance service delivery, and unlock economic potential in every corner of the country. Without functional municipalities, economic growth cannot reach the people who need it most.



The President's emphasis on building a developmental, ethical, and capable state strengthens the mandate of our **Technical Assistance, Mentorship and Development (TAMDEV)** Programme. We will engage with the planned municipal financial model reforms as we scale up our work, ensuring that governance structures are equipped to deliver on their commitments.

Now is the time to move beyond policy and commit to action. South Africa cannot afford to wait. The NBI stands ready to work alongside government, business, and civil society to turn these commitments into tangible progress.

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The National Business Initiative (NBI) is an independent and voluntary coalition of South African and multinational businesses launched in 1995 by the then President, Nelson Mandela.

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