

MEDIA STATEMENT

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EMBARGO: NONE

AGE OF AUSTERITY IS OVER – BUT WILL THE BUDGET LAST?

The SAOU is cautiously optimistic about the 2026 Budget Speech delivered by Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana. A further positive step forward would be for this budget to be accepted on its first proposal, as opposed to the situation in 2025.

Minister Godongwana stated that government has reached “an important turning point in the management of our public finances.”

If this statement is a true reflection of what will be implemented in 2026, it implies that provincial education departments may also experience some relief from their austerity budgets, which can only benefit the education system in South Africa.

The SAOU supports the principles outlined by the Minister, namely that the country’s improvement will be anchored in efforts to “stabilise debt, invest in infrastructure and spend better.” This is a favourable outlook for the education sector, where investment in infrastructure remains a key concern.

The SAOU also supports the Minister’s decision to invest R893 billion in manufacturing, SMEs and public employment programmes. In a period where there are too few teachers in classrooms and where the learner population is growing, these investments can go a long way in addressing the diminished capacity of schools.

If there are sufficient schools, teachers and district-level capacity to support learning and teaching, the education sector can move forward with greater confidence. These improvements may also contribute to addressing discipline-related challenges at school level.

Furthermore, the SAOU and its members express gratitude for the scrapping of the previously envisaged tax increases. With the rising cost of living, above-inflation tax increases would have unduly exacerbated an already difficult situation.

The SAOU believes that any relief from austerity measures will be beneficial to schools and learners.