OPENING REMARKS BY PREMIER OF KWAZULU-NATAL NOMUSA DUBE-NCUBE DURING THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT LEKGOTLA HELD AT PUBLIC WORKS, MAYVILLE ON 17-18 FEBRUARY 2023

I wish to take this opportunity to welcome you all to this first Provincial Government Lekgotla of 2023 starting today, the 16th of February 2023.

We are approaching 30 years of democracy which will be celebrated in the year of 2024. The purpose of the Provincial Lekgotla as we are gathered here, is to plan forward to the coming financial year, but also to look back at the road travelled. The year 2023 presents itself as one of the most historic in our province, because it is effectively the last year before we hold the country’s seventh democratic elections as the Sixth Administration comes to an end.

The question is what do we have to show in the past 30 years? What do we have to show in the past 5 years as a government since the first democratically elected President Nelson Mandela to where we are today, 29 years later?

We need to take stock of the progress that we have made over the past year and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), we need to look at the areas of challenges and shortcomings that we have had to deal with.

As we meet at this Lekgotla, we cannot forget that in 2023 we are still dealing with the lagging effects of the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic, the negative sentiments attached to the July 2021 unrest and most recently, the devastation caused by the floods in April and May.

The impact of sustained load shedding that has derailed a number of potential investments and investors and caused untold damage to the economy of our country and province. The untold impact to human lives and to small businesses as a result of load shedding is yet to be outlined.

Load shedding, as the President His Excellency, Cyril Ramaphosa says is a threat to the progress of our country and the development of its people. We need to give it the urgency and the importance that it deserves. We have to stop the load shedding; we have to deal with the impact and the frequency of load shedding.

We are very excited about the measures that the President has announced in terms of how he is leading from the front in dealing with the load shedding in earnest. There are a number of measures and relief that will be given to communities, to small businesses but also to big businesses in cushioning our economy from the impact of load shedding.

The energy crisis has risen above all because electricity is essential to our development programmes. Without a steady supply of power, we will not achieve the objectives of growing the economy and creating employment.

The people of our province expect us as we converged here in the next two days to present a clear plan of action on what is going to be our contribution as a province in resolving the energy crisis. What interventions and strategic reforms we will introduce as the province from production to transmission as we build energy security for our communities. The energy crisis has risen above all because electricity is essential for our development programme as a country and as a people. Without a steady supply of power, we will not be able to achieve the objective of growing the economy and creating employment that we have set for ourselves a country and province.
How do we then as a province leverage on the energy reforms that the President has announced to get into new market of Hydrogen Energy, Independent Power Producers, Bio Ethanol, Biogas and Biomass to stimulate job creation and SMME development?
We need to present a clear plan on these when we deliver the State of the Province Address on the 24th of February 2023. It is equally urgent that we use the occasion to attend to the delivery of the basic services, youth unemployment and unemployment in general, Water, Sanitation, Electricity and Housing as identified in all our surveys as issues driving a negative sentiment in the mood of the nation.
The second major concern is crime and the creation of safer communities. We cannot mortgage our province to criminals, and we must take our streets, our villages, towns and cities back from the criminal fringe that is threatening to overwhelm our country and province.
The killers of globally-acclaimed rapper and hip hop star Kiernan “AKA” Forbes and his friend Tebello “Tibz” Motsoane, the shootings of people in Mariannhill, the murder of Inkosi Ndaba and Induna Mkhize and Induna Ngcobo and many others, these incidents shine a spotlight on our streets and the security of people. Not long ago there were several attacks on taverns in Pietermaritzburg and other parts of the province. These are indicators of a society that is descending towards lawlessness where drugs and alcohol abuse reign supreme. Building Safer communities and neigbourhoods will thus remain top of our priorities and we need decisive actions and plans to address this.
The other concern is around water. We must do everything to ensure that everyone especially in rural communities taste the full benefits of freedom and receive basic services like water and decent sanitation. We are worried about the noticeable regression trend even in areas that had constant water supply. The Provincial Water Master Plan for KwaZulu-Natal takes cognisance of current and future demand for water and identifies short-, medium- and long-term interventions to ensure water security in our province. But it is just a plan, the plan will be meaningful when we have projects on the ground dealing with water leaks, rehabilitating new infrastructure and resolving the water challenges facing communities.

We have taken a number of decisions about reprioritising municipal budgets toward maintenance and announced many strategic infrastructure projects such as dams.  We need to see progress on the ground. In the eThekwini, almost 50% of the revenue is being lost to non-revenue water.

We have created war-rooms in all districts, but this war needs to be functional and have an impact. We are no longer in a crisis, but we are in an emergency with these issues. We can no longer have war-rooms without adopting a war mentality. If you are in a war you need to be agile and acrobatic.

The fourth immediate concern is employment creation especially among the youth. This crisis has a potential to undermine the gains we have made. We have directed all institutions of government to prioritise particularly youth employment but also to work with private sector partners to address this plight. The structural impediments which include the private sector’s hoarding of investment in what they call an investment strike, and the absence of patriotic capital that works together to build a province for all need our response.

The state of our infrastructure, the concerns around potholes, ending Gender Based Violence and Femicide all these issues requires a solution from this collective gathered here.

As we engage, we must be guided by the dictum that one cannot build a reputation on what you’re planning to do. Abantu bakithi bakhathele ukuzwa sixoxa ukuthi sifuna ukwenza lokhu nalokhu, bafuna ukwenza bakubone ngamehlo. Lokhu kudinga abaholi nabasebenzi bakaHulumeni abasebenza ngokuzikhandla nokuthembeka. This requires government to demonstrate how commitments are translated into reality.

This we need to be practical and quick on implementation and short on new long-term programmes. Solutions on immediate programmes and projects to build back the confidence of the people will come from this Legkotla. When we leave this Lekgotla must be clear that every one of our commitments will be delivered and where possible targets must be surpassed. The state must cease to be famous for the wrong reasons – tardiness, non-responsiveness, lazy officials, fraud and corruption. Let us redefine the essence of a civil service to be willing to go the extra mile, ethical and in it for the service.

History assigns to every generation a mission, and it is up to this coterie of leadership and public servants to leave a shining and legacy of the Sixth Administration.

A capable developmental state

It is time for the development of a truly capable local and provincial corps(core) in the public sector whose only obsession is to improve lives through service delivery. Building an ethical and capable state, which enjoys popular support, is essential for economic transformation.  Consequence Management is being taken against non-performance by those deployed in Government both Politically and Administratively. The Professionalization Framework, its immediate implementation and the fast-tracking of interventions to build an Ethical, Capable and Developmental State are key to the success of our interventions.
Based on the January 8th Statement, the Makgotla and the 2023 State of the Nation Address, we have identified the following as requiring decisive action from this Lekgotla:
▪ Resolving the Energy Crisis;
▪ Water Provision;
▪ Fighting Crime and Building Safer Communities;
▪ Growing the economy to growth and creating jobs;
▪ Ending GBVF;
▪ Fixing all Potholes and Maintenance Programme
▪ Reigniting Tourism, Sport and Creative Arts;
▪ Driving the SMART KwaZulu-Natal Connectivity;
▪ New Smart Cities and entrenching the District Development model;
▪ Progressing key catalytic Infrastructure to grow the economy (Rail, Ports, N2/N3 upgrades, SIPS, Government precinct, Housing. New Hospitals and Clinics etc.).
This Lekgotla will be very comprehensive, and will in various presentations cover updates on the following:
▪ The performance of the KZN Economy;
▪ Programmes to address poverty and Inequality;​
▪ Building Safer Communities;
▪ Human Resource Development;
▪ Health;
▪ Education;​
▪ Youth Development;
▪ Food Security;
▪ Sustainable Human Settlement;​
▪ Tourism;
▪ Agriculture, Environment and Climate Change;
▪ Access to Water and the provision of Water Infrastructure Development;
▪ Sanitation;
▪ Electrical Connections and the path to energy security;​
▪ Good Governance & the fight against Corruption;
Solving some of our key challenges requires an economy that is growing, creating employment, reducing poverty and closing the inequality gap.
Reviving the Tourism Industry
Tourism is a major source of economic activity and tapped correctly, its job-creation potential is endless.  We need a plan on how we will regain the lion’s share of the Tourism Market.
New Smart Coastal City
The Smart City will be a major catalyst for township and Rural Economic Development and a demonstration of the province’s mass adoption and embracing of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.
In conclusion, we must at the end of this Lekgotla produce a programme of action that will ensure decisive and urgent actions on the ground. A concerted effort to demonstrate a government not only in charge but one that is at work.  As champions of delivering on the mandates of respective departments, MECs must be seen to be testing the services provided by the department. This may include standing in queues to check efficiency as well as calling into toll-free lines to check response times and quality of the service provided. The prevalence of poor service delivery, limited inclusivity from economic development and inaction on key deliverables continues to bring the confidence in government institutions and credibility of government into question.
Let us regroup in this Lekgotla to cover the lost ground.  We need to work together to move our province beyond the triple tragedies that derailed our 2019 Programme of Action and as our National Government says, in doing so, we will not leave anyone behind.  Decisive and urgent action is required from the person in the reception desk and the person cleaning our buildings. From the top management to the bottom, we need to work together to deliver the services that our communities rightfully deserve!
Thank You!!