

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY HONOURABLE PREMIER SENZO MCHUNU DURING  
YOUTH DAY COMMEMORATION AT DALES PARK, PIETERMARITZBURG ON 16  
JUNE 2015**

Programme Director  
Mayor of uMgungundlovu District and others Mayors present  
Colleagues in the Executive Council  
Speaker of KZN Legislature  
Minister of Higher Education and Training  
Members of the Provincial Legislature  
Members of the Diplomatic Corps  
Fellow South Africans  
Distinguished Guests  
Ladies and Gentlemen

Frantz Fanon in the *Wretched of the Earth*, reminds us that 'Each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfil it or betray it.'

We are thus gathered here on this historic day, to commemorate the events of June 16, 1976, and to celebrate the fruits of freedom we are enjoying today borne out of struggle of that generation of young people.

That our country observes this day 39 years since that generation of young people of our country took upon themselves to find their historic mission out of relative obscurity, bears testimony to the significance of these words of Fanon.

Those young people understood that they could not stand by when the leadership of the national liberation movement was languishing in prison, and yet others living in forced exile in foreign lands.

They understood that the imposed condition they were facing was not going to change on its own, without being challenged through struggle.

Thus, they organized themselves and confronted the most brutal system of apartheid, whose architects were so determined to sustain through all forms of manipulation, violence and subjugation.

Today 39 years later, people of all persuasions across the length and breadth of our valleys, mountains, rivers, towns, villages and cities; observe this day to celebrate the courage, bravery and determination of the generation of 1976.

That their action brought unprecedented blow to the apartheid system, is not an overstatement.

There could be no doubt in anybody's mind that June 16, 1976, represents a turning point that propelled the struggle against apartheid and its misplaced ideology of superiority to greater heights. Because of June 16, 1976, the ranks of the national liberation movement swelled with young combatants who were prepared to confront and fight the system with utmost determination.

This generation laid the ground for the young lions to roar and intensify the struggle for the total defeat of apartheid system. The generation of 1976 continued to be a source of inspiration, not only for us in South Africa but for all the oppressed across the world. The picture of a dying Hector Peterson being carried by Mbuyisa Makhubo, remain a graphic reminder of the brutality of that system.

In 1994, apartheid was defeated and a democratic dispensation ushered in. This eventual defeat of apartheid, was a fulfilment of that decisive action by the generation of 1976, which had from relative obscurity fulfilled its immediate generational mission.

As we commemorate June 16, 1976, we must be mindful that it is a generation that was confronted by a different set of challenges than those faced we are facing currently. Theirs was a rejection of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction and all it represented, which was an antithesis of democratic rule as outlined in the Freedom Charter.

The current social and economic realities we are faced with, are about massive unemployment, deep levels of poverty and inequality, a challenge of skills set that are not completely aligned to the demands of modern economy, and a sense of marginalization from the mainstream economic activity.

Any sense and feeling of marginalization in any given society including our own, breeds hopelessness and despair. Such feeling if not curbed, may deepen and grow roots that may lead to catastrophe. As a government that understands its historic duty to its people, our immediate task is to always search for sustainable programmes that respond to the challenges of the hour.

It is in this regard that we have adopted a new approach to how we observe this day, first and foremost, as a conscious attempt not to betray the struggles and sacrifices of the generation of 1976, and secondly as an attempt to end any form of hopelessness and despair that threatens the fabric of our society. We do so, fully cognizant of our duty to honour their sacrifice and determination to build a democratic, non-racial and society based on equality and civil liberties.

We have invited different speakers to talk to you about opportunities available to us, which must be seized to better our condition and improve our lives. The fundamental base of such opportunities, is education. With education, there are no guarantees of a better life particularly if the choice of the field of study is not what is required in the modern economy and changing landscape.

But without education, ones' life is doomed from the beginning. Education lays the necessary foundation for any one of us to reach for the stars.

By all accounts, the challenge of youth unemployment is not only a South African phenomenon. Notwithstanding this challenge, new opportunities are being opened up in our country and the greater African continent. New innovations that have produced a growing number of entrepreneurs in our continent, thereby creating new employment opportunities, are being recorded every other day. A lot of these initiatives have radically contributed to human advancement and new ways of doing things. These innovations have been in the fields of banking, science, information technology, medicine and healthcare. Of great importance, they are largely led by young people.

Other African countries like Kenya, Rwanda, Mauritius, Ethiopia, Uganda and Nigeria have seen massive increase in the number of innovations by young people, which has not only transformed their own lives but growth of their own countries. As South African youth, you can learn a lot from your counterparts in other parts of our continent. That is why it is important for you to gain exposure and deeper knowledge of your continent. In this way, you will get to learn what other young people are doing to improve themselves

and their livelihoods. From such exposure, we can in our own corners, design a future that reflects our dreams and aspirations.

It has become a norm in this era of our existence and I dare say, as a matter of convenience, to point fingers at the direction of government and apportion every other blame on the state.

We can use every platform we get to bemoan the challenges we face as a society, most particularly the high levels of youth unemployment. But we must go beyond that and deal decisively with the challenge of lack of appropriate skills required by our economy at this stage of development. Unless we do so, an army of the unemployed will continue to grow unabated.

Since 1994, our democratic state led by ANC government has pursued policies that seek to build an inclusive economic growth. At the core of this has been the creation of opportunities through access to education and financial aid support to the underprivileged. Government has adopted and implemented policies and interventions that have opened up economic empowerment opportunities aimed at fostering entrepreneurship and creation of employment opportunities.

Access to education from primary level irrespective of economic circumstances, has been increased. Various new schools have been built closer to communities to reduce the travel time to school, and to ensure that access to education is a reality.

With all this support, our immediate task is to pursue fields of study that will enhance our opportunities for job creation and employment. For us in KwaZulu-Natal as a largely rural province, we must respond to the growing opportunities that agriculture offers. This will ensure that we become self-sufficient, we are food secure and we are able to grow further opportunities for jobs through exports of agricultural products.

The second key area of opportunity for us as a Province, is the untapped potential in the ocean economy. We need young people who will pursue maritime studies as we focus our interventions on opportunities like fisheries, oil and gas exploration, ship and boat building. These are sectors of the economy that offer new opportunities but whose potential growth is constrained by shortage of skills. This is a tide that cannot be turned by government on its own, but one that we can overcome if we forge a partnership for change.

As a direct response to today's challenges facing you as young people, we have in the Office of the Premier, created a Chief Directorate on Youth Development. This Directorate has been established with a specific mandate to coordinate youth development initiatives in the province by focusing on research on youth development, and to promote the interests of young people in general. The Youth Chief Directorate offers the following programmes:

- Economic Empowerment
- Social Development
- Youth Skills Development
- Education and Transversal Bursaries
- Youth Leadership Development Foundation

The effectiveness and success of this initiative, is your responsibility as well. As government, we are serious about creating platforms for you as young people to realise your potential in any field of human endeavor you wish to pursue.

In our efforts to promote the interest of the youth, the Office of the Premier among other interventions is offering Bursaries to deserving and needy young people. We also offer internships to those who wish to gain some work experience after graduating. In today's forum, we have organised an exhibition to enable you to access necessary information that you may need to make informed career choices.

We call on you to draw inspiration from the courage and determination of the 1976 generation, which defined the history of this country. Your mission should now be to pursue personal empowerment through education. It must be about the full realisation of economic freedom and empowerment as the next terrain of struggle. To be able to realise your dreams, you must engage in serious fight against social ills like substance abuse, and diseases like HIV and AIDS.

As government, we commit ourselves to serve you and not betray the spirit and essence of what June 16, 1976 was about. Equally, we call on you to enter into a social contract with us that you will take full advantage of all opportunities created for you and better your livelihood. Like the generation of 1976, you need out of relative obscurity, discover your mission, fulfil it or betray it.

I thank you.