

Media Statement by Songezo Zibi MP  
RISE Mzansi National Leader

## **RISE Mzansi continues to serve the people of SA through Parliament, GNU and Gauteng Government**

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***Note to Editors:** The following remarks were delivered by **RISE Mzansi National Leader, Songezo MP**, during a media briefing in Rosebank, Johannesburg.*

*The National Leader was joined by **RISE Mzansi National Chairperson and Gauteng MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development, Vuyiswa Ramokgopa MPL**; and **RISE Mzansi Chief Organiser and National Assembly Whip, Makashule Gana MP**.*

Good morning colleagues from the news media. Firstly, let me acknowledge RISE Mzansi National Chairperson and Gauteng MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development, x`Vuyiswa Ramokgopa. Let me also recognise RISE Mzansi Chief Organiser and National Assembly Whip, Makashule Gana.

### **Introduction**

It is just over a year since the 7<sup>th</sup> parliament and administration began, and we, as RISE Mzansi, called this media briefing to account for our work in Parliament, the Government of National Unity, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (SCOPA), the Gauteng Provincial Government of Unity (PGU); and to respond to recent political developments, among other matters.

Over the next 10 to 15 minutes, I am going to cover a number of themes, namely:

- The state of the GNU. We believe it needs a reset instead of lurching from crisis to crisis while the country itself is in crisis.
- Our work in Parliament and Gauteng. Makashule Gana, myself and Vuyiswa were backed by our party to join the GNU to make a difference in critical ways. We will share some insights with you today.
- Critical developments in the country including the crisis in the security cluster, immigration, the economy and municipalities.

- We will also talk about why political party leaders have to get over themselves and work together for a truly progressive, rational politics. Cheap populism that exploits the pain South Africans feel everyday may be interesting in the short term, but our problems need leaders who can unite, devise effective solutions and engage the best talents we can find.

## **The Government of National Unity**

The GNU is an experiment, and we cannot expect it to be perfect, but we must also be candid in our assessment. Currently 9 political parties have individual agreements with the ANC, and we spend too much time and energy worrying about squabbles between the ANC and the DA. We cannot advance the country in this way. We need a single agreement signed by everybody, with mutual obligations to one another.

We also need proactive political management so that we can have a common governing program that coordinates cabinet and parliament. This does not happen currently. The GNU leaders committed in May to meeting soon to work through the political issues affecting the GNU – and we look forward to participating in those discussions so that we can build momentum on national priorities like law and order, fixing the economy and municipalities.

As RISE Mzansi, we will be writing to the ANC, as the convenor of the GNU to call for the following:

- Regular and scheduled meetings of the Leaders of all the political parties represented in the GNU
- A GNU Lekgotla to iron out inter-personal issues, which must culminate in the signing of an actual coalition agreement
- The full functioning of the Clearing House Mechanism, which last met in March

## **Parliament**

The last year has truly stretched our human, political and operational resources, going toe-to-toe with political parties which have significantly more seats than our two. We study all reports so that we can make meaningful declarations; we max out the number of written questions to the Executive to extract information and hold the President and Cabinet accountable; and we ensure that despite only being afforded three-minutes during debates, that we deliver speeches that are well researched, speak to the issues that face the people of South Africa and provide workable and achievable solutions.

When it comes to written parliamentary questions, we have placed pressure on all Ministers, but stand-out portfolios, in terms of portfolios that we have submitted a significant number of questions, relate to:

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## Police

We cannot build a truly democratic safe, prosperous, equal and united state when people are as unsafe as we are in South Africa. This relates to both general safety and security and school safety. For example, in 2024/25, a total of 25,423 cases of murder recorded, representing an increase of 21.74%, when compared to 2023/24.

## Transport

The portfolio is key to unlocking economic activity; ensuring the safe and efficient movement of people and goods; and ensuring that our roads are of a good quality and safe. Transnet, PRASA and the RAF are critical players in South African life, with the RAF making headlines for all the wrong reasons.

## Trade, Industry and Competition

Once again, this portfolio plays a critical role in the economy, and has been plagued by controversy relating to the tender controversy relating to the Lotto tender. But our focus here has been the issue of problem and illegal gambling.

We will expand on some of the above issues shortly, but in many ways these focus areas speak to RISE Mzansi's vision of building a safe, prosperous, equal and united country. Moreover, they align mostly with the work of the so-called "Hardest Working Member of Parliament", Makashule Gana, who serves on the Portfolio Committees for Transport; Police; Trade, Industry and Competition; and Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation. In addition to this he does important accountability work over all MPs and Members of the Executive in the Joint Committee on Ethics and Members' Interests. He also ensures that the smooth day-to-day functioning of the National Assembly through the Rules Committee, the Programme Committee, and the Chief Whips' Forum.

## **Issues spearheaded in Parliament**

### Gambling

The South African gambling industry is worth over R1-trillion, and indeed, "the house always wins".

In the world of psychology, gambling addiction or problem gambling have become a crisis. It upends life and relationships, where in the most extreme of cases it results in victims of suicide.

To paint a picture of this growing and dangerous trend: in 2020/21, 375 "problem gamblers" sought counselling from the South African Responsible Gambling Foundation. This number shot up to 2,977 in 2023/2024, according to a study of the National Gambling Board's annual reports covering the same period.

This represents an eight-fold increase, with many more suffering in silence.

RISE Mzansi takes this matter seriously, and we starting to see other political parties and the Government also take the matter seriously.

## **Standing Committee on Public Accounts (SCOPA)**

I have the privilege of chairing the committee charged with “Protecting the Public Purse”, SCOPA has been busy.

We sadly cannot deal with every issue, but we work to address as much as possible. Some highlights include, but not limited to:

- Water and Sanitation
- Local Government
- Defence
- Eskom
- National Lotteries Commission
- Road Accident Fund (RAF)

On the Road Accident, the Committee will begin its Inquiry immediately after the September recess. In many ways, this inquiry will be a test for the Committee and its effectiveness in combating corruption and protecting the public purse. We believe that we are on the right track, with deliberate attempts made for SCOPA not to deal with this matter. I therefore welcome the support of the Minister and Deputy Minister of Transport, as well as Parliament’s executive management.

## **Gauteng Government of Provincial Unity**

In the Gauteng Provincial Legislature, RISE Mzansi is represented by Vuyiswa Ramokgopa, who also holds the responsibility of MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development.

While the portfolio might seem out of place in the urban setting of province, MEC Ramokgopa is doing well to ensure that the Department’s R671,1-million works for the people of the province and that the monies spent are accounted for.

Some of the programmes that MEC Ramokgopa has championed include:

- Commitment to Ending Hunger: Delivering on our commitment to End Hunger via the first Hunger Symposium bringing people from civil society, business and government together to reduce hunger in the province by 10% by 2029

- Supported 192 urban community gardens in schools and communities all over Gauteng
- Fighting Corruption: Fighting corruption and driving responsible use of public funds. Blew the whistle on the Farm Yard container project which has now been escalated to the SIU and is being investigated
- Driving Industrialisation & creating sustainable jobs: Hosted the first provincial Agro processing convention to drive broad based industrialisation in the Agri sector
- Supporting the next cohort of Agri leaders via Agricultural Education
- Supported agricultural education via the Magaliesburg secondary school
- Creating workplace experience opportunities for 68 unemployed graduates via the departments Graduate Programme

## **Parliamentary Ad Hoc Committee and Madlanga Judicial Commission of Inquiry**

RISE Mzansi fully supports the two investigations into the serious allegations made regarding the of the safety, security and justice ecosystem. We call on South Africans to lend their support to the two probes, and demand the implementation of their recommendations.

While not a member of the Ad Hoc Committee, as a member of the Portfolio Committee on Police, Makashule Gana will fully participate in the work of the Committee.

## **National Dialogue**

RISE Mzansi was in attendance at the National Convention. South Africans who do not belong in political parties never get an opportunity to make their voices heard, and to unite with others to drive common political, economic and social goals. The success of this dialogue will be determined by whether the civil society organisations are willing to fight for what they agree upon, and make it a condition for political support in future elections.

## **Political Party Consolidation and the Road to Local Government Elections**

RISE Mzansi maintains that the municipality is the most important sphere of government. It plays a critical role in the daily lives of South Africans – every business and household has a municipal address and depends on the services provided by their council.

Work is underway to ready ourselves for the next Local Government Elections scheduled to take place on a date between November 2026 and January 2027. We have been talking to other political parties about coming together behind a common electoral and political program, but this work needs leaders who are willing to collaborate build a genuinely new, unifying and progressive political proposition.

Big man or woman politics may be attractive but it does not build collaborative, respectful cultures that respect the contribution of civil society groups who also fight the daily struggles of South Africans across the land. We all have to accept that no one political party, or even all of them combined have the talent and the solution to exclude non-aligned South Africans who want to contribute.

We can also announce today that RISE Mzansi will be contesting a by-election in Ward 64, eThekweni. We have a solid homegrown candidate in Ms Jackie Conclave. She is an active community leader who wants to build her city in a more direct way.

### **The Crisis of Leadership**

A 74year old woman who will be 75 next year has announced that she will be running for mayor of Johannesburg. She is regarded as a viable candidate. I don't blame her. The situation we have where it seems no one is willing to step forward and lead the crown jewel of South Africa is effectively a capitulation of the so-called black intelligentsia. If no one has the balls to step forward and lead Johannesburg, an 81year old Helen Zille will be president in 2029.

This is not for lack of talent, but lack of belief in new, capable leadership. This is why we are building a platform together with others that will galvanise South Africans to build a new leadership corps to take the country forward. If we fail with Joburg, South Africa is gone in 2029.

*Ndiyabulela!*

**ENDS...**

#### **Issued by:**

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