

Please, not another meaningless Sona

By [Abigail Moyo](#)

8 Feb 2023

Ahead of the State of the Nation Address (Sona) tabled by President Cyril Ramaphosa on Thursday, many workers would shrug their shoulders if asked why Sona matters.



Source: Reuters.

South Africans, civil and labour organisations, and private entities have heard enough promises, initiatives, summits and talk about economic growth and service delivery.

Still, the country stays put in economic distress. We know our government and leaders have failed us. Ordinary South Africans are wallowing in poverty, surviving hand to mouth with no concrete plans or hope for a better future.

We may not know why Sona should matter anymore, but we certainly know what is wrong and needs fixing.

Unemployment

More than 32% of the working-age population is unemployed, totalling about 7.7 million individuals, of which 4.6 million are young.

Unless we come up with solutions to this disaster, we are in trouble as a country. The social relief grant, introduced during

Covid-19, brought great relief to many, but South Africans want jobs and a sustainable economy. The majority of South Africans survive on the brink of poverty.

The energy crisis has seen more promises by President Cyril Ramaphosa than many care to remember, but load shedding continues to bring our country to its knees. Companies are closing down, while some are laying off workers and 189 notices are the order of the day, as they no longer have the capacity to run entire operations.



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While citizens fear break-ins and robberies whenever load shedding kicks in at night, energy experts encourage those who can afford it to take care of their own energy needs. The water crisis devastates households, poses health risks and threatens economic activities and growth.

Experts agree there is no water shortage, only a crumbling infrastructure that is not seeing the capital development required to avert water shedding in the near future, and no political will to take the required action.

To this day, South Africa has millions of people who do not have access to clean, running water.

Safety and security

The crime rate in the country has spiralled out of control because of unemployment and the harsh realities people face as they try to make ends meet.

State-owned enterprises

State-owned enterprises (SOEs), including Denel, Eskom, Prasa, SAA, the SABC and others, stumble on haplessly, unable to function as proper businesses due to corruption and mismanagement of funds while seeking bailouts from government.

South Africans are sick and tired of their tax money being used to keep failing SOEs afloat and carrying the unemployed masses through social grants.

No more empty promises

Trade Union, United Association of South Africa (UASA) demands Ramaphosa take a definite stand about unemployment, energy surety, the cost of living (CPI and interest rates), gender-based violence, inequality, lack of service delivery and corruption, and then make known the definite plans government has to make a difference. In this Sona, we want to hear about tangible mileposts that Ramaphosa's office intends to achieve during its term.



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UASA calls on Ramaphosa to restore South Africans' dignity, especially the poorest of the poor who live in despair due to high-level thieves and crooks.

We demand:

- Law enforcement and firm action against the dishonest leaders that destroyed our SOEs, as revealed by the Zondo Commission into State Capture. No one has been lawfully charged while whistle-blowers put their lives at risk or are murdered.
- A firm examination and upgrading of the nation's energy and water supply systems.
- Realistic job-creation measures aligned with growing the economy and upskilling the youth.
- Practical plans to restore all SOEs and retain them to their functioning state again.
- Instilling the knack of proper service delivery at municipalities, government departments and SOEs.
- Firmly upgrading the security cluster to protect women and children against gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF).

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