

SONA to go ahead as planned; City Hall now new venue

After a great deal of consideration and following thorough onsite inspections of alternative places, Cyril Ramaphosa is pleased to announce that the 2022 SONA will be held at the Cape Town City Hall.



Source: Wikipedia

This follows a sad and devastating week in which fires that started last Sunday destroyed Parliament's buildings, including the National Assembly (NA) and sections of the Old Assembly Chamber. The fires, which the firefighters battled for over 70 hours, severely damaged the NA building, including the NA chamber, where the official sittings of the NA and Joint Sittings of both Houses of Parliament are usually held, in terms of both the NA and Joint Rules of Parliament.

The NA Chamber was where Members of Parliament met to pass laws, take binding decisions, hear important announcements, and host the Joint Sittings of the two Houses of Parliament, the NA and the National Council of Provinces (NCOP). It was a building with great historical significance and rich heritage, and represented the evolution of our Parliament from apartheid to democracy.

The extensive damage necessitated the institution to find an alternative venue off-site to host this important event in the parliamentary calendar and the country.

"We made a solemn undertaking that, despite the devastation of the disaster, we will not allow a situation where Parliament's work is derailed or disrupted in any manner," the Presiding Officers said.



Arson confirmed in gutting of Parliamentary precinct, threatening to disrupt SONA

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SONA programme on track

In line with this undertaking, Parliament reaffirms its readiness to host its flagship programme on Thursday, 10 February 2022, at 7 pm at Cape Town City Hall.

This comes on the back of the Western Cape Provincial Government and the City of Cape Town coming forward with offers for the use of their venues for the business of Parliament. They offered the Cape Town International Convention Centre and the City Council Chambers as alternative venue options.

The City Hall was decided on in the end, considered a suitable venue technically in terms of infrastructure and its capacity. It is also a befitting place considering its historical significance as the first place where the founding President of our Democratic South Africa, former President Nelson Mandela, addressed the nation after his release from prison on 11 February 1990, with President Cyril Ramaphosa by his side.

Again, on 09 May 1994, the late Archbishop Desmond Tutu introduced Tata Mandela to thousands of jubilant South Africans in the same balcony after his election in the NA as the first democratic President.

Addressing the nation

In this regard, President Cyril Ramaphosa will address the nation from the City Hall, 32 years since that historic occasion in 1990.

"We have ensured that this decision to host the SONA outside the Chamber of the NA, is taken in compliance with the Joint Rules of Parliament that determine where a Joint Sitting may be held," the Presidency said.

The Presiding Officers are looking forward to a successful SONA.

"As South Africans we are resilient people, we have overcome many difficulties in the past. Therefore, we will rise from these ashes and rebuild, restore, renew and march forward in our continuous endeavour to build a democratic, non-racial, non-sexist, united and prosperous society we all aspire," Ramaphosa said.

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