

Missed opportunity for economic recovery plan

By [Greg Dart](#)

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President Cyril Ramaphosa squandered his one golden pre-election opportunity – when he had the attention of the entire nation – to offer a heartfelt mea culpa for delivery failures and announce a detailed, comprehensive plan to turn the economic tide and reignite investor confidence in South Africa.



Source: [Fixabay](#)

Instead, this State of the Nation Address (Sona) was groundhog day; the president once again opening Parliament with promises to step up delivery, reinvigorate job creation, repair critically dysfunctional state-owned enterprises that threaten the economy and patting his administration on the back for its ‘successes’ during the previous year.

There'd be tremendous reason to celebrate if South Africans felt that positive change instead of breaking under the reality of crippling economic pressure.

There might even be a moment of cynical mirth in the blatant contradiction of the president's promise to keep the lights on, and current draft legislation that paints a very different picture.

It's laughable that Ramaphosa said – and I quote: ‘We are confident that the worst is behind us and the end of load shedding is finally within reach’ – when just a month ago the draft Integrated Resources Plan (IRP) of 2023 was gazetted for public comment, which states unequivocally that load shedding is here to stay until at least 2030.

Either Mineral Resources and Energy Minister Gwede Mantashe was lying in the IRP, or the president did in Sona, because both can't be true.

But it's not funny when our economic future is unequivocally tied to our grid security, and that security depends on the performance – or lack thereof – of state-owned Eskom.

Sona's moral oversight

An even more discouraging takeaway from Sona was the International Criminal Court human rights moral high ground the president celebrated, without a single mention of not one, but two South African court judgments against his administration last year for broadly the same offence – human rights violations of all South Africans for not acting to prevent load shedding and its most basic threat to the right to life.



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There's no argument against the global promotion of human rights. At the same time, the doctrine of clean hands applies; you can't preach lofty ideals from a soap box if you've been found guilty of the same offence in an independent court of law.

In this year's Sona the president reminded us that he was chairman of the Constitutional Assembly during the drafting of our Constitution, and noted that "as President, I see it as my primary duty to defend our Constitution, and to work every day to realise its promise".

He's absolutely right, which is why – with two judicial human rights strikes against his administration in less than a year, in addition to being a founding father of our democracy and incumbent president – a Sona offering a mea culpa and a tangible turnaround strategy would have boosted investor confidence far more than pats on the back for 2023's governmental performance that over-promised but under-delivered, just like the year before.

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