



## TALKING POINTS: PROTEST MARCHES

### **BRIEF:**

Government has noted the call for a National Day of Action on Wednesday, 12 April 2017. Although such protests are understood as part of a vibrant democracy, government believes that issues of concern can be addressed without impacting our economy.

Government therefore calls on protestors to raise issues responsibly and in the spirit of nation building. Our country needs active citizens; active citizens are the bedrock of any democracy.

South Africa has a long and proud history of activism. Our Constitution and our democracy provides space for all South Africans to make their voices heard on issues of concern. As a caring and democratic government we encourage dialogue and engagement to resolve issues.

Our democracy offers many avenues for people to raise grievances. However, should they ultimately decide to raise their concerns through a march or picket, this must be done within the confines of the law.

### **Active citizenry is part of a strong and vibrant democracy.**

- ❖ The various activities and campaigns by organisations, civil society groups, business leaders, prominent individuals and citizens demonstrate an active citizenry.
- ❖ Building our nation is a shared responsibility between government, communities across the country, civil society and the business sector.
- ❖ Government encourages discourse and debate on our national challenges in the interest of nation building and social cohesion.
- ❖ We call on South Africans to champion initiatives that will mobilise all in society to work together for a better nation.

### **We call on protestors to act responsibly and within the bounds of the law.**

- ❖ People have a democratic right to gather and protest peacefully.
- ❖ The Constitution guarantees the right to peaceful and unarmed assembly or demonstrations.
- ❖ Government reaffirms the rights of South Africans to raise their concerns on issues that affect them and has at no point opposed the right to peaceful demonstration and expression of Constitutionally guaranteed rights.

- ❖ Those who wish to protest must apply for the relevant permissions at municipal level.
- ❖ Those who are planning to participate in marches are reminded to do so in a peaceful manner and should refrain from any form of intimidation and destruction of property.
- ❖ Marchers should avoid making inflammatory statements or provocative actions that could incite violence.

**We call on protestors to raise their concerns in a manner that strengthens our democracy.**

- ❖ The Bill of Rights in our Constitution clearly states that: “Everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected.”
- ❖ To deliberately denigrate the highest office in the land and the person of the President, in a country where the overwhelming majority voted for this government is malicious in the extreme.
- ❖ There is no place for placards or banners that promote hate speech or infringe on the dignity of others.
- ❖ Irresponsible social media posts and thoughtless public banners, or insensitive public utterings go against the values and ethos of our democracy.

**Government calls on all South Africans to pull together to build our country, our democracy and our economy.**

- ❖ Government believes that issues of concern can be addressed without impacting our economy.
- ❖ South Africans are encouraged to continue to work in turning our economy around.
- ❖ Government is working with business, civil society and labour to translate the country’s plans into concrete actions.
- ❖ We remain committed to vigorously pursuing economic growth that is inclusive of all South Africans.

**The SAPS will continue to protect and safeguard all South Africans.**

- ❖ The Security Cluster remains operationally ready to police all planned protest actions to ensure that they remain peaceful and safeguard property so that the democratic rights of others are not violated in the process
- ❖ Government has a duty to protect and ensure the safety of all people in South Africa.
- ❖ Members of the SAPS are tasked to maintain public order.
- ❖ Members of the SAPS will use minimal and appropriate force at all times.

- ❖ Police will act whenever there is the need to prevent public violence or to stop clashes.

**Government services will continue as usual.**

- ❖ Government continues its work to build a better life for all.
- ❖ Accounting Officers and Heads of Departments in the Public Service will continue to ensure that our citizens receive the services they expect from their government.
- ❖ We are confident that public servants will continue to conduct themselves in a professional and ethical manner, and will comply with all the regulatory frameworks relating to their responsibilities.
- ❖ Government urges public servants to conduct themselves in line with the Constitution, the Code of Conduct and the Service Charter.
- ❖ We commend the many public servants who, on a daily basis, display professional and ethical values and behaviour, and continually strive to serve the people of South Africa.

**Response to public sentiment.**

- ❖ President Jacob Zuma is the democratically elected President of South Africa.
- ❖ The people voted for overwhelmingly for this government during the 2014 elections.
- ❖ In 2019 the people of South Africa will once again be afforded the opportunity to vote for the government of their choice.
- ❖ South Africa has a proud history of respect for the Constitution, and holding of free and fair Elections since it achieved democracy in 1994.
- ❖ South Africa is a democratic society which encourages public participation, and our democracy creates space for, and encourages active citizenry.