Sipho M. Pityana

Jo'burg Mining Indaba

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Good morning friends, colleagues and members of the press.
There are very few among us in this room who would dispute that South Africa is in crisis. It's a crisis spanning the economy, society, and the political sphere. It's a crisis fueled by patronage, corruption, mismanagement, unchecked power and widespread apathy.
It is a crisis that compels me to persist with my call urging every proud citizen to join the movement to save South Africa.

It is perhaps the most important Constitutional duty of any President to protect the sovereignty of a nation. Yet it is this sovereignty, the very independence of our republic, that I believe is being threatened by widespread graft and malign influence on parts of our government, by entrenched vested interests. That, in my view, is the elephant in the room.
In fact, this phenomenon has become so manifest, so commonplace, that there's a term for it – "State Capture". Wikipedia defines 'State Capture' as *'a type of systemic political corruption in which private interests significantly influence a state's decision-making processes to their own advantage...'*

Sadly, like Apartheid, it's another South Africanism destined for infamy. As the phrase has become part of the popular lexicon, we have ceased to question the existence of the phenomenon, but now look for a convenient shorthand to describe its scale.
Whilst the debate over State Capture rages and corruption grows, we have a President who – at best -- is missing in action. At worst, he is a leader at the very root of this crisis, one who has abrogated his constitutional duties and faces the threat of hundreds of corruption charges. Meanwhile, those closest to him appear to be beneficiaries of the disaster in governance and propriety in South Africa that is unfolding before our eyes.
When those in our governing alliance -- those in the know -- are in an unambiguous and increasingly animated discussion about a "captured state", we should ask how society, and business for that matter, should respond.
For me, the answer is increasingly clear.

When leadership fails as spectacularly as ours has done, it is ultimately ordinary citizens who must find the courage to speak out in defence of the constitution, and the sovereignty that it guarantees.

If there is an assault on the public purse, and an apparent attempt to unlock the Treasury to accelerate patronage to benefit a well-connected few, it is civil society – and this includes the business community -- that must demand better.

In trying to embolden us to act, I have previously invoked the words of W B Rubusana, a teacher, an activist and a true South African unifier. But his words -- *Zemk' inkomo magwala ndini"* – bear repeating.

The literal translation is: 'Your cowardice is costing you your cattle.'

In African custom, cattle symbolise inheritance and wealth, and I borrow Rubusana's call to ask if we will succumb to our instincts for self-preservation and forfeit the great wealth and inheritance that a free and democratic South Africa promises us and our children.

Or, do we unite to take a stand to save our birthright?

So, why is now the time to stand up and be counted?

The answer is that we can no longer afford to wait. We all know that corruption is spreading like an ugly oil slick across our society – from bribes solicited at random traffic stops and collusion in setting bread prices, to brown envelopes needed to get RDP houses or, in some cases, teaching jobs. And all of this seems to be climaxing in the bonanza of corruption in government and public enterprises that runs into billions of rand.

Let's take a look at the numbers. National Treasury has identified almost *26 billion rand* in irregular expenditure at various levels of government in the last financial year alone. That's almost 10% of our GDP. You might wonder how on earth a failure of governance on that scale is possible, but you need only look at the fact that about 72% of government departments and SOEs are non-compliant with supply chain management standards.

Scarier still is the opportunity for that graft and leakage to escalate, particularly when you assume that spending in all spheres of government will reach R1.5 trillion rand over the next three years.

This systemic failure of accountability in our SOEs is perfectly suited to the agenda of narrow interests who would look to chisel benefit from public coffers.
It also suits them to have a weak and pliant Treasury, unable or unwilling to exercise its proper oversight role. It seems increasingly clear that one of those criteria have been met, but the Treasury remains under siege, although its defences have held up amidst a withering attack that has not relented.

Ladies and gentlemen, our young democracy is facing its sternest test yet on a number of fronts. And whilst there is an astonishingly well martialed and enthusiastic effort in some quarters of government to defend – and indeed advance – the interests of individuals close to the center of power, there doesn't appear to be the same zeal for dealing with the more desperate, pressing issues that require leadership and courage to resolve.
It is a national crisis that more than a third of people between the ages of 15 and 34 are out of work. And it is a tragedy that they have little prospect of finding jobs as long as we remain on our current economic trajectory.

Let that sink in for a minute….. more than one-in-three of a ballooning number of young people have no hope of finding a job, and their ranks are swelling each day. This is a powder keg.

So it's little wonder that our morning traffic reports read like a protest directory. Our compatriots, many on the margins of society, are taking to the streets to voice growing frustration at corruption, the absence of opportunity, and a lack of service delivery. Students – disillusioned and fearful of the lack of meaningful prospects facing them as they join the economic mainstream -- are saying 'we have had enough.' Aside from their cry for free education, they appear to have lost faith in government's ability – or indeed its intent – to provide solutions.

This is a view reinforced by our president's woeful showing at this week's tertiary education Imbizo, where he mouthed a few empty platitudes before fleeing to the safety of Luthuli House. His lack of moral authority in trying to broker a solution was laid bare for all to see.

In the context of a government presiding over an unprecedented escalation of waste, corruption and leakage of public resources, should anyone be surprised by student reaction to a state that simply shrugs its shoulders and turns its pockets inside out, claiming poverty. Friends in the business community, particularly those of you who might be hoping that this crisis passes you by, think again.

Less than a week ago, we saw thousands of disciplined and peaceful student marchers make their way to the Chamber of Mines to plead their case. We owe them our empathy and support.

I take this opportunity to make a special plea to those of our children and students involved in the protest action to recognise that in a free country like ours, where the right to education is a hard won justiciable socio-economic right, that is enshrined in our bill of rights in the constitution; none should have to sacrifice their academic studies, their youth or worse still risk criminalisation, injury or death in order to realise this noble goal. Like many, I'm deeply pained by the violent confrontations, wanton destruction of property and the threat to the academic project. Education is the greatest tool for empowerment. Please return to class and a credible process to find lasting solutions to the issues you've put before the nation should be found, urgently through a peaceful dialogue.

As we survey the political economy, we should also worry that we're seeing the proverbial fig leaf of propriety increasingly being cast aside as lying and thievery becomes more brazen. Leaders found guilty of corruption or misrepresentation no longer fall on their swords for the greater good. These days they remain in office, inured to the shame of public opprobrium and cheered on by their superiors. And why not, when we have a President who literally laughs off any suggestion that government be held to a higher standard – and is, in fact, the sponsor-in-chief of corruption?

Friends, the walls of this faltering economy are closing in, and recession's knock on the door is becoming more insistent.

The response of our country's leadership is not to make the important structural changes that would reignite the growth we need to rebalance our economy. It is not to drive out corruption to free up the resources that would help address structural inequality.

It is not to provide policy certainty – for example around the MPRDA and the Mining Charter; or the role of the South African Reserve Bank and the regulatory environment for the financial sector. And it is not to decisively stop the rot in state-owned companies such as SAA, Eskom, Denel and the SABC, even though the need to do so is glaringly obvious.
Instead, our finance minister – a rare example of probity and good governance, a distinguished public servant who is leading the effort to maintain our investment grade credit rating – is hectored and intimidated at every turn. Ratings agencies are sneered at.

Businesses are hobbled at any opportunity. The needs of ordinary people are ignored.
All the while, the growing wariness of investors – both here and abroad -- is quietly chiseling away at the competitiveness of our country, with potentially disastrous long-term consequences.

There is also increasingly open contempt shown for the Constitution, the document that underpins our very democracy and enshrines the fundamental liberties that many of us made enormous sacrifices for.
Chapter Nine institutions, envisaged as the guardians of the Constitution by no less a person than Oliver Tambo, have been attacked, undermined or simply ignored.

It is to our shame as a country that civil society and other interested groups are forced time and again to turn to the Courts to ensure the Constitution is honoured by our country's leadership. And even then – ominously for all of us -- compliance is not guaranteed.
We need only look to the leadership of our national broadcaster for an eloquent – and very public example – of this blatant disdain for the judiciary that has dragged on for so long, at great expense in monetary terms and reputation. It would be comical if it weren't so serious.

Ladies and gentlemen, the problem of State Capture and corruption, and their attendant ills, often seems so vast, so overwhelming, that it's difficult to know what to do about it.
One strategy is to be co-opted by it. To actively throw your lot in with the vested interests that stand to gain from undermining everything that South Africa stood for when we queued to cast our first, democratic vote in 1994.

Lord knows there are many who have placed their narrow self-interest above all else. These are the interest groups that are enabling the creation of a kleptocracy, cheerleading for the status quo. After all, **why derail the gravy train while you're on it**?

Another strategy is to remain quiet. Don't stick your neck out, and hope – against all hope – that things improve. Don't bang the table and demand a clean, responsive government that promotes growth and an end to inequality. Don't forcefully speak up, lest you anger those who regulate industry, dole out tenders, or generally dish out patronage.
This silence is precisely what some in government want. Keep the difficult or indefensible issues away from the court of public opinion, and for heaven's sake don't dare hold our leaders to account out in the open.

For the longest time, our government has had a reliably obedient private sector that has for the most part kept difficult conversations behind closed doors. Quiet diplomacy perhaps.
Those that have chosen to venture a more public critique have been attacked, their reputations undermined and threatened with dire economic consequences for their outspokenness. Remember Reuel Khoza's warning, in 2012, that corruption and poor governance needed to be checked, or we faced a larger crisis in South Africa.
How prescient he was, and how we need a serious bout of introspection to understand why we – as business -- left him hanging out to dry amid withering attacks from government surrogates and peers alike, despite the fact that we knew he spoke the truth.

We are at a watershed moment for our young democracy. There are conflagrations everywhere, and many in our leadership – most notably our President – have an agenda that appears -- to me at least -- to be entirely at odds with addressing the increasingly desperate needs of our country.

It cannot be business as usual. We need to wake up to what our young students sense already, which is that the business community **has a vital role to play** in saving South Africa. But time is wasting.

First, the business community must accept that it is a valid voice in society – it sends children to school and helps provide for retirement. It invests and builds infrastructure, provides medicine and healthcare, and allows us to communicate.
Business is present in every home in our country in one way or another, yet it is a missing voice in meaningful social discourse on the most important issue of the day.
In recent weeks, though, some have started to recognise the importance of speaking out. Business Leadership South Africa and Business Unity South Africa have both started to ask the right questions. The CEOs of FirstRand, Sibanye Gold and De Beers have also voiced their own concerns.

We've also seen churches voice their concern at our leadership and the state of our nation. Civil society is speaking out, with a growing chorus including NGOs, students and academics. We have seen more urgency from opposition political parties, and there is a growing clamour on social media saying one thing, which I agree with: "**Zuma must go**".

Even within the ANC alliance, people are finding their voice. The SACP is increasingly making it clear that it is unhappy with the direction the current leadership is taking. Trade unions inside Cosatu are breaking ranks, and even individual ANC branches, and lobby groups such as those who organised to #OccupyLuthuliHouse, are saying enough is enough.
The stakes for those inside the alliance are impossibly high -- yet they have found the courage to challenge their peers.

And whilst business has made some tentative steps toward confronting the threat, these are nowhere near clear or insistent enough. The fact is, that if we each continue to keep our heads down, protecting our own, narrow self-interest, the business environment that we are so desperately trying to protect with our silence will simply become unmanageable.

The reality is that a growing number of people and groups in civil society agree that the spigots of corruption have been opened wide, and they're draining the very lifeblood from our economy.

We can agree that we live in a democratic society, and that we have a Constitution that is worth protecting.
We can find common cause in the belief that we deserve better leadership than we have at the moment, and that we demand clean, transparent and accountable government that has the best interests of its citizens at heart.
We can agree, and must agree, that under Zuma, the government is incapable of genuine reform. **And, therefore, he must go**.

The elephant in the room is a President who lacks integrity and lacks honour. None of the promises he makes to any segment of society can be held on to, because he lacks integrity. This requires courage. It requires steadfastness. It requires solidarity. It requires that business and others act together in solidarity. It requires us to listen to one another. And it requires us to do this now.

We have to seize the moment, and save South Africa. Before it's too late.