



UNITED DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT

**Address by Mr Bantu Holomisa, MP (UDM President) in the
National Assembly:
State of the Nation
on 12 February 2008**

Madam Speaker, Mr President, Deputy President and honourable Members.

Mr President, you referred to your esteemed mother during your debate and her question of whether this country is still on course. As you are well aware she, like you and I, calls the Transkei region of the Eastern Cape her home. And today I wish to hand to you a report on the state of the infrastructure in the Transkei, which was handed to me on 24 January 2008 in Umtata by the citizens of the Transkei from each of the 28 magisterial districts, including local government councillors from all political parties. Like all other people who were subjected to Apartheid oppression, there was a legitimate expectation on their part that the infrastructure of their region would be upgraded to be on par with that of the rest of South Africa. The truth must be told, as you also said in your address. The National Party regime had always viewed that region as a hotbed of revolutionaries and therefore prejudiced the region when it came to infrastructure and development. We hope therefore Mr President that this report will be taken into account along with the other challenges being tasked to the "national war room" that you referred to.

The nation is gripped by uncertainty. On various fronts we are confronted by ominous developments. It is true that the way forward for this country must be based on a unified effort by the entire nation. About that we agree.

Last year in this House I expressed the view that we require a National Indaba or Convention to deal with various national issues. Mr President you acknowledged that and even suggested some issues, such as social cohesion, which could be dealt with at such a forum. I followed the matter up in writing with the Speaker, but never even received acknowledgement of receipt for my correspondence. I believe it is not too late for your government to identify an institution, such as the Commission for Human Rights, to be tasked to prepare for such a National Indaba or Convention. We can't leave it to the Speaker anymore.

Such a National Convention would review the progress we have made since 1994 and identify whether there are any inherent defects. I take note of what you have said, that you don't agree with the Charles Dickens' quote. But some people outside this House disagree when they observe rogue business elements, wanted by the law, go out of their way to finance the youth and future leaders of this country and encourage them to attack the judiciary and other democratic institutions. That move can never be equated with wisdom. It is the same crowd that financed and promoted tribalism with t-shirts displaying ethnic slogans. Nor can it be correct that this generation of so-called leaders attack the elders such as bishop Desmond Tutu, Barney Pityana and others, without a sign of being called to order by their party leadership. We are talking about a culture of respect that leaders such as us in this House should be cultivating, not undermining because it serves some short-term party political or factional agendas.

At this National Convention we might talk about another major challenge facing the nation regarding the fight against crime. Criminals are becoming heroes. Robbers and murderers in many communities are now becoming role models that our youth aspire to. We should not be

surprised that such a culture will permeate throughout our society and even into this House. The basic idea of ethics, of right and wrong, of punishment for crime, is not being promoted. That is why we are faced with this massive crime wave. Don't you think, Mr President, that the moral fibre of the nation is shaken to its core when the National Commissioner of Police counts among his friends drug overlords?

Your politely-worded reference to the future of the Scorpions, the Khampepe Commission and criminal justice reform seems to contradict the ANC resolution to disband the Scorpions. We are waiting with keen interest for full details. One thing that we have noted is that this concept of combining investigation and prosecution has delivered results. For some people to now advance the academic argument that such a combination cannot be allowed is misguided. Any attempt to blackmail this House - and I dare say your Government - to bend backwards and forwards to accommodate the funders and campaigners for the disbandment of the Scorpions will be resisted at all costs, including resorting to legal action. Perhaps we should be looking at creating an over-arching Ministry of Crime Prevention for the entire criminal justice system, covering the SAPS, Justice, Correctional Services, Home Affairs and Intelligence. Such a Ministry could help to better coordinate our crime-fighting resources and alleviate unnecessary tension between various security departments and units. Specialised units, such as the DSO, would be accountable to this Ministry.

Mr President you have referred to somebody who suggested a quote to you. Would such a nameless "somebody" looking into this House from outside not think that this preoccupation with disbanding or dissolving the Scorpions was sheer foolishness, given the other major challenges facing the nation? Especially since the people who funded and drove this campaign against the Scorpions were wanted by the law themselves. It is still fresh in our memories how easily this country spent R13 million on the Hefer Commission in order to deal with the allegations of one journalist who were part of this campaign against the Scorpions and its leaders. All of the witnesses - whose evidence was later discredited - were either under investigation or related to people under investigation for a range of crimes.

The origins and reasons that gave rise to the 24 apex priorities identified are well-documented. There have been some progress in certain areas, however the greediness and looting of state resources by some - be it at local, provincial or national government level - is gradually dashing hopes that these priorities will ever be addressed. Experience has shown elsewhere that members of an outgoing government tend not to focus, they either look for positions or intensify their looting. Thus the so-called "national war room" will need to be vigilant against this.

Regarding the energy crisis, I believe there is an urgent need to appoint an independent panel of experts to investigate the entire electricity crisis and propose a complete package of reforms and policies to save us from even greater disaster. For too long we have heard a continuous stream of excuses and reasons for this crisis. Many of these reasons are contradictory and every new round of excuses and promises delivers nothing but greater confusion.

Thank you