

Constitution can be amended, says Ramaphosa

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Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa appeared sympathetic on Thursday to calls to change the Constitution to facilitate land expropriation without compensation in Parliament.

Responding to questions in the National Assembly from the EFF, Ramaphosa said the land issue was vitally important. There were various ways for the government to tackle the land question, including amending the Constitution, he said.

"Admittedly, amending the Constitution is a strategy ... implementing what is in the Constitution is another strategy. The ANC's commitment is deep and thorough. We will solve this problem," Ramaphosa said.

President Jacob Zuma last week contradicted his party when he repeated his earlier statement that the government would undertake a "precolonial" land audit and change the Constitution to facilitate expropriation without compensation.

The president said the principle of willing-seller, willing-buyer was not effective.

During the question and answer session in Parliament on Thursday, Ramaphosa said: "Great injustice [was] done against the black majority in our country ... every black MP in the House can tell you personal stories of how families were removed from their land ... We must never speak about land as part of sloganeering.

"What we are called to do as a Parliament is to approach this

matter with [practical] solutions," Ramaphosa said.

"We also feel the pain of land deprivation ... When you hear the president speak on land, he is speaking from a deep-seated pain of experiences of many black people in SA."

Ramaphosa said the government was further promoting economic transformation by strengthening BEE provisions and public procurement policy, intensifying land redistribution and supporting the emergence of black industrialists.

"We have made significant progress in our transition from a racially divided, unequal and underdeveloped state towards one which is more equal, prosperous and in which all may achieve their potential. While there is still a long way to go, we are making important strides."

The ANC in Parliament last week shot down the EFF's call for land expropriation without compensation, saying it would be unconstitutional. The party said the expropriation bill stated property may be expropriated only for public purpose and in the public interest, subject to just and equitable compensation.

This week, the Agriculture Business Chamber, which represents commercial farmers and agribusinesses, said players in the sector "are becoming more reluctant" to invest amid growing uncertainty over land.

The government is under pressure to complete its land-reform programme amid growing fears of Zimbabwe-style land grabs.

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