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| Private Bag X9037, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3200  8th Floor, Natalia Building, 330 Langalibalele Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201  Tel: 033 813 0718 Fax: 033 342 1944 |

**REMARKS BY KWAZULU-NATAL PREMIER ARTHUR THAMSANQA NTULI DURING THE KZN SOCIAL CRIME PREVENTION SUMMIT AT THE OLIVE CONVENTION CENTRE (OCC) IN DURBAN ON FRIDAY 02 AUGUST 2024.**

Programme Director;

Members of the Executive Council

Amakhosi Asendlunkulu

Mayors from District and Local Municipalities

Representatives of the Growth Coalition

Representatives from Business Against Crime

KZN Provincial Commissioner, Lt-General Nhlanhla Mkhwanazi;

Heads of Departments

Municipal Managers

Community Police Forum Members,

KZN Community Crime Prevention Association Members,

Neighbourhood Watches,

Spiritual Crime Prevention Structures

Senior Government Officials;

Distinguished Guests;

Members of the media;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning!

Standing before you today at the KwaZulu-Natal Social Crime Prevention Summit is an honour. Programme Director, this Summit comes at a time when the province and the entire country are searching for solutions to one of the most fundamental issues of our lifetime. Crime prevention in South Africa dominates almost every news feed. The dynamics of crime in KwaZulu-Natal impact our province and are also a precursor to a national question around crime. How can we prevent crime? That is the national question, and you cannot discuss this phenomenon without looking at KwaZulu-Natal and the dynamics at play in this province.

Let us unite behind a common goal: to eradicate the crime that tarnishes this province's beautiful image and restore hope, safety, and trust among our citizens. Ladies and gentlemen, crime is the absence of hope, and crime is the absence of trust. Crime and unemployment have moved the national discourse away from growth and reconstruction into a defensive posture that is riddled with mistrust, insecurity and disinvestment.

KwaZulu-Natal is a province rich in culture, heritage, and natural resources. Its people are known for their resilient spirit and strong community bonds.

But we cannot ignore the shadow cast by criminal activities that threaten our peace, security, and prosperity. It is time to rise together and reclaim our streets, neighbourhoods, and lives from the clutches of crime.

Our beautiful province is plagued by various forms of crime, which have left pain and suffering to the citizens, especially impacting our women and children. As we enter Women's Month, we must take special care to cater for women in the solutions we craft because women continue to bear the hardest brunt of this scourge. I salute women across the province and the country for their resilience and indomitable spirit!

Just on Monday, 29 July, a female teacher was tragically shot and killed at Phikiswayo Primary School, and on Wednesday, 31 July, a robbery occurred at Mukelani Primary School in Kwamashu, where robbers stormed inside the school and robes teachers of their personal belongings. They were also forced to transfer money from their accounts under duress. These incidents have happened in our schools just this week alone. As witnessed by many of us, these incidents are a painful reality that we must change with a no-nonsense approach.

We rarely discuss how crime has impacted our psychological disposition and social discourse. Yet, we have all been victims of crime in some shape or form. As we engage in this Summit, remember that crime has victims. Crime has a profound impact on the mind of a typical South African. Crime has robbed us of our sense of safety, wherein the constant exposure to crime has created a sense of vulnerability. Fear of becoming a victim leads to increased anxiety and distrust in authorities, distrust for our neighbours, and even distrust in our friends and family. We have seen how high crime rates have eroded social bonds and community trust. We, therefore, need to come up with solutions for communities to create safe spaces and maintain a state of general safety, in addition to responding to acts of criminality.

Crime has had far-reaching effects on our mental health; crime has led to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and substance abuse. Crime, every day, creates concerns about property values, insurance costs, and financial security.

However, many South Africans develop coping mechanisms and resilience in response to crime. It is essential to acknowledge the psychological toll of crime on individuals and communities and to address these concerns through support systems, community engagement, and effective crime prevention strategies.

We, therefore, cannot, as this province put the responsibility of fighting and preventing crime to be the sole responsibility of the police; other role-players, including the communities, need to come on board and augment the work that is done by the police, for the province to be a safer place.

This landmark summit is the first in what is an **Integrated and Collaborative Safety Strategy** for the province. The Integrated and Collaborative Safety Strategy is a ritical chapter into an **Integrated and Collaborative Provincial Growth Strategy** that overarching the unity of purpose we share. We want this strategy to be underpinned by principles of collaboration and integration because that is the order of the day in the current government. Gone are the days when government works in silos or works in isolation of the many men and women of this province who have organised themselves to solve problems instead of just complaining. The government must coordinate, provide resources, and set the tone. But we are in this together. This Summit must reflect on how we now join hands as government, business sector, and communities in dealing with this challenge.

We have deliberately invited the community to be part of this Summit because strategies must respond to community concerns. As the saying goes: ***'Nothing about us; without us.'***

To the business sector, let us not criticise the police or government but send out an invitation for new solidarity with the police and the government. In this current administration, we are receptive to innovations and ideas as long as they are within the law. An old Chinese proverb says, ***"I don't care if the cat is black or white, as long as it catches the mice".*** This proverb is a metaphor to express a desire for pragmatic approaches to development and governance, emphasising that the outcome is more important than ideology. Ladies and gentlemen, the time for empty political rhetoric has ended. If the citizens can put aside their differences and demand a united front, who are we to disappoint them? The 100 days of this administration must not fail to deliver a well-canvassed and practical Integrated and Collaborative Safety Strategy.

Programme Director, I am happy that we have structured the Summit to have the right people in the room and commissions that cater to the multidimensional nature of the challenge at hand. Delegates, as you deliberate in plenary and commissions, be honest, respectful, and frank, but most importantly, bring solutions! When people hear that you met and they hear what you discussed, let them firmly say KwaZulu-Natal means business; KwaZulu-Natal is open n for business.

We must applaud the excellent work done by various law enforcement agencies through the able leadership of Lieutenant-General Nhlanhla Mkhwanazi. Indeed, law enforcement is closing ranks; criminals are on the back foot! Will we sit back, or will we join the fight? This is a fight! Trust me on that! It is a fight we must win. A fight we can only win if we are united.

We must acknowledge and appreciate the bravery and commitment to crime fighting displayed by brave men and women in law enforcement. These dedicated law enforcement officers often go toe-to-toe with heavily armed, dangerous criminals.

Since April this year, over 35 wanted suspects have been fatally shot following gun battles with our law enforcement officers. We are confident that our law enforcement officers are equal to fighting crime, but they need our help to eradicate crime and create a safe province.

Crime is not just an issue for law enforcement. Security companies, community policing forums, safety forums, civil society, Amakhosi, Izinduna, Councillors, Teachers, and Organised business, you all have played and continue to play a significant role. Without you, new hope would not be on the rise. Your tireless efforts and sacrifices do not go unnoticed. You are activists we can trust.

Community involvement is crucial. A vigilant and cooperative community can serve as the eyes and ears of law enforcement. We must foster a culture where citizens feel empowered to report suspicious activities, knowing their voices and pleas do not fall on deaf ears or arrogant hearts.

This new approach means building trust between police and the public, ensuring transparency, and demonstrating that the law is here to protect and serve everyone. Officials the public can trust. A justice system we can trust.

This Summit marks the beginning of our concerted efforts. We are not limited to this forum alone; engagements Summit cascades and devolves to reach every District, and Local Municipalities and wards also occur at district levels. In the immediate term, we have outlined a 100-day programme featuring several key interventions to address crime swiftly and effectively.

To demonstrate that this is a government you can trust, we are conducting site visits and perform law enforcement operations. We are ramping up our integrated law enforcement operations targeting the following issues.

* Stock theft,
* Illegal or unlicensed shops,
* Infringements of bylaws and unethical business practices,
* Illegal liquor sales and liquor law infringements
* Traffic infringements
* Home invasions,
* Hijackings and vehicle theft
* Assault
* Rape and
* Murder

**CONCLUSION**

In closing, when we have developed and implemented our integrated and collaborative approach to governance, **we remember that where there was once despair, we now have hope; where there was distrust and disunity, we now have trust and unity!** When you see a police uniform, you do not have anxiety. When you see a government logo, it does not reek of maladministration or indifference but brings feelings of trust and safety. The looting we saw during the events of July 2021 go down in history as one of our lowest point as a province and country. It is a dark moment that was orchestrated by those who, even today, seek to destroy the hard-won victories of this democracy. They are frustrated by the momentum of trut and unity.

This Summit goes down in history as a turning point in the fight against crime. When our heroes, Nelson Mandela and uMtwana wakwaPhindangene, Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi, hear of our efforts, let them be proud. Let them say we rejected disunity! Let them say we put our differences aside and put our shoulders to the wheel of progress, just like they did. Let us be the beacon of hope that guides our citizens towards a future where they can live without fear and reach their full potential. I wish you all fruitful deliberations, and I thank you!