



SOCA 2023

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#JoburgSOCA2023



City of Johannesburg Executive Mayor
Cllr Kabelo Gwamanda



  
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UNDERSTANDING THE PAST IN BUILDING RESILIENT FUTURE CITIES THAT ARE PEOPLE CENTRIC

As a township boy, who grew up during the hardship and confusion of the transitional period of our democracy, grappling and trying to reconcile with an idea of a country that is alive with possibilities. A month ago, I stood at this exact lectern and assumed the role of the City of Johannesburg Executive Mayor. I, myself, could never have imagined that the possibility could manifest itself in a form of such great honour, purpose and fortitude.

As part of a generation that inherited the responsibility of building a future on the foundation of hope, one that is paved in sacrifice, blood, sweat and tears, it is indeed a privilege, more especially in this month of June, where we take time to reflect and celebrate the role of young people in the struggle against the brutality, subjugation and tyranny of apartheid. As we enjoy the fruits of this tree of liberty, let us not forget its systematic and deliberate irrigation.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

As a proud symbol of this current generation, standing tall on the shoulders of giants, I am pleased to play an active and meaningful role in shaping the future, and Madam Speaker, as the first of my kind – the youngest Executive Mayor of this great City that is the gateway to the African continent, I certainly am not the last. Young people, far and wide across our City, must take notice that the circumstances to which you are born are no determinant of your future.

I take this moment to express gratitude and to honour the courageous youth of 1976 and in the same breath to acknowledge the resilient youth of today and the struggles that they are faced with, but equally impress upon them on this day, June 6th, 2023, in this youth month, that the black child should now know with certainty that it is indeed possible.

UNDERSTANDING THE PAST

Madam Speaker;

The City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality has in itself an equal share of difficulties, emanating from the transitional period of the political landscape, and as we

know, coalition governments define our modern political status quo. However, let us observe the implication thereto, as we address the State of the City.

Post 2016, our City has been governed by various coalitions which introduced a new era in the politics and governance of Johannesburg. This new political reality, has introduced a myriad of challenges, both for governance and politics. More importantly, it has introduced unprecedented levels of instability especially under the various DA-led Multi-Party Governments that have sought to settle political scores as opposed to serving the residents.

As we navigate the terrain to create the most efficient and reliable political system in the interests of our people, as the Government of Local Unity (GLU) we are a government determined to serve the residents of Johannesburg and to meet their most basic needs and expectations of a City government.

Our people want to live and work in a safe and clean City. They want to travel on well maintained and tarred roads. They want to open their taps every morning and find clean running water.

We are committed to good governance, a stable administration, efficient and reliable services for our people, equally across the city;

It is with humility and determination that I share with you the current state of our progress, acknowledging that we find ourselves at a performance level of 66% at the end of the third quarter. While this number may not meet our initial expectations, it is essential to recognise the significant strides we have made despite the challenges we inherited. When we assumed office, we were faced with a fragile state of finances that demanded immediate attention. It necessitated aligning our priorities and rebasing our budget to lay the foundation for sustainable growth and development.

In the face of this daunting task, our administration embarked on a journey of restructuring, making tough decisions, and implementing strategic reforms. We recognised the importance of fiscal responsibility and transparency as pillars for effective governance.

By diligently reviewing our budget, reevaluating our expenditure and generating more revenue, we have taken steps to ensure that every rand is utilised efficiently and effectively. We have engaged in extensive consultations with stakeholders, listened to the needs of our communities, and allocated resources accordingly.

This rigorous process has allowed us to realign our priorities, focusing on key areas such as infrastructure development and refurbishment, actively engaging with our citizenry, and facilitating job creation opportunities. Although progress has been steady in the three months of the GLU, we acknowledge that there is still work to be done. We are committed to redoubling our efforts and leveraging every available opportunity to propel Johannesburg towards its full potential. We will continue to build a city that thrives, a city that uplifts its residents, and a city that we can all be proud to call home.

However, Madam Speaker, in order to attain this envisioned City, we must first be cognizant of our reality – lest we be accused of daydreaming and doing nothing.

We acknowledge our current reality that Johannesburg continues to battle a number of developmental challenges. Amongst others:

- Spatial inequality persists, with disparities in access to services and opportunities visible across different areas.
- Unemployment rates remain high, threatening the livelihoods of many of our residents.
- A lack of affordable housing has led to the proliferation of informal settlements, exacerbating the living conditions of the poor.
- Crime, especially violent crime as well as gender based violence and femicide, endangers community safety and undermines social cohesion.
- Transportation inefficiency limits mobility and economic productivity.
- There are still gaps in service delivery, affecting access to water, sanitation, energy, and waste management.

- And sadly, poverty and inequality persist as the hallmarks of the stubborn legacy of apartheid and colonialism and serve only to impede inclusive growth and progress.

Madam Speaker and Fellow Councillors;

There comes a time when one must take a position that is neither politically safe nor popular, but has to be taken because one's conscience dictates that it is the right thing to do - and today, I want to be honest about the true state of our City.

Over the past three weeks I delved into the working mechanisms trying to understand the true State of the City of Johannesburg.

What we know now is that the City's finances remain strained.

Following the tabling of a conceptually flawed budget by the Multiparty Government, and the resultant recklessness in managing the finances of the City, the GLU found itself in a budget rebasing exercise in the adjustment budget process, and is grappling with finding innovative, novel and financially prudent mechanisms to ensure that service delivery continues.

We also know that by the end of June 2021, the Government of Local Unity's audited financial statements reflected a City with a healthy cash balance of R6.6 billion.

However, upon our return in January 2023 when we took over from the Multiparty Government, we found a near bankrupt municipality sitting with over R6 billion in unpaid supplier invoices.

After consistent denial of the true state of affairs by the Multiparty Government, this Government of Local Unity approved a short-term loan facility to begin to clear the unpaid invoices and the reality is that without a financially sound City, we will not be able to invest as required in our core municipal mandate of delivering basic services, ensuring the security of electricity and water supply, efficient roads infrastructure and the many other service delivery matters that need attention.

REMEMBERING WHO WE ARE

Fellow Councillors;

Guided by the GDS 2040, intergovernmental relations are critical to the operationalisation of our 11 strategic priorities which will take us a step closer to the World Class African City we want Johannesburg to become.

Through the District Development Model (DDM) ours is to ensure that we work closely with the provincial and national spheres of government to create synergy and coordination in resolving the challenges that face our City. From our fight against crime, to our ability to provide reliable and sustainable water supply.

From finding viable and lasting solutions to our growing infrastructure backlogs to delivering on our promises to mitigate the load-shedding burden and to cushion residents and businesses against power cuts, our ability to work closely with the provincial and national governments is vital.

Challenges such as those raised by the communities of Fleurhof, which I visited recently, require our joint partnership with province to decisively deal with elements of criminality such as illegal mining, the reckless issuance of liquor licenses in communities, and the deployment of police to hotspots such as Riverlea and Westbury, supported by our JMPD. A task-team on illegal mining in particular will soon be announced, bringing to the table business, communities, law enforcement and the Municipality.

With the reactivation of these intergovernmental relations, the alignment of different spheres of government serves as an enabler of realistic prospects of impactful solutions for our residents' daily lived experiences.

ELECTRICITY CRISIS

Load-shedding remains one of the biggest threats to the safety, security, economy and liveability of the City. Providing reliable and sustainable power supply to our residents and businesses in the City is one of the foremost priorities of the Government of Local Unity. Mitigating the impact of planned outages by ESKOM is a matter that is receiving our urgent attention through City Power.

Last week Monday, residents woke up to the disturbing news of the death of a toddler, whose life-supporting oxygen machine could not support her because load shedding and technical faults meant the home she lives in was without power for eight hours.

We do not need to be politicking around this tragic event, but we need to collectively own the failings of government to our people. The premature death of the toddler is a stain on our collective conscience, and should always serve to remind us of the urgency with which we must find lasting solutions to our energy crisis.

There is no doubt that energy plays a critical role in promoting economic growth, reducing poverty, and enhancing the quality of life for all our residents.

We have recently mandated City Power and the City Manager, through Council, to extend our Power Purchase Agreement with Kelvin Power Station by another three years, ending in October 2026. Currently we purchase 87% of our power from ESKOM and Kelvin supports us with the balance of 13%.

This added power will be beneficial to residents, especially, during the winter peak-period that we are entering as we anticipate a significant growth in demand.

Working with province, we are considering a number of initiatives to improve the energy-mix and availability factor for the province and City.

However, we must also urgently attend to the rampant and increasing cases of vandalism and cable theft. These incidents are at a great cost to the City and at an even greater cost to residents whose supply is affected for days and weeks on end.

We are also under pressure to invest in new infrastructure to cater for growth in communities such as Eldorado Park. The people of Eldorado Park are in the dark because their substation has been under upgrade for far too long and remains incomplete. We have committed to ensure that City Power expedites this work and meets the set timelines to complete the work being done.

We are engaging independent power producers, to diversify our energy sources and ensure reliable electricity supply.

Additionally, we will roll out rooftop solar installations for disadvantaged households in our City. By promoting renewable energy adoption, we aim to enhance energy security, reduce electricity costs, and contribute to a greener and more environmentally sustainable Johannesburg.

TAKING ACTION

Madame Speaker, Fellow Councillors;

Taking bold action is imperative. We must implement strategic interventions that address these challenges head-on.

In January 2023, the Government of Local Unity returned to office.

In this coalition we promised a renewed sense of purpose and a commitment to collaborative governance.

We have promised to stand united in our resolve to confront the challenges that lie before us and shape a future worthy of our great city of Johannesburg.

POLITICS RE-IMAGINED

In the context of the GLU, our "politics re-imagined" means that we will explore new and innovative ways of dealing with the many challenges our City faces.

We committed that despite our different political backgrounds and ideological persuasions, we would come together and govern – united by our common priority and sense of duty to serve the people and make the City of Johannesburg work. A closer look at the composition of the Mayoral Committee rubberstamps this commitment.

In the face of our continued struggles we must claim this moment and declare our commitment to re-imagining our politics, re-imagining our City and re-imagining solutions to our challenges.

In our relentless pursuit of building a legacy for the City of Johannesburg, we recognise that tackling the complex challenges we face requires strategic planning, proactive measures, and a steadfast commitment to collaboration and citizen engagement.

The Government of Local Unity is at the forefront of implementing strategies and plans to address these challenges and work towards our shared vision of a prosperous and inclusive city.

INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The People's Plan, as the theme of our 2023/24 Integrated Development Plan, represents the embodiment of our commitment to inclusive governance and resident-centered decision-making.

The IDP serves as a blueprint for the City's development, and the People's Plan amplifies the voices of our residents, ensuring their active participation in shaping the future of Johannesburg.

This visionary document is a testament to our belief in the power of collective intelligence, recognising that the diverse perspectives, ideas, and aspirations of our people are invaluable assets in driving meaningful change.

The People's Plan establishes a platform for dialogue, collaboration, and shared responsibility, enabling us to align our policies, programmes, and projects with the real needs and aspirations of our communities.

By placing the residents at the heart of the planning process, the People's Plan reflects our unwavering commitment to building a City that truly belongs to its people, one that is inclusive, equitable, and responsive to the diverse needs of our vibrant and dynamic population. I have noted the concerns of residents that were raised throughout the regions across the City of Johannesburg, where common concerns were raised:

- Region A: the need for skills development, a request for the formalisation of informal settlements, electrification and infrastructure upgrades.
- Region B: the need for safety patrols and crime surveillance. I have also noted the recycling and clean-up concerns as well as a request for a taxi rank expansion.
- Region C: the need for maintenance and clean up, a youth skill center and sewer upgrade. I have noted the request raised for the establishment of a police station in ward 49 as well.

- Region D: the need for skills development, rehabilitation facilities, storm water drainage, solar power farming and the request for a police station in ward 11.
- Region E: I noted the request around the refurbishment of the Thusong Youth Centre, as well as the need to convert Alexsan Kopano Resource Centre into a Multipurpose Centre. I noted the concerns raised by the Linbro Park community, amongst them being the refurbishment of the Linbro Park Library, sports facilities as well as the Buccleuch Lower Bridge.
- Region F: I noted the concern of the sewer main pipeline system in Fordsburg ward 58, a request for the upgrade of recreation and sports centres, one being the Xavier Multipurpose centre. I took note of the request for the Slovo social housing electrification.
- Region G: I took note of the request for a skills development centre, a fully operational library in Ennerdale as well as a request for a swimming pool in Ward 5.

SPATIAL INEQUALITY

Madam Speaker;

To address the issue of spatial inequality, we have developed a comprehensive Spatial Development Framework, linked to our IDP that focuses on equitable distribution of resources and opportunities across the city.

This includes targeted investments in infrastructure, social amenities, and affordable housing in under-served areas. Through spatial restructuring and inclusive urban planning, we aim to create integrated communities that promote social cohesion and equal access to essential services for all residents.

GLU STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Fellow residents of Johannesburg,

I want to assure you that the Government of Local Unity is committed to taking a proactive approach in addressing the challenges facing our City. Through strategic planning, collaboration, and citizen engagement, we are laying the foundation for a brighter future.

Together, with the collective efforts of residents, businesses, and civil society, we will create a legacy that reflects the hopes, dreams and aspirations of all the inhabitants of Johannesburg.

The Johannesburg 2040 Growth and Development Strategy (GDS) has been in the past, and continues to be the cornerstone for the GLU's strategic vision.

It provides a lens through which we can view the Johannesburg of the future and defines the type of society we want to achieve by 2040.

In order to make decisive inroads towards the realisation of the four outcomes of the GDS during this term of office, we have identified eleven strategic priorities.

These are:

- Good governance
- Financial Sustainability
- Energy Mix
- Sustainable Service Delivery
- Infrastructure Development and Refurbishment
- Job Creation and Opportunities
- Safer City
- Active and engaged citizenry
- Sustained economic growth

- Green economy, and
- Smart City

With these priorities we, together with my team of capable MMCs, aim to improve service delivery, promote economic growth through the creation of a supportive environment, improve the liveability of urban spaces, and build a resilient and sustainable administration for future residents of the City.

WATER

Madam Speaker, Fellow Councillors;

Perhaps more important than anything I have spoken about thus far is water.

As the old adage goes: “Water is the driving force of all nature. Water is life’s matter and matrix; mother and medium. There is no life without water.”

The State of the Climate in Africa 2021 report has a special focus on water. High water stress is estimated to affect about 250 million people in Africa. Four out of five African countries are unlikely to have sustainably managed water resources by 2030.

As we acknowledge the need to plan futuristically, we cannot deny that current infrastructure challenges contribute to water shortages within the City.

These issues remain high on my agenda, and I will continue to work with the Mayoral Committee and the City administrators to find sustainable, long-term solutions to the infrastructure problems plaguing the City.

Joburg Water is investing to build and upgrade the bulk water infrastructure.

Still in the context of water, the City will implement a Geyser Installation accredited training programme in all regions of the City, targeting 140 residents as part of our comprehensive skills development strategy.

HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

The development of Southern Farms has been approved and the development agreement has been finalised. After a long process, the implementation of the Southern Farms project will finally commence in the 2023/24 financial year.

Through collaboration between the three spheres of government, Lufhereng has been allocated additional funding by National Treasury to boost the construction of infrastructure in the ongoing housing development.

In March 2023, Council approved 181 recognised informal settlements to be upgraded including identification of suitable land for de-densifying congested and densely populated areas.

It cannot go without saying that as the economic hub of our country and continent, Joburg attracts people from all walks of life seeking to improve the quality of their lives. However, this migration of people to our City also puts pressure on the City's infrastructure, security and emergency response systems.

Addressing these challenges will be critical to the City's success in years to come.

CRIME

To tackle high levels of crime, the Public Safety Department, in collaboration with other law enforcement agencies, is dedicated to reducing crime and promoting safety throughout the city.

They will focus on city-wide crime prevention, by-law enforcement, road-traffic management and emergency management services.

A re-imagined, resilient Johannesburg is one in which residents feel safe and protected at all times regardless of their gender or sexual orientation; regardless of their age or dress code; regardless of their vulnerabilities or level of security awareness. Our people must feel safe at all times in this world class African City.

Fighting and defeating crime is a top priority for the Government of Local Unity. To bolster our efforts in fighting crime, we plan to recruit approximately 2,000 Crime Wardens.

These dedicated individuals will work alongside law enforcement agencies, communities, and stakeholders to strengthen crime prevention initiatives, improve community policing, and enhance the overall safety and security of our city.

Driven by our conviction to never surrender our City to criminals, we are determined to collaborate with the provincial and national governments to create safer neighborhoods where residents can live without fear.

This means that we must urgently find a solution to the problem of violent crime that has plagued communities such as Westbury for far too long now.

We must rescue our children from the trappings of alcohol abuse, drugs and gangsterism.

With a firm hand and an infallible eye, we must silence the guns in our communities.

Through the multidisciplinary operation led by the Public Safety department, we will restore the rule of law in the Inner City and ensure the safety of all who live or work in the Inner City. We have since introduced a new initiative and partnership with the private sector that will give our JMPD, access to over 5,000 smart CCTV cameras to allow us to monitor, track and trace crime suspects and perpetrators across the City. Recent collaborations in this regard have allowed us to apprehend robbery suspects and pedestrian criminals, and retrieve hijacked vehicles across the City.

In the coming weeks we will also announce a programme to deal decisively with the problem of hijacked buildings and the lawlessness associated with it.

JOB CREATION

The correlation between unemployment and crime requires no study-text quotation. In this room, too many of us have seen the impact of unemployment on the social health of our communities.

We must renew our efforts to create economic growth and reduce unemployment, with a special focus on the youth.

In pursuit of this goal, the City has made job creation and opportunities a top priority, with a specific emphasis on supporting Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) and entrepreneurs. SMMEs and entrepreneurs are crucial in absorbing labour and developing, growing, and improving the health of the urban economy.

We have identified factors that hinder SMMEs and entrepreneurs' access to markets, sustainable livelihoods, and expansion. As such, we are determined to create an enabling environment for SMMEs and entrepreneurs to thrive.

By doing so, the City will be contributing to increased employment opportunities, and in particular, job creation for the youth.

The Township Economy Bill of Gauteng seeks to promote economic growth and development in townships by supporting small businesses and entrepreneurship.

To implement this in Johannesburg, there needs to be a focus on creating an enabling environment for businesses to thrive, providing access to funding and resources, and building partnerships between government, the private sector, and community organisations.

YOUTH

In this Youth month of June, we have to acknowledge that the City of Johannesburg has a largely youthful population and that we have a responsibility to realise our demographic dividend.

Unfortunately, young people still face a number of socio-economic challenges. Youth unemployment in the City is at an alarming 53%. Young people are over represented as both victims and perpetrators of crime.

Too many young people are battling substance abuse and are characterised by a low entrepreneurial spirit, poor physical and mental health, a low skills level and a skills mismatch.

The City of Johannesburg will, this year, finally heed the call for a restructured and capacitated Youth Directorate, in order to consolidate and enhance youth development in the City.

The Youth Directorate will ensure youth development mainstreaming in all government departments and Municipal Entities. In addition, it will ensure accelerated call for Social Justice through education. This will include economic empowerment, skills development, preferential procurement and social development programmes targeting young people.

The Directorate will collaborate with various stakeholders to ensure maximum impact and that ordinary young people in the City of Johannesburg have a dedicated structure to serve their needs and ensure that the City realises its demographic dividend.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Madam Speaker;

We are determined to embark on women economic empowerment programmes aimed at ensuring the maximum participation of women in the mainstream economy.

This will include the facilitation of access to finance and markets as part of the National Strategic Framework on Gender Equality.

In instances of Gender-Based Violence, the City will provide psychological support and legal assistance to survivors. Furthermore, we will establish a Gender-Based Violence Advisory Committee to address these issues comprehensively.

Our aim is to ensure that victims of gender-based violence receive shelter, three meals a day, and the necessary support they require.

We also aim to establish Self Sustained Food Gardens in various communities, specifically targeting Child headed families and vulnerable women heading indigent families.

As the economic growth hub of the country, Johannesburg attracts a vast pool of job seekers, including both skilled and unskilled labour. In line with its commitment to reducing unemployment, the city ensures that projects are implemented through the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) whenever possible.

The focus of these opportunities is on the youth and women, who face the highest rates of unemployment.

INNER CITY REGENERATION

This administration recognises that the inner city of Johannesburg represents the physical deterioration and decay of the City of Gold. If it remains unchanged, it will not inspire confidence amongst the residents regarding our sincerity to bring about change.

Worse still, it will not inspire confidence amongst the investors we so desperately need for our economic growth ambitions.

The regeneration of the Inner City of Johannesburg therefore remains a mayoral priority and will also remain a key priority for all Departments and Municipal Owned Entities.

The roadmap is the framework through which the City and multiple stakeholders can collectively pursue the vision of the Inner City as a place of opportunity.

This will be achieved by making sure that the Inner City remains a well-governed, transformed, safe, clean and sustainable space. An Inner City that offers high quality, sustainable services; supports vibrant economic activity; and provides a warm welcome for all residents, migrants, commuters, workers, traders, investors and tourists.

Regarding investment attraction, retention and expansion, the Informal Trading Policy has been approved and we will prioritise its implementation after the public participation process has been concluded.

The Special Rating Areas Policy that will see us working with the private sector in providing top-up services will also take priority for this administration.

To make the Inner City clean, we will focus on greater coordination with all stakeholders involved in the cleaning of the Inner City. However, there must be an appreciation that keeping the Inner City clean is not the responsibility of the municipality alone.

We all have a duty to keep our City clean. We must not litter. We must be conscious, patriotic, active and engaged citizens who love Johannesburg.

Working with the provincial government, we will pay special attention to the proliferation of liquor outlets in the Inner City in relation to our own bylaws and assess how this contributes to the City's deterioration.

As much as we face significant challenges in the Inner City, it is not all doom and gloom. Our investment strategy, targeted at the Inner City is beginning to yield significant results.

Braamfontein, which is now designated as a student precinct, is seeing a massive boom in the development of student accommodation.

The noticeable development brought about by the ABSA towers and surrounds is also good example of what we are talking about. All of this is happening as a result of the City working with our partners in the Private Sector.

We have focused our attention on the High Court precinct where we have decisively dealt with lawlessness. We have appointed consultants to package the re-imagination of that precinct, and public consultation processes are underway and overseen by my office.

As our regeneration model is precinct-based, we will also give attention to other precincts like the Mpilo Tutu precinct where the St Mary's Anglican Cathedral is situated.

We also want to create a security precinct where we will have different law enforcement agencies establishing a joint-operations centre equipped with the latest technology to combat crime decisively in the Inner City.

We must be mindful that the new economic initiatives that happen in the Inner City do not adversely impact the existing ones. For example, we must ensure that new developments do not destroy the vibrant cultural atmosphere and culturally orientated entertainment facilities that define certain sections of our city.

We must do all that is humanly possible to preserve the cultural economy of Johannesburg.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, as we reflect on our journey, let us remember the unwavering spirit that resides within us all. We are a community of survivors, of dreamers who refuse to be deterred by adversity.

Our history is a testament to our resilience, a testament to our ability to overcome even the most daunting challenges.

Today, as we face new hurdles and unforeseen trials, we stand tall and resolute. We embrace the fires of determination that burn within us, propelling us forward with unwavering strength.

We will not falter in the face of adversity, for we know that within each challenge lies an opportunity for growth, for transformation, and for greatness.

We have set out on a new path to restore the heartbeat of Johannesburg and make the City work for its residents.

On this path, we will double our efforts to ensure that potholes are fixed, traffic lights work, grass is cut regularly, and indeed street lights function.

On this path, we will recognise and genuinely acknowledge the fact that the workers of the City of Johannesburg are the primary drivers of progress, because we cannot achieve anything without their hard work.

On this path, we shall not be judged by how many times our actions grabbed the headlines or how often our utterances are deemed worthy of soundbites by the mainstream media.

Nor shall we be judged by the frequency with which we trend on Twitter, Facebook or any other social media platform.

We will be judged on the basis of one thing and one thing only, how we work every day as a collective to make the lives of the people of Johannesburg better.

Madam Speaker, Fellow Councillors, Residents of Johannesburg

I have delivered the State of our City and I have outlined how we can use the past to understand who we are in order to take the necessary action to build resilient Johannesburg that is people centric. Now - let us collaborate in bringing back the heartbeat of our World Class African City.

I thank you.



STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS (SOCA) 2023



  
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