



**SURPLUS
PEOPLE
PROJECT**

**Statement on the State of the Nation Address
Surplus People Project
9 February 2007**

SPP welcomes the Presidents commitment to “coordinate and align all anti poverty programmes to maximize impact and avoid wastage and duplication”.

The Presidents address has clearly demonstrated that the South African government has scant regard for agrarian reform. Land and agrarian reform has been superficially addressed within the neo-liberal or market dominant paradigm. During the 2005 National Land Summit both the state and civil society organisations agreed on the factors inhibiting redistribution of land. The key-inhibiting factor is the market driven land reform strategy that has proven to be inefficacious. Whilst we believe a review of the land reform programme is critical it has to be participatory where the landless and rural poor should be active participants in the process. After 12 years of democracy less than 4% of agricultural land has been transferred to the landless black majority. Poor rural women to date have benefited little from the land reform programme.

Democracy and unity in the countryside continues to be undermined by economic and resource inequality. Rural women have been particularly marginalized under this economic system. Natural resources, in particular land and water resources continue to be in the hands of whites and the new elite. White commercial agriculture continues to use approximately 70% of water resources in rural areas to the exclusion of poor black small -scale farmers and farm dwellers. Water reform particularly the redistribution of the resources to the poor and landless should be central.

Farm dwellers and the landless rural poor remain second-class citizens being faced with new forms of dispossession, violence, human rights abuses and rural displacement. Thus we call on the President, who is presumably also the President of farm dwellers and the landless rural poor to Implement the moratorium on evictions as agreed at the National Land Summit of 2005. A moratorium on evictions should be the first step in the review of land reform in South Africa. In the absence of the moratorium democracy and development for farm dwellers and workers would become an ever-receding reality.

SPP embraces the President's commitment to post settlement support to small- scale producers. However post settlement support must be linked to the broader objective of agricultural reform that should be linked to food sovereignty and rural poverty eradication. The state should be an active

player within agricultural reform and post settlement support as oppose to reducing the involvement of the state.

The development of an alternative pro poor land and agrarian reform framework is critical in solving the development challenges faced by rural South Africa. We further recognise that South Africa is increasingly pursuing an elitist development path, where the interest of white commercial farmers and agribusiness is paramount. SPP however remains committed to work with government to implement a pro poor alternative agrarian reform framework. The challenge for civil society organisations, the landless poor and their movements is to intensify the struggle and engage government to implement a moratorium on evictions and a pro poor land and agrarian reform framework that would eradicate rural poverty and transform the countryside.

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