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PRESIDENT RAMAPHOSA'S SCORECARD - AGAIN ...

By Theuns Eloff: Chairman, FW de Klerk Foundation Board of Advisers

There are few issues that are discussed as often as the success (or not) of President Cyril Ramaphosa - even during Rugby World Cup time. Everyone (except the Zuptas and EFF) wants him to succeed and believes that he will succeed. But doubts erode this trust every time something negative happens in the country: whether it's yet another SOE demanding a lifeline, or the case of a student raped and murdered by a public servant. And the recurring refrain is that if Cyril does not succeed soon, there will be no economy or country left to save. William Saunderson-Meyer recently posed the question: can he be referred to as Cyril the Tiger, or is he merely Puss in Boots?

What is our President's scorecard five months after he led the ANC to victory at the polls and was subsequently named President of the country for five years ?

On the positive side, there are several signs, many of which have been lost in the hullabaloo of other negative events. The appointment of an Economic Advisory Board with several international economists and experts on board, is a plus. The distance some of them have from South Africa and the prevailing ideologies could mean that they will come up with fresh and original plans. The partial acceptance of Tito Mboweni's economic turnaround plan by the ANC's NEC is a second positive economic sign. Purists have already complained that this is not enough, but it is far better than the hysteria that broke out at the launch, within the ANC and their alliance partners. What many people lose sight of is that Moody's investment rating of South Africa has not been scaled down to junk status - perhaps those looking from a distance can see that which we who sit beside the fire, cannot.

Regarding corruption and State capture, there were at least three significant announcements (in addition to the continuing revelations of the Zondo Commission). The first was the regulations for the authorisation of a Special Investigation Unit (SIU) to investigate the so-called "asbestos case" in the Free State - in which Ace Magashule allegedly played a key role. The second were the regulations empowering a Special Tribunal (consisting of eight judges) to impose civil claims in cases where the State lost money, and to expedite matters that result from the investigations into the SOEs. The Tribunal has already started its work and the amount involved is more than R14 billion. The third is the launch of an anti-corruption forum in the healthcare industry, with Corruption Watch and Section27 as partners - incidentally, organisations that are not slow to criticise government.

An issue that could be forgotten over time, is how many Zupta's are already out of circulation and have been removed from government under Ramaphosa's leadership . Ferial Haffajee recently wrote an article ("See how they've fallen - a State Capture rogue's gallery") in which she distinguishes between those that were "hubs" and those that were "enablers". These include Bathabile Dlamini, Des van Rooyen, Malusi Gigaba, Supra Mahumapelo, Mosebenzi Zwane, Brian Molefe, Anoj Singh, Siyabonga Gama, Dan Matjila, Hlaudi Motsoeneng, Lucky Montana, Tom Moyane, Shaun Abrahams and Berning Ntlemeza. Although the criminal prosecutions have yet to begin, large sums of money have



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already been recovered through civil cases. The fact of the matter is: politically and administratively, Ramaphosa has already done what he could do. The legal processes and prosecutions will take longer to begin and complete. It is also positive that over the past weeks there have been rumours that the first high-profile prosecutions will begin shortly.

In the area of language and diversity, President Ramaphosa was not very outspoken, until recently. However, during this year's Heritage Day celebrations in Upington, he said (in Afrikaans): "There is no language in our country that we can say is a language of our past and should be left behind. Today we embrace and practice all languages that contribute to the diversity of our nation". This is a welcome sentiment and one hopes that Panyaza Lesufi will take it seriously. Regarding other African languages, he stated that government is working hard to offer such languages as school subjects - but unfortunately nothing was said about mother tongue education in indigenous languages.

President Ramaphosa's weekly newsletter, which began in late September, is an attempt to communicate better and be more visible. Whether the distribution is wide enough and whether the media consider it newsworthy enough to report on, remains to be seen.

Finally (and perhaps it may sound contradictory) there is Ace Magashule's comment, stating he would have preferred to serve under Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma rather than Cyril Ramaphosa - another positive sign. After being chastised of late, Magashule broke the silence with this blatant challenge to his President. This could mean the beginning of the end of the Zuptas in the ANC.

There is, however, no denying that there are also a number of negatives on the scorecard. President Ramaphosa leads a party that is ideologically largely divided and of which a large part (if not the largest part) is still devoted to a form of socialism, with the so-called National Democratic Revolution as the foundation. This recently emerged in the criticism of Tito Mboweni's economic turnaround plan. A second negative factor (which will not change in the foreseeable future) is the poor, or no capacity in the public service - fuelled by ideological transformation, the 80-9-9-2 ideology and cadre deployment. The apparent stagnation in prosecutions has also left many people discouraged. The troubled economy - with an expected growth rate of just 0.6% for 2019 - also doesn't help build confidence. Add to this the debate on prescribed assets, the impending amendment of section 25 of the Constitution, crime statistics and the planned National Health Insurance system, and there is plenty to worry about.

In the short-term, President Ramaphosa cannot do anything about some of these negative points on the scorecard. However, the positive points show that many other things can be done - and that there is indeed progress. It is not a scorecard with a distinction, but at this stage, the results are better than 50%.

The President's "academic year", however, stretches over more than a calendar year. Much hard work lies ahead, and he will face regular tests - and he will have to pass the majority of these in order eventually to obtain a distinction.



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Recently a new Facebook page - #ImStaying - was established in the hope of mobilising South Africans to share whether they plan to stay in South Africa, and what motivated their decision. The number of members rose to more than 600 000 very quickly. This is a clear sign that South Africans across race and class want to stay, but that they also realise that tough decisions need to be taken in order to create a better future.

During Solidarity's Future Summit last week in Pretoria, the concept of self-management and cultural autonomy were strongly emphasised. According to Solidarity's Chairman, Flip Buys, self-management has become essential because state governance is declining and has already failed in places. The theme of the Summit was "Build to Stay". So here is a large part of the Afrikaans population who are also saying "we're staying". And although we do not want to do depend on the failing state for our future, we will have to work together with the state where we can. Therefore, we wish the President every success with his reforms.

President Ramaphosa rightly wrote in his first newsletter that South Africans are ready to face the country's challenges. It is true. But in the context of this scorecard, the question is: "Mr President, we are willing to stay and to build a good future. Are you willing and able to make the difficult decisions that will help us get there?"

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