

State of the Province Address, by Premier DD Mabuza

Nelspruit, Mpumalanga Province

19 February 2010

Honourable Speaker and Madam Deputy Speaker of the Mpumalanga Legislature,
Members of the Executive Council,
Honourable Members of Parliament and Members of the Mpumalanga Legislature,
Deputy Minister of Defense and Military Veterans, Honourable TSP Makwetla,
Deputy Minister of Communications, Honourable DD Pule,
Deputy Judge President of the High Court of South Africa, Honourable Justice Mojapelo,
His Excellency, High Commissioner Dikgang Moopeloa and Members of the Diplomatic Corps and international community,
Our Honourable Mayors, councillors and leaders of SALGA,
Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the Provincial House of Traditional Leaders, and our revered traditional leaders, Amakhosi/Magoshi,
The Provincial Commissioner of SAPS, Commissioner Thulani Ntobela,
The Director General of the Province and Heads of Departments,
The Executive Heads of our parastatals and Board Chairpersons,
Members of the National Executive Committee of the African National Congress and the Alliance,
Recipients of National Order Awards, veterans, our 2010 Soccer Ambassadors and the Mpumalanga Soccer Legends,
Representatives of business, labour and civil society formations,
Our distinguished guests and all dignitaries present,
Residents of our province Mpumalanga at large,
Compatriots,
Comrades and Friends,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Honourable Speaker, let me take this opportunity to join the President of the country, Honourable Jacob Zuma, and the people of South Africa in celebrating 20 years after the release of our former President, His Excellency Dr Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela from prison. No words can express our gratitude for his invaluable contribution to the struggle of freeing this country from the bondage of colonialism and apartheid.

On behalf of the Mpumalanga government and the people of this Province, I would like to say that we will forever be indebted to him and his unparalleled leadership. Today we can walk tall and *silisho ligcwale umlomo ukuthi* - "we are free at last". We can also be counted among the progressive nations of the world that enjoy freedom, liberty and democracy.

State of the Province Address, by Premier DD Mabuza

Nelspruit, Mpumalanga Province

19 February 2010

As we celebrate the 20th Anniversary of our former President Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela's release, we are also reminded of the values and ideals that he stood for and was prepared to die for. He set the stage in his inauguration statement as the first President of a democratic Republic of South Africa in May 1994, when he said:

"We must therefore act together as a united people, for national reconciliation, for nation building, for the birth of a new world.

Let there be justice for all.

Let there be peace for all.

Let there be work, bread, water and salt for all....

Never, never and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another and suffer the indignity of being the skunk of the world.

Let freedom reign.

The sun shall never set on so glorious a human achievement!"

In his State of the Nation Address on May 24, 1994, former President Mandela again emphasized this important message when he said:

"My government's commitment to create a people-centered society of liberty binds us to the pursuit of the goals of freedom from want, freedom from hunger, freedom from deprivation, freedom from ignorance, freedom from suppression and freedom from fear.

These freedoms are fundamental to the guarantee of human dignity. They will therefore constitute part of the centerpiece of what this government will seek to achieve, the focal point on which our attention will be continuously focused."

Our Mandate

Honourable Speaker, the ANC-led government continues to build on this foundation laid by the world icon Nelson Mandela.

In my inaugural State of the Province Address on the 19th of June last year, I concluded my Address with these wise words borrowed from the inaugural Address of President Zuma wherein he asserted that: "...We made a commitment to our people and the world that:

For as long as there are South Africans who die from preventable disease;

For as long as there are workers who struggle to feed their families and who battle to find work;

For as long as there are communities without clean water, decent shelter or proper sanitation;

State of the Province Address, by Premier DD Mabuza

Nelspruit, Mpumalanga Province

19 February 2010

For as long as there are rural dwellers unable to make decent living from the land on which they live;

For as long as there are women who are subjected to discrimination, exploitation or abuse;

For as long as there are children who do not have the means nor the opportunity to receive a decent education;

We shall not rest, and we dare not falter in our drive to eradicate poverty”

Honourable Members, this statement of the President, in essence not only sums up the core mandate that our people gave to the ANC-led government to pursue during this term of office but also bears testimony to the fact that we are still in line with the vision of *uTata Madiba*.

It is a statement that defines the path that we must follow at all times as we discharge our responsibilities in government on a daily basis.

As Mpumalanga government, we wish to reaffirm our commitment to the contract that we entered into with our people – a contract articulated very clearly in the 2009 ANC Manifesto.

We remain committed towards speeding up economic growth that creates decent work and sustainable livelihood for our people in the Province, particularly the poor and the working class.

Our commitment continues to be unwavering with respect to dealing with challenges affecting our rural masses on a daily basis, especially matters involving access and ownership of land – land that should be utilized for subsistence and food security for the country as a whole.

Yes, we remain committed towards ensuring that the challenges relating to creation of decent work, education, health, fighting crime and corruption do not escape our radar screen.

Performance to date and 2010 priorities

Honourable Speaker, in the State of the Province Address delivered last year, not only did we impress on these priorities but also provided a set of broad activities that this province will be embarking upon as part of translating the Manifesto into tangible outputs and outcomes.

Creating decent work and sustainable livelihoods

We highlighted that the implementation of the five key priorities would be pursued against the backdrop of the worst economic crisis. Analysts indicate that close to 20 million jobs were lost worldwide since October 2008. South Africa experienced the biggest economic contraction since the advent of democracy.

Official statistics indicate that in Mpumalanga, approximately 53 000 jobs were lost during 2009 alone. Major sectors that are affected in the province include agriculture, mining, manufacturing, construction and trade. The people who are hardest hit by this unfavorable situation are the poorest of the poor.

Today we need to pay special tribute to the multitude of our people's courage and resilience in the face of this dire situation. We thank the foresight of those companies that did not succumb to the temptation of laying workers off but had preferred other solutions in the face of lower demand of goods and the credit crunch.

Honourable Speaker, in our quest to advance our vision of a better life for all, we are acutely aware of the need to strengthen our capacity to accelerate access to the social security net for the poor and vulnerable. Providing a safety net in the form of social grants continues to be critical in government's efforts to alleviate poverty among the poor and vulnerable sectors of society.

In Mpumalanga, the total number of social grant beneficiaries has grown by 77% (that is from 579,907 in 2004 to 1,030,095, as of the 15 February 2010). The number of children accessing social grants has grown by 110% from 368,500 in 2004 to 774,176 as of 15 of February 2010. This attests to the commitment of government in addressing the challenges of poverty.

We welcome the recent increases in the different grants announced by Minister Gordhan in his budget speech which he delivered on Wednesday and this increase will go a long way in cushioning the hardship faced by our poor people.

Honourable Members, of critical importance is that, as a province we promised to put together a package of stimuli that could assist us in mitigating the recession and also ***speeding up economic growth to create decent work and sustainable livelihood***. We said that we will do this in partnership with the private sector, labour and all other relevant stakeholders.

State of the Province Address, by Premier DD Mabuza

Nelspruit, Mpumalanga Province

19 February 2010

We are aware of businesses that have pledged billions of investments in the province, particularly in the mining and energy sectors. One refers to initiatives such as the Kusile Power Station, the Sasol Secunda Growth Project, Xstrata Goedgevonden, Anglo Coal Zondagsfontein and BHPBilliton Douglas Middelburg Optimisation Project and many other initiatives presently in progress in the province.

Our appreciation of the value of partnerships with business informs our continued support of business development initiatives that contribute significantly towards economic growth which leads to development and job creation.

In pursuit of this, we have established numerous consultative forums with numerous businesses to strengthen our relations with business and labour. The forums are of critical importance in creating a platform to unblock funding, infrastructure, and labour dispute bottlenecks.

These engagements have resulted in the creation of programmes of action focusing mainly on:

- Structured skills transfer from multinationals to locals
- Procurement focused on assisting small local businesses
- Eskom establishing a black local business support programme

These initiatives have variedly contributed to significant job creation, small business and skills development.

Honourable Speaker, in spite of the global recession, the tourism sector seems to be performing relatively well. The official national statistics on tourism visits indicate that South Africa received 9,6 million visitors in 2008/09, of which 1,3 million visited Mpumalanga.

The Province is currently rated the third most visited destination in South Africa, an improvement from being the fifth most visited province previously.

Nationally, there were 34 million domestic trips and 1,4 million of these visits were in Mpumalanga. This placed Mpumalanga on the 6th position from its previous 8th position as the most visited destination in the domestic market.

To further enhance the growing tourism industry in Mpumalanga, in the next financial year we will focus on:

Infrastructure rehabilitation to improve our tourism products and services; and Positioning of Mozambique, Swaziland and Mpumalanga as the Regional destination brand of choice in the SADC region for international market.

State of the Province Address, by Premier DD Mabuza

Nelspruit, Mpumalanga Province

19 February 2010

Honourable members,

We further identified massive socio-economic infrastructure as the catalyst for our growth trajectory and as a cushion to mitigate the impact of the recession. We further indicated our decision to convene a Provincial Economic Summit with an understanding that the Summit will assist in terms of charting out an economic framework that will guide us in tackling this important area of work.

In addition, we promised to merge the provincial state owned enterprises, to create institutional capacity in supporting the mandate of government towards economic development. We also indicated our intention to streamline the flagship projects for better alignment and impact.

Coupled to these initiatives for job creation and income generation, we also committed ourselves to implement Phase Two of the Expanded Public Works Programme, targeting a figure of 28 378 work opportunities for 2009 financial year.

Honourable Speaker, I am pleased to announce that:

The Provincial Economic Summit was convened in October last year. The key stakeholders, namely, government, business and labour, managed to put together a set of specific issues that must guide our programme of action going forward.

Our programme of action will focus on:

- Measures that must be undertaken to mitigate the impact of the economic recession.
- Cushioning job losses
- Placing the provincial economy on a shared and sustainable growth trajectory.

These measures, among other things, include:

- The provision of comprehensive support to SMMEs and cooperatives in the growing sectors of the economy with special attention given to Broad Based Economic Empowerment
- Youth and Women empowerment, including people with disabilities
- Promotion of trade and investment
- Promotion and transformation of the tourism industry; and

State of the Province Address, by Premier DD Mabuza

Nelspruit, Mpumalanga Province

19 February 2010

- The development of strategic massive socio-economic infrastructure, namely, the coal haulage network, establishment of a university and tertiary hospital, including an International Convention Centre.

Equally important is the need to comprehensively assess matters related to the mining sector as well land reform.

Consequently, we have decided to convene a mining and land summits before the end of this financial year.

These interventions we believe will help us to find workable solutions towards job creation and economic development.

Honourable Speaker, six months I stood before this august house and declared that we will rationalize our parastatals. In this regard a Bill to establish the new entity has already been placed before the Legislature for consideration.

I am pleased to report that the flagships have been fully integrated and institutionalized in the areas of work where they are correctly aligned with respective to the mandates of the relevant departments.

Of the that we set ourselves for 2009/10, I am pleased to announce that the target we have set for ourselves in the 2009/10 fiscal year of creating 28 378 Expanded Public Works Programme job opportunities; we have exceeded the target and created 32,943 job opportunities. We have thus exceeded the annual target for the current financial year.

Honourable Speaker, our attention in 2010/11 financial year, will be on:

- Finalizing plans and designs of strategic infrastructure projects some of which I will touch on as I progress with my address.
- We will also take forward the recommendations made at the Coal Haulage Network Summit held on October 2007 at Secunda. Private sector and other stakeholders will be brought on board as we discuss the implementation process.
- Together with business and labour, we will pursue agreements made on a number of Summits that we have held.

Comprehensive rural development strategy linked to land and agrarian reform and food security

Honourable Members, we continue to be seized with the importance of the ***comprehensive rural development programme*** as a deliberate and targeted intervention in addressing the plight of our rural poor.

The majority of our people are living in abject poverty are vulnerable to abuse and most lack access to basic services. In response to these challenges we have identified a three-pronged approach:

Our first leg of the intervention involves the rolling out of the Anti-Poverty Campaign. Through this initiative we have to date managed to profile **6 526** households within twelve wards of the six municipalities, namely, Sikhwahlane in Nkomazi, Hlabekisa, Hluvhukani, Alandale and Sorty in Bushbuckridge, Marapyane in Dr JS Moroka, Verena in Thembisile Hani, Bejeka in Albert Luthuli, Perdekop and Daggakraal in Pixley Isaika Ka Seme and Mkhondo municipality.

The second leg of our intervention involves the comprehensive rural development strategy. This strategy seeks to expand our agricultural productivity including speeding up the transformation of this sector. Such deliberate actions, should lead to more employment, increased outcomes, reduced household risks and additional income opportunities.

We are piloting the implementation of the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme in the Mkhondo municipality in partnership with private business and other stakeholders.

Our gains thus far with regard to the implementation of the programme are as follows:

- We have constructed 550 new housing units that will be handed before the end of this financial year to the deserving members.
- Assisted households to produce their own food,
- Assisted children to access early childhood development facilities,
- Provided three additional mobile clinics for the deep rural parts of the district
- Developed an Agri-villages in the Mondi area

We are proud to announced that this pilot has already created 1 011 jobs and trained 290 Youth through the Mpumalanga Regional Training Trust (MRTT) in various skills.

State of the Province Address, by Premier DD Mabuza

Nelspruit, Mpumalanga Province

19 February 2010

Honourable Speaker, Let me also take this opportunity to extend our gratitude to the Mondi Group, Bunengi Holdings and Vodacom for joining hands with government in this mammoth task.

In the upcoming financial year, we will complete the remaining phase of the pilot project at Mkhondo. We will also identify and begin to prepare other places where this programme is going to be rolled out for remaining period of the term of government

In addition to the above intervention we are continuing to expand the Masibuyele Emasimini programme, in order to alleviate poverty confronting the rural poor by ensuring that land lying fallow is tilled. In this regard we are continuing to support the rural poor with tractors, fertilizers, seeds, training and mentoring.

Since its inception some few years back, this intervention has improved the living conditions of the rural poor communities. We have seen food security of households improving as a result of the assistance provided by government.

In the current production season of 2009/10 alone, the province has managed, through mechanization, to bring 33 000 hectares of arable land into production, bringing relief to 37 210 poor households and, in the process and created 302 decent jobs. As government, we will continue to upscale the Masibuyele Emasimini until all the rural poor communities in the Province in our quest for food security.

Strengthening our skills and human resource base

Honourable Members, the State of the Province Address delivered in June last year highlighted education as another key priority which will be preoccupying this administration during its term of office. We reflected on the need of government, working together with other key stakeholders, to *enhance the skills and human resource base* within the Province.

We pointed out that, as a Province, the path to sustainable growth and prosperity is dependent on our ability to improve the quality of education outcomes and also increase our skills base to drive growth and development.

State of the Province Address, by Premier DD Mabuza

Nelspruit, Mpumalanga Province

19 February 2010

We further indicated a set of challenges confronting basic education in the Province. Among other things, these include:

- The unsatisfactory performance of learners at Grade 12, which continues to be a reflection of serious weaknesses across all grades. Once again, a drop in the
- Grade 12 pass rate to 47.85% in 2009 calls for extraordinary measures to turn around the situation for the better.
- School governance challenges which impact negatively on learner performance.
- Poor management of scholar transport and nutrition programmes;
- Lack of appropriate infrastructure to provide an environment conducive to effective teaching and learning at schools;
- Unfavourable learning and teaching conditions in farm schools, as well as;
- limited capacity to manage matric exams,

Honourable Speaker, last year, we pulled all stops to ensure that we put in place systems and management processes to protect the integrity of our Grade 12 examinations. Despite these efforts, our name and the integrity of our examinations were compromised by some unscrupulous elements responsible for the management of Grade 12 examinations.

As part of strengthening security, management and the integrity of our examination systems and processes, the Province will establish a new Examination Centre. Working with the national Ministry of Basic Education, the examinations' unit will be reconstituted. We will ensure that all officials appointed into this new unit are vetted before assumption of duty.

Our integrated response to these challenges continues to constitute the content of our programme to turn around the education system in the Province.

During the term of office of the current administration there are key interventions that will focus on:

- Improving overall learner outcomes in key learning areas to 60% at key exit grades, namely, grades 3, 6, 9 and 12.

State of the Province Address, by Premier DD Mabuza

Nelspruit, Mpumalanga Province

19 February 2010

- Doubling the number of candidates attaining university entrance requirements from 6 552 to 13 112 by 2014.
- Improving performance in numeracy, literacy, mathematics and science.
- Improving school governance and teacher development programmes.
- Addressing infrastructure backlogs, and ensuring that a culture of discipline and learning is instilled in all our schools.

In line with the President Zuma's clarion call, I wish to reiterate a set of non-negotiables:

- Our teachers should be in class, on time, all the time, teaching seven hours a day,
- There should be no abuse of learners and neglect of duties,
- Learners must accept that the main reason for being at school is to learn and develop academically, socially and culturally, adhere to school rules, do homework, and respect the legitimacy of educators and parents.

Honourable Members, our commitment to improving the quality of basic education is unwavering. *In the 2010/11 financial year*, we intend meeting the following key outputs:

- We will eradicate all schools in mud and shack structures, including farm schools. Alongside this, we are pursuing our approach of building boarding facilities for learners currently attending farm schools.
- We will also subject all principals to capacity building programmes, focusing mainly on managerial skills for a start. It is our belief that empowering the principal first with such skills will go a long way in empowering them to become better and effective managers of their own schools. We recognize that, in the main, poorly managed schools contribute to high failure rates.
- We will introduce Saturday and Winter school classes for learners in matric of all schools that have obtained a pass rate below 50%. Transport to the learning centers will be provided for legitimate learners. Teachers who are recruited to assist in those classes will be paid an agreed stipend.

State of the Province Address, by Premier DD Mabuza

Nelspruit, Mpumalanga Province

19 February 2010

- With regard to scholar transport and nutrition programmes, we have decided that schools, together with their School Governing Bodies, must run these two support programmes on their own.

Honourable Members, as we continue to improve the education system in the Province, we are cognizant of the reality that the provision of requisite skills is the key driver for economic growth and development. Therefore, it is crucial that the entire education system is geared towards ensuring that the Province has a ***skilled and capable workforce to support an inclusive growth path.***

Our training and skills development programmes should be tailored to respond to the labour market demands, including the provision of scarce and critical skills.

In part, the establishment of *a university in Mpumalanga* will, in the long-term, contribute to knowledge generation, research and development as well as training and skills development. I am privileged to announce that the national government has granted permission for the establishment of a fully-fledged university in the Province. We will work together with the Minister of Higher Education, Dr Blade Nzimande, to take this process forward.

The University will adopt a multi-campus model focusing on key development and economic opportunities offered by the provincial economy. The main campus in Mbombela will operate alongside the tertiary hospital to ensure that our health care taps into the wealth of research and skills from the university.

Other faculties such as engineering, science and agriculture will be spread throughout various parts.

Improving the health profile of Mpumalanga citizens

Honourable Speaker, to improve the health profile of the Mpumalanga citizens is a critical outcome measure of our ability to deliver quality health care to the people of the Province. Despite remarkable progress we have made in the revitalization of our hospitals, improving access to health care for the poor and expanding access to treatment for HIV and Aids, our provincial health care system is still confronting challenges.

Last year, we committed to ensure that our work on the revitalization of the hospitals continues in order to improve the quality of health care. I am pleased to announce that we are going to finalize the revitalization of Themba, Rob Ferreira, and Ermelo hospitals by the end of the financial year. In the 2010/11 financial year, we will commence with the revitalization of Barberton Lydenburg, and Tintswalo hospitals.

State of the Province Address, by Premier DD Mabuza

Nelspruit, Mpumalanga Province

19 February 2010

The scourge of HIV and AIDS continues to pose a serious challenge to the health profile of Mpumalanga citizens. The latest STATS SA figures indicate that the HIV and Aids prevalence rate is at 35.5%, making Mpumalanga the second highest after KwaZulu Natal in terms of HIV and AIDS prevalence.

The statistics further indicate that most of the deaths in the province are recorded as TB related. It has been shown by scientist that TB cases are mostly HIV and AIDS related. These statistics paint a bleak future in that the HIV prevalence among youth between 15-25 years of age is high at 26,7%. Equally, Tuberculosis is ranked as number one of the leading causes of death for the age group of 15-24 in Mpumalanga. This situation cannot be allowed to continue.

Honourable Members, the shortage of medical and other health care professionals continues to put a strain on our capacity to accelerate the delivery of quality health care for our people.

The response time of procuring and supplying of drugs in our health facilities remains a challenge that must be addressed without further delays.

In response to these challenges, our health care delivery programme will, in the next financial year, focus on the following interventions:

- We will strengthen the institutional capacity at all levels to ensure the delivery of quality health care. In this regard, we will ensure that we continue attract and retain medical and health care professionals to address skills shortages. As a matter of urgency, all critical vacant posts will be filled.
- We will accelerate the implementation of the Comprehensive HIV and Aids Plan and significantly reduce the mortality rate related to TB and opportunistic diseases. In this regard, we will accredit more primary health care facilities to provide Anti-Retroviral treatment as part of expanding access.

Particular attention will be paid to the treatment of patients co-infected with TB and HIV. Currently, 65, 090 patients are on ARV treatment. In the next financial year, we are targeting to reach 102,000 patients who are eligible to receive treatment.

Honourable Speaker, as government, we will strengthen the implementation of our education and awareness programmes to prevent new infections. We call upon every citizen to take personal responsibility, to save this nation from the devastating impact of HIV and Aids.

State of the Province Address, by Premier DD Mabuza

Nelspruit, Mpumalanga Province

19 February 2010

We wish to enjoin our people to participate in clinic committees and hospital boards to ensure our institutions are responsive to the health care needs of communities.

We will enhance systems for the distribution of drugs to our health facilities to ensure that drugs are available at all times.

In the 2010/11 financial year, government will set in motion processes of establishing a tertiary hospital in the Province. This tertiary hospital will be linked to the main campus of the University. We intend to drastically cut down the number of unnecessary referrals among the different levels of health care facilities.

Intensifying the fight against crime and corruption

With regard to crime, Honourable Speaker, we pointed out that the Province intend reducing the levels of crime and corruption. We are all aware that crime hinders social development and constraints prospects of investment in the provincial economy. It also undermines the respect for human freedoms and denies communities their right to safety and security.

We are informed that the areas bordering Mozambique and Swaziland have become a safe haven for criminals. This trend extends to the Nkomazi area and the entire belt that runs from Matsulu to Barberton, especially along the mining areas. Car-hijacking and livestock theft, including housebreaking seem to be on the increase as per the latest crime statistics.

As government, we will continue to support the law enforcement agencies in our provincial efforts to reduce serious and violent crime.

In the next financial year, as a Province:

- We are going to dedicate funding towards the fight against crime.
- We will pay special attention on crimes occurring around the Mozambican and Swaziland borders.
- We also intend intensifying our crime awareness campaigns throughout the Province. We want to see communities, through Community Police Fora and other structures, working together with police, to smoke out criminals from their safe havens.

State of the Province Address, by Premier DD Mabuza

Nelspruit, Mpumalanga Province

19 February 2010

- We are going to have targeted focus on crimes against women and children as well as crime against tourists, particularly during the World Cup period.

Government alone will not be able to address the crime problem. Fighting crime requires the participation of all citizens. I am calling upon all the citizens of the Province to participate in community policing forums as well as street, village and block committees and contribute to making the areas where they live secure and safe.

- Let us report crime and corruption
- Let us not harbour criminals in our homes and communities.
- Let us not buy stolen goods

On behalf of government, I wish to once more, appeal to all community members to work with the police in their quest to make Mpumalanga a safe province for all of us and our tourists

Honourable Members, corruption is a cancer that is gradually eroding our moral fibre and societal compass. As I stated in my address last year, the prevention of corruption will remain one of the priority areas of our work in the next five years. We need to combat fraud and corruption at all levels of the society, both in the private and public sectors. We ensure that investigations are speedily concluded so that we act decisively against those breaking the law, irrespective of status or position.

As government, we have already started our work in earnest in this regard. We have intensified our investigations in areas where fraud and corrupt tendencies are reported. Last year, we set up Commissions of Inquiry into alleged irregularities in the scholar transport and the construction provincial Disaster Management Centre and the Archives Building. We have already begun to implement recommendations from these investigations.

We are going to take decisive actions against all individuals who will be found on the wrong side of our laws and regulations. We will ensure that investigations are speedily concluded.

Last year, the Provincial Government approved the Provincial Anti-corruption Strategy that outlines our approach to dealing with issues of corruption. We are in the process of engagement and consultation with the private and public sector stakeholders to ensure that the implementation of anti-corruption plan is accelerated.

State of the Province Address, by Premier DD Mabuza

Nelspruit, Mpumalanga Province

19 February 2010

Building cohesive, caring and sustainable communities

Honourable Members, on the 19 of June when I address this august house I contended that:

“...for service delivery to have maximum impact on the lives of our people, an integrated and focused approach at municipal level will be required in more practical terms...one expect to see a targeted approach where all basic services are delivered holistically in a particular area...In this way, I believe we can contribute far much better in terms of job creation, small business development, skills development and delivery of quality services.”

To date, there are three areas, namely, Klarinet in Emalahleni, Mashishing in Thaba Chweu and Balfour in Dipaliseng where this new integrated human settlement approach is going to be piloted. We expect to complete these settlements in the next three years.

Honourable members, while access to reliable and affordable electricity, efficient sanitation and proper waste management are still a challenge in many communities. You will agree with me that the challenge of water security and supply remains a challenge in the Province. Many of our communities are still without safe and potable drinking water.

It is in this context that in September last year, together with the Minister of the Department of Water Affairs, we hosted and convened a two-day Provincial Water Summit to diagnose the challenges of water supply and demand in the Province. This Summit managed to put together a Provincial Water Plan that will be used as a guide as we tackle the challenges of water in the Province.

We have already begun to implement some of the elements of the Plan to provide immediate relief to distressed communities. Some of the short-term interventions include:

- the construction of boreholes,
- provision of rain water harvesting tanks to communities, as well as
- water tank trucks to supply water to communities

In the next financial year, we will pay particular attention to the supply of bulk water infrastructure to municipalities.

State of the Province Address, by Premier DD Mabuza

Nelspruit, Mpumalanga Province

19 February 2010

Building a developmental state including improvement of public services and strengthening democratic institutions

Honourable Members, the critical task of advancing developmental priorities to create a better life for all is only plausible if the state has the requisite capacity to implement agreed priorities.

As a Province, we remain seized with the task of transforming the administration into well oiled machinery that is accountable, transparent and people-cantered. Central to this task is the need to change the organizational culture that perpetuates mediocrity, poor performance and non-accountability for results.

We note that there are some individuals placed in positions of responsibility who do very little or nothing, either through incapacity or unwillingness, to address the concerns of the people they are meant to serve. As the provincial government we shall work with speed to either capacitate all those who are incapable, needing such assistance or replace them with more capable people

We need a capable developmental-oriented public cadre that demonstrates commitment to community service and empowerment. This should be a new public service cadre characterized by core values of honesty and professionalism, and a caring attitude towards the people we are meant to serve. Our people deserve better.

Part of what should define the character of a developmental state that we envision as a nation is the creation a local government system that is responsive, efficient, effective and accountable. The spate of service delivery protests that engulfed some of our municipalities in the last few months are indications that we have a long way to go in building a truly developmental state.

Largely, these protests pointed to challenges in areas of financial management, institutional capacity and leadership.

Such manifestations of poor performance, poor communication and perceived 'social distance' between the servants of the people and people themselves should become focal points of attention as we continue to turn our local government system around into a better performing machinery. As a democratic state we respect the right of people to voice their concerns through protests , however the violent protests, wanton destruction of property, intimidation will not be tolerated.

State of the Province Address, by Premier DD Mabuza

Nelspruit, Mpumalanga Province

19 February 2010

In the short term, the Province intervened to support municipalities that were confronted by service delivery protests. In some municipalities, we had no choice but to put them under administration. In others, leadership change had to be effected to bring stability in these institutions.

Our intervention currently is focusing on, among other things:

- Supporting municipalities in strengthening their administrative capacity to render day-to-day municipal services. This includes the setting up of proper governance systems and processes, particularly in the areas of financial management.
- Responding to issues raised by communities during the protests.
- Assisting municipalities to enhance effective mechanisms for public participation and engagement on issues of service delivery. This involves, among others, ensuring that public participation structures such as ward committees, izimbizo and other community fora are functioning effectively to bridge the communication gaps with communities.
- Strengthening the participation of traditional leadership institutions in matters of governance and service delivery, including providing necessary support required in the execution of their legislative mandates

In the long term, the Province will develop a comprehensive turnaround strategy for local government that will place local government into a sustainable developmental path.

In this regard, we will convene a Local Government Summit before the end of this month to craft practical programmes that will assist municipalities to be more people centered and service delivery-driven.

Honourable Members, governance and institutional challenges were not limited to local government, but also experienced by the Provincial government.

Last year, we committed ourselves to improving efficiencies and gearing the Provincial Administration for better performance and responsiveness. We committed to strengthening organizational performance, including improved management of public finances.

The first priority was to stabilize provincial finances to ensure that we address challenges of over-expenditure and accruals.

State of the Province Address, by Premier DD Mabuza

Nelspruit, Mpumalanga Province

19 February 2010

At this point, I am happy to report that we have managed to significantly reduce the accruals. We will continue to apply austerity measures to ensure that we bring the issue of over-expenditure under control. In the main, we have also reduced the time taken for the payments of invoices to service providers with the normal 30 day period, except those complex ones which require further investigation.

As we progress, we will continue to strengthen the institutional capacity and efficacy of the state to deliver services in line with the expectations of communities.

2010 World Cup

Honourable Members, it is 112 days to go before the FIFA Soccer World Cup spectacle begins on our home soil. I would say without any fear of contradiction that there is no turning back. Our time has come, and, as a Province, we are on track to meet all the requirements to host a successful tournament.

The Mbombela Stadium is practically complete, and all remaining external works are currently being finalized. We expect to be able to play our first practice matches from the beginning of April on this state of the art pitch.

We are closely monitoring the final stages of the roads infrastructure projects, which are due to be completed in the second week of April. The Ehlanzeni District's Disaster Management Centre will be utilized to ensure that we are ready to deal with any disaster should it happen. This centre will be ready in time for the hosting of the World Cup in the Province.

Our health and safety plans are in place and our facilities are ready. The Safety and Security sector has developed an Integrated 2010 safety and security plan, which is aligned to the General Security Concept of the Local Organizing Committee. The safety and security of our visitors will be of critical importance.

Over the last few years, the World Cup infrastructure programme has injected massive investment into the provincial economy, resulting in business development, employment and skills development opportunities for local people.

At least 80% of the labour force that worked on the Mbombela Stadium project consisted of local people. A lot of these people received training in fields such as shutter making, bricklaying, plumbing, painting and plastering. Following their training, they received certificates, which put them in a better position to seek employment elsewhere once their contracts were concluded.

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19 February 2010

As people of Mpumalanga, let us prepare ourselves to receive the nations of the world with warmth, friendliness and hospitality that define our core values of *Ubuntu*. Let us remember the old adage that says *Isisu somhambi singangenso yenyoni*. Let us be ready to treat our visitors well.

Our hospitality industry needs to be ready for the influx of visitors and ensure that the service offered to our visitors and tourists is friendly, efficient and of good quality at all times. We hope that at least 10% of the visitors to our Province will come back in years to come, which in turn, will create jobs for our people

Honourable Speaker, I am glad to announce that we recently reached an agreement to host the 15th ranked team in the world – Chile, at the Ingwenyama Sports and Conference Centre just outside White River. We thank the Chilean people for making Mpumalanga a Province of choice. We hope that our partnership and friendship will continue to blossom.

Conclusion

Honourable Members, let me take this opportunity to appeal to all the people of this province to work together with government in the execution of these important priorities. If we work together, we can definitely do more.

Working together, we can do more in making this province a better place to live in. We cannot afford to be a laughing stock of everyone anymore.

*We have chosen a life path that binds our lives to contribute in the creation of a **humane** society and the world. Burdens and challenges cannot bend us. Our journey of life is not about our egos and narrow self serving interest but service to our toiling masses and the poor.*

Our life purpose is to serve, the glowing tears of honourable men and women will fall on our ashes.

Sekwanele bakithi. Let us stop the 'pull down syndrome'.

We are calling for less s'chamtho but more Action, Action and Action.

Ngiyabonga ukungiph' indlebe.