

**SPEECH BY HONOURABLE PREMIER SENZO MCHUNU ON THE OCCASION OF
A VISIT AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN DUDUDU, VULAMEHLO
MUNICIPALITY ON 23 MARCH 2015**

Programme Director, MEC Sibhidla-Saphetha,
Colleagues in the Executive Council,
Mayors and Councillors,
Traditional Leaders,
Religious Leaders,
Community Members,
Press Corps,
Ladies and Gentlemen

There was a time when the majority of the people of this country were denied access and enjoyment of their human rights. A time when one group of people could be classified and treated as human, yet others as sub-human on the basis of colour.

A time when racial superiority of one race over the other was enforced as a norm. A time when a false sense of racial exceptionalism was introduced, enforced and justified through deliberate distortion of Christianity, projecting the creator as God of one particular race.

Indeed, there was a time when the cultural beliefs and practices of the majority were viewed as barbaric and that of one race as godly and pure. There was a time when acts of land dispossession were enforced through a barrel of a gun, disrupting thriving economic activities and denying people of their means of livelihood.

There was a time when forced removals and segregation according to race, was enforced through Group Areas Act leading to displacement of land occupants from their original places of birth and settlement.

A time when oppression and subjugation of one race by the other was sustained through terror and violence.

There was once a time when others could be classified as citizens and yet others as subjects. When others could vote, make laws, and decide the fate of the majority without their participation in matters that govern their affairs.

A time when one's movement in a country of his or her birth, from one place to another or from one corner to another, was restricted through Influx Control Act and Pass Laws.

There was once a time when who to love or fall in love with was regulated through legislation, confusingly named Morality Act.

There was once a time when access to centres of public services were determined and controlled according to one's skin colour. Once a time when recreational facilities were classified by race.

There was once a time when one group had access to all basic services, yet others denied. A time when access to water meant competing with animals to access this basic human need.

There was once a time when education was a privilege for the few. A time when areas of human endeavour that one wished to pursue, were determined by one's skin colour. Indeed a time when racial supremacy of one group over the majority was enforced. A time when the minority on the basis of skin colour, determined the quality of life of the majority and how they must lead their lives.

Such is the unfortunate and painful history of our country. A history where racism and its brutality was given theological justification, and sustained through brutal force and repression. A history where racism and sexism was designed, made and enforced as a human condition.

From the arrival of the Dutch in 1652 to the colonisation of the majority by the British Empire - to the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, and the ultimate coming into power of the Nationalist Party in 1948, the majority never featured as full citizens in a country of their forebears.

All these successive regimes and their systems of governance, shared a common thread of racial supremacy as an enforced human condition.

The key question is what the majority could do to respond to this reality of dispossession, oppression, dehumanisation and violence? What could the oppressed black majority do from a position of their humiliated condition?

History tells us that there were frontier wars of resistance against land dispossession. Many compatriots lost their lives in defence of their dignity and land of their forebears. We know of the imposition of poll tax that led to the break-up of family units, as males were forced to sell their labour in the mines and some in the sugar and cotton plantations.

Siyazi ngezimpi ezaliwa okhokho ukuvikela umhlaba kanjalo nesithunzi sabantu bohlanga. Yize balwisana nokuhlukunyezwa kwabo ngabamhlophe, banqotshwa ngenxa yentuthuko yezikhali ezazisetshenziswa ngaleso sikhathi. Ukunqotshwa kwabo akushongo ukuphela amandla ekulweni nengcindezelo. Yingaleso sikhathi lapho izingqalabutho zabaholi bethu bahlangana khona ukubumba umbutho wabantu owabasekhaleni lempi yokukhulula izwe lethu kwingcindezelo yobandlululo. Lokhu kwaba yigalelo elinamandla ekuhlanganiseni bonke ababecindezelwe ukuze sibe nalenkululeko esinayo namuhla.

The brutality of the system at the time, led to the formation of the national liberation movement to organise the oppressed and advance the principles of unity, non-racialism, non-sexism and democracy. This movement led an organised resistance across all sections of our society including religious and traditional leadership, against the unjust and evil system of oppression.

It is common course that people were forced to sell their labour in the mines and plantations, in order to meet the obligations of enforced tax and resultant loss of economic livelihood as a result of land dispossession.

It is common course that people were arrested for petty crimes like not carrying a Dompas. It is common course that peoples' movement were controlled through influx control legislation. It is common course to those who lived through the history of oppression in our country that prison labour was used in sugar, cotton and potato plantations.

When we finally brought down the Apartheid regime and ushered in a democratic South Africa, we were mindful of the pain that the black majority had experienced. We understood that there can be no new society that can be built without acceptance of our past, and any the role we may have played in it - whether in perpetuating Apartheid or in fighting to end it. We understood some may have perpetuated oppression of one group by another, through acts of commission or omission. We understood that the liberation breakthrough of 1994 was not only of the oppressed majority, but was equally the liberation of the former oppressor as well.

To close that painful chapter of our ugly history, we introduced our own version of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, where we had to take part and give full disclosure of all atrocities we may have committed or know of their commission. Through this process, our nation could find closure and with time, find healing from such pain. Our country earned praise from the international community for this route we had taken. We further earned praise for ushering in of our democratic Constitution, which contained clearly articulated Bill of Rights.

It has been two decades since that historic moment of April 27, 1994. However, our march towards a prosperous society that is at peace with itself, is still in progress. Our nation is still grappling with the national question. We seem to be a society that is struggling to fix its racial fault lines. We seem to be a society that is struggling to talk to each other, and have a decent conversation about the present and the future of our country across colour line. It seems that racial minority whose privilege had been gained through exploitation of the majority, seem comfortable to opt out of processes of building a thriving economy that potentially could produce outcomes for the common good of our nation.

With all these challenges, we remain an imperfect society in the making. We strongly believe that it is possible to build a truly democratic, united, non-racial and non-sexist South Africa as envisioned in the Freedom Charter. If we are to bequeath a country of dreams to the future generations, failure is thus not an option.

What was presented at the meeting of the Provincial Executive Council on the 11th March 2015, bring back the pain and scars of our history. It also highlights the nature of political economy of our country under apartheid. It suggest that as we continue to extend dignity to the living through social protection, we equally have an obligation to extend the same to those who may be in the same condition as these remains here in Glenroy Farm, who are lying in there with no identity. It also says, the story of what happened in the sugarcane plantations of our country is yet to be uncovered and told in full.

We gather in this part of our country today after a week of headline grabbing of these sensitive news. At this stage, we do not know the identities of those remains. We do not know their causes of death. What we know is that it is the right of a new born to have a name that will be his or her identity. Even in death, one has a right to identity and to be laid to rest in dignity.

Loludaba olusihlanganisa lapha, luvusa imizwa ebuhlungu. Lusikhumbuza ubunzima bempilo eyayiphilwa abasebenzi basemapulazini nesihluku sobugqila. Kusho futhi ukuthi kusamele siphenye ezinye izigigaba ezingafana nalezi. Umuntu unelungelo lokuqanjwa igama, kanjalo nasekufeni, unelungelo lokwaziwa ukuze abasondelane naye beyokwazi ukuthi wafihlwa kuphi. Ukufihlwa komuntu ngokwesiko labantu kusho ukuthi kumele kwenziwe ngesizotha kungalahlelwa njengento engenamphefumulo. Lokhu kwenziwa ngaphandle kokubheka izinga lempilo umuntu asuke ekulo, kepha kwenziwa ngoba eyisidalwa sikaMdali.

As we seek to build a cohesive society that is based on principles of equality, justice and human rights, we must do so bearing in mind that any such efforts must arise of the experiences of those who lived such injustices. Our hope is of building a better South Africa that in all its form is based on genuine pursuit of a future that despises

racial intolerance, racial supremacy and is intolerant of poverty, economic deprivation and inequalities that are prevalent in our society.

We cannot afford to be indifferent to how the present realities of our country came into being. We must confront our demons head on and engage in a frank national conversation on issues that threaten social cohesion. The history of plantations across the world is not an easy one.

Dealing with our past may be uncomfortable for some, as it brings back the pain of exploitation and lived hardship. Even on the side of the erstwhile perpetrator, it would be uncomfortable as it challenges the conscience and legacy of privilege and benefits, accrued under an evil and unjust system. In far flung areas like the United States of America and the Caribbean, the story of the plantations and gross violation of human rights of those who provided labour through coercion, remains an uncomfortable matter – yet one that must be confronted in our efforts to build a better world.

Today, we have a Constitution that guides and compels us as a nation to observe human rights. A Constitution that has guaranteed human dignity for all. A Constitution that ensures that human rights and are the cornerstone of our society.

We will be writing officially to the President of the Republic of South Africa, requesting him to set-up a Commission of Enquiry into this matter. We appeal to all those who may know anything particularly on the conditions of workers at the time, to talk about these things. This will help to shed light on what could have transpired, but also help our nation to move forward and heal as we seek closure to our painful past. It is not going to be easy to identify who these victims were and to find their next of kin, we thus appeal for patience and cooperation with all agencies that will be involved.

Kwabathintekayo kulokhu kanye nalabo abalahlekelwa izihlobo zabo, siyazwelana nabo. Kuyithemba lethu ukuthi ngalesinyathelo bayokwazi ukuthola ukuthi kwenzakalani kulezo zihlobo zabo. Siyaluqonda usizi lokulahlekelwa isihlobo noma izihlobo ngaphandle kokwazi ukuthi kwenzakalani kuso noma kuzo. SiwuHulumeni okhethwe ngentando yeningi, siyakuqonda okuwumthwalo wethu ukuqinisekisa ukubuyisa isithunzi kubantu, kokunye ngokuvikela amalungelo abantu ukuze

kungaphinde nangelinye ilanga kuphinde lokho okwenzeka ngesikhathi sengcindezelo nobandlululo. Sizokwenza okusemandleni ethu, ukuvumbulula amaqiniso ngalokho okwenzeka kulendawo. Akuzukuba lula nokho. Kuzobuyisa ubuhlungu nomunyu, kepha kumele sikuqonde ukuthi indlela eya ekuthuleni nakulohlobo besizwe nomphakathi esizama ukuwakha, idlula ebunzimeni nasebuhlungwini bokuvusa amanxeba. Kuyithemba lethu ukuthi lokhu kuyo sinika ithuba lokupholisa lawomanxeba angaphinde avuleke.

Ends