

How Ramaphosa responded to MPs' SONA concerns – News24 21 February 2020

Between the points of order, the accusations, bluster and grandstanding of the debate on President Cyril Ramaphosa's State of the Nation Address, members of the opposition raised some criticism on policy issues, with recommendations on how Ramaphosa can rectify them.

Some of the most hotly debated topics were the flailing power provider Eskom, expropriation without compensation, and the National Health Insurance (NHI) Bill.

Here are some of the points raised on these topics by opposition MPs, with the response Ramaphosa delivered on Thursday.

Eskom

DA MP and spokesperson on energy and mineral resources Kevin Mileham said: "We had hoped that in this critical hour, President Ramaphosa would seize the opportunity last week to take ownership of the problem, deal decisively with Eskom, and provide South Africa with a path to a powered future. But the incapable state and its incapable president never take bold action."

He called on Ramaphosa to split and privatise Eskom, open the energy generation market and to not use pensions to bail out Eskom.

Ramaphosa responded: "We will not, as some honourable members have suggested, simply switch off Eskom's life support, for to do so would be to plunge our economy and our country into chaos.

"We have a clear road map to restore Eskom's financial and operational position and to place our entire energy sector on a new trajectory of sustainability."

Expropriation without compensation

DA interim leader John Steenhuisen advised Ramaphosa to walk away from expropriation without compensation.

DA MP Annelie Lotriet said amending Section 25 of the Constitution to allow expropriation without compensation would cause South Africa irreparable harm, it would undermine property rights and that it was just used to paper over the ANC's failures regarding land reform.

"The initial motivation for the amendment to Section 25 was to make explicit that which is implicit. This is a false argument. The Constitution is explicit enough about specifically land reform and restitution."

Lotriet called on Ramaphosa to provide policy certainty, not to amend the Constitution in such a way that the executive has the power to decide when to expropriate without compensation and to condemn land grabs.

Ramaphosa's response: "As some honourable members have noted, land reform is an essential part of inclusive growth."