**Remarks by Premier of KwaZulu-Natal Hon. Nomusa Dube-Ncube, during the National Council of Province’s Taking Parliament to the People held at the Ugu Sports and Leisure Complex in Ugu District on 18 November 2022**

**Hon. Chairperson; Hon. Masondo**

**His Excellency President of the Republic Hon. Cyril Ramaphosa;**

**Honourable Chief Whip; Hon. Mohai**

**Honourable Speakers;**

**Honorable Members;**

**Honourable Members of Provincial Legislatures,**

**Honorable Premiers;**

**Chairperson of SALGA;**

**Esteemed Amakhosi;**

**Mayors and Councilors;**

Allow me as I start, to recognize the presence of our Honourable President, His Excellency Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa and all Members of the National Council of Provinces (NCOP).

We wish to acknowledge my colleagues from other provinces who are here with us today. You are most welcome to KwaZulu-Natal.

Yesterday the nation took time to celebrate His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa on his 70th Birthday. To reach such a milestone in one’s life is a major blessing, and we would like on behalf the Provincial Government and the people of KwaZulu-Natal again to join the millions in our country to wish the President well, a long and healthy life, and 70 more years.

**Honourable Chairperson,** this debate comes as the province of KwaZulu-Natal is fast recovering from the April and May Flood disasters that left a trail of death and destruction in its wake and cost our province billions of rand in lost revenue and recovery.

We recently had a massive storm in Pietermaritzburg which swelled the Msunduzi River and broke its banks. This also caused massive destruction.

Before the floods, in 2020 KwaZulu-Natal like the rest of the world, had to deal with the global Covid-19 pandemic which prompted a shutdown that had a major negative economic impact globally. As if that was not enough, in July 2021 we had to deal with the social unrest that was accompanied by destruction to business premises.

Mr President, throughout these developments we pride ourselves that we had the leadership, which was just right, to guide our country and province through these crises. Indeed, the Bible has this to say about our leadership rather emphatically in Esther 4:14 when it says: *“You, were born for such a time as this*”.

**Honourable Chairperson,** just two weeks ago, our province hosted an important conference driven by the Department of Public Service and Administration, the Office of the Premier together with the University of KwaZulu-Natal, which was meant to assess the capacity of the state since the adoption of the National Development Plan ten years ago. The conversations centered on the progress our country is making in strengthening our democracy and transformation.

At the ten-year review of the NDP, we reached consensus that this is the greatest vision that has been produced for our country. If we focus on the implementation, action and impact of our NDP we will speedily bring about the fundamental change in the socio-economic conditions of citizens.

**Hon. Chairperson,** among the issues which were cited as critical in building the capacity of the state, include the following:

* State Capacity and Institutional Development in South Africa;
* The State, Para-diplomacy and Development;
* The ethical dilemma in the Public Service – and new pathways towards redemption public sector integrity;
* Ethics and Government Performance;
* State-owned Enterprises, Privatisation & Development Finance;
* Government policy direction and capacity building of municipalities and service delivery;
* The State of Local Government; and
* The future of South Africa and the National Development Plan.

Among the conclusions that were drawn from the conference are that:

* Various sectors are willing to join hands to advance the NDP, and to work with government to build state capacity;
* Without capacitating the state building a functional government, the NDP goals will not be realized;
* The professionalisation of the Public Service is one of the fundamental drives necessary to build state capacity.

**Honourable Chairperson,** for government to build the capabilities of an agile state it is necessary that:

* + Integrated Service Delivery Models like Operation Sukuma Sakhe are used to support the District Development Model, and should be strengthened;
  + Fit-for-purpose Service Delivery Monitoring and Evaluation systems are adopted & customised to specific service delivery challenges such as in the case of our Operation Siyahlola;
  + Public Service skills development is needed to ensure that public servants possess the appropriate skills.

**BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF THE STATE THROUGH SKILLS DEVELOPMENT**

As the Province of KwaZulu-Natal, we acknowledge that the Public Service will not be able to deliver high quality services to citizens if they do not possess appropriate skills and competencies. In order to move towards building a capable state, the Provincial Executive Council resolved that a skills audit be conducted in the entire Provincial Administration and in Municipalities.

Amongst others, the purpose of the skills audit is to assess the level and relevance of skills possessed by public servants against the service delivery imperatives.

**Honourable Chairperson** we are proud that the skills audit in all municipalities has been finalized, and this has provided valuable information on the state of human capacity and capabilities at a local government level.

We also understand that achieving a Capable and a Developmental State requires collaboration between all sections of society.

A Province-Wide Human Resource Development Strategy has been developed, and it is being monitored by the Provincial Human Resource Development Council. We have also signed a number of cooperation agreements with all institutions of higher learning in our Province with the aim of working together to build the capacity of the state. Most importantly, we want to influence the curriculum so that it responds to the economic and service delivery needs of the Province. Early this year, we signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the National School of Government to work together in capacitating public servants.

**MODERNISATION OF GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES**

Our province has also embarked on an agile citizen-centric strategy that will direct the digital transformation of the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government. The strategy is to work towards an all-inclusive digital Province where all citizens can benefit from the opportunities offered by technology.

The 4th Industrial Revolution brings new possibilities for citizen-centricity globally, and also how the KZN Provincial Government can become a Digitally Transformed Province. The Provincial Digital Transformation Strategy was approved by the Executive Council in May 2020.

**Honourable Chairperson,** the province has developed a policy framework to embrace 4IR in an orchestrated agile manner. Digital transformation is progressing at a fast pace and the province acknowledges the continuous effort to plan, do as we say, check our compliant progress and act appropriately in context. To that end, we have aligned our 4IR ICT vision to the very tenets of our provincial multi-year plan. This will undoubtedly lead the KZN Provincial Government to harness the 4IR to create a Citizen-Centric, Modern, Innovative and Digitally enabled KZN Province where technology uplifts human dignity, health, harmony, skills and safety whilst giving citizens a technological gateway to Africa and the World.

**Honourable Chairperson,** here are just some of the initiatives that are currently being accelerated through agile computing are:

New jobs for the future today; Connected people; Government that never sleeps and delivers 24/7; Smart Province; Smart people and a thriving economy; Smart Government; Smart Agriculture; Safe Environment; School Skills Development; Data Analytics program; Drone Technology; Smart Government Control Centre; Innovation and Information Hub.

Through these initiatives, KZN plans to become an innovation and Technology Hub. The main objective is to expose school children from a very early age to the Fourth Industrial Revolution. KZN has intelligent, innovative and highly talented people. As provincial government we want to create an environment where innovation is nurtured and supported through technology.

As the province of KwaZulu-Natal, we initiated the Operation Sukuma Sakhe Delivery Model. Since launching Operation Sukuma Sakhe (OSS), the Province has placed great emphasis on its strengthening in order to ensure that it meets the service delivery obligations of households and communities within the Province.

**Honourable Chairperson,** one of the things we have learnt through this model is that on:

**GOVERNANCE**:

* + There must be active Buy-in and support at all levels both political and administrative;
  + There must be buy in of Community leadership from Traditional leaders, Political leaders, religious leaders, civil society leaders;
  + There must be utilisation of and alignment with existing Institutional structures;
  + War room conveners to be community members.

**LESSONS LEARNT FROM COVID-19**

**Honourable Chairperson,** if we talk about the agility of state to improve service delivery outcomes, we should also reflect of the lessons we learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic.

**COORDINATION**

During COVID-19; we saw all state institutions acting in concert. The coordination between the three spheres of government and the other state institutions was remarkable. As a result, there was one centre of command across all levels. Furthermore, the silo approach was done away with and we had an integrated system led through the Command Centre.

**SOCIAL COMPACT**

There was a tight social compact with civil society organisation. This ensured that there was sufficient buy- in by all the stakeholders and bottlenecks were identified on time; as government and civil society played their roles respectively. There were also no unnecessary delays in implementing the necessary interventions.

**ADAPTATION TO THE NEW NORMAL**

If anything, COVID-19 taught us that government institutions are able to adjust and adapt to the new normal. New ways of doing things were introduced and hybrid approach to working arrangements was adopted to ensure continuity in the delivery of services.

In conclusion, Honourable. Chairperson today we are pleased to welcome this sitting of the National Council of Provinces to this local municipality named after Ray Nkonyeni, and an ANC region of the Lower South Coast that is named in honour of Tolomane Mnyayiza. We have no doubt that the people of Ugu district can attest to the fact that these two heroes who passed away in 1999 and 2016 respectively, were leaders who were born for “such a time as this”.

Such a time as this requires a state that has the agility to rise to emerging challenges and to be pliable enough to respond. To respond swiftly, an agile state must have the necessary tools - the capacity of its institutions, regulations and infrastructure.

More importantly, the state requires capable individuals who are not only skilled and technically adept, but who have the commitment, orientation and empathy to become a servant of the people. A developmental state no matter how agile and responsive, is not sustainable unless it is led by leaders of high moral ethics who by force of their example, cultivate a culture of selflessness, dedication and servant leadership as the core of the public service. In everything we do in this province, the National Development Plan serves as our compass that is daily guiding us to a more prosperous future.

We are pleased to say without any fear of contradiction, that our province was born for a time as this and will continue to fully recover from the ashes of destruction and rise again.

I Thank You!