

REMARKS BY MPUMALANGA PREMIER TSP MAKWETLA AT THE NUM REGIONAL CONFERENCE

Badplaas Aventura, 17 July 2005

Programme Director

Comrade Paris Mashego, Regional Secretary of NUM

The leadership of NUM in the country and the province

Representatives of fraternal organizations and structures

Distinguished guests

Comrades and friends

I am delighted to be with you today, and to accept your invitation to speak at this momentous occasion of the NUM regional conference.

You are gathered here representing the largest union in our country and located in an industry that shapes the lives of thousands of workers and millions of their dependants in the entire Southern African region.

We look forward to the outcome of your deliberations, which we hope will deal with challenges, and policy issues that affect you as workers and as members of the broader community of Mpumalanga.

The NUM Regional conference takes place at a time when we are celebrating various milestones in the struggle for the liberation and transformation of our country. As we celebrate we also have an opportunity to take stock of the advances that workers have made over the years.

This year we are celebrating the 50 th anniversary of the Freedom Charter, the 50 th anniversary of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), and the 20 th anniversary of COSATU. These are indeed important milestones not just for all our freedom loving people but also for workers in particular.

From the Freedom Charter to the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), "Work" and the labour market have long been at the centre of the democratic movement's development agenda.

For the democratic movement, labour was never just a commodity or a means of production. We were always aware that 'work' is a means of realising human development and workers should work in an environment that accords them dignity, assures their sense of worth and gives space to the human capacity for creative transformation and sustainability.

It is therefore a source of pride and inspiration to all of us to note the achievements that have been made by the democratic movement in the world of work.

As correctly reflected in the **Consolidated Report on Sectoral Strategies**, from the recently held ANC National General Council,

"Since 1994, the legislative and regulatory environment of the labour market has been radically transformed, and in the process many of the Charter's demands have been realized. The labour market framework now in place builds stability, and reduces tension, conflict and strikes. It has allowed for massive social transformation without significant disruptions to production, which must be regarded as a major achievement of the democratic order".

It is our hope that in your deliberations you will assess the extent of the validity of these statements for workers in your sector and in Mpumalanga as a whole.

For our part, we wish to reaffirm our commitment to working with the trade union movement and relevant state organs, such as the Department of Labour, in realizing the gains that workers have made in the legislation and

regulations across the length and breadth of our province, in the factories, on the farms and even within individual households.

It is through such a partnership that together we can make Decent Work a reality in our province. This partnership can allow us to also address new and emerging challenges facing workers and the labour movement as a whole, particularly in the context of a changing global environment and the transformation of work and employment.

This regional conference also takes place at a time when there is increasing momentum for ending global poverty and a growing realization that a world characterized by the contradictory realities of extreme wealth and extreme poverty, side by side, is indeed one that is not conducive to world peace and security.

We all witnessed the tragic events in London only a week ago, and it was heartening that amidst these very acts of terrorism world leaders attending the G8 Summit at Gleneagles in Scotland, including our own President, reaffirmed their commitment to attending to the plight of the world's poor, millions of whom are to be found on our continent, millions of whom also constitute what are referred to as 'the working poor'.

Many are critical of the G8 but we should commend the efforts of our leaders on the continent, particularly President Mbeki and President Obasanjo of Nigeria, who managed to secure various commitments from them such as the agreement to increase aid to the continent by \$25 billion a year by 2010.

There were other commitments also such as the 100% cancellation of the multilateral debts of the Highly Indebted Poor Countries and an agreement to provide as close as possible to universal access to treatment for HIV and AIDS by 2010.

Some would wonder what these developments mean for us here in Mpumalanga.

As a province, we are not an island. In an increasingly globalised world our fortunes are tied to those around us and sometimes with those even far from us.

Located next to Swaziland and Mozambique, we must realize that growing prosperity in those countries will mean expanded markets for firms located in the province, leading to possible investments and necessary jobs that our people yearn for. At the same time, improvements in health and education and broader human development in those countries will also reduce some negative aspects of cross-border migration and instability within our region.

As a country and as the province of Mpumalanga we can be part of this growing global momentum to make a difference in the lives of millions by strengthening our own commitment and implementation of the People's Contract to create Work and Fight Poverty.

We need to begin to be bolder and not think about reducing poverty but rather eradicating it. The benefits would be immense, not only for ourselves but for the region as a whole. Jeffrey Sachs the eminent economist and adviser to UN General-Secretary Kofi Annan, has aptly captured how the world can be a better place if our generation seizes the challenge of ending poverty, he says:

“Our own generation lives with a precarious peace, one threatened both by terrorism and by overly militaristic response of the United States but a peace on which we can build if we can sustain it. Ending poverty is a great opportunity of our time, a commitment that would not only relieve massive suffering and spread economic well-being, but would also promote other Enlightenment objectives of democracy, global security and the advance of science”

Comrades,

Our presence here at this NUM regional conference is testament to our commitment to working together with workers and the trade union movement in addressing the critical challenges facing our province, such as underdevelopment, governance, poverty and unemployment.

We do not believe that government can end poverty or reduce it considerably, on its own. We do not believe that we can address the many other challenges that we have mentioned, without the support of our social partners, in particular labour.

Therefore, we are not afraid to say we want to work with a strong labour movement and a strong NUM in our province. We believe that a strong NUM and a strong labour movement in Mpumalanga will assist us to achieve many of the commitments we have made to our people, particularly those of halving unemployment and poverty by 2014.

It is our hope that during your deliberations you will consider the critical challenge of strengthening social dialogue in Mpumalanga.

You should also assess whether the necessary structures are in place that enable all social partners, particularly organized workers, to contribute meaningfully to the formulation and implementation of the provincial vision for growth and development, as agreed to by all social partners in Badplaas earlier this year.

The sectors and thousands of workers you represent in our province are facing uneven prospects that call for maturity and leadership from the trade union movement.

We remain confident that mining will continue to be a key sector in our province for a long time to come, either as a sector on its own or as a result of its linkages with other critical sectors such as electricity and manufacturing.

But behind this broad picture we are aware that this is a sector that has a lot of unevenness. Mining is a sector that has grown in our province, achieving a growth rate of 4.6% in 2004 compared to 2.2% in 2003 and -2.5% in 2002. At the same time we are aware that mechanization, increasing capital intensity, retrenchments and outsourcing are some of the aspects of this sector that pose a great challenge to workers in the province.

As a provincial government we are interested in the perspective of the NUM in our region, regarding a range of issues affecting mining, energy, and construction. Somehow a forum must be found to engage each other and draw on the expertise and your day-to-day experience of the sector, in a way that will sharpen our ability to position these sectors as some of the growth drivers in Mpumalanga.

Among the areas of interest to us, where the regional NUM can shed light and enrich our knowledge are:

- The obstacles, real or imagined, to greater beneficiation in mining
- The best approaches to maximizing benefits for the province in the implementation of sectoral charters, such as the "Broad-based socio-economic empowerment Charter" for the Mining Industry
- The implications of the various legislative and policy developments such as the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act
- The state of transformation in the various sectors, not only in terms of ownership but also in terms of human resource development, employment equity and decent working conditions in the mining sector
- Health and safety challenges
- HIV/AIDS and other disease affecting workers in the sector
- Environmental issues related to efficient depletion and extraction of minerals, water consumption and so on.

These are some of the areas where we feel we can benefit from your inputs as we seek to improve mining's contribution to the provincial economy. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list but where an opportunity exists we may unpack them further.

The Mpumalanga Government is committed to the development of the provincial economy in such a way that it not only achieves higher rates of growth but also does so in a manner that transforms it into one that is inclusive and contributes to overall human development in the province.

We believe that there is a critical role that the trade union movement can play as our partner on this journey to realize the People's contract.

We are eager to work with you in a solid partnership to transform our province. This partnership can build on the militancy of workers that so heroically brought down to its knees that nightmare called apartheid. Leading from the front the NUM can be a true partner in the quest for a better life for all.

Programme Director, Comrades, the ANC has just come back from its mid-term National General Council. It is expected that many members of NUM as members of the ANC would have been part of the experience ANC

cadres were exposed to during the processes in preparation to, and the sitting of the NGC itself, at the University of Pretoria.

As we meet here today none of the ANC cadres can disagree that the Pretoria NGC was a watershed in the history of the ANC. Never before was public interest guaranteed in the internal affairs of the organisation as the NGC did.

Whereas we have always expressed concern that the media is setting the agenda of the country, at times to the detriment of the transformation challenges, it is now clear that the media is also substantially determining the agenda of the party.

As difficult as the case of the Deputy President of the ANC, Cde Zuma, is, there can be no denying that the extent to which it has polarised the ranks of the organisation could not have happened without the role the media has played and is playing in the equation.

There is validity to the fact that in the post-1994 period, ANC NGC's have acquired a reputation of being vibrant national political schools because of the amount of energy and purpose they unleash within the ranks dedicated to nothing else but policy discussions and implementation evaluation. This is more than ANC conferences are able to achieve because of the space NGC's have by being free from conference contestations over leadership. This NGC was different because it was polarised more than what conference normally contend with.

It is our firm view that whatever the challenges and difficulties are that are thrown up or occasioned by the case of the Deputy President, can not be handled in a manner that divides us as cadres and members of the organisation. For as long as we take personal interests out of the equation and prioritise the interests of the organisation, we will always find each other. For as long as we all observe the constitutional obligations we carry as individual members and act within the established traditions and practices of the organisation, no situation can overwhelm us.

The questions we must pose to ourselves are – What are we dealing with? What is the definition of the problem? How must we approach it? Can we discern the challenges involved beyond the individual actors? In what way were we ready to govern? How do we preserve unity and why?

The Oath says that our members commit themselves to " *work towards making the ANC an even more effective instrument of liberation in the hands of the people* ".

To achieve this goal means that we, as members of the ANC, must see and conduct ourselves as part of this effective instrument of liberation that serves and is part of the masses of our people. This means that we must in the fullest meaning of these words, internalise the principled position that we have joined the organisation voluntarily and without motives of material advantage or personal gain, as our Oath says.

The National General Council has pointed the way forward towards the further acceleration of the process of reconstruction and development. It has directed us to work even harder to strengthen the people's contract to advance the vision of the Freedom Charter. It has committed us to intensify our contribution to the continuing struggle for Africa's renewal.

It has directed that we must guard the unity of our movement and the unity of the Alliance. It has instructed that we should move forward together as this united force selflessly to serve all the people of South Africa and Africa, and act in solidarity with all other progressive forces throughout the world.

Comrades

Allow me to conclude by noting the importance of your gathering here today, at this regional conference.

We are confident that you will assess and develop strategies for the various challenges that you face.

You should take comfort in that dynamic changes in the world of work have persisted throughout the twentieth century and that it is only through building necessary partnerships that workers can defend their gains.

We look forward to working with a strong NUM in our province, one that can be a true servant of workers and a true partner in our efforts to end poverty and bring a better life to our people.

An injury to one is an injury to all!

Amandla!