

**Address by the Premier of the Province of KwaZulu-Natal
Senzo Mchunu on the occasion of the Youth Development Summit
held at the Coastlands Hotel in Durban
22 August 2014**

Programme Director
Members of the Executive Council;
Mayor of eThekweni Municipality, Cllr James Nxumalo;
Statistician General; Phali Lehohla
Director General of the Province;
Representatives from National Governments;
Delegates;
Members of the Media present

First and foremost, let me express my sincere appreciation to the officials from the national governments who are with us today representing national governments.

I also want to express my appreciation to all delegates who have set aside time to be part of this Youth Development Summit.

While I appreciate the opportunity to address this summit, I am of the view that the voices that should be heard today are the voices of all delegates and youth development practitioners who are with us.

It is for this reason that I have directed that the programme for this summit and the lineup of speakers be structured such that we are able to give you as delegates enough time to engage meaningfully.

The good attendance gives me confidence that we will achieve the objective of this summit of developing a strategy that will guide the Youth of KwaZulu-Natal Province on how to Move South Africa Forward.

Delivering a speech here in KwaZulu-Natal in 1995 in EZakheni Township in Ladysmith, our late President Nelson Mandela said:

"This generation of youth stands at the border-line between the past of oppression and repression, and the future of prosperity, peace and harmony."

These words are nails on a chalkboard. The most important lesson that we must draw from these words is that Madiba believed in young people.

He neither condemned them nor regarded them as a burden on society. Instead he viewed young people as valuable assets and successors upon whom a country depends for the continuity of development. It was the former President Nelson Mandela who declared June youth month and he addressed the first ever official Youth Day here in KwaZulu-Natal.

In young people, Tata Madiba saw shining lights.

Today it may sound like a cliché, but our youth truly remain the future of our country, and as such no effort should be spared in ensuring that they are well taken care of materially, guided through the challenges and difficulties they encounter because of their stage of development, and the other challenges that they face at this stage of their lives.

Indeed, youth is an important life stage in human development. It is a period in which a human being moves through a teenage stage to becoming an independent adult.

It is a significant period of development—physically, psychologically, emotionally and socially.

It is also a period of enormous change in how young people relate to themselves, to each other and how they interact with the world.

At this time, most young people question their identity, their values, their interests and relationships. In the quest to find answers to these questions young people experiment with issues and negotiate multiple relationships with people from different backgrounds.

As young people go through transition and interact with the world, government remains the most important point of entry and a point of exit. Through the manner in which government conduct its affairs, young people can have a smooth transition into a brighter future or a rough transition which may lead them to nowhere.

We have therefore convened this Summit to develop a comprehensive Youth Development Strategy that will guide this province on how to assist young people to navigate transition from being dependents to becoming independent and responsible citizens.

Our vision as the provincial government is for all young people to grow up safe, healthy, happy and resilient and to have the opportunities and skills they need in order participate in the socio-economic development of this province.

However, we acknowledge that KZN Government cannot achieve this vision alone. We are relying on many role players such as youth

development practitioners, NGOs, civil society, academics, organized labour and the private sector.

Our ultimate goal as government is to develop a strategy that will help build a robust and enduring productive capacity of young people throughout the province for many more years to come.

From the dawn of democracy, the South African government has conceptualized, experimented with and implemented various programmes and strategies aimed at advancing youth development in the country.

Some progress has been made but we are sensitive to the fact that many developmental challenges still prevent South African youth from playing a meaningful role in the reconstruction and redevelopment of this country.

In 2002 National Parliament unanimously passed the National Youth Policy Framework, thus giving tangible endorsement to the clarion call by former ANC President O.R Tambo that “a nation that does not take care of its youth has no future and does not deserve one”.

The subsequent National Youth Policy 2009–2014 was an essential planning tool guiding the country on its approach to youth development. This policy document contains commitments by government, young South Africans, and society at large on interventions and services that have to be rolled out to ensure effective and efficient mainstreaming of our youth development in the socio-economic mainstream.

Through the NYP 2009-2014 and Youth Accord which has just been signed, government gives voice to the recognition and acknowledgement by our nation of the role played by our youth in establishing a South Africa that is truly free, democratic and caring.

These will give them opportunities to play a meaningful role towards the attainment of all the good values we cherish so that we can safely say that we have afforded every citizen of our country a better life.

Programme Director, without attempting to dwell on issues that were discussed by commissions yesterday and other issues that will be addressed by speakers today, it is important to emphasize the importance of the National Development Plan and our own Provincial Growth and Development Plan in relation to the economic well-being of our young people.

The PDGP offers a long-term perspective for KZN’s economic development and growth. It defines a desired destination and identifies the role different sectors of society need to play in reaching that goal. As a long-term strategic plan the PGDP serves four broad objectives:

1. Providing overarching goals for what we want to achieve by 2030.
2. Building consensus on the key obstacles to us achieving these goals and what needs to be done to overcome those objectives.
3. Providing a shared long-term strategic framework within which more detailed planning can take place in order to advance the long-term goals set out in the NDP.
4. Creating a basis for making choices about how best to use limited resource.

The Plan aims to ensure that the people of this province, young and old, urban and rural, attain a decent standard of living through the elimination of poverty and reduction of inequality.

The core elements of a decent standard of living identified in the plan are:

- Housing, water, electricity and sanitation
- Safe and reliable public transport
- Safety and security
- Quality health care
- Social protection
- Quality education and skills development
- Employment
- Recreation and leisure
- Clean environment
- Adequate nutrition

I am of the view that through harnessing the energy of the youth and their creative ideas and mixing it with the wisdom and capability of the older generation through a common vision as outlined in both NDP and PGDP, youth in KZN have a golden opportunity to positively contribute towards shaping South Africa's future.

In developing the Youth Development Strategy, this summit must seek to find ways and means of ensuring that young people are not only made aware of the NDP and PGDP but the youth strategy defines their role in the implementation of PGDP.

Our youth must continue to play the role of a motor-force for progressive change consistent with the spirit of June 16. Whereas in the past active citizenry was against an unjust and oppressive system, today active citizenry must contribute towards the creation of a globally competitive country that rests upon the pillars of inclusive economic growth and development that leads to the creation of decent employment opportunities and entrepreneurship development.

The NDP acknowledges that there are constraints in the labour market that pose challenges for young people to be meaningfully engaged in the

labour market. The NDP advocates for reforms to improve the functioning of the labour market to reduce tension and ease access for young people to the labour market.

Young people are one of the hardest affected groups by our almost stagnant economy. Even though constituting the majority of our population, youths remain one of the most marginalised groups in South Africa economically.

Although Stats SA will be making a comprehensive presentation today I do want to quote the figures for the third quarter of 2012 which show that 71% of the unemployed are aged 25-34 and the unemployment rate among youth is 36%. About 3,3m youth aged 15-34 are not employed or studying.

KZN has a youth unemployment rate of 48.4%, while South Africa's youth unemployment rate is 1% lower at 47.4%. This reversal is more evident in the 15-24 age group, with KZN recording a 66.8% unemployment rate, and South Africa as a whole recording a rate of 64.5%.

The large disparity between the strict and broad youth unemployment rates for KwaZulu-Natal can be attributed to the higher incidence of discouragement among young work-seekers in the province. As expected, considering the province's higher broad unemployment rate, the incidence of discouragement among young work-seekers is higher in KZN than it is in South Africa as a whole.

Globally, it is estimated that young people constitute about 25% of the working age population, but they constitute 47% of the unemployed.

Another important matter worth mentioning *Programme Director*, is that South Africa and the rest of the world have since the late 2000s been subjected to vicious upheavals in the economic sphere, which has resulted in drastic reduction in the GDPs of most countries, while some have tittered at the brink of total collapse, especially in Southern Europe.

While African economies have to a large extent escaped the full brunt of the economic crisis, it is important to always remember that what has made KwaZulu-Natal vulnerable to the global financial crisis is that this province has effectively become a global player.

Along with the rest of the country, KwaZulu-Natal has managed to fully integrate our economy to the rest of the world. This has both benefits and costs. On the positive side, barriers to global economic integration are diminishing rapidly. New technologies are shrinking economic distance dramatically. The shrinking of economic distance has opened up new opportunities for competitive activity for developing countries like ours.

But we need to ask ourselves few questions: -

- Can we safely say that the youth of KwaZulu-Natal can participate on equal footing with their counterparts from other countries?
- Could it be that this globalization and trade integration is causing too many challenges for young people in KZN?

It is true that many young people have identified many opportunities as a result of globalization and trade integration but there are too many challenges that stand between them and opportunities.

The challenges that young people face in the country can lead to increased disenchantment and ultimately result in the country being locked in a vicious negative cycle that will have an adverse impact on social cohesion and nation building. Many social commentators have called the plight of youth a ticking time bomb.

We have therefore invited you to this summit because we believe that you will inspire us with solutions that will guide the whole province on how to drive youth development.

At the end of this Summit we must have resolved how to: -

- ensure an increased steady flow of contributing and productive young people in the province;
- Unlock the potential of young people through cognitive, emotional, physical and spiritual empowerment;
- Ensure an effective implementation of behavioral change programmes;
- Rollout initiatives that focuses on the building of self-esteem of the young people of this province so that they believe in their potential;
- Speed up the provision of relevant vocational skills to youth;
- Strengthen collaborations and partnerships by the different stakeholders for youth development; and
- Increased prospects of employability and business venture creation by young people.

In conclusion I want to once again quote our former President Nelson Mandela who once said: "Sometimes it falls upon a generation to be great, you can be that generation".

I thank you.