

**SPEAKING NOTES FOR THE HONOURABLE KWAZULU NATAL PREMIER, MR. ES MCHUNU
DURING THE INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S DAY CELEBRATION AT MELMONT**

Programme Director

MEC's present

MPL's present

Local Mayor

Community Members

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my greatest honour to greet you all on this special day dedicated to the ones who hold the key to our tomorrow - our children. This day is observed internationally around the world as International Children's Day. This day was proclaimed by the World Conference for the Well – Being of Children in Geneva in 1925 and has been celebrated throughout the world on the 1st of June.

Last month it was May, when we celebrated our workers and our great continent of Africa. Amongst many countries of the world, as South Africans, we are known of being hospitable and a caring nation. Our government and our people were so ashamed by the recent attacks on foreign nationals early in April. We are all Africans, and we must embrace our fellow brothers and sisters.

Our province must be known world-wide by its hospitality because that will improve our economy by bringing in tourists

The International Children's Day Celebration in South Africa coincide with the month (June) specifically dedicated to the Youth. It was during this month 39 years ago when the youth of this country confronted Apartheid regime and denounced being taught in Afrikaans. This was the turning point of what many called the beginning of a revolution which ultimately led to the total collapse of Apartheid-minority regime, and ushered the new era which culminated to the democracy that we achieved in 1994.

In June 2012, His Excellency President Jacob Zuma launched the child protection week in the Northern Cape. During the launch he said " We have to work together to protect the children in distress, children who suffer neglect, abuse or exploitation, and children who live in extreme poverty and for whom life still remains a struggle despite the progress we have made since the dawn of freedom." The theme for 2015 International Children's Day Celebration is "Working Together to Protect Children". I must begin by commending the organizers of this noble and important initiative and for choosing such a powerful theme. I have noted that through Operation Sukuma Sakhe the Provincial Government of KwaZulu-Natal have contributed with some desks and chairs to assist the young ones. This is the single greatest contribution that can be made to secure the future of our children. I am confident that such a contribution made today will go a very long way in attempting to positively influence the future of our children.

Indeed, it is our responsibility to protect our children. But, the events such as that of Taegrin Morris shocked the whole world about the cruel and sadistic nature some of our people behave towards

children. Taegrin Morris's ordeal was told through different television news bulletins after he tragically died at the hand of the hijackers in Reiger Park early last year. Taegrin was with her mother and eight year old sister outside his grandmother's house when they were approached by three armed men. The hijackers drove away leaving him dangling outside the car, and sadly he died later. It is through special days such as the International Children's Day that we can reinforce the message to the whole society that our children are the future, therefore we must protect them from all forms of abuse.

The rate of child abuse, and child neglect, smuggling remains unacceptably high, and that points to the direction that something has really gone wrong in our society. It shows that most of us have lost touch with our roots and we have forgotten our key responsibility as parents. A society that does not take good care and protect its children is a doomed society. As the Provincial Government of KwaZulu Natal, we have taken this International Children's Day Celebration to Melmoth for the specific reason of highlighting the plight of children in the whole province of KwaZulu Natal.

- Health issues in Mthonjaneni reflect that the prevalence of TB is not that severe. This seen as the Department of Health embarked on several campaigns early this year.
- TB screening was done to 7104 under 15 children. Only 21 were diagnosed and certified to be infected.
- Statistics in as far as access to Anti-Retroviral Therapy for under 15s reflect that out of 1077, 1056 receive ART, 12 are newly identified and 9 were diagnosed and are accepted into the ART programme.

- Seven children were discovered to be in severe and acute malnutrition while 103 children were mild are receiving supplements.
- One HIV site and three (3) Home Based Care sites which provide 245 Orphans and Vulnerable Children with services have been erected.
- Department of Social Development provided 11 schools with school uniforms in their campaign.
- 110 households are benefitting from Home Based Care.
- There are 28 **Early Childhood Development centers** of which 15 are registered and are receiving funding.
- An ECD Forum where crèche Supervisors sit, has been establish so as to take care of Early Childhood Development matters.
- Furthermore, a **Satellite Service Office** has been erected in Nkalakuthaba so as to bring services nearer to the community.

According to Independent on Line News (IOL) of September 2014, child abuse in KwaZulu-Natal is on the rise. Child line receives 350 000 calls a year from abused children, with the majority of complaints involving sexual abuse. Other complaints involve neglect, exploitation and child trafficking. This calls for a combined efforts from all of us as government, non-governmental organizations and members of society to put a stop on this. In order to revive a society that is going to protect its children, we need to revive our morals, especially the concept of Ubuntu. This is the concept that encourages the spirit of communalism and the so-called Ubuntu-ism, where a child can enjoy protection from every person in the neighborhood.

Despite the best efforts of the South African Government and civil society to protect children from child abuse, neglect and exploitation, many children still remain vulnerable. This is attested by the findings of the AU Committee of Experts which sat in October 2014 in Ethiopia, as pointed on issues of forced and early marriages, to name the few. The South African society is plagued by high levels of violence and it is no surprise that children also face a substantial amount of violent experiences in their lives. Exposure to violence and a host of abuses are experienced by children across multiple- and virtually all- settings where childhood is spent. These settings include the home and family, schools, care and justice systems, places of work as well as in the community. The high amount of violence exposure across a number of contexts has major implications for children's psychological, emotional and social development and their well-being. These consequences are known to continue well into adulthood. Thus, violence against children is not just a children's rights issue but is also a major public health concern.

Today's theme is a clarion call to all of us to do something about the protection of our children. It is a call upon each and every one of us to stand up and take responsibility for the protection of the most vulnerable members of our society. Such an action is in line with Operation Sukuma Sakhe which is a rallying call by the Provincial Government of KwaZulu-Natal to call people into action, to build their own future. There has been a number of instances where we have seen critical interventions being made in our own communities where neighbours played their roles in mobilizing for assistance for those in distress. This is the type of action that this special day for the children is calling for. I firmly believe that this call for action is not only for government, municipalities or non-governmental organisations only, but it is a call for all of us.

South Africa as a member of the United Nations has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, therefore we have committed to implementing the principle of “First Call for Children”. On this International Children’s Day, we as the Provincial Government of KwaZulu-Natal also extend our solidarity with children throughout the world whose lives are ravaged by the scourges of hunger, war, abuse and ignorance. We commit ourselves to contribute to the best of our ability to the international efforts aimed at resolving the problems and conflicts affecting children.

Programme Directors, today’s International Children’s Day is in pursuance to the Provincial Government’s aspirations of realizing safe and secure communities in KwaZulu-Natal, where everybody including children will walk freely on the streets, without any fear of harm. We are therefore committed to realizing the objectives of ensuring that we prioritize the welfare of children which include developing, monitoring and measuring tools that define and deal with child poverty, strengthening the current safety nets that deal with child protection, ongoing murders, disappearance, abuse and negligence which continue to torment many children. We have to give the best interest of children the utmost priority.

Through various efforts by the Department of Social Development and the Department of Education, the Province of KwaZulu-Natal is registering a remarkable progress in opening the doors of learning and teaching. This include Government legislated Social Grants, Child Support Grants, Early Childhood Development and other direct interventions from Government aimed at assisting children. As a Province, we view education as an important tool that must be used to determine and shape the future of the nation.

The 2011 Census indicates that the proportion of **households headed by children** in KwaZulu-Natal has declined over the three epochs and across districts. As expected; the proportion of child headed households is consistently low.

Protecting children and creating a safe and secure environment is everybody's responsibility, hence the theme for this year's campaign is, "Working Together to Protect Children." The five year theme starting from 2011 to 2015 was adopted on 28 October 2010 by the National Child Care and Protection Forum, in order to uphold Government's commitment to protect and promote children's rights in partnership with civil society. .

In conclusion Programme Directors, Communities must also play their part to ensure the safety of our children and teachers in schools. Protect our schools. If you know about thugs in the community, tell the police. Remember that the children, are South Africa's future.

You make up the great nation we have fought so hard to bring to fruition. We know you'll make us proud. Through our programmes and projects we are clearly demonstrating that children are a responsibility of all of us. Equally it is the duty of each and every child to look after her or himself.

On behalf of the Provincial Government of KwaZulu-Natal and its people, I would like to reaffirm our full support to the International Children's Day.

I thank you