**SPEECH BY THE PREMIER OF KWAZULU-NATAL, NOMUSA DUBE-NCUBE, ON THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE MEDITERRANEAN SHIPPING COMPANY (MSC) COLD STORAGE FACILITY IN CHESTERVILLE ON 07 MARCH 2024**

Programme Director;

**Mr Siboniso Duma** – MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs;

**Cllr Mxolisi Kaunda** – Mayor of eThekwini Municipality;

**Mr Soren Toft** – Group CEO, MSC Geneva;

**Captain Salvatore Sarno** – Chairman, MSC South Africa;

**Ms Rosario Sarno** – Managing Director, MSC South Africa;

MSC Shipping, Logistics and Depot Directors;

Transnet Group Executives;

Chairman and CEO of Durban Chamber of Commerce;

Perishable Goods Exporters;

Members of the Media;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is an honour to address you this evening on this auspicious occasion where we are celebrating the multi-million-rand investment by the Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC) into our provincial economy.

Programme Director, our delight at the opening of this cold storage facility by MSC is derived from many reasons, not least the fact that the global economy continues to face many headwinds. As you will recall, last year the global economy was thrown into a tail-spin when one of the biggest developed markets in the Eurozone entered a recession.

The economic downturn followed a period of prolonged uncertainty because of a number of factors, including the geo-political situation occasioned by the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the subsequent rise in the cost of living, the climate change challenge, the dire inflation outlook, the runaway increase of public debt and the widening gap of inequality across the globe.

Given this context, the investment by MSC is not only a vote of confidence in our economy but it shows that if we work together as government and the private sector, there is so much we can achieve.

The fact that MSC has invested R350 million in the construction and development of this cold storage facility is a clear demonstration that you share our positive outlook for the future growth of KwaZulu-Natal.

As the provincial government, we wish to applaud MSC for improving our supply chain machinery as a province by creating this state-of-the-art cold storage. We are particularly pleased about the number of jobs that this facility has created. This development also underpins the importance of the maritime industry. Hence our government has invested substantially in maritime skills development. Over and above the maritime schools that we are creating, plans are afoot the construction of a maritime university.

Programme Director, as a province we have always understood that for us to grow our economy and to be a force to be reckoned with in the global economic arena, we need to strengthen the capacity for our economy to trade and export goods to other countries. This also assists us in creating jobs in our country, which is in line with our government strategy to boost manufacturing and value addition in our country.

It is for this reason that one of the entities for our Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, dedicates a whole week every year to promoting export of goods by our businesspeople to other countries. This facility will, therefore, boost our capacity as a province to export temperature-sensitive goods to other countries,

It is also because of this reason that we have accelerated our efforts to fight decongestion at our ports, which are a lynchpin of our economy as KwaZulu-Natal. As a result, the number of vessels at anchorage was reduced from more than 60 ships to just 12 ships at the end of January 2024.

Also, because of cooperation between the government and the business sector, we are pleased to report that traffic congestion around the Port of Richards Bay has also eased significantly.

Programme Director as part of ensuring that we continue to build on the gains we have notched together with business to strengthen cooperation, this week we hosted a post -State of the Province Address with business leaders and captains of industry during which we also reaffirmed our commitment to the creation of a collaboration between all social partners.

As social partners, we cannot allow a situation where the economic development prospects of our province are dimmed.

It is because of this reason that as the provincial government, we have taken a dim view of the illegal and violent strike which is currently taking place within the eThekwini Municipality.

No matter the nature of grievances we might have as workers, this is not a licence to embark on unbridled lawlessness.

We, therefore, call on the workers and the management within the municipality to find one another and ensure the peaceful resolution of the illegal strike. After all we have been through as a province, we can ill-afford to have an illegal industrial action that will imperil our determined march to a better future.

In conclusion, I wish to once again congratulate MSC for this investment. We have no doubt that it will be an omen for others to follow suit.

I thank you .