

**ADDRESS BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM, MR J.L (JABU) MAHLANGU, MPL, DURING MANDELA DAY CELEBRATION AT TIKHUNI SECONDARY SCHOOL IN MZINTI, NKOMAZI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY.**

**Sunday, 18 July 2010**

Programme Director: Ms Winnie Rambau;

The representative of the Executive Mayor of Nkomazi Local Municipality,  
Councillor Robert Vilakazi;

Councillors present;

Head of Department, Mr Rabeng Tshukudu;

The Principal of Tikhuni Secondary School, Ms C.S Khoza and members of the  
School Governing Body;

Managing Director of Ubuntu Helping Hand Institute, Mrs Baby Mabuza;

Renowned Maskandi singer, Mr Mbasi Ngcobo – better known as iHashelimhlophe;

Our distinguished guests from the showbiz industry;

Pastor Mduduzi Khoza;

Learners from the school and parents;

Members of the Media;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and gentlemen;

***Good morning!***

Just seven days after hosting a successful World Cup on the African Soil, we once again converge to celebrate the life of our living legend; our struggle icon – *isithwalandwe/Seaparankwe, tat'u* Nelson Mandela. Just as the World Cup has strengthened the unity of our people of all races and cultures, so is the birthday of Madiba, which has now been declared by the United Nations as the **Nelson Mandela International Day**, in recognition of his contribution to global peace and freedom.

Madiba is not just a South African icon, but an international icon and the citizen of the world, whose immense contribution towards our freedom is immeasurable. The **Nelson Mandela International Day**, as it will from now on be known, is celebrated worldwide on Madiba's birthday to appreciate, as the United Nations General Assembly President Ali Treki puts it, *"a great man who had suffered for the sake of people everywhere."* Our coming together here this morning, is to pay homage and celebrate the legacy of former President, Nelson Mandela.

Just as Madiba sacrificed 67 years of life to fight for freedom and justice for all, we are here this morning to spend a minimum of 67 minutes of our time, with those less fortunate than us. We believe that by so doing, we would have given Madiba a perfect birthday present.

Ladies and gentlemen, just as it is one of our Millenium Development Goals, Madiba's wish is to see all children attending and receiving education under favourable conditions. The 2010 UN Millenium Development Goals Report indicates that we continue to make significant strides as a country, in ensuring that all children go through a classroom by 2015. It is estimated that over 75 million children the world over are not attending school – with half of them being in Africa.

When addressing the **"1 Goal: Education for All"** summit on the last day of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, President Jacob Zuma called on African countries to "focus on the basics, such as ensuring school fees and uniforms did not become a barrier to education." Through the **1 Goal: Education for All"** campaign, millions of children who do not have access to education will be assisted by ensuring that governments keep their promises related to education, and provide the money needed to get every boy and girl to school by 2015, or by the next World Cup in Brazil in 2014.

Our commitment as government and social partners, is to ensure that nothing hinders us from scoring the goal of education for all.

We will strive always to ensure that the less fortunate of our children, go to class on a full stomach. It is our quest to restore the confidence and dignity of our less privileged learners, by ensuring that school uniforms do not become obstacles on the road to education. We have a collective responsibility, to ensure that we reach children in remote rural areas who are not attending school.

However, most children with disabilities continue to be excluded. And as we celebrate Madiba's birthday today, let us all commit to ensure that those vulnerable members of our society including all those from poor families, are also counted. Let's take pride and pay homage to Madiba by making an imprint in the lives of the less privileged. Heed the call to **"make and imprint – and touch lives!"**

Before I close, may I take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to the companies and organisations that have partnered with us by donating to this worthy course. We acknowledge the **Mpumalanga Gambling Board** under the leadership of its CEO, Mr Bheki Mlambo, **Buscor** and **Nedbank** for being committed to ensure that school uniform does not become an impediment for learners of this school to become educated. The uniform we are handing out today, has been fully sponsored by the three organisations.

We appreciate the donation of the six (6) computers and a printer to the school donated by **ICT Works** through Ms Carole Chiloane, who is a partner in the company and a resident of this district. She hails from Matibidi at the Thaba Chweu Municipality. Our gratitude also goes to **Jacaranda-fm** and **Sneakers Edition** for collectively donating a soccer kit and soccer balls; the **Edcon group** for the school bags; **Bushbuckridge News** for contributing towards the food parcels; the **Executive Mayor and the Nkomazi Local Municipality** for the creation of a food garden at the school.

My appreciation also goes to the Head of Department, Mr Rabeng Tshukudu and his family, the staff of the Communication unit within the Department and other staff members for opening their hearts to this course. Much appreciation goes to Ubuntu Helping Hand Institute under Ms Baby Mabuza for bringing our showbiz personalities to come and motivate our learners. We believe that the learners from this school, will be motivated to perform better in order to achieve what you have achieved. We also thank our media partners, Mpumalanga News and Ziwaphi newspapers.

Through your contributions, you've made **an imprint and touched lives** of the less privileged learners at this school.

The challenge that we now pose to local business people and others, is to plough back to their communities by contributing towards the realisation of education for all.

Ladies and gentlemen, the people of our province have always been peaceful and welcoming. They have always been able to live peacefully with people from neighbouring countries of Swaziland and Mozambique and many other countries. It is therefore our plea to request you to continue to accept them as your brothers and sisters. Show the world that as Africans, we love one another and can live peacefully with each other. As Africans, we are one big family, and one's originality will never be an issue with us. Continue to say no to xenophobia.

As I close, I was touched by what 12-year-old Nthabiseng Tshabalala, the 1-Goal ambassador, said when she addressed world leaders at the 1 Goal Summit on July 11, 2010, and I quote:

*"There are millions of children in Africa and around the world who can't go to school. I think that our government and other governments should do everything they can to make sure that all children are allowed to get the education they need for their futures.*

*As leaders, you had your opportunity to go to school. Please sure make that 72 million children get theirs."*

Indeed, we will move all stops to make sure that all children go to school, since in the words of Nelson Mandela, and I quote:

*"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."*

Let's continue to collectively change our world by investing in the education of the future of this country, the African continent and the world.

From all of us, **Happy Birthday Madiba! You've made an imprint and touched lives!**

*Ngiyabonga!*