

Speaking Notes
National Assembly
27 June 2025



N Gantsho ANC (MP)

Portfolio Committee on Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment

Budget Vote Debate: Budget Vote 32 (DFFE)

[8 Minutes]

Honourable Chairperson,

We stand before you today to advocate for the crucial budget allocation to the Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment. This investment isn't just about departmental operations. It's about safeguarding South Africa's future by promoting a low-carbon, climate-resilient and inclusive economy. The recently enacted Climate Change Act provides a clear legislative framework, outlining key proposals that demand our collective commitment. We recognise that climate resilience begins at the municipal level, and that's why we are leveraging the District Development Model (DDM) to empower our communities, ensuring they are better equipped to face future climate shocks. The Climate Change Act complements the DDM's approach to building climate resilience, while also enhancing planning and coordination to reduce impacts and recovery time. The urgency of this mandate is underscored by the devastating extreme weather events that our beautiful country is experiencing more frequently and at higher intensities, particularly in the KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, and Western Cape provinces. We extend our words of condolences to the families and communities that have lost loved ones in the Eastern Cape because of extreme weather events. Our hearts are also with the families and communities that have missing persons and those currently affected by the heavy rains and flooding in the Western Cape and Eastern Cape, which are causing costly damages and homelessness, necessitating significant government relief to support affected families.

Honourable Chair, we urge all departments and municipalities to embrace a climate-friendly budget approach, integrating climate resilience into every aspect of their planning and expenditure. The R1.7 million allocation towards climate change legislation, resilience, and adaptation within our budget is a vital starting point. It enables us to develop the necessary adaptation measures and build the capacity needed to navigate a changing climate. This is not merely an environmental imperative; it is an economic necessity. By investing in climate resilience now, we can protect our infrastructure, secure livelihoods, and foster sustainable growth, ensuring that South Africa not only withstands the challenges of a warming world but also thrives in the transition to a greener future.

Honourable chairperson, the recent flood disaster in the Eastern Cape has caused damages that exceed the allocated R5 billion towards assisting flood victims, which will go a long way in providing immediate relief and support. We emphasise the need for the implementation of the long-standing resolution of the African National Congress, focusing on climate-resilient infrastructure and finance solutions to safeguard poor and vulnerable communities. We urge the decision-making teams to collaborate closely with the South African Weather Service, a key stakeholder in climate change response. The SAWS plays a crucial role in disseminating early warnings and advisories on weather forecasts. Early warning systems should lead to improved disaster preparedness, minimising damage, loss of life, and destruction of livelihoods.

Chairperson, South Africa's economic outlook remains weakened, thus limiting increased budget allocations to various government priorities. We thus understand the context behind the R9.08 billion budget allocation to the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment for the 2025/26 financial year. The entities of the Department have been instrumental in advancing the environmental mandate. We are thus concerned by the decline in total transfers (operational and capital) to the entities from R1.88 billion in the 2024/25 financial year to R1.75 billion in the 2025/26 financial year. The ANC remains concerned about the budget reduction to all entities, in real terms. This will impact their ability to deliver critical services, including meteorological services and early warnings, as well as marine and inland fisheries management, parks and biodiversity management, and support for local jobs and economic development.

As I conclude chair, we encourage our entities to double their efforts of reducing dependency on the fiscus. We believe they have the required capacity, as complemented by the Department, to source external funding and generate sustainable revenue from their commercial products and services.

The ANC supports this budget vote.

I thank you.