ADDRESS BY DEPUTY PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA ON THE OCCASION OF THE ACTUARIAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICA CONVENTION DINNER

22 OCTOBER 2014

Programme Director,
President of the Actuarial Society of South Africa,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

Thank you for inviting me to address you on this prestigious occasion.

It is an honour to be invited to address fellows of a discipline that is so important to our efforts to anticipate the future and guide our actions in the present.

The actuarial sciences perform a critical role in the economic and social life of our country. They contribute to greater certainty, stability, investor confidence and financial security.

While actuaries may tend to be concentrated in the finance and insurance sectors, there is significant need for their capabilities in other areas of economic and social development.

We need to see more and more actuaries becoming involved in public policy and governance.
We must use your risk assessment skills better in the public sector, especially in dealing with the challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment.

The information that you generate to estimate the probability of events such as death, sickness, injury and disability is just as important for the Department of Health as it is to the insurance industry.

Government is currently exploring various models for the implementation of the National Health Insurance system. We need to draw on the skills of actuaries to ensure that it is appropriately structured and financed.

Programme Director,

The actuarial profession is at its most essential about planning. It is about using available evidence to create a credible representation of the future and providing a basis for the decisions that we take now.

This approach to planning is echoed in the work of the National Planning Commission, which was established by President Jacob Zuma in 2010.

At the inaugural meeting of the commission, President Zuma said:

“The mandate of the commission is to take a broad, cross-cutting, independent and critical view of South Africa, to help define the South Africa we seek to achieve in 20 years’ time and to map out a path to achieve those objectives. The commission is expected to put forward solid research, sound evidence and clear recommendations for government.”
As a result, South Africa now has the National Development Plan, which offers a credible vision of the future founded on sound evidence.

However, as the Plan makes clear, this vision will not be realised unless certain actions are taken now – and over the next two decades.

These actions require collaboration among all sections of society. They require broad public-private partnerships to address social challenges.

They require also that we grow our pool of actuaries to be able to service both an expanding financial sector and more complex public planning needs.

This means that we have to ensure that the Actuarial Society of South Africa vigorously pursues efforts to ensure that the profession is representative of the demographics of the country.

We must do more to improve our support programmes for women, students and young black professionals. It requires a concerted focus on mentorship, financial support and the promotion of the actuarial profession among school leavers.

Government stands ready to work with you to advance these transformation efforts.

Programme Director,
In the State of the Nation Address, President Zuma made a call for radical economic transformation.

In pursuit of this objective, and in line with the priorities of the National Development Plan, President Zuma last week reported back on the progress of Operation Phakisa in exploring the potential of the ocean economy.

This is a results-driven approach, involving setting clear plans and targets, ongoing monitoring of progress and sharing of experience.

It focuses on bringing key stakeholders from the public and private sectors and academia and civil society together.

It calls for stakeholder collaboration in detailed problem analysis, priority setting and intervention planning.

The Operation Phakisa process aims to arrive at detailed, measurable and implementable plans with ambitious targets and public commitment. These will be rigorously monitored and reported on to ensure that implementation challenges are actively managed for effective and efficient resolution.

This is one of the innovative, unique and pioneering approaches that have arisen out of the National Development Plan.

To enhance these approaches, to make them more meaningful, we need to mobilise all the technical capabilities that reside in our country.
We need to mobilise our actuaries.

Countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia and India have established actuary departments in government that play a significant role in development planning.

Since the advent of democracy in our country, we have made significant progress in moving our country forward.

The state has successfully restructured public finances, created an effective tax system, and built independent and credible institutions.

But there is much more to be done.

The actuarial profession has a significant contribution to make to ensure that social services are provided in a more efficient, cost effective and sustainable manner.

We must therefore challenge you to explore new and innovative ways to employ your skills in the public sector.

In a society with deep historical divisions, neither social nor economic transformation is possible without a capable developmental state that has the requisite skills at its disposal.

The National Development Plan provides a framework for action, but far more detailed planning is required to ensure effective implementation.
We want a society where all who can work are employed, where poverty is eradicated and where inequality is reduced.

We must all champion the objectives and the broad framework outlined in the National Development Plan. We must engage and debate the options robustly by harnessing the contribution of all stakeholders.

Private sector partners are critical for meeting the job creation, skills development and educational needs that are critical for success.

We look forward to working with you to develop the actuarial profession in South Africa.

We look forward to working with you to transform the profession so that it is more representative of the South African reality.

And we look forward to working with you to ensure that the capabilities of all South Africans are harnessed in the implementation of the National Development Plan.

In that way, we can secure a better future for all.

I thank you.