

Salutations

Honourable Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Legislature,
Honourable Minister of State Security, Mr MD Mahlobo,
Honourable Deputy Ministers,
Honourable Members of the National Assembly and of the
National Council of Provinces present;
Honourable Members of the Mpumalanga Executive Council;
Honourable Members of the Mpumalanga Provincial
Legislature;
Honourable Leaders of the minority parties in the
Legislature;
Executive Mayors;
Chairperson of SALGA, and all local government leadership;
Deputy Judge President of the South Gauteng Division of the
High Court, Pretoria, Justice P Mojaelo;
Members of the Diplomatic Corps.
His Majesty King Makhosonke II
Chairperson of the Mpumalanga Provincial House of
Traditional Leaders, Kgoshi ML Mokoena;
Director-General of Mpumalanga Provincial Government, Dr.
Nonhlanhla Mkhize;
The Provincial Heads of Mpumalanga Government, CEO of
Parastatals and other Chapter 9 Institutions;
ANC Provincial Secretary, Comrade Lucky Ndinisa and all
ANC Officials present;
Leaders from business, sports, traditional, religious and all
sectors,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ngiyanibingelela, Dumelang, Lotshani, Avuxeni,
Ndimacheroni, Molweni, Goeie More, Good Morning

The Context

1. Honourable Speaker, it is always a privilege and a humbling experience to stand before this august House to reflect on our performance and progress towards building a better life for the people of this wonderful Province, Mpumalanga, 'The Place of the Rising Sun'.
2. This occasion allows us to look ahead with hope, determination and courage as we write the story of our collective future, which abounds with endless possibilities for our children and generations to come.
3. The story of our past is rooted in our vision to create a **National Democratic Society** founded on core values of equality and freedom, human dignity, and the progressive realization of socio-economic rights.
4. The realisation of the vision expressed by our predecessors in **the 1955 Freedom Charter** continues to illuminate our path towards the creation of a united, non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and prosperous society. As the principal agent of social transformation, the African National Congress remains steadfast in its pursuit of the ideals of the Freedom Charter.
5. The destination of our people has been clearly marked out and pursued by the Ruling Party for the more than 100 years of its existence. It is a destination **free from poverty, inequality, deprivation and social exclusion.**

6. As we celebrate the **sixtieth anniversary of our Freedom Charter**, we have taken time to reflect on our exceptional journey, and on where we are today.
7. We need to acknowledge and applaud the foundation we have built to ensure that our children and their children's children live the better life we dreamed of and fought for. Today, we can proudly say that we are a better nation than yesterday.
8. In spite of all our achievements, we are under no illusion that our task to realize **the objectives of the National Democratic Revolution** has been completed. A lot of hard work lies ahead. Slowly, but surely our 'long walk' to freedom will continue as we write the new chapters of our lives.
9. Guided by our Constitution, the ANC-led government has, over the past twenty one years, created democratic institutions to uphold and advance a strong culture for the respect of **human rights, civil liberties and the rule of law**.
10. More critically, we have entrenched participatory democracy to empower citizens to elect the government of their choice, and participate meaningfully in government structures and processes aimed at advancing their own development.
11. As government, we have made progress in implementing programmes aimed at improving the quality of life of the vulnerable sectors of our society regardless of race, class or creed.

12. We have implemented policies to ensure that women, children, the elderly and people with disabilities continue to enjoy the protection of the law against abuse.
13. We have improved access to education, health care and economic development opportunities to ensure that we **reverse the marginalization and social exclusion** of the majority of our people
14. Our social security net continues to shield the poor from the indignity of abject poverty.
15. Despite challenges experienced in many areas, the majority of citizens in the Province enjoy access to basic services such as **electricity, water and sanitation**.
16. Our land reform programme continues to restore land ownership to those who were forcefully removed from the land of their ancestors.
17. In this regard, government will continue to support all the beneficiaries so that restituted land is effectively utilised for production and the economic empowerment of previously disadvantaged individuals.

The Mandate

18. Madame Speaker, our work as the ANC-led government in Mpumalanga continues to focus on the implementation of priorities that were raised in the **2014 ANC Manifesto** to ensure that whatever we do responds to the aspirations of ordinary people who overwhelmingly mandated the ANC to govern this Province.
19. In June last year, we outlined our five year programme which, among others, pays particular attention to:
- Growing the economy and creating decent employment to address the triple challenge of unemployment, poverty, and inequality
 - Improving the quality of education
 - Improving our health care system to ensure that we increase life expectancy and mitigate the negative impact of HIV and AIDS, and opportunistic diseases
 - Ensuring that our people have access to basic services to improve their quality of life
20. Today, we stand before this eminent House to reflect on our **implementation progress and present our programme of action for the 2015/16 financial year.**

Creation of decent work and sustainable livelihoods

21. Madame Speaker, for us to improve the quality of life of citizens, it is important that our economy grows and creates opportunities for development and job creation.
22. Despite the negative impact of the global economic outlook, our economy has recovered gradually since the global economic recession in 2008 – although that growth remains below the 5% target.
23. Most notably, there is an improving trend with regard to reducing poverty levels and increasing job creation opportunities owing to the implementation of the socio-economic interventions that shielded millions of our people from the recent economic recession.
24. The share of Mpumalanga's population below the poverty line decreased during the last couple of years to 36.2 per cent in 2013 from 51.1 per cent in 2009.
25. The public sector accounted for most of the net jobs created in the province since 2008. Out of **86 710** jobs created between 2008 and 2014, **53 173** jobs were created in the community and government services.
26. According to Statistics South Africa, Mpumalanga created only **11 000 jobs** between the first quarter and the last quarter of 2014.

27. During the first six months of the current financial year, our Expanded Public Works Programme created **36 450 work opportunities** against a target of 23 552. The main beneficiaries of these opportunities were young people, women, and people with disabilities. The Public Works programme is poised to achieve the annual target of **57 599 work opportunities** by 31 March 2015.
28. Madame Speaker, a worrying factor is the lacklustre performance of the private sector. Sluggish industry growth in most sectors of our economy has impacted negatively on prospects for employment creation.
29. The economy has become over-reliant on social grants and welfare services, with mass joblessness and a large number of people on social security benefits accepted as a fact of life.
30. Consequently, we are concerned that many people still labour under the triple burden of **poverty, unemployment and inequality**, especially the youth. Over 70% of the unemployed are young people.
31. Our economy is not growing at a rate that allows us to absorb many people into productive employment. The **slowing domestic growth** has been caused in part by the global economic slowdown and secondly by domestic structural conditions, such as labour market disruptions, skills shortages and also the shortage of energy.

32. Furthermore, the economy has become more and more unbalanced, with our fortunes attached to a few industries concentrated in one area of the province such as mining, which makes a quarter of the provincial economic share, while other industries like agriculture diminish.
33. Madame Speaker, the state of our economy must change if we are to make significant progress in transforming society in a manner that confronts poverty, unemployment and inequality.
34. If we are to meet our five year targets, we need **to implement extraordinary measures to accelerate economic growth** and job creation. We need to be at the forefront of implementing the NDP and the programmes laid out in the New Growth Path.
35. These are our roadmaps, and in the Province, we will use instruments such as our **Vision 2030 Strategic Implementation Framework** and the **Mpumalanga Economic Growth and Development Path** to drive economic transformation and broaden access to our province's potential wealth.
36. We need to do more, together with labour, business and all stakeholders, to lead our economy into a new, bold direction for higher growth, decent work and greater equality.

37. Just as we have involved our people in government from grassroots level, so too must we motivate our citizens to kick-start the economies in their localities. **Local economic development** initiatives have the most tangible impact on communities.

38. We must support and celebrate our entrepreneurs and our small businesses. We must open doors, broker partnerships, facilitate access to finance and limit the frustrations caused by red tape.

39. At the heart of our **radical socio-economic transformation** agenda our targets should focus on:

- Investing in **strategic infrastructure development** to unlock growth and job creation
- Growing **strategic economic sectors** that have the potential to create jobs, including new economies such the green economy and ICT
- Strengthening **partnerships** with the private sector to create opportunities for small businesses and cooperatives,
- Investing in the development of **township and rural economies**, including the provision of infrastructure and support for industrial development in areas where the majority of our people live.
- Supporting the development of **small businesses** and cooperatives

Strategic Infrastructure Development

40. Madame Speaker, infrastructure is critical and plays a significant role in supporting the expansion of the productive sectors. It promotes balanced economic development, unlocks economic opportunities and promotes job creation.
41. The acceleration of infrastructure development has been identified as one of the key levers to achieving the goals of the Mpumalanga Vision 2030.
42. Our infrastructure development programme continues to prioritise **socio-economic infrastructure** such as roads, hospitals and schools. In the process, we are making a significant contribution to enterprise development, and supporting businesses to create employment opportunities.
43. In 2015/16 we have set aside **R2.065 billion** to continue the critical efforts needed to develop and upgrade these vital foundations for socio-economic development in the Province.
44. In the 2014 State of the Province Address, strategic infrastructure development initiatives to unlock growth and job creation were highlighted. We are happy with progress that we are making in creating space for local people to access opportunities during the construction of these initiatives.

45. Among others, we are making progress in the rehabilitation and maintenance of the coal haulage network to mitigate the degradation of our roads in the mining areas of the Province.
46. The **construction of the 68 km Majuba** railway is progressing well and the completion of this project will alleviate pressure on our coal haulage network, as it will change the transportation mode of coal to a number of power stations, especially Majuba Power Station, from road to rail. The first coal-loaded train is scheduled to begin operating on May 31, 2016. Once completed, this corridor will have cost in the region of R5.2-billion.
47. As part of our infrastructure build programme, we have, for the next financial year alone, set aside **R1.7 billion** for investment in the construction and maintenance of roads to enhance mobility and support the economy to create employment opportunities.
48. Our work related to improvement and expansion of the **road network in strategic towns** such as Mbombela, Emalahleni, Ermelo, Middleburg, Mashishing and Secunda is progressing well.
49. As part of government investment in public transport infrastructure, Mbombela has completed *phase 1* for the implementation of the Integrated Public Transport Network.

50. Construction of the required infrastructure which involves widening some parts of the Central Business District road network is currently underway. The project is aimed at incorporating all modes of transport.
51. Madame Speaker, I am pleased to report that after a long period the **Moloto Rail Corridor Development** programme has now been approved to proceed, and is included as part of the national **Strategic Infrastructure Project 1, namely, Unlocking the northern mineral belt.**
52. The Moloto Development Corridor will be a catalyst for stimulating economic growth and job creation that will benefit the Province, especially Thembisile Hani and Dr JS Moroka local municipalities. It will attract private sector investment along the corridor, thereby increasing prospects for employment and local enterprise development.
53. The national Department of Transport has already signed and handed the project over to the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa for implementation.
54. Madame Speaker, the establishment of the **Mpumalanga International Fresh Produce Market** is another major infrastructure initiative to support agricultural production and create a logistics platform for the export of our fresh produce to international markets.

55. The Mpumalanga International Fresh Produce Market and associated agri-hubs remain critical infrastructure projects to ensure access to markets for small holder and land reform farmers. This market will create the required **infrastructure and logistics platform** to assist vegetable, fruit, citrus and meat production farmers and remove the current barriers to market.
56. In partnership with the national Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, we will ensure that the designated **Agri-park investment** in the Province, announced by the President in the State of the Nation Address will be directed to support production and the development of agro-industries linked to the Fresh Produce Market value chain.
57. I am pleased to report that the process for the acquisition and registration of land for the Mpumalanga International Fresh Produce Market has been concluded. All the necessary statutory compliance matters such as the environmental impact assessments have been finalised.
58. MEGA has commenced with the **installation of bulk infrastructure**, which includes water, sewerage and electricity at the site of the Mpumalanga International Fresh Produce Market (MIFPM). In the next financial year, we will commence with the construction of the Fresh Produce Market.

59. Madame Speaker, our infrastructure development programme must also contribute to attracting private sector investment that promotes exports and more widespread industrialization in the Province.
60. In partnership with the dti, the Province has prioritised the establishment of the **Special Economic Zone** in Nkomazi to attract investment that will unlock growth and create employment.
61. In this regard, pre-feasibility and detailed feasibility studies have been concluded. The results indicate that the SEZ will be developed to become a **Mixed Use Special Economic Zone** that will include logistic and intermodal facilities for the automotive and mining industries.
62. It will attract investment in a variety of industries, including the production of agri-chemicals and agro-processing initiatives. To support the proposed infrastructure investment, Nkomazi municipality has made land available for the establishment of the SEZ.
63. In the next financial year, the municipality will prioritise the provision of basic infrastructure to support the establishment of the SEZ. We are hoping that the Minister of Trade and Industry will finalise the process of designation of the Nkomazi SEZ.
64. Going into the future, we will continue to prioritise strategic infrastructure development initiatives to support the growth of priority sectors.

65. These initiatives include:

- *The **construction of strategic dams*** to increase the availability of water supply for development. In this regard, Mbombela will commence with processes leading to construction of a dam that will incorporate hydro-energy generation
- ***The construction of the Cultural Hub.*** In this regard, we will ensure that opportunities for private sector investment are explored
- ***The High Altitude Training Centre*** in Emakhazeni Local Municipality. This project is ready for private sector investment so that we finalise the establishment of this centre.
- *The establishment of **the International Convention Centre.*** In this regard, Mbombela Municipality has publicly launched the concept and the model of the proposed ICC to entice private sector interest and investment.
- Investing in ***broadband infrastructure*** to enhance connectivity.
- Attracting private sector investment for the construction and management of the ***Skywalk, Cable Car and Bourkes Luck Hotel*** as part of the Blyde Development cluster. This project will be packaged and presented to potential investors.

66. The Mpumalanga Economic Growth Agency (MEGA) will drive an aggressive **investment attraction programme** to ensure that the private sector takes advantage of investment opportunities presented by our infrastructure build programme. Working together, we can make a difference and take the economy of the Province to a higher growth trajectory.

67. In doing this, we will continue to prioritise **key productive sectors** that will stimulate rapid economic growth and create decent employment. These sectors are:

- Agriculture and forestry
- Tourism
- Mining
- Manufacturing
- The Green Economy, as well as Information and Communication Technology

Growing and supporting priority sectors of the economy for job creation

68. Madam Speaker, **the agricultural sector** remains critical to addressing the developmental challenges that are facing the Province.

69. As a predominantly rural province, agriculture remains our competitive advantage to drive growth and job creation.

70. However, we are concerned about declining output and employment in this sector. Something drastic must be done to improve the performance of the agricultural sector.

71. For agriculture to grow access to land for production remains at the heart of agricultural prosperity. In the Province we have managed to transfer **921 981 hectares** of land through the land redistribution and restitution processes at a cost of **R4, 4 billion** since the inception of the land reform programme.

72. Together, with our National partners, the Province has embarked on a Comprehensive Rural Development Programme in our poorest municipalities to address the development backlogs that persist in these areas.

73. Through this Programme, we have made strides in improving the quality of life of many of our communities. Among others,

- We have ensured the **empowerment of local cooperatives** to access business opportunities. Today, cooperatives are now supplying the school nutrition programme with vegetables.
- **Modern boarding schools, clinics and ECD centres** have been built to ensure that those living on the farms have access to quality education and health care
- Rural **access roads and bridges** have been built to enhance rural mobility

- **Housing and security of tenure** have been improved and rural safety has been improved in these targeted areas.
74. Notwithstanding progress made to date in the implementation of our Comprehensive Rural Development Programme, we are convinced that the conditions under which **farm dwellers** live are far from ideal, and require our urgent intervention as government.
75. We need to address the plight of farm dwellers to ensure that their socio-economic rights are protected. Like all of us, they should have access to quality education, healthcare and other basic services such as electricity, water and sanitation.
76. In this regard, I will set up a commission to look into the conditions of farm dwellers and make specific recommendations on what interventions are required to address the plight of farm dwellers.
77. Madame Speaker, agriculture is at the centre of rural development and the Province's ability to create jobs.
78. As part of the State of the Nation Address, Honourable President Zuma, unveiled a nine point economic plan to ignite growth and create jobs. The revitalization of agriculture and the agro-processing value chain were emphasised as critical areas of focus.

79. As a Province, we will continue to increase our investment in agriculture to ensure that farmers are supported with critical infrastructure for production.
80. We are going to prioritise strategic agricultural infrastructure to **support primary production** and ensure maximum beneficiation throughout the value chains of the identified priority commodities.
81. We will ensure that land reform farms are producing for market. In this regard, we will focus on strengthening **farmer support programmes** to ensure that emerging farmers are linked to local and export market.
82. In partnership with commercial agriculture, a targeted **supplier development programme** will be rolled out to ensure that small scale farmers are capacitated to produce at the right level of quality to supply the International Fresh Produce Market with produce that meets international quality standards.
83. Madame Speaker, as part of the Agricultural Policy Action Plan, the **integrated poultry value chain** must be developed to significantly contribute to the food security and job creation needs of our people whilst simultaneously negating the need of the Republic to import chicken meat.
84. Currently broiler chicken production is dominated by large, vertically integrated producers with an outgrower scheme that tends to yield very low returns for emerging farmers.

85. As a Province, we have emerging youth broiler producers who have the potential to grow to commercial levels of production, but their challenge is that they do not have the capacity to supply bigger markets and they do not have access to the right marketing channels.
86. In the next financial year, a targeted programme will be implemented to link youth enterprises in **the broiler chicken value chain** and help them to access markets. Youth enterprises will be identified in all the three Districts for this initiative.
87. Madame Speaker and Members, we are convinced that we should do more to enhance the participation of young people in agriculture. The future of our agriculture is in the hands of the youth.
88. In the next financial year, we will establish **a Mpumalanga Fortune-40 Young Farmers Incubator**, a programme that will have 20 youth-owned SMMEs and 20 youth-owned cooperatives recruited into an incubator programme operated in four farms throughout the Province.
89. The incubation programme will be operated under a strategic partnership with the private sector to mentor future commercial farmers. The incubator will train our youth in farming high-value crops mainly for the export market.
90. The private sector will contribute farming expertise and business knowledge to make sure that our youth undergo intensive training on the whole value chain of commercial farming.

91. This programme is expected to create **200 direct jobs, and 100 jobs** will be added each year for the next three years.
92. Madame Speaker, our partnerships with the mining sector will continue to prioritise the rehabilitation of mining land for agricultural production.
93. We will also make opportunities available for aspiring young farmers to access rehabilitated land for farming purposes.
94. Our partnership with **BHP Billiton** has resulted in this company rehabilitating **860 hectares** of land and part of this land will be used for animal farming by emerging young farmers with the remainder being set aside for crop farming.

Growing our Tourism industry

95. Madame Speaker, our natural resources and heritage are competitive advantages that we must leverage for the benefit of all the people of the Province. Undoubtedly, tourism remains key to our efforts of growing the economy and creating employment.
96. To grow this sector, we will collaborate with industry players to enhance existing, and develop new, tourism products to ensure that Mpumalanga becomes a destination of choice for domestic and international tourists.

97. We will prioritise the diversification of the tourism product portfolio focusing specifically on the Blyde River Canyon, Loskop Dam Tourism Belt and the Barberton Development Clusters.
98. Various key projects have been identified, including the recapitalization and the commercialisation of Zithabiseni Resort, the Barberton Makhonjwa Mountain World Heritage Site precinct, the rejuvenation of Pilgrims Rest; as well as other themed events and activity based tourism product offerings.
99. As part of destination profiling and branding, we will ensure that our marketing programmes entrench the new Mpumalanga brand. In doing this, we will work with regional partners to undertake joint marketing initiatives, including the strengthening of the regional integration projects such as the TRILAND Brand and Umsebe Accord.
100. Our partnership with KZN will also prioritise joint destination profiling and marketing initiatives that benefit both provinces.
101. Madame Speaker, our nature reserves under the management of MTPA are our prize natural assets and should contribute to economic growth and employment creation.

102. However, the current model for the management of our parks is unsustainable as it is largely dependent on the diminishing fiscal resources of government. As a consequence, many of these parks operate at a loss. The state of infrastructure is poor and requires huge capital injection for upgrading.

103. We have come to the conclusion that a different model is required to attract the investment that is critical for the recapitalization and viable operation of our parks.

104. In this regard, we will set up a unit within MEGA to conduct a comprehensive assessment of each park and develop a commercialization plan that will attract much needed investment to make our parks viable.

Partnerships with the Mining and other Sectors

105. Madame Speaker, we are constantly engaging with the mining sector to accelerate the implementation of the decisions of the ***Mining Lekgotla*** held in 2012.

106. Our progress report is a mixed bag of successes and slow progress in the implementation of key resolutions around enterprise development, infrastructure development, human capital development as well as sustainable environmental management and research.

107. Our commitment to support infrastructure development and urban renewal in distressed mining areas has not yielded positive results.

108. As a result I have decided to establish industry sector forums, starting with a Mining Forum. The mining Forum will be established in partnership with the Department of Mineral Resources. The main focus of the Forum is to engage the mines in the socio-economic development of communities that live in their vicinities.

109. Madame Speaker, I have visited some of these mines and the situation under which our people live is appalling. It cannot be true that 21 years after independence some of our people still live in such squalid conditions. It is also shocking that we find such extremes of poverty and wealth living side by side. We need to start sharing.

110. Access to procurement opportunities in the mining sector value chain by small businesses and cooperatives remain negligible. A more focused approach to promoting local procurement opportunities is needed as we move forward.

111. Despite slow progress in the implementation of the 2012 Lekgotla resolutions, we are pleased about the contribution of the mining sector to human capital development initiatives.

112. Madame Speaker, to ensure that the **mining sector** continues to contribute to economic growth, job creation and the empowerment of communities, we focus on the following priorities:

- The **revitalization of distressed mining towns**, with more targeted intervention to improve the conditions of poor communities living near the mining areas
- Upgrading and maintenance of the **coal haulage network**
- Supporting **small scale mining enterprises** through the establishment of the Mining Incubator in Steve Tshwete local municipality
- Aggressive enhancement of **procurement opportunities** to address transformation in the supply value chain of mining companies

Manufacturing

113. Madame Speaker, in our endeavour to drive economic growth, we have positioned the **manufacturing sector** as a main driver of our industrial development.

114. The manufacturing sector has the highest economic and employment multipliers of any sector. It plays a critical and indispensable role as a driver of innovation and productivity growth. It should increasingly provide the capital goods and equipment inputs required for the infrastructure build programme.

115. We are finalising the ***Mpumalanga Industrial Plan*** which will guide us in growing the manufacturing sector. The principal objective of the Industrial Plan is to achieve structural change, by encouraging the development, growth and increased competitiveness of the Mpumalanga manufacturing sector.

116. We will prioritise the establishment of innovation hubs in areas where the Province has a competitive advantage in order to promote industrial clustering.

117. In partnership with industry players, we will prioritise specific initiatives to enhance our manufacturing innovation and capabilities in the following key areas:

- metal manufacturing technology
- wood processing and beneficiation technology
- agro-processing technology and
- mining technology

118. Included in the proposals of the Industrial Plan is the establishment of two Industrial Parks in the Province, one that focuses on petrochemicals and one that focuses on the mining industry. The purpose of these industrial parks will be to promote processing and manufacturing opportunities, as well as enterprise development and job creation.

119. Madame Speaker, we will continue to expand sector specific incubators to enhance local industrial development.

120. In partnership with private and public sector companies, we will establish Fly Ash Brick Manufacturing Incubators aimed at building a robust SMME dominated construction materials sector, using our abundant fly ash waste.
121. Phase one of this initiative will be rolled out in the Gert Sibande District, with the first plant in Govan Mbeki Local Municipality due for opening in June 2015.
122. This first incubator plant will incubate three SMMEs and one co-operative. With a production capacity of 13 000 000 bricks per annum it is set to create 80 permanent jobs for the youth within the Govan Mbeki Municipality.
123. The incubators will supply bricks for the construction of low cost houses in the Province, especially in the Gert Sibande and Nkangala Districts. A second facility will be opened in March 2016 in E local Emalahleni Local Municipality to create an additional 80 jobs targeted at young people.
124. Madame Speaker, our support for the industrialization programme will include targeted support towards growing township economies. We prioritise support in townships to SMMEs and businesses that are owned by our youth in order to increase and expand the demand for goods and services by small businesses and cooperatives in these localities.

125. Our assessment indicates that small businesses and cooperatives are struggling with access to finance and requisite infrastructure to support the expansion of their back-yard businesses.
126. In this regard, we will prioritise the **regeneration of industrial sites** to provide infrastructure that will support township industrial development.
127. In all townships and new human settlements, our municipalities will plan for designated industrial infrastructure to support small businesses and cooperatives.
128. **Mentorship programmes** will be designed to respond to the needs of entrepreneurs in the townships
129. Madame Speaker, as we implement all these initiatives, young people must be at the forefront of exploiting the opportunities presented by both government and business.
130. For this to be realized, we will enhance initiatives to make information available to the youth in business. In partnership with the Youth Chamber of Business in Mpumalanga, we will launch the **Mpumalanga Youth Business Portal** which is a web-based youth business directory service. It will allow youth suppliers, government, private sector and potential clients to connect and share information.

Alternative Energy

131. Madam Speaker, our focus on industrialization as a country, together with the mass electrification programme to take power into deep rural areas, has seen a steep increase in the demand for electricity. In fact, our energy demand is expected to increase substantially from the current levels by 2030.
132. More importantly, **energy security** is critical to our ability to attract large scale investments into the Province. Some of the priority projects that we want to deliver such as the Special Economic Zone and industrial parks would attract projects that are highly energy intensive.
133. Besides coal, our Province has vast **renewable energy resources** which must be exploited to power our productive industries. The transition to a **green economy** is framed around the three central sustainability concepts of **climate resilience**, **resource-efficiency** and **job creation**. The green economy has the potential to significantly stimulate economic growth and create jobs.
134. The green energy sub sectors that have great potential to increase our energy diversification include bio-fuels and biomass. Other key focus areas expected to support the green economy in the province include focusing on green buildings and **using municipal waste** to generate energy.

135. In partnership with the private sector, we have established the **Mpumalanga Bio-energy Cluster** comprising various stakeholders from government and the private sector. The Cluster has identified economy related projects with the aim of creating job opportunities.

136. In the next financial year, we will initiate the processes leading to the establishment of a large-scale Bio-Mass Plant for energy generation.

137. We will also identify viable sites in municipalities to establish **solid waste energy plants** for energy generation.

138. More importantly, our close proximity to Mozambique and existing infrastructure transporting gas to South Africa presents opportunities for the Province to set up **gas powered energy generation infrastructure**. We will prioritise this initiative to address our energy needs.

139. We will commence with the roll-out of the retrofitting of government buildings to be energy efficient.

140. As we undertake these initiatives, we will ensure that we support the development of SMMEs and youth-owned enterprises through locally manufactured components and locally assembled energy efficiency products to supply the sector.

141. We will partner with the private sector to establish an incubation programme for youth-owned enterprises to be trained, skilled and supported to operate in the green energy industry.

142. This three-pronged incubation programme will include:

- The building of a green energy efficient **bulb factory** in Mpumalanga
- The establishment of an **incubation program** with 40 youth owned businesses to be trained on auditing, installation and maintenance of green products as produced from the established factory
- Developing **procurement arrangements** with government to ensure that they provide a stable market for these emerging businesses.

143. When fully implemented, the project will make a significant contribution towards energy saving initiatives and is expected to support 40 youth-owned enterprises and create 200 direct jobs in the process.

ICT Sector

144. Madame Speaker, as we tackle development and service delivery challenges, we prioritise ICT as the driver for economic growth and development.

145. Our major focus will be on the expansion of **broadband infrastructure** to connect schools, hospitals, libraries, and government offices to high speed broadband services. We will target underserviced areas of the Province to ensure that economic growth and service delivery is supported by a reliable ICT infrastructure backbone.

146. In our pursuit to bridge the digital divide, we will continue to engage different partners to explore ways in which we can **deploy affordable broadband** to all parts of the province particularly the rural areas which by far remain the most under-serviced.

147. As a Province, we will work closely with Telkom in the roll-out of **broadband infrastructure** in prioritised areas of the Province.

148. We are pleased that His Excellency, President Zuma announced **Gert Sibande District** as one of the priority districts targeted for the initial roll-out of broadband infrastructure. As part of this process, we will begin connecting a number of schools to ensure improved learning and teaching through the deployment of **ICT**.

149. This year, we will finalise the appointment of the transaction adviser to support the Province with the development of the ICT Master Plan that will guide the implementation of ICT interventions. We will also commence with the process leading to the establishment of an **ICT Innovation Hub** to enhance skills development, innovation and SMME development.

Education

150. Honourable speaker, our agenda for radical socio-economic transformation of our society must be anchored on an education system that delivers quality outcomes.

151. Our future is in the hands of our children and their needs and aspirations are uppermost on our agenda. Our investment in education remains a critical **lever for self-empowerment and social progress.**

152. Starting with the youngest of our citizens, we have undertaken to prioritise quality and accessibility in the **Early Childhood Development (ECD)** sector. We will accelerate this programme and build on progress that we have made in the delivery of ECD.

153. We have planned to provide readers and indoor play equipment for **90 000 learners in Grade R.** Our contribution extends to both public schools and community centres and we will be providing further support to **12 502** pre grade R learners in identified community centres.

154. With quality being a key theme in our service provision agenda for the year, we have also undertaken to ensure that **600 child minders and 5 800 ECD specialists** are trained.

155. To facilitate the skilling of these critical ECD practitioners, we have prioritised the completion of the 2nd phase of renovations at the **Province's ECD institute** so that we can accommodate the trainees who travel long distances to complete this critical training.
156. Further, in the spirit of "getting things done through partnerships", the Department of Education will collaborate closely with our Departments of Health and Social Development to ensure that our citizens are informed and aware of the critical role that ECD plays in the development and well-being of the children of this Province.
157. Campaigns across the province will highlight issues around registration requirements, parental capacitation, childcare, health and nutrition.
158. Madame Speaker, we renew our pledge to supporting the entire spectrum of our children's school careers. We recognise and emphasise the **importance of teaching and learning environments** that are conducive to intellectual, physical and spiritual growth.
159. This commitment is evidenced by the focus that we have placed on addressing the specific challenges that persist in our education sector.
160. **Improving learner outcomes** tops our agenda, and we know that this is only possible if we systematically improve the quality of our learners' education experience.

161. **Numeracy, literacy and mathematics** are the basic building blocks for sound education and we have ensured that adequate resources are allocated to improve our learners' performance in these subjects, especially our grade 3, 6 and 9 pupils.

162. Furthermore, the **Maths Science and Technology Academy** will be utilised as a vehicle to stimulate interest and build capacity in maths and science from the foundation through to the intermediate phase.

163. The Academy also underscores our commitment to using **ICT** to improve access to learning opportunities. We intend to make sure that all our primary schools are linked to the Academy so that we can provide adequate support to the lower phases.

164. In 2015/16 alone, **160 Academy feeder primary schools** will be provided with resources in order to ensure optimal functionality. This, of course, includes human resources. We will be training **1000 Maths and Science teachers** through the Academy on particular topics according to specific, identified learner needs.

165. Madame Speaker, the last couple of years at secondary school are particularly crucial in any learner's progress into the world of further work or future study.

166. Performance at FET level is largely measured by learner performance at **Grade 12 level**, and we are pleased that our performance has shown a steady increase from **47.9% in 2009 to 79%** in 2014.

167. Once again, we take this time to congratulate the matric class of 2014. We would like to thank parents, teachers and all education stakeholders for working with us to improve education outcomes at all levels. We would like to congratulate MEC Mhaule and her leadership team for work well done.

168. Honourable members, we have set targets for 2015/16 that tell the story of our commitment to reinvigorating the education landscape in this Province.

169. We have set out to ensure that, amongst others,

- 40 000 learners take up mathematics in Grade 10 and 35 000 take up physical science in Grade 10
- 89% of our learners pass Grade 12
- 35% of our learners pass mathematics at 50% and above and 34% of our learners pass physical science at 50% and above
- Furthermore, we would like to see at least 30% of our Grade 12 learners gaining **University entrance**.

170. Madame Speaker, notwithstanding our progress in improving our education system, we are concerned that we are losing children before they complete their schooling.

171. The dropout rate in the province is of concern and a large number of our learners are lost to the system.

172. In 2015/16, we will introduce the programmes that we have developed to **track out learners throughout the schooling system**. This will enable us to trace each learner's journey through the schooling system.

173. However, we cannot stop there. We must investigate and address the **root causes of the dropout rate**. These are no doubt entrenched in the landscape of poverty, need and neglect that characterises many of our children's lives.

174. I have visited many schools and witnessed the afflictions of malnutrition, sickness and scarcity first hand. Our approach to the development of our children must be **holistic** and needs must include due consideration of their health and welfare.

175. We continue to be committed to developing and implementing school based programmes and interventions that provide for the **basic health** and welfare needs of our children.

176. Honourable members, at its simplest level, the **classroom environment** brings to mind the ubiquitous idea of the three legged pot. Each leg represents one of its critical components – **learners, teachers and infrastructure**.

177. We all know what happens to the pot if one of the legs is broken, I am sure.

178. Let us turn our attention to the teachers. William A Ward, a much quoted writer of inspirational sayings put it that, "the mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires."

179. As a province, our efforts must of necessity be directed towards transforming every "mediocre" teacher into someone we can truly call great; someone whose passion for the future of his or her learners is matched only by their passion for the subject that they teach.

180. We have planned a number of programmes to support our teachers in the coming year and these include the roll out of a three year programme to train all teachers in the **use of ICT** to broaden and improve education.

181. Our teachers will also be playing their part as mediators of social cohesion and cultural diversity as they will be trained to implement the incremental introduction of **African languages** into schools where these are not yet offered.

182. The new curriculum for South African Sign Language has been approved and we will ensure that selected teachers receive the training required to ensure access to education for our deaf learners too.

183. Madame Speaker I turn to the third leg.

184. **Adequate and appropriate infrastructure** is critical to a conducive teaching and learning environment. We are dedicated to meeting the minimum norms and standards prescribed in the National Implementation Plan, and the following aspects of infrastructure provision have been prioritised in 2015/16:

- Construction of Grade R facilities
- Provision of laboratories and computer centres to all schools offering maths and science
- Upgrading of special schools, and
- Provision of sanitation facilities, water and electricity.

185. Most importantly, let me add that we have put in place systems to ensure the **rigorous monitoring** of our infrastructure maintenance and development efforts and we will be taking a hard line with the contractors that we have entrusted with the maintenance of our children's school facilities.

186. Madame Speaker, alongside these initiatives, we will continue to systematically address the **plight of poor children** living on the farms to ensure that these children too are able to receive quality education.

187. In this regard, we are currently implementing our decision to close all **dysfunctional farm schools**, and build state-of-the-art boarding facilities to accommodate children living on the farms.

188. We are happy with the impact of this intervention. For many of these children life has changed for the better.

189. Madame Speaker and Members, a large part of the schooling experience is designed to prepare our learners for their further education and future careers.

190. Part of our responsibility is to facilitate access to relevant information on further education and **career options** to high school learners so that they can be stimulated to make informed choices about their future careers.

191. This year, we will partner with **SASOL** to stage one of the biggest **career exhibitions** in Mpumalanga which will draw grade 7-12 learners from across the country. The 2015 Sasol Techno X will be hosted by Sasol Secunda Operations in Mpumalanga.

192. **Techno X** is an exhibition that focuses on displays, workshops, tours, talks and hands-on activities aimed at enthusing learners and students to study in the fields of science, maths, engineering and technology.

193. Madame Speaker, as part of preparing our learners for further education, we have also undertaken to improve the performance of our skills development system, in particular through partnerships with institutions of higher education and training, the SETAs and local businesses.

194. Coupled to this, the Province will in this year establish ***the Provincial Human Resource Development Council***, in line with the National Skills Development Strategy III (NSDS III).

195. Our ***Integrated Youth Skills Development Plan*** has been designed to support our out of school youth through job creation, entrepreneurship and SMME support programmes as well as skills development initiatives in our key economic sectors such as mining, manufacturing, agriculture and tourism.

196. In 2014, provincial departments awarded ***318 new bursaries***. For 2015/16 we have prioritised increasing the number of bursaries offered to learners passing Grade 12, and these will be awarded in line with the Provincial Human Resources Development Strategy.

197. We are also partnering with Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services SETA (MERSETA) on artisan training for our out of school youth. MERSETA is contributing R20 million while, as government, we will allocate R10 million to this joint initiative.

198. Our partnership with Eskom, has resulted in the recruitment of ***1847 trainee Artisans; 465 Technicians and 126 Engineers***. The programme will be completed in 2017.

199. SA Breweries has also committed itself to train ***60 artisans***.

200. During the course of this year, SASOL's contribution to learnerships and artisan development will produce **794 technicians** in the Maintenance; Process; Mining; Electrical and Mechanical fields.

201. The Mpumalanga Regional Training Trust (MRTT) and Hydra Arch, in partnership with other training providers, are currently training **274 learners** towards Artisan development in various trades.

202. In the 2015/16 financial year, our partnerships with the mining sector will continue to focus on artisan development to ensure that we create a pool of technical skills for the sector.

203. We will fast track the establishment of the **Provincial Skills Hub** to respond to the shortage of skills required by the sector.

204. More young people in the mining areas should access technical training programmes that enable them to find employment in the sector or empower them to start their own businesses.

205. Madame Speaker, **the Lowveld Agricultural College** was successfully incorporated into the University of Mpumalanga as of the 1st January 2015. The University now has **840 registered students**. This year, we also introduced a National ICT Diploma to our basket of courses.

206. The **Council of the University** is in place, and management and lecturing staff have been appointed. The building of additional facilities is also underway, and these will be available for use in January 2016 – enabling us to expand our student intake to 1000, and allowing us to introduce five new study programmes.

Health

207. Madame Speaker, our economy, future development and progress will always depend on our commitment towards improving the health profile of our citizens.

208. Our citizens must be healthy and productive in order to make meaningful contributions to our overall development as a nation.

209. Madame Speaker, the American politician, Richard Lamm, was quoted as saying that, “**universal coverage, not medical technology, is the foundation of any caring health care system.**” Our overarching priority remains clear – **reduce mortality and increase life expectancy** – for **everyone**.

210. Our approach is anchored in two strategies, namely piloting the **National Health Insurance** system in the Gert Sibande District, and the implementation of the Department of Health’s **turnaround strategy**.

211. The two are inextricably linked. The implementation of the turnaround strategy will ensure that we move towards creating a robust foundation for the implementation of the NHI.

212. Madame Speaker and Members, notwithstanding current challenges, we are pleased that we have made some significant gains in **stabilising the Mpumalanga Department of Health**. There are indications that the Department is heading in the right direction.

213. The Department's financial and human resource management systems are beginning to improve. We are beginning to make a difference in the maintenance of our facilities.

214. Admittedly, we are still far from where we should be. A lot of work still needs to be done. However, we continue to support the Department in the implementation of its turnaround plan.

215. Our efforts to sustain this progress will continue as we focus on the appointment and retention of suitably **qualified and experienced health professionals** as well as the **renovation and refurbishment** of health care facilities across the Province.

216. To date we have appointed area managers in our "big five" hospitals and have accelerated the revitalisation of infrastructure with the assistance of the **Rapid Implementation Unit** situated in the Office of the Premier.

217. To date, 19 infrastructure projects have been completed, and 3 facilities are progressing through the revitalisation and refurbishment process, namely the **Themba, Ermelo and Rob Ferreira** hospitals. Routine maintenance is underway in all facilities.

218. We have commenced with the upgrading of **Sabie Hospital** to ensure that the quality of health care is improved. We have set aside **R70 million** to complete this work.

219. In our efforts to address the challenges experienced with the provision of **food, linen and waste removal** services in our health facilities, I am pleased to record that we have reduced the cost of food provided to the Department by 30%.

220. The savings realised here have enabled the Department to extend the provision to other health facilities that were not originally catered for.

221. Madame Speaker I am pleased to report that one year on, we have had a significant impact on our **maternal mortality rate**, which has decreased from 146 per 100 000 in 2012/13 to 102.6 per 100 000 in 2014.

222. This is due in large part to the education and awareness efforts of the Department of Health, including the "**Mom Connect**" service that mobilises women to access ante-natal services in the early stages of their pregnancies.

223. We have provided seven obstetric emergency ambulances to provide emergency care to pregnant women and we have introduced a **"Help Baby Breathe" strategy** to train nurses to resuscitate babies effectively.
224. Madame Speaker, the figures show us clearly that we are not making a substantial enough impact on the prevalence and incidence of **HIV/AIDS in the Province**.
225. David Mixner, the civil rights activist and best-selling author states it plainly, *"treating HIV/AIDS is a lifelong commitment that demands strict adherence to drug protocols, consistent care, and a trusting relationship with health care providers."*
226. The Department of Health has developed a **provincial HIV/AIDS Turnaround Strategy** that is currently being implemented in the Gert Sibande District.
227. The Office of the Premier plans to support their efforts in this regard and has commissioned a **diagnostic evaluation** to assess the viability of a **Community Based HIV/AIDS Risk Reduction Programme**, which complements existing government **front line service delivery systems** and strategies.
228. Madame Speaker, government, business and community-based organisations and institutions of traditional leadership must continue to work together to reverse the spread and the negative impact of HIV and AIDS.

229. As a Province, we should continue to strengthen the work of the Mpumalanga AIDS Council to ensure that we bring all key stakeholders and partners together in the fight against HIV and AIDS.

230. I would like to acknowledge and thank our revered traditional leaders for their contribution to this fight, most particularly in the implementation of our **Male Medical Circumcision** programme.

231. In the current financial year, we have already carried out **39 424** male medical circumcisions.

232. Madame Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring **a long and healthy life for all** our citizens. We are not yet satisfied with the state of our Provincial healthcare system.

233. We have made some gains, we have assessed our results and we are saying that where we have failed, we will learn and improve, where we have succeeded, we will learn, replicate, scale up and sustain.

234. We will continue to ensure that resources are available to address the system's accessibility, functionality and service delivery and we will continue to take decisive action to address any instances of mismanagement, misappropriation and neglect.

235. As we confront challenges of **infrastructure backlogs** in the context of limited fiscal resources, we must begin to explore innovative ways of building modern high-tech hospitals to revolutionise the delivery of health care services to Mpumalanga citizens.

236. Population growth pressures and years of under-investment have left our healthcare infrastructure in a poor state, making it incapable of thoroughly meeting the needs of our citizens.

237. Over the next three years, we will develop at least **10 modern, high tech hospitals** that will revolutionise the delivery of public healthcare services in the province. The hospitals will range in size from 400 to 600 bed facilities and will use the **latest medical technology** available.

238. The province seeks to achieve this objective by partnering with the private sector, thereby expanding the pool of capital available for the provision of healthcare infrastructure.

239. Partnering with the private sector will allow us to mobilise additional skills and **capital** to complement government resources and to build these **state-of-the-art hospitals** much faster.

240. We are therefore tasking MEGA, in line with its mandate of attracting investment into the province and facilitating the delivery of critical social and economic infrastructure, to assume the role of lead implementation agent for the execution of this project.

241. MEGA will liaise with the Department of Health to finalise the needs analysis and with the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport to identify and secure the land and infrastructure requirements for the successful rollout of these healthcare facilities.

242. MEGA will also facilitate the process of raising the required capital and identifying suitable domestic and foreign institutions and investors to partner with. In the fulfilment of this task, MEGA is expected to take due consideration of its mandate to advance ***broad-based black economic empowerment***.

Towards Integrated Sustainable Human Settlements

243. Madame Speaker, integrated and sustainable human settlements are key to redressing apartheid planning and restructuring of cities in order to create more humane living and working conditions.

244. Over the past year we have made some progress towards achieving our objective of creating integrated and sustainable human settlements. Our Executive Council has approved the Mpumalanga Human Settlements Master Plan, which provides us with a roadmap for urban rejuvenation and rural development interventions up to the year 2030.

245. The Master Plan addresses challenges of uncoordinated and racially based planning, which resulted in the proliferation of marginalised and disconnected settlements where the poorest of the poor commute long distances to their places of work.

246. The concept of Integrated, and Sustainable Human Settlements takes us beyond the building of houses towards the establishment of cohesive communities that have equal access to economic and social services and opportunities.

247. In the coming financial year we will commence with **nine (9) new integrated sustainable human settlements** in addition to the four (4) that are already under development. These include, Tekwane North, Tekwane South and Hillsvie in Mbombela. Umjindi and Malelane, Elandsplaagte and Middleburg Extension 18. Naauwpoort in Emalahleni. Wesselton in Msukaligwa. Zondagfontein and Evander in Govan Mbeki.

248. In our efforts to **eradicate informal settlements**, 3 117 sites and 2 487 housing units have been completed in Wesselton Extension 7, Malayinini, Maphepheni, Rustplaas and Embalenhle Extensions 18 & 22.

249. With due consideration of our priority to ensure access to basic services, water and sanitation, 6 469 sites have been serviced across the Province.

250. To assist future operations, the Department of Human Settlements has established a functional **GIS system** to accelerate the identification and utilisation of land that is suitably located for human settlement and local socio-economic development.

251. More importantly, our approach to the roll-out of integrated human settlements will be coupled with the development of an **urbanisation strategy** that seeks to foster a shared understanding of how urbanisation should best be managed to address the goals of economic development, job creation and improved living conditions of our people.

252. Madame Speaker, this includes the systematic integration of poor areas in distressed mining towns to improve the living conditions of people working and living near the mines.

253. As part of our interventions to revitalise the distressed mining towns, we have identified poor areas for the provision of integrated human settlements. These areas include **Thubelisha, Masakhane, Rietspruit and Phola in Ogies.**

Access to Basic Services

254. Madame Speaker, at the heart of integrated, sustainable human settlements is the provision of basic services such as water, sanitation and electricity to create decent living conditions for the people of the Province.

255. Last year, we prioritised the provision of bulk water infrastructure to address the challenges of access to water in many parts of the Province.

256. To this end we invested an amount of **R2.7 billion** in programmes for water and sanitation in the current financial year. We are happy that we are continuing to make progress towards reaching our target of universal access by December 2015.

257. An additional 15 151 households were connected in 2014/15 alone reducing the water backlog by **31% from 48 528 to 33 377.**

258. There are currently **84 Bulk Water supply** and **43 water reticulation** projects under construction across all our municipalities.

259. We have also provided steel reservoirs to 9 targeted areas to enhance bulk water storage capacity. **Steel Reservoirs** with a capacity of 2 mega litres storage were completed in Phola, Matsulu, Ka-Bokweni, Ka-Shabalala, Steenbok, Mangweni, Casteel, Thusanong and Cunningmore to cater for the areas in critical need in the Mbombela, Nkomazi and Bushbuckridge Municipalities.

260. Madame Speaker, I am pleased that our interventions in Bushbuckridge are beginning to yield desired results. Many villages now have access to water.

261. We have partnered with the national Department of Water and Sanitation as well as Rand Water to provide water to communities. For Phase I, we have invested **R298million** to connect 24 villages, benefitting **15 000 households.**

262. I must hasten to acknowledge that in some villages water availability is at times inconsistent due to uncontrolled, high water losses, unauthorised use and vandalism on infrastructure. We are intervening to address this situation.

263. We have started with Phase 2 which is planned to cover a total of 69 villages at a cost of **R601million**, and this will benefit **23 340 households**.

264. Madame Speaker, as we continue with our intervention, we have also realized that there are communities that have been waiting far too long for permanent water infrastructure that is yet to reach their areas.

265. For this reason, **boreholes** will be drilled in all areas in need in order to provide reliable and constant water supply. To this end, municipalities will be tasked with ensuring that water supply is supplemented with boreholes within the next 3 to 4 months.

266. Where boreholes exist, but are non-functional, we will refurbish all these boreholes within the next 3-5 months to ensure that our people have access to water. All these interventions will ensure a substantial reduction in the number of people without access to water.

267. Madame Speaker, let me take this opportunity to acknowledge the contribution of our **private sector partners** to our efforts of providing access to housing alongside basic services.

268. Our **partnership with SASOL** has resulted in the urban renewal of Secunda, particularly Mbalenhle Township. These initiatives include:

- the building of 33 houses for the vulnerable groups in our society
- upgrading of the sewage plant and the electrical substation
- electrical capacity expansion and
- critical road maintenance

269. South African Breweries has contributed to the provision of water at Jabulani Agri-village in Mkhondo

270. Madame Speaker, despite progress that we are continuing to make in delivering water, we are concerned that there are still about **33 377** (5%) of our households without access to water.

271. In the coming financial year, we will invest in excess of **R1.8 billion** to continue our radical programme to deliver universal access to water for all these communities.

272. Madam Speaker, I recently visited a number of **rural farm areas** in the Piet Retief town of Mkhondo Municipality including areas such as Entombe, Ntithane, Ezitholeni, Congo, Alma, Madola, Waterside, Krom, Bergplaas and Empumelelo villages among others.

273. These communities like many others are still living in hardship without access to water, sanitation and electricity.

274. For 2015/16, we have set aside resources to ensure the development and implementation of **four bulk and distribution water schemes** to deliver water to these communities within the next 6 to 8 months.
275. We will also ensure the provision of **Solar Street Lighting**, covering a maximum of 300 households to these communities as part of our contribution to fighting crime and delivering decent living conditions to our people.
276. The challenge of intermittent water supply in some areas of the Province is still persistent and the costs for water reticulation have not yet been brought to minimal levels.
277. As a consequence, the **War-on-Leaks Programme** for water conservation and water demand management will be scaled-up and implemented by all municipalities as part of revenue enhancement strategies.
278. Madame Speaker, we will continue to upgrade our **wastewater treatment plants** in order to connect our people to decent sanitation services.
279. We have budgeted in excess of **R500 million** for the continued roll-out of sanitation services in the province. This is crucial in our efforts to protect our natural water resources and environment from pollution as we strive to make all our municipalities Green Drop compliant in terms of the final effluent discharged into our rivers.

280. We will continue to fast track efforts to electrify our communities in areas without electricity. An amount of **R186.2 million** has been allocated from the Integrated National Electrification Programme (INEP) to achieve this imperative.

Social Cohesion and Nation Building

281. Madame Speaker, we have come a long way since 1994 in our attempt to become one nation and one country, bound together by peace; reconciliation and forgiveness.

282. Our collective task of building **a truly united, non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and prosperous society** should remain a priority that all citizens of the Province continue to embrace.

283. Undoubtedly, the **preconditions for social cohesion** find expression in each and every one of our provincial priorities for social and economic development.

284. As part of our holistic response to addressing **poverty and inequality**, it is imperative that we promote equitable access to quality education, quality health care, safe community environments, and economic development opportunities for all the citizens of the Province.

285. Our approach to building cohesive and sustainable communities should focus on developing human settlements, schools, places of worship, and institutions that represent and serve the diverse races and cultures that constitute our population. Our different heritages, languages and cultural symbols should unite us and be celebrated.

286. Our shared sense of nationhood must be nurtured. Heritage and cultural events hosted by the Province must be premised on a desire to share and unite. Events that provide a platform for those wanting to promote fracture and disunity within society undermine our constitutional values of inclusivity and patriotism.

287. Let our celebrations be inclusive. Let us take the lead in promoting inter-cultural communication and social cohesion.

288. As the citizens of Mpumalanga, we unequivocally condemn and reject the divisive celebration of apartheid symbols that serve only to conjure images and feelings of a painful past for the majority of our citizens.

289. Incidents such as the inappropriate rendition of 'Die Stem' and hoisting of the 'apartheid era' flag at the Innibos event cannot be tolerated.

290. Events that celebrate arts, culture, language, history and heritage will only be supported by the Province if they are inclusive and intended to advance the objectives of unity and social cohesion.

291. We believe that the Innibos festival represents many of the multiple aspects of our collective identity as the people of South Africa.

292. For this reason, it should be a significant platform for the celebration of the cultural diversity of the people of Mpumalanga. This event has the potential to be a powerful vehicle for unity and social cohesion.

293. To further support the creation of an environment conducive to social cohesion in 2015/16, we plan to continue fostering our constitutional values, celebrating our heritage and promoting social cohesion across society by hosting social and sporting events that provide a platform for cross-cultural interaction and exchange.

294. In collaboration with our social partners, we will host the ***Mpumalanga Cultural Festival*** as one of the signature cultural events that will bring together people of the Province, the country and the world to celebrate our diverse culture and heritage.

295. Madame Speaker, we are disturbed by the continuing resurgence of racially based practices and incidents that manifest themselves in our society, especially in schools.

296. As parents, we have a collective responsibility to educate our children about the values and ideals of a post-apartheid South Africa anchored in human dignity, social cohesion and respect for human rights.

297. We are calling for unity among the people of this beautiful Province so that they embrace one another as citizens of one country, united by one Flag and one National Anthem.

298. Madame Speaker, as part of commemorating our liberation history and heritage we will unveil the statue of Saul Mkhize, one of our heroes who was killed in 1983 by the apartheid regime for resisting forceful removal from Driefontein in Mkhondo Municipality.

299. In the spirit of our commitment to forgiveness, peace and reconciliation, all the people of the Province, Black and White, are invited to be part of this celebration.

300. Such events should be used to teach our children about where we come from in order to shape their impressionable minds to be respectful of one another.

301. Madame Speaker and Members, **sports and games unite all of us** around a common goal. We will continue to invest in the promotion of **inclusive sport** at all levels to ensure that we enhance social interaction and unity across racial and class divides.

302. In 2015/16, we will commence with the implementation of an **integrated school league system** that fosters intercultural interaction among schools from diverse cultural, racial and ethnic groups. All the schools across the Province will participate.

Fighting Crime

303. Honourable members, the **negative impact of crime** impedes the enjoyment of freedom and human rights. Communities live in fear. Women, children, people with disabilities and older persons are subjected to the indignity of rape and abuse.

304. Crime undermines the values of a cohesive society.

305. As government we work hard to improve the lives and livelihoods of our citizens, but at the same time, we must **increase our vigilance and boost our responsiveness** to their plight at the hands of criminals.

306. Our **integrated crime prevention programmes** are making some progress and our recent figures show that **sexual crimes** in the Province have decreased by 7.4%. We have also maintained the 5.6% decrease in contact crimes.

307. We want to reiterate our call to all our citizens to work with our law enforcement agencies as well as our social workers in fighting this scourge since this kind of criminality happens within closed doors and among people who know each other well.

308. We must mobilise society, and forge **partnerships** between government, civil society formations and organised business in the fight against crime.

309. In the 2015/16 financial year, we will continue with our ***integrated crime prevention programmes***, with special attention being paid to vulnerable groups, and ensuring that we increasingly provide victim friendly facilities.

310. We will strengthen education awareness campaigns on issues like human trafficking, gender-based domestic violence and drug abuse.

311. More critically, we need to create safe school environments to support quality learning and teaching. The implementation of our ***Integrated School Safety Programme*** will focus, amongst others, on ridding our schools of drugs and dangerous weapons such as knives and guns.

312. We are appealing to our parents and key education stakeholders to support this programme and partner with law enforcement agencies to create safe school environments for our children.

313. Madame Speaker, we also remain committed to ensuring the ***safety of our tourists*** and visitors to our beautiful Province. For this reason, we will continue with the deployment of tourism safety monitors to ensure that our tourists are assisted and protected from potential criminal acts.

314. For the 2015/16 financial year, we will deploy **546 tourism safety monitors** in strategic areas leading to our tourism attractions.

315. Madam Speaker, we need to strengthen traffic law enforcement on our roads. Many of our citizens and visitors have lost their lives unnecessarily. Our roads carry **high volumes of traffic between** our provinces and neighbouring countries leading to the high frequency of fatal accidents.

316. We must ensure that our roads are safe for all commuters. However, many of our commuters are in fact the cause of our road accidents through fatigue, driving under the influence of alcohol, blatant **disregard for the rules of the road** or persistent use of vehicles that are not roadworthy.

317. We will continue to strengthen **traffic law enforcement** and the implementation of road safety awareness programmes to improve road safety on our roads

318. Madame Speaker, we believe that the establishment of the **Mpumalanga Traffic College** will enable us to put more qualified traffic officials on the roads to monitor road use and issue the appropriate punishment in the case of traffic violations.

Towards a Capable Developmental State

319. Madame Speaker, we have set ourselves **a number of goals and targets** for this year that may seem ambitious, costly and even daunting in their complexity. This is the work of government. More importantly, it is the work of a government that is lean, professional, accountable and committed to hard work.

320. This is in effect the profile of the type of colleagues we need in order to drive the agenda of **a capable, developmental** state that lies at the heart of our National Development Plan.

321. To put it bluntly honourable speaker, our “**state machinery**” requires an upgrade and in 2015/16 we will continue to **hone our skills and services** such that we meet our obligations to **raise and manage resources** that facilitate economic growth and social development.

322. I have mentioned before that we are dedicated to ensuring that our public service structures reflect our commitment to **improved financial management and service delivery** and that we will continue to inculcate a strong culture of **performance and accountability**.

323. Given the shrinking budgets, it is imperative that we focus on enhancing efficiencies throughout the system to be able to **do more with less**. We will implement stringent measures to cut wastage and duplication.

324. We will review, realign and streamline organisational structures in order to **reduce excessive expenditure** on compensation for employees. Cost-curtailement measures on non-core activities will be introduced to release more resources for service delivery.

325. Given the ***shrinking budgets***, the provincial government needs to work more closely with the ***private sector*** to leverage skills and resources to accelerate the delivery of quality services to the people.

326. Our vision, Madame Speaker, ***is a cadre of professional, effective and efficient senior managers*** who can identify and prioritise key government programmes, marshal both the public and private resources needed to meet our objectives, and implement, monitor and evaluate the value add of our efforts.

327. We need strategic managers, not bureaucrats, who share in the vision of the province and have the capacity and confidence to ***steer our programmes responsibly*** and course correct when necessary.

328. Madame Speaker, embracing ***professionalism*** goes hand in hand with shunning unprofessional and indeed, criminal activities. My government does not tolerate ***corrupt or fraudulent activities***, and will vigorously pursue and prosecute any individuals who engage in such practices.

329. In November last year, all senior and executive management in the Province publicly recommitted themselves to these principles at a ***Senior Management Summit*** where we openly invited the public to ***hold us accountable*** to the standards that we have willingly undertaken to uphold.

330. We are committed to ensuring that our institutions are not only places of work, but **places of learning** and with an eye on the future, we will soon be signing **memorandums of understanding with a number of Universities** in order to jointly prepare and skill the public servants of the future and ensure that they are ready to take over leading positions in government when the time comes.

331. Madame Speaker, our state machinery must demonstrate **seamless integration** for effective and better coordinated development across all the spheres of government. It must create a platform for more meaningful participation by communities and our social partners in the fight against poverty, unemployment and the negative impact of HIV and Aids.

332. In the forthcoming year, we will commence with the roll-out of a **Development Coordinating Model** that is responsive, one that provides comprehensive and integrated services to communities through **effective and efficient partnerships**.

333. We will also partner closely with our communities, an integral element of our **participatory Development Coordinating Model** to create vibrant, equitable, and socio-economically sustainable rural and urban societies. To this end we will embark on a programme to, amongst others, create efficient and effective governance structures with a diverse range of competent members at all levels. Ladies and gentlemen, this does **not mean more or additional structures**, but rather, improved integration across all levels and sectors.

334. Madame Speaker, to deliver on our commitment to improve the quality of life of Mpumalanga's citizens, we need a **responsive local government system** that is effective and efficient.

335. The Executive Council has approved the implementation of an Integrated Municipal Support programme to provide **targeted support to municipalities** that are battling to deliver on their legislative mandates.

336. Our **Back-to-Basics Programme** will focus on promoting good governance and effective administration through cutting wastage; spending public funds prudently; hiring competent staff and ensuring transparency and accountability in municipalities.

337. It will also focus on ensuring that municipalities provide water, electricity, parks, street lighting and refuse removal whilst repairing potholes and dealing with the frustrating interruption of services and the problems with billing systems.

338. Most importantly, it means providing these services in a professional and caring manner that recognizes the human dignity of each resident. We will therefore monitor the implementation of the **Municipal Support Plan** very closely.

339. Most urgently, we will focus on supporting municipalities to improve their audit outcomes. Despite resources invested to support municipalities to achieve clean audits, we are not happy about the **regressions and negative audit opinions** that some of our municipalities continue to receive.

340. We will continue to implement **anti-corruption measures** to promote accountability and prosecution of all financial administration cases whenever they are discovered and reported.

341. We are dealing decisively with **poor performance** in local government. Some municipal managers have resigned voluntarily in light of this clampdown and we have fired others who have consistently received negative audit outcomes, including disclaimers.

342. Madame Speaker, for all these interventions to succeed, we need **decisive and bold leadership** to take tough decisions so that our institutions become more responsive to the needs of communities we serve.

Conclusion

343. Madame Speaker, today we have painted a picture, told a story, of our Province, its people and their needs and aspirations; what we have **succeeded** in achieving on their behalf, and where we **need to do much more**.

344. These words **signify nothing** if they are not matched with **decisive action**.

345. Yes, I am by right the leader of this Province, but being a leader is not just about making speeches. The measure of my contribution will be counted in units of “results delivered” and not in “applause received”.

346. As the venerable **Martin Luther King Junior** succinctly put it,

*“Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable. Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering and struggle; the **tireless exertions and passionate concern** of dedicated individuals.”*

347. It is these individuals that I call upon to walk beside me, to **take action**, to wake up every morning remembering that we are servants of the public and to ask, “**What do we need to do to make the lives of our people better in Mpumalanga, ‘the Place of the Rising Sun’?**”

348. **I Thank You**