



**STATEMENT BY
THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**TO THE 54TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON
POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT:**

ON

**“POPULATION, FOOD SECURITY, NUTRITION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT”
19-23 APRIL 2021**

DELIVERED BY:

**HER EXCELLENCY: MS LINDIWE D ZULU, MP
MINISTER OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT,
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

Chairperson, Excellencies, and Distinguished Delegates

Allow me to congratulate you and the Bureau on your election; as well as to thank you and the Secretariat for organising this session.

The theme 'Population, Food Security, Nutrition and Sustainable Development' comes at a time when the world is in the midst of the challenges that accompany the coronavirus disease of 2019 (CoVID-19). Along the advent of CoVID-19 has been: the unbearable increase of food prices; increase of the number of people who experience hunger and malnutrition; worsening poverty; and deepening inequalities. These CoVID-19-induced adversities are having a disproportionate impact on the poor and vulnerable.

Consequently, CoVID-19 demands that we decisively support inclusive and targeted people-public-private-multilateral innovation partnerships that are working towards the comprehensive improvement of food systems and access, management of climate change issues, and ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all of our citizens. In this regard, it is necessary that our hard-won achievements in the areas of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and socio-economic development be protected.

Chairperson, South Africa's food and nutrition sovereignty, security and access policy initiatives are underpinned by our post-apartheid Constitution. In practical terms, through it, food and nutrition sovereignty, security, access are integral to every citizen's right to life and dignity. The Constitution emphasises that through a government-led social compact, proactive steps be taken to realise these rights.

Further, our National Development Plan (NDP) further sets out methods and targets to — by 2030 — eradicate food poverty and improve our people's health outcomes and wellbeing. Recognising the vicious reinforcements between, on the one hand, food and nutrition insecurity and, on another, poverty and inequality, the NDP outlines specific steps towards the improvement of food sovereignty, security and access. These include sustainable farming innovations, land tenure (especially for women), and the promotion of nutrition education.

Chairperson, while at the macro-national level our country is largely food secure, our CoVID-19 coordinating and responsive structures (e.g. National Coronavirus Command Council (NCCC), National Joint Operational and Intelligence Structure (NatJoints), etc.) have sharply drawn our attention to the need to embrace the prospects of optimally utilising big data infrastructures towards, among others, measurably reducing acute hunger and malnutrition at the district/metropolitan municipality level. The strengthening of household level hunger elimination strategies is the impact we seek.

While CoVID-19 threatened to worsen the socio-economic dimensions that relate to hunger and malnutrition among our people — due to the economic contraction, closure of businesses, and job losses — our government pre-emptively responded by investing R500 billion (\$26 billion) into our economy. This investment is symbolic of our government's unrelenting leadership of a people-public-private-multilateral innovation partnership. The key aspects of this partnership include: increasing our support of pre-existing social protection measures (e.g. social grants, unemployment insurance fund (UIF), etc.) and advancing tax relief to businesses in different sectors. Specific to the theme of this session, is our government's special CoVID-19 Social Relief of Distress Grant (a programme of the Department of Social Development) as well as the CoVID-19 Agricultural Disaster Fund (a programme of the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development). Informed by the need for sustainability beyond CoVID-19, our government is implementing a focused Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan. This Plan details the necessary measures for a prosperous economy and healthy and pandemic-protected population: a comprehensively resilient South Africa.

Our people-public-private-multilateral innovation partnership is expressed through the Solidarity Fund whose mandate is to: mobilise and coordinate financial and in-kind contributions from South Africans and the global community; use the donated contributions to ameliorate both the health crisis and the social consequences of CoVID-19; and bring South Africans together to play their part in combatting CoVID-19 (similar initiatives are replicated at different throughout all levels of society and institutions, including faith-based organisations, community-based organisations, etc. towards induce immediate responsiveness). People-public-private-multilateral innovation partnerships are a sustainable stimulus of collective strengths, resilience, solidarity and flexibility towards sustainable living.

I thank you.