FRONTLINE AFRICA ADVISORY

REGENESYS SCHOOL OF PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

Frontline Conversations

South Africa's 2026 Local Government Elections

What the Elections Mean for Municipal Governance and South Africa's Developmental State

Speakers and Panellists' Biographies

Ms Maropene Ramokgopa

Minister in the Presidency Responsible for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation

Maropene Ramokgopa is Minister in the Presidency responsible for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation and a senior African National Congress leader. Her career spans local government, national politics, international relations and development, including roles in the African Union and as Special Advisor to President Cyril Ramaphosa on international relations.

She has held leadership positions in ANC structures, including serving as Second Deputy Secretary-General. Her ministerial portfolio focuses on strengthening government planning, monitoring implementation and evaluating public-sector performance. She has studied Business Management at Wits Business School and undertaken further studies at Regenesys in India.

Mr Gcinumzi Qotywa

Incoming Chairperson, Rand Water

Gcinumzi Qotywa is a public-sector strategist and business leader with more than 28 years of experience in leadership, governance, infrastructure and development. A Rand Water board member since September 2022, he is due to assume the role of Chairperson in November 2026. He is also Founder and CEO of Nondzaba Consulting, specialising in strategy, leadership and governance.

His previous roles include Interim CEO of the Eastern Cape Rural Development Agency, COO of the Competition Tribunal, founding CEO of the Buffalo City Metro Development Agency and Chief Director for Environmental Protection and Infrastructure Programmes at the Department of Environmental Affairs. He holds an MBA from GIBS and a Master of Arts in Environment and Society from the University of Pretoria and is a certified director through the Institute of Directors South Africa.

Mr Thembinkosi Gcoyi

Managing Director, Frontline Africa Advisory

Thembinkosi Gcoyi is Managing Director of Frontline Africa Advisory, an intelligence-led public affairs advisory firm he founded in 2015. A former South African diplomat, he brings more than 20 years of experience in public policy, research, stakeholder engagement and strategic advisory across government and business.

His experience spans highly regulated sectors and international development, including engagements involving the United Nations, African Union and Southern African Development Community. He holds a Master of Arts in International Studies, specialising in foreign policy analysis, from Rhodes University.

Mr Khulekani Mathe

Chief Executive Officer, Business Unity South Africa (BUSA)

Khulekani Mathe is CEO of Business Unity South Africa, a position he assumed in February 2023, and Chairperson of the SADC Business Council. His experience spans business advocacy, financial inclusion, public administration and national development planning. He previously led financial inclusion work at the Banking Association South Africa and held roles in the Presidency, the National Planning Commission Secretariat and the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, contributing to the development of the National Development Plan.

Earlier in his career, he spent 15 years in adult education and chaired a ministerial committee reviewing adult education policy. He holds master's degrees in Development Finance and Education, specialising in Adult Education, and is a certified director and member of the Institute of Directors South Africa.

Ms Zoleka Lisa

Vice President of Corporate Affairs, South African Breweries (SAB)

Zoleka Lisa is Vice President of Corporate Affairs at South African Breweries and a member of the AB InBev Africa Executive Committee. She leads corporate affairs across Southern Africa, covering public policy, government and stakeholder relations, strategic communications, sustainability and social impact. Previously, she spent nine years at Accenture advising organisations on strategy and business transformation.

She serves as a trustee of the SAB Foundation and on the boards of the Beer Association of South Africa, the National Business Initiative and the South African National AIDS Council Private Sector Forum. She holds degrees from the University of Cape Town and the University of the Witwatersrand and has completed executive programmes at LSE and Wits Business School.

Ms Preola Adam

Senior Director: Sustainability for Africa, The Coca-Cola Company

Preola Adam is Senior Director and Sustainability Lead for Africa at The Coca-Cola Company. She focuses on water security, climate resilience and sustainable development, leading strategic partnerships between business, government and development organisations.

Her work centres on translating sustainability commitments into practical, scalable initiatives that support systemic change and deliver measurable, lasting impact across the continent.

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY

Mr Kamohelo Mothibedi

Principal Investment Officer: Municipal and Waterboards Finance, Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA)

Kamohelo Mothibedi is Principal Investment Officer in the DBSA's Municipal and Waterboards Finance unit, which finances municipal infrastructure across sectors including water and sanitation, electricity, solid waste management, and roads and transport.

Working within the DBSA's Local Government Support and Finance Division, he contributes to municipal infrastructure financing and initiatives supporting project preparation, implementation and local government capacity. His work is focused on strengthening infrastructure delivery and essential municipal services.

Mr Xhanti Payi

Economist; Director, Inani Strategies; Chairperson, Indlulamithi SA Scenarios Trust Board

Xhanti Payi is an economist, researcher and strategic advisor whose work focuses on economic analysis, public policy and South Africa's development trajectory. As Director of Inani Strategies, he helps public- and private-sector organisations interpret economic trends and structural challenges to inform strategic decisions. His career spans banking, insurance, asset management and strategy consulting, including roles at Investec, Stanlib, Standard Bank Corporate and Investment Bank, and PwC Strategy.

He also chairs the Indlulamithi South Africa Scenarios Trust Board, contributing to national dialogue on long-term development and social cohesion. He has studied at the universities of Cape Town, Pretoria and London.

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY

Mr Sifiso Skenjana

Economist; Managing Director, ESG Analytics; Founder, ESG Now News

Sifiso Skenjana is an economist and sustainability strategist with 18 years of experience in economic research, consulting, investment management and public policy. As Managing Director of ESG Analytics, he leads sustainability research and advisory projects across sectors including financial services, mining, FMCG and telecommunications.

He also founded ESG Now News and serves as a Senior Commissioner for labour economic advisory at the CCMA. Previously, he held senior research and advisory roles at Transnet and IQbusiness and contributed to government advisory initiatives. He holds a master's degree from ESADE Business School in Spain and is a YALI Young Leaders Fellow. He regularly comments on economic, sustainability and policy issues across broadcast and print media.

Mr Siyabulela Jentile

Director, Civic Root Advocacy NPC; Founder and President, #NotInMyName International

Siyabulela Jentile is a civic leader, human rights defender and social justice advocate focused on democratic participation, accountable governance, gender equality and community-led development. Trained in civil engineering, he moved into public policy and civic advocacy and now leads Civic Root Advocacy NPC and the #NotInMyName International movement.

An Obama Foundation Leader, Mandela Washington Fellow and French Government Initiative Marianne laureate, he has engaged with international institutions including UNESCO, the United Nations Human Rights Council and the European Parliament. He is the author of Democracy Through Tinted Windows, which explores power, democratic accountability and institutional design.

Mr Zamokwakhe Somhlaba

Manager: Political Risk Advisory and Research, Frontline Africa Advisory

Zamokwakhe Somhlaba is a political risk and public policy advisor with more than 22 years of experience in political and economic analysis, research, stakeholder engagement and strategic advisory across South Africa and Africa. His experience includes work involving the African Union, NEPAD, UNDP and the African Development Bank. He has served as a speechwriter to Ministers of Public Service and Administration and as Head of the Open Government Partnership, supporting the President's Special Envoy on OGP.

He advises across sectors including telecommunications, fintech, mining, FMCG and other regulated industries, connecting political and institutional developments to business decisions. He holds a Master of Arts in International Studies, specialising in African Political Economy.

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