ADDRESS BY KWAZULU-NATAL PREMIER NOMUSA DUBE-NCUBE DURING THE RELEASE OF THE RESULTS FOR THE MATRIC CLASS OF 2022 HELD AT THE BETHSAIDA MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL CHURCH, MOUNT EDGECOMBE, 0N 20 JANUARY 2023

CONGRATULATING OUR STAKEHOLDERS AND THE MATRIC CLASS OF 2022

It is with great pride and excitement that we stand here to celebrate and congratulate the KwaZulu-Natal Matric Class of 2022.

We are here today to witness the product of the hard work of the educators, the support of the parents, the school governing bodies, labour unions, our sponsors and all the stakeholders who have played a major role in the success of our leaners throughout the system.

The matric class is a true measure of the impact and totality of the input of the education ecosystem into moulding a learner who is self- assured and ready to face the world, and to map for themselves a career in the future.

CONQUERING IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY

In April and May this year we were a province under siege as the floods pummelled KwaZulu- Natal and caused untold damage to our infrastructure and disrupted education.

This resulted in 824 learners in eThekwini being placed among the displaced in 135 mass care centres, and later being moved into the Temporary Residential Units by December.

Out of this number at least 36 were in matric in 2022, and 04 had special needs. Despite these challenges our resilience showed up. We ensured that these learners were given a fair chance and were not prejudiced by the impact of the flood disaster.

ACHIEVING THE SEEMINGLY IMPOSSIBLE

At the similar ceremony with the class of 2021. The Provincial government announced that we had obtained an overall percentage of 76.8% and set a new target of an 80% pass rate for the Matric Class of 2022.

This morning we want to celebrate what is a momentous occasion and the attainment of our wildest dreams as we witness an 83% overall pass rate for the province. This means that we have far surpassed even our target of 80%, which by all standards, is a massive achievement in one financial year.

We congratulate the Department of Education led by Honourable MEC Mbali Fraser for putting in place clear plans including Accountability Sessions for all the schools.

Our system remains the largest with KwaZulu-Natal having the highest number of learners in matric in 2022 with 198 866 full and part time candidates. The KZN Department of Education’s examination system is the biggest in the country, with 6022 invigilators managing the writing of the examination in 1780 centres.

ANALYSIS OF THE 2022 MATRIC RESULTS

We congratulate the Matric Class of 2022 for bettering last year’s 76.80% pass rate and achieving a massive 83% in 2022.

The 2022 results reflect an improvement in all our districts with Umkhanyakude being the most improved district. This follows the rollout of the Ten-Point improvement plan championed by the Department of Education in our province.

These objectives were meant to guide all the interventions for the improvement of the performance of the matric class of 2022.

The province undertook to improve performance in Mathematics and Physical Science and also sought improvement in the total number of distinction passes in 2022. Progress was achieved in all these areas.

Attention to special schools has also resulted in significant achievement overall. The province has worked hard to improve education of learners with learning barriers.

The province is pleased that girl learners performed better than the boy learners. Girl learners obtained an overall pass percentage of 83.6% whilst the boy learners obtained 82.3%. We will continue to intervene to ensure that female learners have equal opportunities of success like male learners.

We are excited to learn that no school received a 0% pass rate in our province. We have already discussed with the MEC that the Department of Education will come up with a decisive intervention strategy to deal with the situation in the 11 schools that performed below 30%. We note that they were 22 in 2021 and now have reduced to 11. The Education Department must conduct an evaluation and introduce an academic improvement plan with immediate effect. The Executive Council will receive the report with school by school analysis and will assist with relevant interventions.

In terms of qualitative improvement, we are excited about the increase in the number of Bachelor passes from 37% in 2021 to 42.5% in 2022. This 5.4% improvement makes our hearts swells with pride.

In terms of school performance, we have noted an improvement in township and rural schools that achieved 100% pass rate from 145 in 2021 to 212 in 2022.

We are excited because this achievement demonstrates that we are closing the gap between the schools serving poor communities in rural areas and townships and those in middle class areas. This is a clear impact of our pro-poor policies as government bearing fruit.

We are pleased that all our Districts recorded significant improvements. Even the district at number last in the province recorded above 5% improvement. The Provincial districts have featured nationally as top achievers this is highly impressive. As highlighted earlier, Umkhanyakude is the most improved District nationally, they have jumped from the unwarranted position of 2021 and became a national pride of the year 2022 and they have really defied the odds!

Ugu District has defended the crown of being the number one district for four consecutive years. Indeed, Ugu you are in a league of your own – Halala! well done!

The Districts of uMlazi and Pinetwon with all the resources at their disposal have much more to learn and we believe they will be inspired to emerge at the top in 2023.

We are delighted with our subject performance especially in areas of Mathematics, Physical Science, Life Sciences, Accounting and other gateway subjects. We remain committed to increasing the success rate in these areas through our response plans in order to meet the skills needs to grow and develop our province.

EXCEEDING THE TARGET OF 83% IN 2023

Let me use this platform to say that our eyes are firmly set on the road to recovery, and while the future glitters in gold, the road is long, with more mountains and valleys to climb.

To reach our targets for 2023, we will need to work harder and smarter. We must put shoulder to the wheel and step by step, we will reach the destination of our dreams which is to get 100% in all schools.

As Premier on behalf of the provincial government we therefore wish to express our sincere congratulations to all the learners who defied the odds – the legacy of the Covid-19 pandemic, the July civil unrest in 2021 and the devastating flood disasters in April and May.

Like warriors sent to battle when our province faced its worst crisis ever. Like in all wars there will be tears, but there will also be jubilation and congratulations for those who emerge heroes and heroines.

To those who did not make it, the department continues to offer the Second Chances Programme which provides an opportunity to rewrite. Let us not forget that our entire education system is structured around second chances.

EMBRACING THE FUTURE AND 4IR

As learners and young people of today you are walking into a world of new, exciting and infinite possibilities. This literally opens a totally new world for all of young people as you consider your career options. One of the lessons we learn from people such as Elon Musk (Tesla and Twitter), Bill Gates (Microsoft), Mark Zuckerberg (Facebook) and others is that the capacity of a human being’s mind has no limit. The only limitation is your own imagination.

To take advantage of digitisation, robotics, and the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), we are paying attention to subjects like Coding, Mathematics, and Physical Science.

The province also recently launched the Mobile Digital Analytics Skills Laboratory in Pietermaritzburg.

Again, do not ever limit your dreams. Dream that you can touch the stars and allow your imagination to lead you to careers you have never imagined before.

CONVERSION OF UNUSED SCHOOLS INTO VOCATIONAL SKILLS CENTERS

We have taken a decision as the Provincial Government that we must assess the viability of schools with a low enrolment rate. Our view is that some of them could be converted into Vocational Skills Centers to address among others the shortage of technical skills for the country as we are experiencing a shortage of technical skilled personnel that we need as a country to develop. These among others include among others Artisan and, Plumbers, Electricians, Construction and Carpentry.

OPENING THE DOORS OF HIGHER EDUCATION LEARNING FOR OUR 2023 STAR PERFOMERS

We will soon be convening the Human Resource Development Council, which is Chaired by the Premier in the Province. This is the structure that involves all the senior management of our higher education institutions. Central on our agenda will be to establish and assess the state of readiness for the Institutions of Higher Learning to commence the 2023 academic year.

We will be having these engagements in order to ascertain the capacity of our Universities, TVETS and colleges to absorb all our students that have made our province proud in the Matric Class of 2022.

The KZN Provincial Academy in the Office of the Premier has been tasked to work with the Department of Education to conduct a tracking and audit exercise of all the learners who passed their Matric in 2021. We want to assess their progress and whether they are still in the system to advance their skills. We do not want to live on assumptions; we want tangible data that we are building a skills capital for our province.

IMPORTANCE OF TVET COLLEGES

We would like to make a strong recommendation on the use of TVET colleges as an alternative for those who have not been absorbed by the Universities. One of the reasons why government adopted the three-stream model in our education system was to accommodate some of our leaners who have skills but may find it hard to be accepted in universities. We are therefore encouraging leaners to also make use of the opportunity provided by TVET colleges. We have seen in the past few years a trend where industry and business is absorbing more graduates from TVETS as opposed to Universities.

THANKING ALL THE STAKHOLDERS ROLE

No one reminds us better about the value of education than Madiba when he says, and I quote:

“It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that a son of a mineworker can become the head of the mine that a child of farm workers can become a president”.

When we educate a learner, we educate a family, a community and a nation. We thank all teacher unions who worked to ensure that Teachers were in Class, on Time and Teaching.

We convey our heartfelt gratitude to the Principals and all School Management Teams for their resolute commitment to the success of our learners against all odds. Allow us to also recognise all our school governing bodies who displayed stellar leadership under such difficult circumstances.

On this day we celebrate the parents and guardians who refused to give up even when the going was tough. It has not been easy with pressing economic challenges placing a lot of pressure on families.

A number of these parents were facing troubles emanating from the global economic crisis, load shedding and the stress caused by the various social ills.

We take off our hats to the learners, who burned the midnight oil in pursuit of a bright future for our province.

We congratulate the Minister for Basic Education Angie Motshekga, our MEC for Education, Honourable Frazier, senior managers in the Department of Education under the stewardship of Dr Ngcobo, the Principals, teachers, labour, the parents, learners and all our stakeholders for their contribution towards achieving excellent matric results this year.

We urge our communities to take a keen interest in the future of their children. Let us join hands and work with community policing forums to protect school assets and buildings from vandalism, theft and destruction. We continue to emphasize that communities need to understand that schools belong to them more than they do to government. It is therefore up to communities to protect the resources that we, as government, pour into schools. The safety and security of teachers, schoolchildren, and property are also the responsibility of communities who must work with law enforcement agencies.

We want to thank the District Political Champions (MECs), Mayors, Councillors, Communities, HOD Champions, activists and business for this phenomenal achievement.

This achievement is the product of the collective effort of the entire community of KwaZulu-Natal. This reminds of the African proverb which says, “alone you can go faster, but together we will all go far”, as long as we ensure that we do not leave anyone behind.

THIS IS A FITTING TRIBUTE TO HIS MAJESTY

This is a record performance and there is not better tribute to the work and lifetime dedication to education of His Majesty King Goodwill ka Bhekuzulu whose work and encouragement has culminated in this wonderful achievement.

We have no doubt that with the advice and support of His Majesty King Misuzulu kaZwelithini on our side, we will do even better in 2023.

Once again to all the learners who passed in 2022, congratulations and best wishes as you embark on your new journeys which will take you to many different places here and abroad. The world is your oyster.

Those who did not do well, learn from the experience and pick yourself up and keep moving.

God Bless the people and learners of our province!

Together Growing KwaZulu-Natal!

THANK YOU!