**Keynote Address by Premier of KwaZulu-Natal Amb. Nomusa Dube-Ncube at the National Development Plan and State Capacity Conference held at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban on 07 November 2022**

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Fellow Presenters and Panelists;

Members of the Media;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good Morning!

**Introduction**

I wish to start by thanking the organising departments together with the University of KwaZulu-Natal for this opportunity to address the National Development Plan and State Capacity Conference which is aptly themed ‘*Reflections on State Capacity and Government Performance through the first ten years of the National Development Plan’*.

The adoption of the National Development Plan (NDP) in 2012 was a seminal moment in our country’s history which ushered us onto a novel planned developmental pathway by setting for the first time, key steps to follow in order to attain a better future by 2030. The NDP committed all stakeholders at national, provincial and municipal level to a number of targets to be achieved within an 18year timeframe. Having travelled 10 of those years, it is appropriate to perform a public assessment of our journey, as we shall do over the next few days.

This conference focuses on Chapter 13 of the NDP, the capacity of the ethical developmental state and is important because of its location in the middle of our five-year strategic term, with about 16months left to the 2024 national elections.

As a discipline, public planning is an evolving science which depends to a large extent on the political and socio-economic environment in which it is implemented. As identified correctly in this gathering, central to the attainment of our development objectives is the quality of core capacity that resides in the state, its proper deployment, and the measurement, monitoring and evaluation of its performance. The role of the state remains crucial.

Additionally, our experience over the past 10 years shows how key outcomes can be undermined by the fluid relationship between the state, capital, labour and other stakeholders including international investors. The fact remains that we will not be able to achieve the ideals of the NDP without all the relevant parties working together towards one single plan for the country.

**The Constitution, the NDP and the PGDS**

In a constitutional democracy this calls for voluntary Social Compacting and 10 years into the NDP, this remains one of the challenges to a national consensus that will lift our growth trajectory significantly. The resulting failure to manage this tension between planning and implementation, undermines the achievements of our targets and indicators and more importantly the aspirations of the people as enshrined in our Constitution.

In its preamble our Constitution commits us to:

* “Heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights; Lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by law;
* Improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person; and, build a united and democratic South Africa able to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations”.

**Situational Analysis of Implementation of NDP and PGDS objectives**

This is by no means an easy task, and evidence indicates that more needs to be done to meet the lofty but justified dreams of the Constitution and the NDP.

The first detailed analysis of the “NDP” implementation in KwaZulu-Natal was undertaken in 2011, under the guidance of the newly appointed Provincial Planning Commission. This is because our province’s planning model of the Provincial Planning Commission predates the NDP, and the National Planning Commission.

The Provincial Growth and Development Strategy (PGDS) is however now aligned to the national plan and is a macro policy instrument which incorporates the Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) and government’s five-year programme of action.

A similar approach was followed in the 2020 review identifying benchmarks as well as key challenges and interventions.

**Implementation of Education Goal- moving towards 4IR**

One of the key findings of our review was that on a quantitative basis, education and training outputs have improved in KZN over the past 10 years. The number of people without any schooling decreased from 2011 to 2021 with an average annual rate of 4.91%, while people with 'matric only' increased from 1.79 million to 2.59 million.

Sadly, those without any schooling in KwaZulu-Natal accounted for 24.40% of the national figure. In our analysis poor educational outcomes undermine literacy and numeracy, and by extension the province and country’s competitiveness. There is inadequate focus on emotional well-being and the reskilling of educators lacks attention to the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

This has resulted in a substantial mismatch between the skills demand and supply axis in our province. This is a matter that has been raised sharply by the private sector as well. We are now addressing this vigorously with the project of the SMART Province which will see the roll out of the digital economy and 4IR skills and all its attendant technologies.

**Addressing poverty and equality**

In 2021, there were 8.33 million people living in poverty across KZN Province. This is sadly 30.63% higher than the 6.38 million in 2011. Unsurprisingly, the population group with the highest percentage of people living in poverty is African with a total of 78.3%. This is where skills shortage is also highest. Among others programmes are being introduced to upskill households in agricultural production activities and providing support in seeds and implements.

This is because between 2011 and 2021, the agriculture sector experienced the highest positive growth with an average rate of 29.1%. At the same time, between 2011 and 2021, the manufacturing sector experienced a positive growth rate of 6.7%. In 2011 the number of households below the RDP-level were 686 000 within KZN Province, this decreased annually at -2.55% per annum to 530 000 in 2021.

There has been a decline in the number of tourist visits to the Province with bed nights declining at an average annual rate of -7.34% from 35.4 million in 2011 to 16.5 million in 2021. This is worrying as tourism can be our province’s breadbasket with world-class attractions that KwaZulu-Natal has to showcase.

There is a positive correlation between growth in tourism and employment creation and programmes are now in place which are paying dividends with new and more airlines flying into King Shaka International Airport. A sustained revival of tourism is essential but attainable only if all the relevant parties work together on a cohesive and choreographed programme.

Allied to these indices according to the Stats SA Governance, Public Safety and Justice Survey (GPSJ) 2021/22, the experience of crime by households between the 2020/21 and 2021/22 periods show an upward trend in four out of six types of crime. This is a key variable especially to the sensitive tourist market. One of the challenges undermining positive outcomes in crime, economic sectors, addressing poverty and unemployment is lack of adequate capacity in the state. A lack of institutional capacity at a local level has limited the capability of government to provide infrastructure and services in an efficient and corruption free manner.

**The threat of low expenditure in infrastructure**

Low expenditure levels on infrastructure investment is evidence of these capacity deficiencies despite the national government continuously emphasizing the need for more investment. We have also experienced relatively massive under-funding for decades, and this has led to decay and in some instances, a collapse of key network infrastructure at local, provincial and national level.

Our view is that government spending on infrastructure reached its peak in the 1960s to late 1970s. Although this decline is from 1977, in 2000 the country’s per capita spending on infrastructure reached a 40-year low and resulted in a number of well-known challenges today, including load shedding.

Recognizing the lasting impact of our racialized past, we have thus conceded to the state a major role in driving social and economic justice, and particularly to address the transformation challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality. Such a post-apartheid project requires a capable, ethical and developmental state to lead the implementation of the NDP targets, the KZN Provincial Growth and Development Plan and Integrated Development Plans at local government level.

**Skills at core of unequal service delivery**

Lee Kuan Yew, the founding father of modern Singapore which is one of the world’s leading capable and ethical development states points out that: *“To get good government, you must have good people in charge of government”.*

At this conference we are confronting the challenge of uneven implementation that arises clearly out of capacity inadequacy across the state manifesting in uneven outcomes at local, provincial and national government.

We are clear that these skills gaps lead to, and are also a result of weak accountability, persistent corruption emanating from a leadership skills deficit. Such a public service is yet to embrace Information and Communication Technology resulting in missed opportunities and efficiency gains.

Building capabilities is key to retooling the State for higher performance. We need to have a good cadre of public service that is desired in Singapore and other world-class economies that is proud to work for the State. A functional and integrated government requires a professional, responsive and meritocratic public service cadre that is obsessed with efficiency and citizen-focused delivery.

To be able to lead a state that is capable of playing a developmental and transformative role, this public service must be immersed in the development agenda but must be insulated from undue political interference. These factors must interact together in one direction to achieve the NDP goals, and to lead the thorough-going transformation of our country at all levels.

In addressing this challenge in KwaZulu-Natal at least 100% of municipal officials have been audited for skills. Our audit revealed training needs for senior managers in amongst others, financial management, strategic capability and leadership, risk management, change management, policy development, and monitoring and evaluation. Our province has developed a Framework for Mentorship and Coaching to address the findings of the skills audit. Councilors are being capacitated on the complexities of the District Development Model through the Integrated Councillor Induction Programme and Sector Based Councillor Orientation Workshops.

The capacity development of public servants has been conducted with 791 officials already trained. The repositioned Provincial Training Academy is prioritising key skills and capacity building interventions to improve service delivery in partnership with the National School of Governance and other institutions. Through this partnership, several training courses have taken place, including the course of Ethics, Theory of Change and related competencies.

**Concluding thoughts**

In closing, the Public Service will not be able to deliver higher quality public services to our citizens if public servants are not capable and competent. Towards Building the Capacity of the State, the Provincial Executive Council resolved that skills audit be conducted for all public servants in the Provincial Administration including the municipalities which is more than 200 000 strong.

This will assist us to ascertain whether as the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Administration we have the required skills set to deliver services to our people. The exercise is assisting us to know the skills in supply and the skills in demand.

The skills audit in all the municipalities has been finalised while the skills audit in government departments will be finalised in 2023.

Our partnerships are not only ensuring that the curriculum offered in universities responds to the economy and skills needed by the Province but to partner with university and NSG in the skilling, reskilling and upskilling of public servants. To address corruption the Provincial Anti-Corruption Implementation Plan has been drafted based on the National Anti-Corruption Strategy that was approved on 18 November 2020. In addition, the Office of the Premier, together with COGTA, the Special Investigations Unit, the Hawks and National Prosecuting Authority are working together as a forum in conducting the ethics and anti-corruption awareness campaigns.

In closing, we are reminded by war-time President of the United States of America Woodrow Wilson who says: *“You are not here merely to make a living. You are here in order to enable the world to live more amply, with greater vision, with a finer spirit of hope and achievement. You are here to enrich the world, and you impoverish yourself if you forget the errand*”.

With these few words on behalf of provincial government we welcome you to KwaZulu-Natal and may you have a productive couple of days ahead.

Ends.